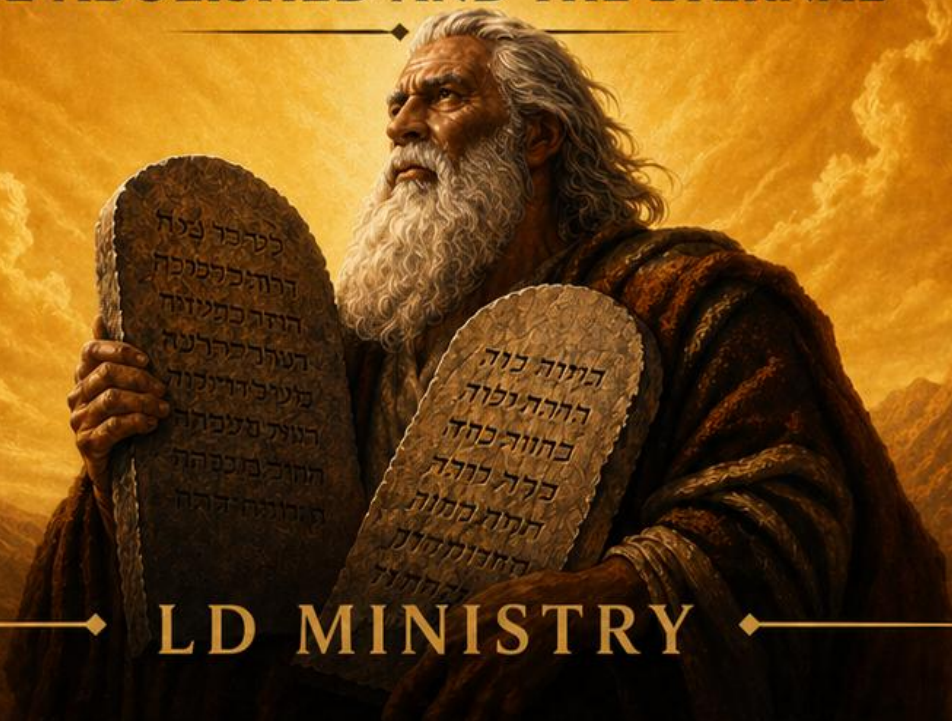


RITUAL LAW AND MORAL LAW

A CONTRAST BETWEEN
THE ABOLISHED AND THE ETERNAL



LD MINISTRY

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Prologue

In a time when many affirm that the entire law was abolished, while others, in reaction, mix the ceremonial with the moral without making any distinction, it becomes necessary to return to the Bible with reverence, patience, and honesty. This book arises precisely from that need.

The subject of the law is not a small matter. It touches directly on the character of God, the nature of sin, the mission of Christ, the meaning of the cross, and the believer's experience under the new covenant. If we do not understand what was abolished and what remains, we will end up confusing the gospel with spiritual lawlessness, or obedience with legalism. Both are dangerous errors.

The Holy Scriptures clearly present that, within divine revelation, there were commandments and ordinances with different functions. There was a ceremonial law that pointed, through sacrifices, feasts, priesthood, and sanctuary services, to the promised Messiah. And there was a moral law, expressed in the Decalogue, written by the finger of God on tables of stone, designed to reveal sin and to manifest the eternal righteousness of the Creator (Ex. 31:18; Deut. 4:13; Rom. 3:20; 7:7).

The first was shadow. The second, moral standard. The first was prophetic and temporary. The second is holy, just, and good (Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:16-17; Rom. 7:12). The first found its fulfillment in Christ. The second was confirmed by Christ.

This book does not seek to exalt the law above Christ, nor to present obedience as a means of salvation. Quite the opposite. Its purpose is to show that Christ and His law are not in conflict. The moral law does not compete with the gospel; it prepares the sinner to understand it. Grace does not destroy obedience; it makes obedience possible. The cross did not abolish divine righteousness; it vindicated it in the sacrifice of the Son of God.

Throughout this study, the biblical testimony has also been considered in harmony with the Spirit of

Prophecy and with the observations of the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary. Ellen G. White summarized this matter in very clear words when she stated that many do not see clearly what was abolished, and mistakenly suppose that the moral law was nailed to the cross, when in reality it was the ceremonial law that ceased with the death of Christ. That observation does not contradict the Bible; it faithfully summarizes it.

May this material be useful to students, preachers, defenders of the faith, and sincere readers who wish to understand better the difference between the abolished and the eternal, between the shadow and the reality, between the symbol and the permanent moral principle. And may it be clearer, by the end of this work, that the true gospel does not destroy the law of God, but honors it in Christ and writes it upon the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

The question at the center of this book is simple to state, but profound in its implications: Was the whole law abolished at the cross, or only that which pointed to Christ in figures and ceremonies?

The answer to that question determines how we understand texts such as Matthew 5:17-19, Romans 3:31, Hebrews 7 and 10, Galatians, Colossians 2, 2 Corinthians 3, Acts 15, and Revelation 14:12. It also determines how we understand sin, grace, the new covenant, and the identity of the faithful people in the time of the end.

For centuries, many readers of the Bible have stumbled at this point because they did not distinguish between different functions within divine legal revelation. Some read the word “law” and automatically conclude that it always means exactly the same thing. But the Bible does not use that term in only one way. At times it refers to the Decalogue. At times it refers to the Mosaic system in a broad sense. At times it refers to laws of sacrifice. At times it refers to divine instruction in general. Therefore, context is indispensable.

Scripture shows that the Ten Commandments were written by God Himself on tables of stone and placed inside the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:16; 31:18; 40:20). By contrast, the book of the law written by Moses was placed beside the ark as a witness against the people (Deut. 31:24-26). That difference is not accidental. It reveals that, although all true instruction

proceeds from God, not everything within the legislation given to Israel had the same purpose or the same duration.

The ceremonial law was added in relation to the problem of sin and the ministry of the sanctuary. Its sacrifices, feasts, and ordinances were a shadow of good things to come (Lev. 7:37; Heb. 10:1). They pointed to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). When Christ died, those figures found their fulfillment.

The moral law, on the other hand, was not given to symbolize the Messiah through ceremonies, but to define sin and to manifest the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:20; 7:7; 1 John 3:4). That is why Paul could say that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12). That is why Christ declared that He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it in its true meaning (Matt. 5:17-19). And that is why the new covenant does not promise the disappearance of the law, but its internalization: “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10).

This book has been organized into ten chapters in order to answer progressively the main objections on this subject. First, the biblical distinction between the

ceremonial law and the moral law is established. Then their functions are studied. After that, we analyze what was really abolished at the cross. Later, the texts often used to deny the continuing validity of the moral law are answered, including Hebrews 7, Galatians, Colossians 2, Romans 14, 2 Corinthians 3, and Acts 15. Finally, all of this is connected with the final message of Revelation, where the remnant appears as keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus (Rev. 14:12).

The reader should not expect here a defense of salvation by works. Salvation is only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. No sinner can be justified by keeping the law. But neither should the reader expect a presentation of grace as permission to transgress the divine will. The same grace that forgives also transforms. The same Christ who justifies also sanctifies. The same Spirit who comforts also convicts of sin and writes the law upon the heart.

That is the spirit of this book: to show, with Bible in hand, that the ceremonial law pointed to Christ and ceased when it was fulfilled in Him, while the moral law remains as the eternal expression of God's character. If this study helps the reader to love Christ more deeply, to understand His work better, and to

see more clearly the beauty of obedience born of faith, then its purpose will have been fulfilled.

Chapter 1

The Two Laws in the Bible: Difference, Origin, and Purpose

Confusion about the law often arises because the Bible uses the word law in a broad sense. In Hebrew, Torah means instruction, teaching, or divine direction. But within that instruction given to Israel, Scripture clearly distinguishes between commandments that are moral and permanent, and ordinances that are ritual, symbolic, and temporary.

This is not about inventing an artificial division. It is about recognizing what the biblical text itself shows. One thing is the law that regulated sacrifices, offerings, ceremonies, and sanctuary rites; another thing is the moral law summarized in the Decalogue, written by God Himself on tables of stone. Both proceed from God, but they do not fulfill the same function, nor do they have the same duration.

1. The Bible Does Present a Distinction

Leviticus speaks of a law connected with sacrifices and offerings: “This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, of the sin offering, of the trespass offering, of the consecrations, and of the sacrifice of the peace offering” (Lev. 7:37). That text is not describing the Decalogue, but the ritual system of the sanctuary.

By contrast, Deuteronomy 4:13 directly identifies the covenant expressed in the Ten Commandments: “So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone” (Deut. 4:13).

Here a fundamental difference already appears. The sacrificial rites appear as a group of ceremonial provisions. The Ten Commandments appear as the moral covenant of God, written in a unique manner upon stone.

The difference becomes even clearer when we observe who wrote each one and where they were placed. The Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God (Ex. 31:18). The book of the ceremonial law was written by Moses and placed beside the ark, not inside

it (Deut. 31:24-26). The tables of the testimony, however, were placed inside the ark (Ex. 25:16; 40:20).

That contrast is not accidental. God Himself wanted to leave visible the difference between what was the moral foundation of His government and what served as a pedagogical and prophetic system until the coming of the Messiah.

2. The Ceremonial Law Pointed to Christ

From the entrance of sin, God revealed the plan of redemption through symbols. When He clothed Adam and Eve with tunics of skin (Gen. 3:21), He was already indicating, in figure, that there would be substitutionary death because of sin. Later, that principle was developed in the sanctuary: lambs, blood, altar, priesthood, atonement, feasts, and offerings.

All of it pointed to Christ. John the Baptist declared it plainly: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Hebrews 10:1 teaches that the ceremonial law had “a shadow of the good things to come.” It was not the final reality; it was a figure. It did not remove sin by itself; it announced the One who would remove it.

Therefore, when an Israelite brought an offering for sin, it was not the animal that saved him. The sacrifice taught that the sinner needed a Substitute, and that only the Messiah could fully satisfy divine justice. Leviticus 4:1-4 shows precisely that teaching and atoning function within the ritual system.

The ceremonial law, then, was not given to be eternal in its outward form. It was given to announce, preserve, and teach the gospel in symbols.

3. The Moral Law Reveals Sin

The function of the moral law is different. It was not given to prefigure the Messiah through ceremonies, but to reveal the holy character of God and to define sin. “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). Paul adds: “I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Rom. 7:7).

The moral law is not shadow. It is standard. It is not symbol. It is measure. It is not a passing ceremony. It is the expression of divine righteousness in human life. For this reason, 1 John 3:4 defines sin as “lawlessness,” or the transgression of the law. And

James 2:10-12 presents that law as the rule of moral judgment.

The moral law does not save the sinner, but it does show him his need of the Savior. It functions as a mirror. It does not wash the stain, but it reveals it. It does not forgive, but it leads the sinner to Christ, who does forgive and transform.

4. The Cross Abolished the Shadow, Not the Moral Standard

When Christ died, the ceremonial system reached its fulfillment. It was no longer necessary to keep offering animal sacrifices, because the true Lamb had been slain. Hebrews 10:4-10 teaches that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins, but Christ came to do the will of God through His perfect sacrifice.

Colossians 2:14-17 speaks of what was removed and nailed to the cross: that which consisted in ordinances and was related to food, drink, festivals, new moons, and ceremonial sabbaths, “which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Col. 2:17). The shadow ended when the reality arrived.

But the moral law was not abolished at the cross. Christ Himself said: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets” (Matt. 5:17). And

He added that not one jot or one tittle would pass from the law till all is fulfilled (Matt. 5:18-19). Paul, far from annulling it, declares: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Rom. 3:31). And he also states: “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12).

The cross did not destroy the moral law. It vindicated it. If the moral law could have been annulled, Christ would not have had to die. He died precisely because that law is immutable, and because sin could not be treated lightly.

5. The Moral Law Remains in God’s Final People

The Bible presents the faithful people of the time of the end as those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus (Rev. 14:12). It also says that the dragon was enraged with the woman and went to make war with the remnant who keep the commandments of God (Rev. 12:17).

This shows that, after the cross, obedience continues to be a mark of the faithful people. Not as a means of salvation, but as the fruit of living faith. Grace does not cancel obedience; it makes obedience possible.

Christ did not die to authorize sin, but to forgive it and destroy it in the life of the believer.

Common Objections and Biblical Answers

Objection 1: “The Bible never literally uses the phrases ‘moral law’ and ‘ceremonial law.’”

It is true that these expressions, as technical formulas, do not always appear literally. But the Bible clearly describes both realities. Leviticus 7:37 identifies the law of sacrifices and rites. Deuteronomy 4:13 identifies the Ten Commandments written on stone. Doctrine does not depend merely on a label, but on the total teaching of Scripture.

Objection 2: “There is only one law.”

In a broad sense, all divine instruction may be called law. But within that body of instruction, the Bible itself distinguishes function, content, duration, manner of writing, and location. To deny every distinction leads to confusing what was shadow with what is eternal standard.

Objection 3: “If Christ died, then all law was abolished.”

Hebrews 10 and Colossians 2 do not teach the abolition of the Decalogue, but of the ritual system

that prefigured Christ. If all moral law had been abolished, then sin would no longer exist, because “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). But the New Testament continues to condemn idolatry, adultery, lying, murder, and covetousness. Therefore, the moral standard remains in force.

Ellen G. White Commentary

Ellen G. White expressed this truth clearly:

“Many in the Christian world also have a veil before their eyes and heart. They do not see to the end of that which was done away. They do not see that it was only the ceremonial law which was abrogated at the death of Christ. They claim that the moral law was nailed to the cross. Heavy is the veil that darkens their understanding.”
{1SM 239.2}

This statement summarizes the biblical point exactly: the death of Christ brought the system of shadows to an end, but it did not abolish the moral law that defines sin.

Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

SDA Bible Commentary, summary on Deuteronomy 4:13 and Exodus 31:18: the Seventh-day Adventist

Bible Commentary highlights the unique character of the Decalogue because it was spoken directly by God and written by Him in stone. This separates it from the rest of the regulations given through Moses.

SDA Bible Commentary, summary on Colossians 2:14-17 and Hebrews 10:1: the Commentary explains that Paul is referring there to ceremonial ordinances related to feasts, rites, and shadows of the plan of redemption. The emphasis is not on the abolition of the Decalogue, but on the expiration of the symbolic system once the sacrifice of Christ was consummated.

Conclusion

The Bible does not confuse the two laws. The ceremonial law was temporary, symbolic, and Christ-centered; it pointed forward to the sacrifice of the Messiah. The moral law is permanent, holy, and universal; it reveals sin and expresses the character of God. The first found its fulfillment at the cross. The second was confirmed by the life, death, and teaching of Christ.

Where many see contradiction, Scripture presents harmony: the rites led to Christ, and the commandments show the need of Christ. The shadow

ceased when the reality came; but the moral righteousness of God remains forever.

Chapter 2

The Function of the Ceremonial Law and the Function of the Moral Law

One of the most common errors in studying the law in the Bible is to think that all the provisions given to Israel had exactly the same function. They did not. God did not give commandments without purpose. Each part of His revelation fulfilled a specific mission within the plan of salvation.

The ceremonial law and the moral law proceed from the same God, but they do not do the same thing. The first pointed to the Redeemer through symbols; the second reveals sin and expresses divine righteousness. One guided the sinner toward the promised sacrifice; the other showed him why he needed that sacrifice.

In simple terms: the ceremonial law showed the remedy in figure; the moral law showed the disease in reality.

1. The Function of the Ceremonial Law: To Point to Christ

The ceremonial law, also called the ritual law, consisted of sacrifices, offerings, purifications, annual feasts, priesthood, and sanctuary services (Lev. 7:37-38; Heb. 9:1-10). That law was not given as an end in itself, but as a great visual lesson of the gospel.

A. To Teach That Sin Produces Death

From the beginning, God wanted human beings to understand the seriousness of sin. Genesis 3:21 shows that, after the fall, there was death in order to cover human shame. There appears, in figure, the idea of the substitute. Later, in the sanctuary, that lesson became visible in every sacrifice.

When the sinner placed his hand upon the victim and it died, he understood that sin was not a light matter. The death of the animal taught that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). The sinner had to learn that forgiveness was not cheap; it would cost the life of the Lamb of God.

B. To Point to the Promised Messiah

The ceremonial law had a prophetic function. The entire sanctuary system pointed to Christ. John the

Baptist summarized it in one phrase: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Hebrews 10:1 says that the law had “a shadow of the good things to come.” That is, it was not the final reality, but its anticipation.

The altar announced the cross.

The blood announced atonement.

The priest announced the mediation of Christ.

The earthly sanctuary announced the ministry of the true heavenly Sanctuary (Heb. 8:1-5).

For this reason, the ceremonial law was deeply Christ-centered. It did not compete with Christ; it announced Him.

C. To Keep Alive the Hope of the Gospel

Each sacrifice repeated the same truth: God had not abandoned the sinner. Even under the old covenant, the center was grace. The ceremonial system did not teach salvation by works. It taught salvation through a promised Substitute. The believers of the Old Testament were saved by the same faith in Christ, although they saw Him in symbols and we see Him in fulfillment.

Hebrews 4:2 teaches that the gospel was also preached to them. The difference is not in the method of salvation, but in the degree of revelation. They saw the promise in shadows; we see it in the historical person of Jesus.

D. To Be Temporary Until Its Fulfillment in Christ

The ceremonial law had an expiration date in its outward form. Not because it was bad, but because it was provisional. When the antitype came, the shadow no longer retained obligatory force. Hebrews 10:4-10 declares that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins, but Christ did come to do the will of God through His perfect sacrifice.

Therefore, when Christ died, the veil of the temple was torn (Matt. 27:51). That act showed that the ceremonial system had reached its culmination. To continue offering sacrifices after Calvary was, in practice, to deny that the true Lamb had already been slain.

2. The Function of the Moral Law: To Reveal Sin and Express the Character of God

The moral law, summarized in the Ten Commandments, fulfills a different mission. It was not

given to symbolize the plan of redemption through rites, but to reveal the holiness of God and to show human beings their moral condition.

A. To Define What Sin Is

Scripture is clear: “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). Paul adds: “I would not have known sin except through the law” (Rom. 7:7). And 1 John 3:4 declares that “sin is lawlessness.”

This means that the moral law functions as an objective standard. It does not depend on emotions, culture, or human convenience. God does not leave man to define good and evil for himself. His law reveals it.

Without law, sin becomes relative.

With law, sin is exposed.

B. To Reflect the Character of God

The moral law is not arbitrary. It expresses who God is. If the law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12), it is because it reveals the holiness, justice, and goodness of its Author. The commandment is not a capricious invention, but a transcript of the divine character in human terms.

Therefore, the moral law cannot be treated as something disposable. If its nature is moral, and if it flows from the character of God, then it cannot change according to the ages. God does not change; therefore His righteousness does not change either (Mal. 3:6; Ps. 111:7-8; 119:142).

C. To Act as a Spiritual Mirror

The moral law does not clean the sinner, but it shows him his uncleanness. That is its role. Like a mirror, it reveals; it does not transform by itself. James 1:23-25 uses precisely this idea. A man looks at himself, sees his condition, and then understands his need for something more.

That “something more” is Christ. The law does not save, but it does lead to the Savior. It does not justify, but it does convict. It does not forgive, but it does unmask.

Here we see the perfect harmony between law and gospel. The law wounds the conscience; the gospel heals the heart.

D. To Guide the Life of the Believer

The moral law does not end its function when the sinner comes to Christ. It continues to be the standard

of the sanctified life. The believer does not obey in order to be saved, but because he has been reached by grace. Romans 3:31 says: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”

Grace does not eliminate obedience; it produces it.

Faith does not cancel the commandment; it honors it.

Christ did not die to authorize transgression, but to liberate from sin.

For this reason, Revelation 14:12 presents God’s final people as those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. They are not legalists; they are obedient redeemed people.

3. The Relationship Between Both Laws

The ceremonial law and the moral law were not in conflict. They were complementary in function, though different in nature.

The moral law said: you are a sinner.

The ceremonial law said: there is a promised Substitute.

The moral law showed guilt.

The ceremonial law showed the path of forgiveness.

The moral law pointed to the violated standard.

The ceremonial law pointed to the Lamb who would die for the violator of that standard.

Therefore, separating Christ from the moral law produces cheap grace. But mixing the moral law with the ceremonial law until both are abolished together destroys the distinction that the Bible itself presents. The cross did not abolish the moral principle of obedience; it abolished the symbolic system that announced the sacrifice already completed.

4. Common Objections and Answers

Objection 1: “If the ceremonial law came from God, then it could not cease.”

Yes, it could cease in its obligatory form precisely because it was given for a temporary purpose. Hebrews 10:1 calls it a shadow. Colossians 2:16-17 also says that those things were a shadow of what was to come. The temporary was not false; it was pedagogical. When Christ came, the shadow fulfilled its mission.

It was not abolished because it was bad, but because it was fulfilled.

Objection 2: “If the moral law does not save, then it is useless.”

It is useful, and very much so. One thing is that it does not save; another very different thing is that it is useless. The moral law serves to reveal sin (Rom. 3:20), convict of guilt (Rom. 7:7), show the need of Christ, and guide the life of the believer (Rom. 3:31).

A mirror does not wash, but it is useful.

A thermometer does not heal, but it is useful.

The law does not justify, but it does fulfill an indispensable function.

Objection 3: “We are under grace, not under law.”

Romans 6:14 does not mean freedom to sin. Paul clarifies it in the following verse: “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” (Rom. 6:15). To be under grace does not mean living without a moral standard; it means living without condemnation in order to obey now with a renewed heart.

Objection 4: “Acts 15 did not impose the whole law on the Gentiles.”

Correct. But Acts 15 was not a council convened to abolish the moral law. The issue there was whether the

Gentile had to be circumcised and submit to the Mosaic system in order to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5). The apostolic decision rejected salvation by Judaizing ritualism. It did not cancel God's moral standard.

Furthermore, the New Testament itself continues to reaffirm moral commandments: do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet, honor your parents, and so forth (Rom. 13:8-10; Eph. 6:1-3; Jas. 2:10-12).

5. Ellen G. White Commentary

Ellen G. White presents this distinction with great clarity. In summary, she explains that the ceremonial system was established after the fall to teach humanity the cost of sin and to direct faith to the coming Redeemer. The sacrifices had no virtue in themselves; their value was in what they represented: Christ, the true Lamb.

She also affirms that the moral law is permanent and that the death of Christ did not abolish it. The cross made its immutability even more evident, because if the law could have been changed, Christ would not have needed to die. The fact that the Son of God gave His life shows precisely the firmness of divine justice.

The statement already cited fits perfectly here:

“Many in the Christian world also have a veil before their eyes and heart. They do not see to the end of that which was done away. They do not see that it was only the ceremonial law which was abrogated at the death of Christ. They claim that the moral law was nailed to the cross. Heavy is the veil that darkens their understanding.”
{1SM 239.2}

6. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

In summary, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary explains the following:

On Leviticus and the ceremonial system

The Commentary emphasizes that the laws of sacrifices, offerings, and sanctuary services were given as an instructive system centered on redemption. The whole ritual had typological value. It was an anticipatory representation of the ministry of Christ.

On Romans 3:20 and 7:7

The Commentary underlines that Paul uses the moral law to show the function of the conscience illuminated by the commandment. In particular, when he cites “You shall not covet,” he is clearly appealing to the

Decalogue to explain how the law reveals inward sin, not merely outward acts.

On Hebrews 10

The Commentary notes that the continual repetition of sacrifices showed their insufficiency. Their purpose was pedagogical and prophetic, not definitive. Christ came to replace the symbol with the reality.

On Colossians 2:16-17

The Commentary understands Paul there to be referring to ceremonial regulations related to feasts, foods, and observances of the symbolic system. The emphasis is on the shadows that pointed to Christ, not on the abolition of the moral law of God.

Conclusion

The function of the ceremonial law and the function of the moral law are not the same, but both worked in harmony within the plan of salvation.

The ceremonial law taught the gospel in figures.

The moral law taught the righteousness of God in commandments.

The ceremonial law directed the eye to the future sacrifice.

The moral law revealed the present need of that sacrifice.

The ceremonial law ceased when Christ fulfilled what it announced.

The moral law remains because it expresses what God is.

Therefore, the believer must not confuse the symbolic with the eternal. When that difference is lost, one ends up saying that the cross abolished what it actually came to vindicate. Christ brought the shadows to an end, but confirmed the holiness of the moral law by paying with His blood for human transgression.

Chapter 3

The Ceremonial Law Was Abolished at the Cross, but the Moral Law Was Confirmed by Christ

The cross of Christ is the center of all biblical revelation. There the promises, the symbols, the prophecies, and divine justice converge. But precisely for that reason, the question must also be answered correctly there: What was abolished at the cross?

Many answer hastily: “the law.” But that answer, stated that way, is imprecise and can lead to serious error. The Bible teaches that at the cross the system of shadows, rites, and sacrifices that pointed to the Messiah came to an end. However, it never teaches that the moral law, expressed in the Ten Commandments, was annulled. On the contrary, Christ confirmed it by His life, His teaching, and His death.

The cross abolished what prefigured the sacrifice of Christ. But it did not abolish the moral standard whose transgression made that death necessary.

1. Christ Fulfilled What the Ceremonial Law Announced

The ceremonial law had a prophetic function. Every sacrifice, every priest, every ceremony, and every feast pointed forward to the work of the Redeemer.

Hebrews 10:1 says that the law had “a shadow of the good things to come.” A shadow is not the final reality; it only anticipates it.

For centuries, Israel offered animals upon the altar. But the blood of those sacrifices did not truly remove sin. Hebrews 10:4 declares it clearly: “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away

sins.” Then what purpose did they serve? They served to teach, announce, and keep alive the hope of the true sacrifice.

When Christ died, the symbol found its fulfillment. The true Lamb appeared. The type met the antitype. The figure yielded to the reality.

That is why John the Baptist had said: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). And that is why, when Christ died, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51). That act was not accidental. God was showing that the ceremonial system had reached its culmination. The earthly sanctuary, with its rites, would no longer be the center of access to God, because the perfect sacrifice had been offered once for all.

2. What Does It Mean That the Ceremonial Law Was Abolished?

To say that the ceremonial law was abolished does not mean that it was bad, false, or sinful. It means that its temporary function ended when it was fulfilled in Christ.

Ephesians 2:15 says that Christ abolished “in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments

contained in ordinances.” The context does not point to the Decalogue as the eternal moral standard, but to the ordinances that ceremonially separated Jews and Gentiles within the Mosaic system.

Colossians 2:14-17 adds that the handwriting of requirements that was against us was taken away and then mentions food, drink, festivals, new moons, and ceremonial sabbaths, concluding: “which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Col. 2:17).

Here Paul is not speaking of sin as transgression of the Decalogue, nor of the commandment “You shall not covet,” nor of the law that defines moral righteousness. He is speaking of ceremonial regulations that were shadow.

Hebrews 9:9-10 also speaks of ordinances “imposed until the time of reformation.” And Hebrews 10:9 declares: “He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” That is, the symbolic system gave way to the finished work of Christ.

In summary: the ceremonial law was abolished with respect to its obligatory and typological force, because Christ fulfilled what it announced.

3. The Moral Law Was Not Abolished, but Confirmed

Now, the fact that the ceremonial law ended does not mean that the moral law also ended. That is the great confusion of many.

Christ said clearly: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17). In context, “fulfill” does not mean abolish, but fill with full meaning, confirm, and bring to its true intention. That is why Jesus adds: “till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law” (Matt. 5:18).

If Christ had wanted to teach that the moral law was annulled, that would have been the perfect moment to say so. But He did exactly the opposite. He exalted it.

Then, in the Sermon on the Mount, He did not lower the law; He deepened it. He condemned not only murder, but also hatred. He condemned not only outward adultery, but also lust in the heart (Matt. 5:21-28). That is not abolition. That is confirmation and spiritual amplification.

Paul teaches the same: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we

establish the law” (Rom. 3:31). Later he declares: “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12).

Notice something decisive: when Paul wants to show the function of the moral law, he cites the tenth commandment: “You shall not covet” (Rom. 7:7).

Therefore, the apostle himself distinguishes between the law that was shadow and the law that reveals sin.

The moral law was not annulled at the cross. It was vindicated at the cross.

4. The Death of Christ Proves That the Moral Law Is Immutable

Here is one of the strongest arguments in the whole Bible. If the moral law could be abolished, changed, or set aside, then Christ would not have needed to die.

God did not give His Son because He could simply ignore sin. He gave Him because His law is holy, His justice is real, and transgression demands an answer. The cross does not demonstrate that the law can be annulled; it demonstrates that it cannot be treated as something unimportant.

Psalm 119:142 says: “Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth.” And

Psalm 111:7-8 declares that His precepts “stand fast forever and ever.” The moral law has that character because it reflects the character of God.

Grace did not arise to destroy justice, but to satisfy it in Christ and make possible the forgiveness of the repentant sinner. At the cross, mercy and truth meet. Christ pays humanity’s guilt without annulling the divine standard.

Therefore, the idea that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross destroys the very logic of the gospel. If the moral standard disappeared, then the definition of sin also disappears. And if there is no longer moral law, there is no sin in the biblical sense, because “sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4).

But the New Testament continues to call idolatry, adultery, murder, lying, covetousness, and rebellion sin. Therefore, the moral standard remains in force.

5. Christ Not Only Defended the Moral Law; He Also Obeyed It

Jesus did not teach a doctrine of freedom without obedience. He lived in perfect harmony with the Father’s will. He could say: “I have kept My Father’s commandments” (John 15:10).

He also declared: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Love for Christ is not opposed to obedience; it produces it. The new covenant does not erase the moral law, but writes it on the heart (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10).

It is important to note this: in the new covenant, God does not promise a humanity without law, but a humanity with the law internalized. He does not say, “I will remove My commandments.” He says, “I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts” (Heb. 8:10).

This means that the gospel does not replace obedience with spiritual anarchy. It replaces the external letter without conversion with obedience born from a heart renewed by the Holy Spirit.

6. Common Objections and Answers

Objection 1: “Colossians 2:14 says the law was nailed to the cross.”

Colossians 2 does not say that the Decalogue was nailed to the cross. The passage speaks of decrees, ordinances, and shadows connected with food, drink, festivals, new moons, and ceremonial sabbaths. Paul himself clarifies that they were “a shadow of things to come” (Col. 2:17). The Ten Commandments were not

a shadow of Christ's sacrifice. They were the moral standard of God.

Objection 2: “Ephesians 2:15 teaches that Christ abolished all law.”

Ephesians 2:15 speaks of the law of commandments contained in ordinances, in the context of the reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles. The problem there was not that the Decalogue stood in the way, but that the ceremonial system and its distinctive barriers had already fulfilled their function in Christ.

Objection 3: “If Christ fulfilled the law, we no longer have to keep it.”

That argument confuses fulfillment with abolition. Christ also fulfilled all righteousness, and that does not mean that unrighteousness is now permitted. To fulfill, in Matthew 5:17, means to confirm fully, carry out the divine purpose, and show the depth of the law. In fact, Jesus immediately forbids relaxing even “one of the least of these commandments” (Matt. 5:19).

Objection 4: “Romans 6:14 says we are not under law.”

Paul does not say that the law ceased to exist. He says that the believer is not under the law as a system of

condemnation. This is seen in the very next verse: “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” (Rom. 6:15). Grace does not authorize disobedience.

Objection 5: “2 Corinthians 3 calls what was written on stone a ministry of death.”

Paul is not teaching that the Ten Commandments were bad or abolished. He is contrasting the ministry of condemnation, when the law acts upon an unregenerate heart, with the ministry of the Spirit, who writes that same law upon the heart of the believer. The problem was not the law, but the sinner. That is why Paul never contradicts Romans 7:12.

7. Ellen G. White Commentary

Ellen G. White was very clear on this point. She teaches that the ceremonial system ceased at the cross because it had found its fulfillment in the sacrifice of Christ. But she insists that the moral law remains immutable.

The quotation already cited is central to this chapter:

“Many in the Christian world also have a veil before their eyes and heart. They do not see to the end of that which was done away. They do

not see that it was only the ceremonial law which was abrogated at the death of Christ. They claim that the moral law was nailed to the cross. Heavy is the veil that darkens their understanding.”
{1SM 239.2}

In harmony with this, Ellen G. White also explains in other writings that the death of Christ exalted the law of the Father. The cross showed that the law could not be changed to accommodate human sin. If that had been possible, Christ would not have needed to die.

In summary, her thought is this:

the ceremonial law ended because it was shadow;
the moral law remains because it expresses the eternal righteousness of God.

8. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

In summary, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary presents the following points:

On Matthew 5:17-19

The Commentary emphasizes that “fulfill” does not mean annul the law, but give it its full meaning and confirm its validity. Christ came to reveal the true spiritual depth of the law, not to reduce it.

On Colossians 2:14-17

The Commentary understands Paul to be referring to ceremonial regulations related to the Jewish ritual system. The mention of shadow confirms that these are typological observances, not the Decalogue.

On Hebrews 10

The Commentary emphasizes that the sacrificial system was insufficient in itself and pointed to the one sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, when the perfect offering was consummated, the need for the ceremonial system ceased.

On Romans 3:31 and 7:7, 12

The Commentary underlines that Paul does not attack the moral law, but the legalistic misuse of the law as a means of justification. Faith does not destroy the law; it places it in its proper function. And when Paul cites “You shall not covet,” he demonstrates that he still regards the moral law as authoritative.

Conclusion

The cross did not abolish all law indiscriminately. The cross abolished what was a shadow of the coming sacrifice: rites, offerings, ceremonies, and ordinances of the symbolic system. But the moral law was not

destroyed. It was confirmed by Christ, defended in His teaching, obeyed in His life, and vindicated in His death.

The ceremonial law ended because it pointed to the Lamb.

The moral law remains because it reveals the character of God.

The ceremonial law was nailed to the cross with respect to its typological function.

The moral law was established with greater firmness, because the cross showed the price of violating it.

Therefore, the true gospel does not teach that grace eliminates obedience. It teaches that grace forgives the transgressor, writes the law upon his heart, and enables him to live in harmony with the will of God.

Chapter 4

The Law Written by God and the Law Written by Moses: Two Locations, Two Functions, Two Scopes

One of the most solemn contrasts that the Bible presents on the subject of the law is found in who wrote each law, where it was placed, and for what

purpose it was preserved. This point is not a minor detail. God Himself wanted to leave, in the sanctuary and in the covenant, a visible difference between the moral law and the book of ordinances given through Moses.

This is not to say that one came from God and the other did not. Both proceed from God. But they were not communicated in the same way, they were not deposited in the same place, and they did not have the same scope within the plan of redemption.

The moral law was written by God Himself on stone and placed inside the ark.

The law written by Moses was placed beside the ark as a witness.

That contrast alone is enough to show that we are not dealing with two identical expressions of the same function.

1. The Moral Law Was Written by the Finger of God

Scripture states directly that the Ten Commandments were written by God Himself: “And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He

gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God” (Ex. 31:18).

This text is extraordinary for several reasons.

First, because God did not leave this part of His will to human composition. Although Moses was the great lawgiver of Israel, the Decalogue was not originally drafted by Moses, but by God Himself.

Second, because it was written on stone, a symbol of permanence, stability, and firmness. It was not a transitory standard tied to changing ceremonies, but the enduring expression of the divine moral will.

Third, because those tablets are called “the tablets of the testimony.” They were not merely a legal record; they were the sacred testimony of the divine covenant with His people (Ex. 32:15-16).

Deuteronomy 4:13 summarizes this fact by saying: “So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.” Here not only the content is identified, but also its covenantal character.

The moral law, therefore, occupies a unique place: it was spoken by God before all the people, written by

His finger, engraved on stone, and directly associated with His covenant.

2. The Law Written by Moses Was Placed in a Book

By contrast, Scripture says: “So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished” (Deut. 31:24). It then adds: “Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you” (Deut. 31:26).

Here the difference is very marked.

It does not say that Moses wrote on stone.

It does not say that it was written by the finger of God.

It does not say that it was placed inside the ark.

It says that it was written in a book and placed beside the ark.

And it adds something decisive: that book would be there “as a witness against you.” That phrase is not used for the tablets of the covenant inside the ark. The book contained instructions, statutes, ordinances, regulations, and warnings that served as testimony against the unfaithfulness of the people.

This fact cannot be overlooked. The fact that one law was placed inside the ark and the other beside the ark shows that they did not perform the same role in the economy of the covenant.

3. The Place Where They Were Put Reveals Their Relative Importance

The ark of the covenant was the most sacred article of furniture in the earthly sanctuary. Inside it, the testimony of God was placed (Ex. 25:16; 40:20). This indicates centrality, permanence, and fundamental value.

The tablets of the Decalogue were inside the ark because they represented the moral foundation of the divine government. The ark itself was connected with the symbolic throne of God among His people. Therefore, the moral law deposited inside it shows the righteousness of God as the center of His covenant.

The book written by Moses was placed beside the ark, not on the same symbolic level. That does not mean it was contemptible, but that its function was different. It was a complementary, explanatory, regulatory, and testimonial document for Israel.

In other words:

Inside the ark: the permanent, central, and directly written by God.

Beside the ark: the complementary, pedagogical, regulatory, and written by Moses.

This difference of location is theologically significant.

4. Two Different Scopes

The moral law has a universal scope because it expresses eternal principles: exclusive worship of God, reverence for His name, holiness of the Sabbath, honor to parents, respect for life, sexual purity, honesty, truth, and purity of heart (Ex. 20:1-17).

These principles do not belong to only one nation. They define good and evil for all humanity. That is why Paul can use the tenth commandment to explain sin in Romans 7:7, and James can speak of the law as the standard of moral judgment in James 2:10-12.

By contrast, the book of the law given through Moses included regulations applied to Levitical worship, sacrifices, purifications, feasts, ritual foods, priesthood, and various national ordinances for Israel. Leviticus 7:37 shows this clearly when it speaks of “the law of the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering,

the trespass offering, the consecrations, and the sacrifice of the peace offering.”

That system had a very concrete historical and pedagogical application. Its function was to prepare Israel and to point to the Messiah. It was not the eternal foundation of universal moral judgment, but a symbolic and national administration within the history of redemption.

5. Two Different Functions in Relation to Sin

The moral law defines sin.

The law written by Moses regulated the symbolic treatment of sin.

The first said: you shall not covet, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery.

The second explained: what sacrifice to offer, what priest would minister, what rite had to be performed, what feast would recall the divine work.

The moral law revealed guilt.

The ceremonial law showed the typical way of atonement.

For this reason, 1 John 3:4 and Romans 3:20 relate sin to the moral law, while Hebrews 10:1-4 relates the sacrifices to the shadow of future redemption.

The difference is fundamental. A man did not sin because he first failed to present an animal. He sinned by violating the moral will of God. The sacrifice came afterward, as a pedagogical and symbolic response to transgression.

6. The Book of Moses Included More Than Ceremonies, but the Distinction Still Remains

Here an important clarification is necessary. Some object: “The book of Moses did not contain only ritual laws; it also included civil and judicial laws and even repetitions of the Decalogue.” And that is true.

But that observation does not destroy the biblical distinction; rather, it requires that it be stated with greater precision.

What we are affirming is not that everything written by Moses was ceremonial in the strict sense. What we affirm is that the book of the law included a broader legislative body, connected with the national and cultic life of Israel, while the Decalogue occupied a singular place, set apart, written by God Himself and deposited inside the ark.

In other words:

The Decalogue was the permanent moral core.

The book of the law developed applications, regulations, ordinances, and provisions for the religious and national life of Israel.

And within that book, what was clearly abolished at the cross was the system of ritual ordinances that pointed to Christ (Col. 2:14-17; Heb. 10:1-10).

7. The Location of Each Law Helps Us Understand What Remained and What Ceased

When Christ died, the heavenly ark was not opened in order to take out the tablets and annul them. What ended was the symbolic system that had served as a shadow of the perfect sacrifice.

This harmonizes perfectly with the Old Testament distinction:

What was at the center of the moral covenant remains.

What served as witness and temporary pedagogical administration reached its fulfillment in Christ.

That is why Hebrews speaks of the change of the priestly system and of the earthly sanctuary, but the

New Testament never teaches that sin ceased to be sin. It never teaches that idolatry, adultery, murder, theft, or covetousness ceased to be transgression.

If the moral law had been annulled, then the placement of the tablets inside the ark would lose its permanent significance. But the Bible moves in the opposite direction: Revelation 11:19 presents the heavenly temple opened and the ark of the covenant visible, showing that the moral foundation of the divine government continues to have relevance.

Common Objections and Answers

Objection 1: “Both laws came from God, so there is no difference.”

Yes, both proceed from God. But not everything that proceeds from God has the same function or the same duration. The Levitical priesthood also came from God, and yet it was transitory. The sacrifices also came from God, and yet they ceased in Christ. Common origin does not eliminate functional difference.

Objection 2: “Moses also wrote the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy.”

Yes, Moses recorded them in the book for the instruction of the people. But that does not change the

fact that the original covenant document was written by the finger of God on stone. The existence of a literary copy does not eliminate the uniqueness of the tablets of the testimony.

Objection 3: “The Bible speaks of only one law.”

At times yes, in a general sense. But within that legal revelation, Scripture itself marks differences of content, writer, material, location, and function. To deny those differences produces confusion, especially when one tries to put both the symbolic and the moral into the cross.

Objection 4: “The book of the law was not only ceremonial.”

Correct. But the main point remains: the book of Moses contained the complementary legal system given to Israel, while the Decalogue had a unique and supreme position within the covenant. And within that complementary system were precisely the ritual ordinances that ceased at the cross.

Ellen G. White Commentary

Ellen G. White repeatedly emphasizes the difference between the moral law written by God and the ceremonial system given through Moses. In summary,

she teaches that the Ten Commandments were placed inside the ark because they constituted the great standard of righteousness, while the ceremonial law was preserved separately, with a temporary and typical function.

Her constant emphasis is that the Decalogue is immutable, while the ceremonial system was added because of sin to direct the faith of the people to the promised Redeemer.

The quotation already provided remains very useful here:

“Many in the Christian world also have a veil before their eyes and heart. They do not see to the end of that which was done away. They do not see that it was only the ceremonial law which was abrogated at the death of Christ. They claim that the moral law was nailed to the cross. Heavy is the veil that darkens their understanding.”

{1SM 239.2}

This thought harmonizes perfectly with the distinction between the law kept inside the ark and the book placed beside it.

Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

In summary, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary highlights several important points regarding these texts:

On Exodus 31:18

The Commentary stresses the uniqueness of the Decalogue because it was written directly by God. That fact distinguishes it from the rest of the legislation communicated through Moses.

On Exodus 25:16 and 40:20

The Commentary notes that the tables of the testimony, placed inside the ark, constituted the heart of the covenant and symbolized the moral basis of God's government over His people.

On Deuteronomy 31:24-26

The Commentary explains that the book of the law placed beside the ark functioned as a witness against Israel. Its location and purpose show a different function from that of the tablets of the covenant inside the ark.

On the general relationship between both

The Commentary recognizes that the Mosaic system included various ordinances connected with the national and ceremonial life of Israel, while the Decalogue retained a singular character as the direct and permanent revelation of the moral will of God.

Conclusion

The distinction between the law written by God and the law written by Moses is not a theological invention. It is engraved in the very structure of the sanctuary, the covenant, and the biblical text.

One was written by the finger of God on stone.

The other was written by Moses in a book.

One was placed inside the ark.

The other was placed beside the ark.

One defines eternal moral righteousness.

The other regulated, taught, and administered aspects of Israel's worship and life.

Both were given by God, but not for the same purpose. Therefore, when the cross came, not everything fell in the same way. The symbolic yielded

to the reality; the moral remained as the eternal expression of the divine character.

Chapter 5

Hebrews 10 and Colossians 2: What Was Really Abolished at the Cross

Two of the passages most often used to affirm that the Ten Commandments were abolished are Hebrews 10 and Colossians 2. But a careful reading shows that those texts are not attacking the moral law of God. They are pointing to the end of the ceremonial system, which was a shadow of the work of Christ.

The error of many consists in reading the word “law” or “decrees” without asking: What law is the context speaking about?

That detail changes the interpretation completely.

In Hebrews 10, Paul speaks of repeated sacrifices, animal blood, offerings, and shadows.

In Colossians 2, Paul speaks of ordinances, a handwriting of requirements, foods, drinks, festivals, new moons, and sabbaths connected with shadows.

In neither chapter is the central theme the abolition of the Decalogue. The theme is the end of the symbolic system that pointed to Christ.

1. Hebrews 10 Does Not Speak Against the Ten Commandments, but Against Repeated Sacrifices

Hebrews 10:1 says: “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never... make those who approach perfect.”

The immediate question is: What law had a shadow of good things to come?

The answer appears in the chapter itself: the law that commanded sacrifices to be offered continually year by year (Heb. 10:1-3).

Then the text adds: “For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Heb. 10:4).

This defines the subject with complete clarity.

Hebrews 10 is not discussing whether “You shall not murder” or “You shall not covet” were abolished. It is explaining that the Levitical sacrifices were insufficient

in themselves and only pointed to the perfect sacrifice of Christ.

A. The Law Mentioned in Hebrews 10 Was a Law of Sacrifices

The context repeats it again and again:

sacrifices and offerings (Heb. 10:1, 5, 8)

burnt offerings and offerings for sin (Heb. 10:6, 8)

blood of bulls and goats (Heb. 10:4)

continual repetition of rituals (Heb. 10:1-3, 11)

This corresponds exactly to the ritual law of the sanctuary, not to the Decalogue.

B. Christ Put an End to the Shadow by Offering His Body

Hebrews 10:5 says: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.”

And Hebrews 10:9 adds: “He takes away the first that He may establish the second.”

What does He take away?

He does not take away the moral righteousness of God.

He takes away the system of symbolic sacrifices, because the true sacrifice has now come.

The first was the symbolic order.

The second is the perfect obedience and real offering of Christ.

C. The Problem Was Not the Moral Law, but the Insufficiency of the Symbol

The sacrifices were not bad, but they were provisional. They pointed forward. Once Christ died, to continue depending on them was to remain in the shadow when the reality had already arrived.

Therefore, Hebrews 10 does not teach that the cross abolished sin, righteousness, or the moral commandments. It teaches that it abolished the need to continue offering animal sacrifices.

2. Colossians 2 Also Did Not Abolish the Decalogue

Colossians 2:14-17 is perhaps the most frequently cited passage against the continuing validity of the moral law. There Paul says that Christ wiped out “the handwriting of requirements that was against us” and then adds: “Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or

sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

The key is to notice three things:

A. Paul Speaks of “Requirements” and “Shadow”

The text does not say that Christ nailed to the cross the moral law written by God on stone. It says that He wiped out the “handwriting of requirements” that was against us and that those things were “a shadow of things to come.”

The moral law was not a shadow of the future sacrifice.

The commandment “You shall not murder” was not a shadow.

“You shall not covet” was not a shadow.

“Honor your father and your mother” was not a shadow.

What was shadow was the ritual system: regulated foods, ceremonial drinks, annual feasts, monthly observances, and festal rests connected with Israel’s religious calendar.

B. The Vocabulary Points to the Ceremonial System

Paul mentions a very well-known sequence in the Old Testament:

festival

new moon

sabbaths

This pattern appears repeatedly in the Old Testament to refer to Israel's ceremonial liturgical calendar (1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 31:3; Ezek. 45:17; Hos. 2:11). The order moves from annual, to monthly, to recurring festive observances.

Furthermore, the same context speaks of “food” and “drink,” which is very characteristic of ceremonial regulations and not of the Decalogue.

C. Paul Says Those Things Were Shadow

Colossians 2:17 states it plainly: “which are a shadow of things to come.”

If something was shadow, then it belonged to the typical system.

If it belonged to the typical system, then it was not the eternal moral law.

The fourth commandment, as part of the Decalogue, was not given as a shadow of Calvary, but as a memorial of creation (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11). Therefore, it cannot automatically be placed within the ceremonial shadows of Colossians 2.

3. The “Handwriting of Requirements” Was Not the Decalogue

Colossians 2:14 uses a very strong expression: “having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us.”

That phrase points to a legal debt, a recorded obligation, something that testified against the sinner. In harmony with the rest of the context, Paul refers to the system of ordinances that condemned the sinner within the ceremonial regime and found its fulfillment in Christ.

The Ten Commandments are not presented in the Bible as a ceremonial “handwriting of requirements.” They are God’s moral standard. What did testify against Israel as an added document was the book of the law placed beside the ark “as a witness against you” (Deut. 31:26).

That detail harmonizes very well with Colossians 2. What was nailed to the cross was that which

functioned as a condemning record in the system of ordinances, not the eternal righteousness of the divine character.

4. Hebrews 10 and Colossians 2 Complement Each Other

Both chapters teach the same truth from different angles.

Hebrews 10 says:

the sacrifices were shadow

they could not perfect the worshiper

Christ came with a better sacrifice

therefore, the repetitive system of offerings ceases

Colossians 2 says:

there were decrees and ordinances against the sinner

Christ annulled them at the cross

therefore, no one should judge the believer by

ceremonial observances that were shadow

Both texts point to the same result:

the cross put an end to the ceremonial system.

But neither teaches that Christ abolished the law that defines sin. In fact, the New Testament itself continues to condemn idolatry, lying, adultery, murder, and covetousness. This shows that the moral law continues to operate as the standard of righteousness.

5. If Colossians 2 Abolished the Decalogue, Impossible Contradictions Would Arise

Consider the consequences.

If Colossians 2 annulled the Ten Commandments, then:

there would no longer be sin as transgression of the law (1 John 3:4)

Paul could not cite “You shall not covet” as a valid law in Romans 7:7

James could not speak of the law as the standard of judgment in James 2:10-12

Jesus could not say that not one jot or one tittle would pass from the law (Matt. 5:17-19)

Romans 3:31 would be contradictory when it says that faith establishes the law

Therefore, the interpretation that places the Decalogue inside Hebrews 10 and Colossians 2 destroys the harmony of the New Testament.

The correct interpretation preserves biblical coherence:

the moral law remains

the ceremonial law ceased at the cross

6. What About the “Sabbaths” of Colossians 2?

Here appears one of the most frequent objections:

“Colossians 2 says that no one should judge you regarding sabbaths; therefore, the Sabbath was abolished.”

The answer is found in the context.

A. The Weekly Sabbath Was Not a Shadow of the Coming Sacrifice

The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was established at creation, before sin and before the Levitical system (Gen. 2:1-3). Its principal basis is not ceremonial, but creational and moral (Ex. 20:8-11).

B. In the Ceremonial System There Were Other Annual Rests

Leviticus 23 shows that besides the weekly Sabbath, there were festal rests associated with annual feasts: the first and seventh days of Unleavened Bread, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Trumpets, Tabernacles, and others. These were directly connected with the ritual calendar and were a shadow of things to come.

C. Colossians 2 Places Them Within a Ceremonial Package

Paul does not speak of the moral Sabbath in isolation, but of a series: food, drink, festival, new moon, and sabbaths. All of that, he says, was shadow. Therefore, the subject is not the moral commandment of the Decalogue in its creational basis, but the ceremonial observances of the Jewish system.

7. Common Objections and Answers

Objection 1: “Hebrews 10 says ‘the law’; therefore, it is the whole law.”

No. The context defines what law is being discussed. In Hebrews 10, it is a law related to sacrifices,

offerings, and animal blood. It is not dealing with the Decalogue.

Objection 2: “Colossians 2 mentions sabbaths; therefore, the weekly Sabbath was abolished.”

Not necessarily. The ceremonial context, together with the phrase “a shadow of things to come,” indicates ritual observances of the liturgical calendar. The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was not instituted as a shadow of Calvary, but as a memorial of creation.

Objection 3: “Christ nailed everything that was written.”

No. If that included all moral law, then the commandment not to lie, not to commit adultery, not to steal, and not to covet would also have been nailed there. But the New Testament continues to condemn all those things.

Objection 4: “If we are no longer under those ordinances, then we are not under commandments either.”

Paul does not make that leap. One thing is the end of the ceremonial shadows; another very different thing is the permanence of the moral standard. Paul

combats ritualism and legalism as a means of salvation, not obedience as the fruit of faith.

Objection 5: “Acts 15 did not command Sabbath keeping.”

Acts 15 was not convened to list the whole of Christian morality, but to resolve whether the Gentiles had to be circumcised and submit to the Mosaic system in order to be saved. The chapter’s silence about the Sabbath does not prove abolition of the Decalogue; it only proves that the council was dealing with another issue.

8. Ellen G. White Commentary

Ellen G. White fully harmonizes with this reading. She teaches that the death of Christ brought the ceremonial law to an end, because the whole system of sacrifices and offerings pointed to the Redeemer. But she insists that the moral law was not nailed to the cross.

The key quotation fits here exactly once again:

“Many in the Christian world also have a veil before their eyes and heart. They do not see to the end of that which was done away. They do not see that it was only the ceremonial law which

was abrogated at the death of Christ. They claim that the moral law was nailed to the cross. Heavy is the veil that darkens their understanding.”

{1SM 239.2}

In summary, Ellen G. White affirms:

Hebrews and Colossians do not destroy the Decalogue

the cross brought the symbols to an end

the moral law remained standing as the standard of God's people

9. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

In summary, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary explains the following:

On Hebrews 10

The Commentary teaches that the law mentioned there is the law of the sacrificial system. The chapter concentrates on the insufficiency of the Levitical sacrifices and on the perfect efficacy of Christ's offering.

On Colossians 2:14-17

The Commentary understands Paul to be speaking of ceremonial ordinances that were a shadow of the Messiah. The mention of food, drink, feasts, new

moons, and sabbaths is interpreted within the framework of the Jewish ritual calendar.

On the word “shadow”

The Commentary stresses that shadow belongs to the typical system. The moral law, because it expresses the character of God, does not fall into that category.

On harmony with Romans

The Commentary holds that Paul cannot be abolishing in Colossians what he confirms in Romans 3:31 and uses in Romans 7:7 to define sin. Therefore, the distinction between moral law and ceremonial law is indispensable for correct interpretation.

Conclusion

Hebrews 10 and Colossians 2 do not teach that Christ abolished the moral law. They teach that the cross put an end to the ceremonial system that functioned as a shadow of the coming sacrifice.

Hebrews 10 speaks of sacrifices.

Colossians 2 speaks of decrees, foods, feasts, and shadows.

Both passages point to the same target: the end of the symbolic regime.

The ceremonial law was abolished because Christ fulfilled what it announced.

The moral law remains because it defines sin, expresses divine righteousness, and continues to be established by faith.

Where some see total abolition, the Bible shows an orderly transition:

the shadow disappears, but the righteousness of God does not disappear.

Chapter 6

Matthew 5:17-19, Romans 3:31, and Romans 7:12: Christ and Paul Confirmed the Moral Law

If the New Testament really taught that the moral law was abolished, then there should be some clear statement by Christ or Paul saying that the commandments ceased to be binding. But the opposite is exactly what occurs. When we go to the most direct texts, we find that both Jesus and Paul affirm, honor, and confirm the moral law of God.

Three passages are decisive at this point:

Matthew 5:17-19

Romans 3:31

Romans 7:12

These texts leave no room for the idea that the cross canceled the moral law. Rather, they teach that true faith, far from annulling it, places it in its proper role.

1. Matthew 5:17-19: Christ Did Not Come to Destroy, but to Fulfill

Jesus declared:

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill”
(Matt. 5:17).

This verse is fundamental. Christ begins by correcting a suspicion: “Do not think.” That is, do not suppose, do not conclude wrongly, do not imagine that His mission was to overthrow the law. From the beginning, He wanted to close the door to that false interpretation.

A. “Destroy” Was Not the Mission of Christ

The word “destroy” carries the idea of tearing down, invalidating, or making void. Jesus explicitly denies that He came to do that with the law. This statement alone is enough to destroy the idea that Christ came to cancel the Father’s moral standard.

If someone affirms that Jesus abolished the moral law, he is saying precisely what Christ commanded us not to think.

B. “Fulfill” Does Not Mean Abolish

Some say: “Jesus fulfilled the law; therefore we no longer have to keep it.” But that reasoning does not work. In Matthew 5, “fulfill” does not mean cancel, but bring to its full meaning, confirm, and fill with its true content.

This is demonstrated by the immediate context. After saying that He came to fulfill, Jesus adds:

“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matt. 5:18).

If “fulfill” meant abolish, then Jesus would be contradicting Himself in the following verse by saying that not one jot or one tittle would pass from the law. No. Christ came to accomplish the divine purpose of the law, not to destroy it.

C. Christ Strengthens the Authority of the Commandments

Matthew 5:19 says:

“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

This is impossible to harmonize with the theory of the abolition of the moral law. Jesus not only defends the law; He also warns against teaching others to break it.

Greatness in the kingdom is not found in invalidating commandments, but in doing them and teaching them correctly.

2. The Context of the Sermon on the Mount Proves That Christ Deepened the Law

After Matthew 5:17-19, Jesus does not soften the law. He deepens it.

“You shall not murder” reaches the level of anger and contempt (Matt. 5:21-22)

“You shall not commit adultery” reaches the level of the lustful look (Matt. 5:27-28)

Truth is elevated above hypocritical oaths (Matt. 5:33-37)

Love extends even to the enemy (Matt. 5:43-48)

This shows that Christ was not dismantling the moral law, but restoring its true spiritual reach. The Pharisees had reduced it to external formalism. Jesus took it to the heart.

The moral law did not become weaker on Christ's lips. It became higher, deeper, and more penetrating.

3. Romans 3:31: Faith Does Not Make the Law Void

Paul writes:

“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Rom. 3:31).

This is one of the most forceful texts in the entire New Testament.

A. Paul Anticipates the Objection

After teaching that we are justified by faith and not by works of law, Paul knows that some might conclude: “Then faith eliminates the law.” That is why he formulates the question himself: “Do we make void the law?”

The answer is emphatic: “Certainly not!”

He does not say:

“Yes, the law ended.”

“Yes, grace replaced the law.”

“Yes, now the law no longer matters.”

He says the exact opposite: “we establish the law.”

B. How Does Faith Establish the Law?

Faith establishes the law in several ways:

First, because it recognizes that the law told the truth about us: we are sinners.

Second, because it recognizes that the law could not be ignored, but that its condemnation had to be borne by Christ.

Third, because faith receives the Savior who forgives and transforms, making possible a life in harmony with the will of God.

Grace is not permission to violate the law.

Faith is not an excuse for disobedience.

Justification does not turn sin into something acceptable.

Faith establishes the law because it confirms the holiness of God, the seriousness of sin, and the necessity of the atoning sacrifice.

C. Paul Distinguishes Between Justification and Obedience

Paul does not teach salvation by keeping the law. But neither does he teach salvation in rebellion against the law. The law does not justify; Christ justifies. But the justified person is not authorized to live in transgression.

That is why Romans 6:15 says: “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” And that is why Romans 8:4 declares that the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in those who walk according to the Spirit.

4. Romans 7:12: The Law Is Holy, Just, and Good

Paul affirms:

“Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12).

Here there is no possible ambiguity. Paul does not speak of the law as something abolished, defective, or sinful. He speaks of it in terms of moral exaltation.

A. The Law Is Holy

It is holy because it comes from a holy God. It is not the product of a culture, nor of a human tradition, nor

of a temporary concession. It expresses the purity of the divine will.

B. The Commandment Is Just

It is just because it establishes what is right. It does not demand evil, promote injustice, or oppress arbitrarily. It rightly defines man's relationship with God and with his neighbor.

C. The Commandment Is Good

It is good because it protects life, the home, truth, worship, purity, and moral order. The problem was never the law. The problem is sin in man.

That is why Paul does not blame the law for the sinner's spiritual death. Rather, he says that sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced death in him (Rom. 7:13). The law reveals evil; it does not create it.

5. Romans 7:7 Clearly Identifies the Moral Law

A little earlier, Paul says:

“I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Rom. 7:7).

This detail is decisive. Paul directly cites the tenth commandment. This shows that, when he speaks of the law that reveals sin, he has in mind the moral law of the Decalogue.

This destroys several mistaken ideas:

that Paul always uses “law” to refer only to the ceremonial system

that the Decalogue was removed from Christian thought

that faith makes the moral law unnecessary

No. Paul uses the tenth commandment as a valid standard to explain how the law reveals inward sin.

If “You shall not covet” had been abolished, Romans 7 would completely lose its argumentative force.

6. Christ and Paul Are in Perfect Harmony

Some try to set Jesus against Paul, or Paul against Moses. But that opposition does not exist.

Christ says:

I did not come to destroy the law (Matt. 5:17)

not one jot or one tittle will pass from the law (Matt. 5:18)

whoever breaks and teaches others to break commandments will be called least (Matt. 5:19)

Paul says:

faith does not make the law void; it establishes the law (Rom. 3:31)

the law reveals sin (Rom. 7:7)

the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12)

There is no contradiction.

Christ confirms the law.

Paul confirms the law.

The problem is not the law, but the wrong use of the law as a means of justification.

7. Common Objections and Answers

Objection 1: “Jesus fulfilled the law, so we no longer have to keep it.”

No. Fulfill does not mean abolish. In Matthew 5, Christ Himself clarifies that He did not come to destroy and that not one jot or one tittle would pass from the law. In addition, in verse 19 He warns against breaking commandments.

Objection 2: “Paul was against the law.”

Not against the moral law. Paul was against legalism, the use of the law as a means of justification, and confidence in external rites. But in Romans 3:31 and 7:12 he speaks with great reverence of the moral law.

Objection 3: “Romans 7 speaks only of the law in general.”

Paul himself specifies which commandment he is citing: “You shall not covet.” That belongs to the Decalogue. Therefore, at least in that context, he is clearly speaking of the moral law.

Objection 4: “The law gives death; therefore, it must be abolished.”

The law gives death only in the sense that it condemns the sinner. But that does not make it bad. A mirror reveals dirt; that does not make it evil. The law shows guilt; Christ brings forgiveness.

Objection 5: “If salvation is by grace, the law no longer matters.”

That contradicts Paul. Precisely after teaching justification by faith, he asks whether the law is made void and answers: “Certainly not.” Grace does not

erase the moral standard; it erases the guilt of the repentant.

8. Ellen G. White Commentary

Ellen G. White insists that Christ did not abolish the moral law, but came to magnify it. In harmony with Isaiah 42:21, she presents Christ as the One who magnifies the law and makes it honorable, not as the One who lowers it.

She also emphasizes that the moral law reveals the character of God and remains in force under the new covenant, now written in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

The quotation already cited remains fully applicable:

“Many in the Christian world also have a veil before their eyes and heart. They do not see to the end of that which was done away. They do not see that it was only the ceremonial law which was abrogated at the death of Christ. They claim that the moral law was nailed to the cross. Heavy is the veil that darkens their understanding.”

{1SM 239.2}

In this chapter, that statement harmonizes especially with Matthew 5 and Romans 3 and 7.

9. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

In summary, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary emphasizes the following:

On Matthew 5:17-19

The Commentary explains that Christ did not come to annul the law, but to reveal its true reach. “Fulfill” must be understood as completing its meaning and vindicating it against false interpretations.

On Romans 3:31

The Commentary notes that justification by faith does not eliminate the law, but establishes it in its true function. Faith recognizes both the authority of the law and the need for grace.

On Romans 7:7

The Commentary points out that Paul cites the tenth commandment to show that the Decalogue continues to be the standard that reveals sin, even in its inward dimension.

On Romans 7:12

The Commentary stresses that Paul exalts the law and the commandment, making clear that the problem is not in the law, but in human sin.

Conclusion

Matthew 5:17-19, Romans 3:31, and Romans 7:12 form a biblical wall against the idea that the moral law was abolished.

Christ said He did not come to destroy the law.

Paul said that faith does not make the law void.

Paul also said that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good.

The cross did not destroy the moral law.

The cross showed its seriousness.

Faith does not cancel obedience.

Faith places obedience in its proper place: as the fruit of grace and not as a means of salvation.

Therefore, the true Christian does not look at the law as an enemy of the gospel. He sees it as God's holy standard, confirmed by Christ, explained by Paul, and now written on the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 7

Answering the Objection “There Is Only One Law”: Unity of Revelation, but Real Differences in Function and Duration

One of the most repeated objections against the distinction between moral law and ceremonial law is this: “there is only one law.” At first glance, the phrase seems strong. And in a certain general sense, it contains some truth: all true law proceeds from the same God. But the problem begins when that general statement is used to erase differences that the Bible itself presents.

Scripture may speak of “the law” in the singular, and still distinguish within it commandments of different function, scope, form of writing, and duration. To deny this is not to defend the Bible; it is to oversimplify it.

The correct question is not: Can the Bible use the word law in the singular?

Of course it can.

The correct question is: When the Bible uses the word law, does it always refer to exactly the same thing?

The answer is no.

At times “the law” refers to the Pentateuch in general.

At times it refers to the Decalogue.

At times it refers to a specific law of sacrifices.

At times it includes the Mosaic system in a broad sense.

And context is what decides.

1. The Bible Does Use “Law” as a Broad Term

In many passages, “the law” functions as a general expression for the divine instruction given to Israel. For example, Jesus speaks of “the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 5:17), using “the law” as a broad reference to the body of revelation given through Moses.

Luke 24:44 also speaks of “the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms,” showing that “the law” can function as an entire section of the Scriptures.

This means that, yes, in a broad sense there is one divine legal revelation. But that does not prove that everything within that revelation has the same function.

It would be like saying that because there is one Bible, there is no difference between history, prophecy, poetry, and gospel. The unity of the book does not cancel the diversity of its parts. Likewise, the unity of the law does not cancel its internal distinctions.

2. The Bible Itself Distinguishes Laws Within the Law

Here is where the objection begins to fall.

Leviticus 7:37 says:

“This is the law of the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the consecrations, and the sacrifice of the peace offering.”

That text clearly speaks of a law of sacrifices and rites. It is not defining the Decalogue, but a set of ceremonial regulations.

By contrast, Deuteronomy 4:13 says:

“So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.”

Here the emphasis is on the Ten Commandments, written on stone, with covenantal and moral character.

Then Exodus 31:18 says that those tablets were written by the finger of God, while Deuteronomy 31:24-26 says that Moses wrote a book of the law and placed it beside the ark, not inside it.

Therefore, even if someone insists that at a general level everything may be called “the law,” Scripture itself distinguishes:

law of sacrifice

Ten Commandments

tables of stone

book of the law

law inside the ark

law beside the ark

No theologian invented that. It is in the text.

3. Unity Does Not Mean Absolute Identity

To say that all of this belongs to one divine revelation does not mean that everything is identical. Unity of origin is one thing; identity of function is another.

For example:

one sanctuary had a court, a holy place, and a most holy place

one covenant included commandments, statutes, and ordinances

one religious system included morality, sacrifices, priesthood, and feasts

All was part of the order given by God, but not everything did the same thing.

The Ten Commandments defined moral righteousness.

The sacrifices pointed to the Messiah.

The feasts taught prophetic truths.

The priests ministered in figure the future mediation of Christ.

This was not contradiction. It was divine organization.

4. The Difference of Function Is Biblical, Not Artificial

The moral law had the function of revealing sin. Paul says this clearly in Romans 3:20 and 7:7. And when he explains that function, he cites the tenth commandment: “You shall not covet.”

The ceremonial law had the function of showing, in symbols, the remedy for sin. Hebrews 10:1 says that it had “a shadow of the good things to come.” Leviticus

4 and 7 show sacrifices, offerings, and rites related to atonement and purification.

Therefore:

the moral law said: this is sin

the ceremonial law said: this points to the Redeemer who will take away sin

One revealed guilt.

The other taught the typical path of forgiveness.

They are not identical functions. They are complementary.

5. The Difference of Duration Is Also Biblical

Here a key point enters. If someone says “there is only one law” in order to conclude that either everything fell or everything remains exactly the same, he is ignoring the testimony of the New Testament.

Hebrews 10 teaches that the sacrifices ceased in Christ.

Colossians 2:16-17 says that certain observances were shadow.

Ephesians 2:15 speaks of commandments contained in ordinances abolished in the flesh of Christ.

This shows that within the legal system given to Israel there were temporary and typological elements.

But at the same time:

Matthew 5:17-19 says that Christ did not come to destroy the law

Romans 3:31 says that faith establishes the law

Romans 7:12 says that the law is holy, just, and good

James 2:10-12 uses the law as the standard of moral judgment

This shows that there are also permanent elements within divine legal revelation.

Therefore, the Bible itself obliges us to make a distinction. Otherwise, we fall into a contradiction:

either everything was abolished,

or nothing changed.

Neither of these positions does justice to the full biblical testimony.

6. At Times “the Law” Is Used in the Singular for Different Things

This is one of the most important arguments against the objection.

A. “The Law” Can Refer to the Decalogue

Romans 7:7: “I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’”

Here “the law” clearly points to the tenth commandment.

B. “The Law” Can Refer to the Sacrificial System

Hebrews 10:1: “the law, having a shadow of the good things to come...”

The context makes clear that it speaks of sacrifices and offerings.

C. “The Law” Can Refer to a Whole Section of Scripture

John 10:34 cites a psalm and says: “Is it not written in your law...?”

There “law” is used broadly to refer to the Scriptures.

D. “The Law” Can Refer to a Concrete Regulation

Leviticus 7:37: “This is the law of the burnt offering...”

Thus the argument “the Bible only says law in the singular” solves nothing by itself. What determines the meaning is the context.

7. The Distinction Does Not Divide God; It Clarifies His Revelation

Some are bothered by the distinction because they think that speaking of moral law and ceremonial law “divides” the law of God. But it does not divide it in the sense of destroying it; it distinguishes it in the sense of understanding it correctly.

When we say that one thing was moral and another ritual, we are not saying that one was from God and the other was not. We are saying that God gave commandments of different nature for different purposes.

That same reality appears throughout the Bible.

It is not the same:

a commandment against adultery

as

an instruction about what animal to offer for sin.

It is not the same:

“You shall not covet”

as

“This is the law of the burnt offering.”

It is not the same:

an eternal standard of worship and conduct

as

a prophetic shadow connected with the earthly sanctuary.

The Bible itself obliges us to recognize that difference.

8. Acts 15 Shows That Not Everything Within the Law Had the Same Status for the Church

The Jerusalem Council was not convened to abolish divine morality, but to resolve whether the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic system as a condition of salvation (Acts 15:1, 5).

This already shows that the apostolic church knew how to distinguish between:

faith in Christ as the basis of salvation

and certain ritual requirements of Judaism

If no functional distinction existed within “the law,” that debate could not have been resolved. But the apostles understood that imposing the Mosaic system upon Gentiles as a salvific burden was an error.

This did not mean authorizing idolatry, adultery, or murder.

It meant that not everything in Israel's legal system had the same purpose or the same obligation after the cross.

9. Common Objections and Answers

Objection 1: “If there is one law, you cannot speak of two.”

Yes, I can, if by that I do not mean two gods or two origins, but two great categories within the same legal revelation. The Bible itself distinguishes between the law of sacrifices and the Ten Commandments.

Objection 2: “The phrase ‘moral law’ does not appear literally.”

Many correct theological expressions we use to describe biblical realities also do not appear literally. The important thing is not whether the label appears, but whether the reality appears. And the reality does appear: a law of sacrifices and a law of commandments written on stone.

Objection 3: “Everything that was in the law of Moses fell with Christ.”

No. If that were true, the moral principles reaffirmed in the New Testament would also have fallen. Christ put an end to the ceremonial shadows, not to eternal moral righteousness.

Objection 4: “If you distinguish, you are inventing categories.”

No more than someone invents categories by distinguishing between priest, sacrifice, altar, and ark. The Bible is not an undifferentiated mass. It has structure, order, and purpose.

Objection 5: “Paul never makes that distinction.”

He does make it by context. In Hebrews 10 he speaks of sacrifices. In Romans 7 he cites “You shall not covet.” In Colossians 2 he speaks of shadows. His uses are not identical.

10. Ellen G. White Commentary

Ellen G. White fully harmonizes with this understanding. She recognizes the unity of the system given by God, but clearly distinguishes between the moral law and the ceremonial law. Her constant

argument is that many confuse what was temporary with what is eternal.

The central quotation summarizes it with force:

“Many in the Christian world also have a veil before their eyes and heart. They do not see to the end of that which was done away. They do not see that it was only the ceremonial law which was abrogated at the death of Christ. They claim that the moral law was nailed to the cross. Heavy is the veil that darkens their understanding.”

{1SM 239.2}

This statement responds precisely to the error of placing everything in the same bag without distinguishing its function.

11. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

In summary, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary highlights several principles that help here:

On the use of “the law”

The Commentary recognizes that the term may have various scopes depending on context: the Pentateuch, the Decalogue, specific regulations, or the Mosaic system in general.

On Hebrews and Colossians

The Commentary explains that Paul is referring there to elements of the ceremonial system and not to the abolition of the moral law.

On Romans 7

The Commentary emphasizes that by citing “You shall not covet,” Paul is directly using the Decalogue to explain the moral function of the law.

On biblical harmony

The Commentary insists that only by distinguishing between the moral and the ceremonial is the coherence preserved between the passages that speak of the abolition of shadows and those that affirm the continuing validity of the moral law.

Conclusion

The objection “there is only one law” does not destroy the biblical distinction. At most, it reminds us that all legal revelation proceeds from the same God. But that unity of origin does not eliminate real differences of function, form, scope, and duration.

Yes, there is one divine source.

But within that revelation there is:

law that defines sin

law that regulates sacrifices

law written by God on stone

law written by Moses in a book

law placed inside the ark

law placed beside the ark

law eternal in its moral principle

law temporary in its typological form

To deny this does not simplify the Bible; it confuses it.

The biblical truth is richer and more precise:

one divine revelation, but with real distinctions that God Himself marked in the text, in the sanctuary, and at the cross.

Chapter 8

Answering Hebrews 7, Galatians, and 2 Corinthians 3: Change of Law, Ministry of Death, and the True Meaning of the New Covenant

Among the texts most often used to deny the continuing validity of the moral law are Hebrews 7,

several sections of Galatians, and 2 Corinthians 3. Many quote them as if they proved that the Ten Commandments were abolished. But when studied in context, those passages do not destroy the moral law. Rather, they show three important truths:

that the Levitical priestly system was replaced by the priesthood of Christ,

that no one is justified by works of law,

and that the law, without the Spirit, can only condemn the sinner, but with the Spirit it is written in the heart.

The problem is not in the moral law. The problem is in the wrong use of the law, in the ceremonial system already fulfilled, and in the unregenerate human heart.

1. Hebrews 7 Does Not Teach That the Decalogue Was Abolished

Hebrews 7:12 says: “For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.” This text is often presented as proof that the Ten Commandments changed. But that conclusion does not come from the context.

A. The Central Theme of Hebrews 7 Is the Priesthood

The whole chapter revolves around a comparison between:

the Levitical-Aaronic priesthood, and

the priesthood of Christ according to the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 7:11 makes it clear: “Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood... what further need was there that another priest should rise?”

Therefore, when verse 12 mentions a “change of law,” the subject is not the Decalogue as moral standard, but the legislation that governed the Levitical priesthood.

B. The Law Changed Was the One That Regulated Who Could Be Priest

Under the Mosaic system, the priesthood was restricted to the tribe of Levi and, especially, to the line of Aaron (Num. 3:10; 18:1-7). But Christ came from the tribe of Judah, “of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood” (Heb. 7:14).

So what changed?

The priestly law that regulated the Levitical ministry changed, not the moral law that says “You shall not murder,” “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not covet.”

C. The Same Chapter Defines the Nature of the Change

Hebrews 7:18-19 speaks of the annulling of the former commandment “because of its weakness and unprofitableness,” and the context again points to the priestly system that could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper.

It does not say that the commandment “You shall not covet” was weak or unprofitable.

It does not say that “Honor your father and your mother” was replaced.

It speaks of the Levitical system as a mediatorial structure insufficient to bring perfection.

The moral law reveals sin.

The Levitical priesthood could not remove it definitively.

That is why a better Priest, a better sacrifice, and a better covenant were necessary.

2. The “Change of Law” in Hebrews 7 Is Not a Change of Morality

There is something decisive here. If Hebrews 7 taught that the moral law changed, then we would have to ask:

Is it now right to worship images?

Is it now right to lie?

Is it now right to commit adultery?

Is it now right to covet?

Of course not. The New Testament continues to condemn all of that.

How, then, can someone use Hebrews 7 to abolish the moral law, if the rest of the New Testament continues to affirm its principles?

The answer is simple: Hebrews 7 is not dealing with the abolition of the divine moral standard, but with the replacement of the Levitical priestly system by the perfect priesthood of Christ.

3. Galatians Does Not Fight Obedience, but Justification by Works

Galatians is perhaps the most misused letter on this subject. Many read the word “law” and automatically

conclude that Paul is attacking the Ten Commandments. But the problem in Galatians was not moral obedience born of faith. The problem was the attempt to use the law as a means of justification and the effort to impose the Jewish system on Gentile believers as a requirement for salvation.

A. The Context of Galatians Is the Controversy Over Circumcision and Judaizers

Galatians 2:3-5, 5:2-6, and 6:12-13 clearly show that the great conflict was circumcision and the idea that the Gentile had to submit to the Mosaic system in order to be fully accepted.

Paul combats this firmly because it destroys the gospel. No one can be justified by works of law. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ.

B. Galatians 3 Does Not Say That the Moral Law Is Bad

Galatians 3:19 asks: “What purpose then does the law serve?” and answers that it was added “because of transgressions, till the Seed should come.” Here there is a strong emphasis on the pedagogical and provisional character of certain legal aspects connected with Israel.

But that does not turn the moral law into sin. In fact, Paul asks in Galatians 3:21: “Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not!”

That is, the law is not the enemy of the gospel. What the law cannot do is give life or justify. Its function is not to save, but to expose sin and lead to Christ.

C. The Tutor of Galatians 3

Galatians 3:24 says: “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ.” The tutor was not the savior; he was the guide or guardian. Likewise, the law does not replace Christ; it leads the sinner to Christ.

But this is crucial: the fact that the law leads us to Christ does not mean that, once we are in Christ, sin has ceased to exist. Rather, Christ saves us precisely from what the law revealed.

D. Galatians 5 Does Not Destroy the Moral Law; It Summarizes It Correctly

Paul says in Galatians 5:14: “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” This does not mean abolition of the Decalogue, but its practical summary in love, just as Christ taught in Matthew 22:37-40.

Love does not replace the moral law. Love is its correct fulfillment.

For the one who loves:

does not murder,

does not steal,

does not commit adultery,

does not lie,

does not covet.

Romans 13:8-10 explains the same.

4. Galatians Condemns Legalism, Not Obedience

When Paul says in Galatians 2:16 that a man is not justified by works of law, he is destroying every hope of human merit. But he is not teaching that the Christian may now live without a moral standard.

This is clearly seen in the same book. Galatians 5:19-21 condemns the works of the flesh: adultery, fornication, idolatry, hatred, murders, and others. On what basis are those things condemned, if no moral standard exists?

Precisely because God's morality remains in force.

Paul is not saying: “Because we are saved by grace, the law no longer matters.”

He is saying: “Because we are saved by grace, we cannot use the law to justify ourselves; but neither can we use grace to live in the flesh.”

5. 2 Corinthians 3 and the “Ministry of Death”

This passage is also often used against the moral law because Paul speaks of something “engraved on stones” as a “ministry of death” (2 Cor. 3:7). Here he is indeed clearly alluding to the Decalogue. But the question is: In what sense does he call it a ministry of death?

A. Not Because the Moral Law Is Bad

That would be impossible, because the same Paul says in Romans 7:12 that the law is holy, just, and good. Paul cannot contradict himself. Therefore, the problem is not the law itself.

B. The Law Is a Ministry of Death for the Unregenerate Sinner

The moral law, when it confronts a sinful heart, condemns. Not because it is unjust, but because the sinner is in rebellion. The law demands righteousness;

fallen man cannot produce it by himself. Therefore, the law sentences him.

In that sense, the ministry of the law is condemnation.

Not because the law is bad,
but because the sinner is guilty.

C. Paul Contrasts Two Ministries

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul compares:
the ministry of condemnation, and
the ministry of the Spirit.

Not to say that the moral law was abolished, but to show that what was formerly outside man, written on stone, must now be written in the heart by the Spirit.

This harmonizes perfectly with Jeremiah 31:33 and Hebrews 8:10: the new covenant does not eliminate the law; it internalizes it.

D. The Passing Glory Was Not Proof That the Law Was Evil

Paul speaks of the glory on Moses' face and of the veil. His emphasis is not that the law was sinful or useless, but that the old regime, without the Spirit, could not produce the internal transformation that the new covenant in Christ does produce.

The letter, without the Spirit, kills.

Not because the written truth is bad,
but because the sinner without conversion remains
under condemnation.

The Spirit gives life because He unites the sinner with
Christ and writes the law within him.

6. The New Covenant Does Not Eliminate the Moral Law; It Changes Its Location

This point is decisive. What does God promise in the
new covenant?

Jeremiah 31:33: “I will put My law in their minds, and
write it on their hearts.”

Hebrews 8:10 repeats the same.

God does not say:

“I will abolish My law.”

“I will remove My commandments.”

“I will make void what I wrote.”

He says: I will write it on the heart.

This means that the change of the new covenant is not
the disappearance of the moral law, but the change of
location:

formerly, written on stone and confronting the sinner from outside;

now, written by the Spirit in the heart of the believer.

The new covenant is not spiritual anarchy.

It is inward obedience born of grace.

7. Common Objections and Answers

Objection 1: “Hebrews 7:12 says change of law; therefore, the Ten Commandments changed.”

No. The context speaks of the Levitical priesthood and of the legislation that regulated it. The change has to do with the priestly order, not with the abolition of the divine moral standard.

Objection 2: “Galatians says we are no longer under the tutor; therefore, the law ended.”

Paul does not say that sin ceased to exist or that divine morality was abolished. He says that we are no longer under the old pedagogical regime as a means of justification. Now we are in Christ, justified by faith.

Objection 3: “2 Corinthians 3 calls what was written on stone a ministry of death.”

Yes, but in the sense of condemnation upon the sinner, not in the sense that the law is bad or abolished. Romans 7:12 prevents that interpretation.

Objection 4: “The letter kills.”

The letter kills when it confronts the sinner without the regenerating work of the Spirit. But the Spirit did not come to erase the law, but to write it upon the heart.

Objection 5: “If we are under grace, we should no longer concern ourselves with commandments.”

That contradicts both Paul and John. Romans 6:15 says: “Shall we sin...? Certainly not.” And 1 John 2:3-4 connects the true knowledge of God with keeping His commandments.

8. Ellen G. White Commentary

Ellen G. White harmonizes with this reading very clearly. She distinguishes between:

the ceremonial and priestly system, which found its fulfillment in Christ, and

the moral law, which continues to be the standard of righteousness.

She also teaches that the new covenant does not consist in abolishing the law, but in writing it in the heart through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The statement that has been used throughout this study perfectly summarizes the core of the argument:

“Many in the Christian world also have a veil before their eyes and heart. They do not see to the end of that which was done away. They do not see that it was only the ceremonial law which was abrogated at the death of Christ. They claim that the moral law was nailed to the cross. Heavy is the veil that darkens their understanding.”

{1SM 239.2}

That “veil” is seen precisely when Hebrews, Galatians, or 2 Corinthians are used to overthrow what those same books do not overthrow.

In summary, Ellen G. White holds:

Hebrews presents the replacement of the priesthood and the shadows,

Galatians combats justification by works,

the new covenant writes the moral law in the heart.

9. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

In summary, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary emphasizes the following points:

On Hebrews 7

The Commentary explains that the “change of law” is connected with the change of priesthood. The central point is that Christ, not being a Levite, exercises a superior priesthood according to Melchizedek, which implies a change in the priestly regulations of the old system.

On Galatians

The Commentary underlines that Paul combats the legalistic use of the law as a means of salvation, especially in relation to circumcision and the Judaizing system. He does not teach the abolition of the moral law, but the impossibility of its justifying anyone.

On 2 Corinthians 3

The Commentary understands the contrast to be between the ministry of condemnation and the ministry of the Spirit. The law written on stone reveals sin and condemns the transgressor; the Spirit produces inward transformation. There is no contradiction with Romans 7:12.

On the new covenant

The Commentary highlights that Jeremiah 31 and Hebrews 8 teach the internalization of the law, not its abolition. The new covenant changes the believer's relationship to the law, not the holiness of the law itself.

Conclusion

Hebrews 7, Galatians, and 2 Corinthians 3 do not teach that the Ten Commandments were abolished.

Hebrews 7 speaks of the change of priesthood and, therefore, the change of priestly legislation.

Galatians combats legalism and the false idea of justification by works.

2 Corinthians 3 contrasts the condemnation of the sinner under the letter with the life produced by the Spirit.

None of those passages says that idolatry, adultery, lying, or covetousness have ceased to be sin.

None teaches that God annulled His moral standard.

None presents the new covenant as absence of law.

On the contrary, the new covenant is the law of God written in the heart, obeyed from within, under the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 9

Answering Acts 15, Romans 14, and Colossians 2 Regarding the Sabbath, Days, and Observances

One of the most frequent arguments against the continuing validity of the Sabbath and against the distinction between moral law and ceremonial law is to appeal to three New Testament passages: Acts 15, Romans 14, and Colossians 2. Many suppose that these texts teach that it no longer matters whether one keeps any day, or that the Sabbath was eliminated together with the Jewish ceremonies. But when read carefully, the picture is very different.

None of these passages teaches that the fourth commandment was abolished.

None presents the Sabbath of creation as a passing shadow.

None authorizes the Christian to treat the moral law as optional.

What these texts do resolve are concrete problems of the apostolic church: the imposition of Judaizing rites upon the Gentiles, disputes over matters of conscience, and ceremonial observances connected with the Mosaic system.

To understand them correctly, one must always ask: What is the subject of the context?

If that question is not asked, the text is forced to say what it does not say.

1. Acts 15 Did Not Abolish the Sabbath; It Resolved the Controversy Over Circumcision and the Ceremonial Yoke

Acts 15 narrates the Jerusalem Council. The problem that provoked that meeting is stated clearly:

“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1).

Later, some insisted on “circumcising them, and commanding them to keep the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5).

A. The Central Issue of the Council Was Not the Sabbath

This is decisive. The discussion did not revolve around the fourth commandment. The debate was whether the Gentiles had to enter the people of God by submitting to the rite of circumcision and bearing upon themselves the Mosaic system as a requirement for salvation.

Peter answered that this was placing upon the neck of the disciples “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts 15:10). That yoke was not the moral law written by God, but the legal and ceremonial system that the Judaizers wanted to impose as a condition for acceptance.

B. The Apostolic Decision Was Not a Complete List of All Christian Morality

The apostles sent the Gentiles a letter with four immediate prohibitions: things polluted by idols, sexual immorality, things strangled, and blood (Acts 15:20, 29). Some conclude: “Since they did not mention the Sabbath, the Sabbath was abolished.”

But that conclusion does not stand.

The purpose of the council was not to draft a complete catechism of the entire Christian life. If that were the case, one would also have to say that because the letter does not mention “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” and “You shall not covet,” those commandments are also no longer binding. And that is absurd.

The apostolic letter did not attempt to enumerate all Christian morality, but to resolve the specific problem that was troubling the Gentile church.

C. Acts 15 Harmonizes With the Continuity of the Moral Law

The apostles did not abolish the moral law; they rejected the idea that the Gentile had to be saved by submitting to the Jewish ritual regime. In fact, the prohibition of sexual immorality already shows that the moral standard remained in force.

Furthermore, James adds something very interesting:

“For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath” (Acts 15:21).

That verse does not say that the Sabbath was abolished. Rather, it shows that the teaching of God

continued to be known and read in the context of the Sabbath day. The point of the chapter is not the elimination of the Sabbath, but the non-imposition of the Judaizing system as a means of salvation.

2. Romans 14 Does Not Deal With the Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment

Romans 14 is another passage often cited to affirm that each Christian may freely choose what day to keep or not keep. The text says:

“One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5).

At first glance, some think Paul is saying that the weekly Sabbath is optional. But the context demonstrates something else.

A. The Subject of the Chapter Is Food, Drink, and Personal Scruples

From the beginning of the chapter, Paul speaks of disputes over debatable matters:

one believes he may eat all things

another, who is weak, eats only vegetables (Rom. 14:2)

the issue is not judging one another over these practices (Rom. 14:3-4)

Then he continues speaking of:

days

eating or not eating

giving thanks to God (Rom. 14:5-6)

Later he again mentions:

food

drink

stumbling the brother (Rom. 14:17, 20-21)

The entire chapter revolves around matters of conscience, especially related to food and voluntary practices of devotion. It is not a treatise on the abolition of the Decalogue.

B. Paul Could Not Be Making the Moral Sabbath Optional

Why? Because the same Paul had already said:

“the law is holy” (Rom. 7:12)

“faith establishes the law” (Rom. 3:31)

the law reveals sin, citing “You shall not covet” (Rom. 7:7)

It would be contradictory for him, after affirming the moral law, now to say that one may esteem all days alike in the sense of canceling the fourth commandment.

C. The “Days” of Romans 14 Fit Better With Fasts or Devotional Practices

In the Judaism of the apostolic period, there were disputes over days of fasting and personal pious observances. This harmonizes much better with the context of food and drink than the weekly Sabbath of the Decalogue.

Paul is not saying:

“Let each person decide whether or not to worship the Creator on the day He sanctified.”

He is saying:

“Do not destroy one another over debatable practices of conscience, especially those connected with food and days observed voluntarily.”

D. The Language of Romans 14 Does Not Correspond to the Fourth Commandment

The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was not presented by God as a matter of personal opinion. It does not say: “Let each person be convinced as to

whether or not to keep the seventh day.” It says: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8).

Therefore, Romans 14 cannot legitimately be used to turn a moral commandment into a private preference.

3. Colossians 2 Does Speak of Ceremonial Observances, Not of the Sabbath of Creation

Colossians 2:16-17 says:

“Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

This passage does speak of religious observances. But the key is in the final phrase:

“which are a shadow of things to come.”

A. What Paul Mentions Belongs to the System of Shadows

Paul speaks of:

food

drink

festival

new moon

sabbaths

And then he says that all of it was shadow. This describes very well the ceremonial liturgical calendar of Israel.

In the Old Testament the sequence appears repeatedly:

annual feasts

monthly new moons

festal rests

as a formula for the ceremonial system (1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 31:3; Ezek. 45:17; Hos. 2:11).

B. The Weekly Sabbath of the Fourth Commandment Was Not a Shadow of Calvary

The Sabbath of the Decalogue was sanctified at creation (Gen. 2:1-3), before sin, before Israel, before the Levitical sanctuary. Its root is creational, not ceremonial.

It was not given as a shadow of a future redemption, but as a memorial of the Creator God (Ex. 20:8-11). Therefore, it cannot automatically be placed in the category of ceremonial shadows.

C. In Leviticus 23 There Were Ceremonial Sabbaths Besides the Weekly Sabbath

This point is very important. In Leviticus 23 there appear:

the weekly Sabbath, and also

other annual rest days connected with feasts, such as the Day of Atonement, Unleavened Bread, Trumpets, and Tabernacles

Those festal rests were directly connected to the ceremonial system and were indeed a shadow of things to come. Paul in Colossians 2 is dealing with that ceremonial framework.

D. The Context of Colossians 2 Combats Ascetic and Judaizing Regulations

Colossians 2 also speaks of:

decrees

the basic principles of the world

“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle” (Col. 2:21)

The whole tone of the passage shows that Paul is combating ritual and ascetic impositions, not the

moral commandment of the Sabbath as memorial of the Creator.

4. The New Testament Never Presents the Moral Sabbath as an Abolished Shadow

On the contrary, Jesus said:

“The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27).

He did not say “for the Jew only,” but “for man,” that is, for humanity. This harmonizes with its origin in creation.

Moreover, Jesus identified Himself as “Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28). He did not treat it as an obsolete institution, but as a divine institution whose true meaning had to be restored in the face of human traditions.

In Luke 4:16 it says that He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath “as His custom was.” And after the cross, the disciples continued recognizing the holiness of the Sabbath (Luke 23:54-56).

Paul also preached on the Sabbath to Jews and Gentiles (Acts 13:42-44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4). It is true that this alone does not prove the whole doctrine, but it does show that the Sabbath does not appear in the

New Testament as a canceled and forbidden commandment.

5. Common Objections and Answers

Objection 1: “Acts 15 does not mention the Sabbath; therefore, it was not obligatory.”

Acts 15 also does not mention several other moral commandments, and no one concludes from that that they were abolished. The council dealt with a specific controversy: circumcision and Judaizing, not a complete list of all Christian ethics.

Objection 2: “Romans 14 says each person may choose whatever day he wants.”

Romans 14 deals with debatable matters of conscience connected with food, drink, and personal devotional practices. It does not deal with the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, which was never given as a private option.

Objection 3: “Colossians 2 says ‘sabbaths’; therefore, the Sabbath ended.”

Colossians 2 speaks of things that were a shadow of what was to come. That fits the ceremonial rests of the liturgical calendar, not the creational Sabbath of the Decalogue.

Objection 4: “If the Sabbath were still valid, the apostles would have repeated it as a commandment.”

The New Testament does not always repeat each commandment in list form. But it does confirm the moral law, presents sin as transgression, and never teaches that the Sabbath of creation was changed or abolished.

Objection 5: “Jesus rose on Sunday; therefore, He changed the day.”

The resurrection glorifies the first day as a historical day of victory, but no biblical text says that for this reason the first day was sanctified or that it replaced the seventh. A glorious event does not change a commandment unless God declares it, and no such declaration exists.

6. The Harmony Among These Three Passages

When read correctly, Acts 15, Romans 14, and Colossians 2 do not contradict one another or attack the moral law.

Acts 15: rejects imposing the Judaizing system as a means of salvation.

Romans 14: calls for tolerance in debatable matters of conscience.

Colossians 2: frees the believer from being judged by ceremonial observances that were shadow.

None teaches:

that sin ceased to exist,

that the Decalogue was abolished,

or that the creational Sabbath was replaced by another day.

7. Ellen G. White Commentary

Ellen G. White clearly distinguishes between the Sabbath of the fourth commandment and the Jewish ceremonial observances. She teaches that the death of Christ put an end to the system of shadows, but not to the Sabbath of the Decalogue.

In harmony with this whole subject, the quotation that has been used throughout remains central:

“Many in the Christian world also have a veil before their eyes and heart. They do not see to the end of that which was done away. They do not see that it was only the ceremonial law which was abrogated at the death of Christ. They claim

that the moral law was nailed to the cross. Heavy is the veil that darkens their understanding.”
{1SM 239.2}

Also, in summary, Ellen G. White teaches that:

the Sabbath was instituted in Eden,

Christ did not abolish it,

and the ceremonial feasts ceased when they found their fulfillment at the cross.

That distinction is exactly what protects the correct interpretation of Acts 15, Romans 14, and Colossians 2.

8. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

In summary, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary explains the following:

On Acts 15

The Commentary notes that the Jerusalem Council dealt with the problem of circumcision and the imposition of the Mosaic law as a requirement of salvation for Gentiles. It was not an abolition of the moral law.

On Romans 14

The Commentary understands Paul to be dealing with disputes over personal devotional and dietary practices, not the weekly Sabbath of the fourth commandment. The context of foods and days favors that reading.

On Colossians 2:16-17

The Commentary interprets the list “festival, new moon, or sabbaths” as a reference to the Jewish ceremonial system. The phrase “a shadow of things to come” confirms that the issue is typical observances, not the creational Sabbath of the Decalogue.

On the Sabbath

The Commentary holds that the weekly Sabbath, rooted in creation and in the Decalogue, must be distinguished from the annual ceremonial sabbaths connected with the Jewish feasts.

Conclusion

Acts 15, Romans 14, and Colossians 2 do not destroy the biblical doctrine of the Sabbath or the distinction between moral law and ceremonial law.

Acts 15 combats the Judaizer who wants to be saved by rites.

Romans 14 regulates matters of opinion and conscience.

Colossians 2 removes the obligation of ceremonial shadows.

But the Sabbath of the fourth commandment was not a shadow of Calvary.

It was a memorial of creation.

It did not begin at Sinai, but in Eden.

It was not given as a mere national rite, but as a divine gift for man.

Therefore, when these passages are interpreted correctly, they do not cancel the Sabbath. Rather, they confirm that what was abolished was the ceremonial system, while the moral law of God remains standing, holy, just, and good.

Chapter 10

General Conclusion: The Ceremonial Law Pointed to Christ, the Moral Law Still Points Out Sin, and the Remnant Keeps the Commandments of God

After going through this study, the biblical conclusion becomes clear: Scripture does not present confusion between the ceremonial and the moral. What many mix together, God distinguished. What some want to abolish together, the Bible separates by functional origin, redemptive purpose, and duration.

The ceremonial law and the moral law were not enemies of each other. Both formed part of the divine plan, but they did not occupy the same place. The ceremonial law was given to point to the Messiah through shadows, sacrifices, priesthood, feasts, and sanctuary ordinances. The moral law was given to express the righteousness of God, reveal sin, and govern human life according to the character of the Creator.

Therefore, when Christ died on the cross, everything did not fall in the same way.

The shadow fell.

The moral standard remained.

The symbol ceased.

Divine righteousness remained.

The rite ended.

Obedience did not end.

1. The Ceremonial Law Fulfilled Its Mission in Christ

From Genesis 3:21 to Hebrews 10, the ceremonial system pointed to one center: Christ. Every slain lamb, every sacrifice for sin, every ministering priest, every drop of shed blood said in figure: sin demands death, but God will provide a Substitute.

Leviticus 7:37-38 presents the law of sacrifices.

Leviticus 4 shows the ritual treatment of sin.

John 1:29 identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God.

Hebrews 10:1 declares that the ceremonial law had the shadow of good things to come.

Therefore, when Christ died, the symbol found its fulfillment. There was no longer any need to continue offering animals, because the true Lamb had been

slain. It no longer made sense to keep depending on the system of shadows, because the reality had arrived.

The ceremonial law was not bad.

It was provisional.

It was not false.

It was pedagogical.

It was not useless.

It was prophetic.

Its greatness consisted precisely in announcing Christ. And its end was not defeat, but its glorious fulfillment at the cross.

2. The Moral Law Did Not End at the Cross, Because the Cross Presupposes Its Continuing Validity

Here is one of the strongest points of the entire study: if the moral law could be abolished, Christ would not have needed to die. The cross does not demonstrate that the law was disposable. It demonstrates that the law is so serious, so holy, and so just that sin could not be forgiven without atonement.

Romans 3:20 says that by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7:7 says that the law reveals even inward covetousness.

1 John 3:4 defines sin as lawlessness.

Romans 7:12 declares that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good.

The moral law, then, was not abolished at the cross. It was vindicated at the cross. The death of Christ showed that God does not change His righteousness to accommodate the sinner. Rather, in His love, He gave His Son to save the sinner without destroying the holiness of His government.

Grace did not annul the law.

Grace provided forgiveness for the transgressor of the law.

Faith did not destroy obedience.

Faith placed it in its proper role.

3. Christ Confirmed the Moral Law and Removed the Shadows

Jesus never spoke as an enemy of the moral law. He said clearly:

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17).

And He added:

“One jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law” (Matt. 5:18).

Then He warned against breaking even the commandments called least (Matt. 5:19). Afterward, in the same sermon, He elevated the moral standard even higher, taking it from the outward act to the intention of the heart.

By contrast, when the New Testament speaks of shadows, decrees, foods, drinks, feasts, new moons, sacrifices, Levitical priesthood, and ritual ordinances, the context shows that it refers to the ceremonial system already fulfilled in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; Heb. 7; Heb. 10).

Christ did not abolish the eternal.

Christ fulfilled the temporary.

Christ did not destroy the Father’s moral righteousness.

Christ brought to completion the system that announced Him in figures.

4. The New Covenant Does Not Erase the Law; It Writes It on the Heart

One of the greatest errors of antinomian theology is to imagine that the new covenant means a life without law. But God's promise says exactly the opposite:

“I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10).

God did not promise to abolish His law.

He promised to internalize it.

He did not promise a people without commandments.

He promised a people with a renewed heart.

Before, the law was outside man and condemned him.

Now, by the Spirit, the law is written inside the believer and guides him in holiness.

This does not mean automatic perfection or salvation by works. It means that the gospel not only forgives; it also transforms. The same Christ who justifies also sanctifies. And the same Spirit who convicts of sin also enables obedience.

Therefore, the new covenant is not freedom to sin. It is freedom from sin.

5. The Objection “There Is Only One Law” Does Not Destroy Biblical Truth

Yes, in a general sense, all divine instruction may be called “the law.” But the Bible itself distinguishes within that revelation:

the law of the burnt offering and the sacrifice (Lev. 7:37)

the Ten Commandments written on stone (Deut. 4:13)

the tablets written by the finger of God (Ex. 31:18)

the book of the law written by Moses (Deut. 31:24-26)

Furthermore, it distinguishes between:

what was placed inside the ark, and

what was placed beside the ark.

It also distinguishes between:

what was a shadow of things to come, and

what reveals sin as a moral standard.

Therefore, the expression “there is only one law” does not settle the debate. What settles it is the biblical context. And the context shows that there is one divine source of revelation, but with real differences in function, purpose, and duration.

6. The Sabbath Belongs in This Conclusion as Part of the Moral Law

As part of the Decalogue, the Sabbath does not originate in the ceremonial system, but in creation (Gen. 2:1-3). It was sanctified before sin, before Israel, and before the Levitical sanctuary. Therefore, it cannot be treated as a simple Jewish shadow abolished at the cross.

The Sabbath of the fourth commandment:

was written by God on stone,

remained inside the ark with the Decalogue,

was defended by Christ,

and was not replaced by any later biblical declaration.

What did end were the ceremonial sabbaths connected with annual feasts and the typical system of Leviticus 23. Therefore, Colossians 2 must not be used to erase the creational Sabbath of the Decalogue.

The moral Sabbath recalls the Creator.

The ceremonial sabbaths prefigured redemptive aspects connected with the Messiah.

Confusing them produces the false idea that every rest day was shadow.

But the Bible does not teach that.

7. The Final Remnant Keeps the Commandments of God

The book of Revelation carries this subject into the time of the end.

Revelation 12:17 says that the dragon is enraged with the remnant “who keep the commandments of God.”

Revelation 14:12 adds: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”

This description is decisive. The faithful people of the final time do not appear as a legalistic people trying to save themselves by works. They appear as a people who have the faith of Jesus and who, precisely because of that faith, keep the commandments of God.

Here the final harmony between gospel and law is seen:

the faith of Jesus

and the commandments of God

They are not enemies. They are inseparable companions in the experience of the remnant.

Satan hates this people not because they trust in themselves, but because, in the midst of general apostasy, they recognize the authority of God and live under the obedience of faith.

8. The Great Counterfeit Consists in Mixing the Abolished With the Permanent

One of the enemy's most effective deceptions has been to place the ceremonial and the moral in the same bag. Thus, by showing that the shadows ceased in Christ, he also tries to drag away the Decalogue. But that is not faithful exegesis; it is doctrinal confusion.

The Bible teaches:

that the sacrifices ceased,

but not that idolatry became permitted;

that the typical offerings ended,

but not that adultery ceased to be sin;

that the Levitical priesthood was replaced,

but not that lying, theft, and covetousness became authorized.

When someone affirms that the moral law was nailed to the cross, he is in reality destroying the biblical

definition of sin. And without a definition of sin, it is no longer clear why Christ died.

Therefore, this doctrine is not a secondary matter. It touches the very heart of the gospel.

9. Final Objections and Summary Answers

Objection: “Speaking of moral law and ceremonial law is a human invention.”

Answer: the labels may be theological, but the distinction is biblical. Leviticus 7:37 shows the law of sacrifices. Deuteronomy 4:13 shows the Ten Commandments. Exodus 31:18 and Deuteronomy 31:24-26 mark a visible difference.

Objection: “Christ abolished the law.”

Answer: Christ abolished the ceremonial shadows and typical ordinances fulfilled in Him. He did not abolish the moral law, because He Himself said He did not come to destroy the law (Matt. 5:17), and Paul established it (Rom. 3:31; 7:12).

Objection: “Now we are under grace.”

Answer: yes, but grace does not authorize sin. Romans 6:15 expressly denies that. Grace forgives and transforms; it does not license transgression.

Objection: “In the new covenant there is no law.”

Answer: the new covenant does not eliminate the law; it writes it on the heart (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10).

Objection: “The Sabbath was only for Israel.”

Answer: the Sabbath was sanctified in Eden for humanity and later included in the Decalogue as a memorial of creation. The ceremonial was indeed connected with Israel as a nation; the moral Sabbath precedes Israel.

10. Ellen G. White Commentary

The statement by Ellen G. White that has accompanied this study masterfully summarizes the general conclusion of the book:

“Many in the Christian world also have a veil before their eyes and heart. They do not see to the end of that which was done away. They do not see that it was only the ceremonial law which was abrogated at the death of Christ. They claim that the moral law was nailed to the cross. Heavy is the veil that darkens their understanding.”

{1SM 239.2}

This quotation concentrates the core of the biblical argument:

something was abolished, yes;
but it was not the moral law;
it was only the ceremonial law.

In harmony with the rest of her writings, Ellen G. White also teaches that:

the moral law is the great divine standard,
Christ magnified it,
the ceremonial system ceased at the cross,
and God's final people will be an obedient people by faith.

11. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

In general summary, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary maintains a harmonious line in all the texts studied:

Exodus 31:18 and Deuteronomy 4:13: emphasize the uniqueness of the Decalogue written by God.

Deuteronomy 31:24-26: show that the book of the law beside the ark had a different function.

Hebrews 7 and 10: focus on the change of priesthood and the end of the sacrificial system.

Colossians 2:14-17: speak of ceremonial ordinances and shadows.

Romans 3:31 and 7:7, 12: affirm the permanence and holiness of the moral law.

Jeremiah 31:33 and Hebrews 8:10: teach that the new covenant internalizes the law instead of abolishing it.

Revelation 12:17 and 14:12: present the final people as keepers of the commandments of God.

The conclusion of the Commentary, taken as a whole, coincides with the conclusion of this book: the cross ended the typical system, but it did not annul the moral law.

Final Conclusion of the Book

The Bible presents two realities within divine legal revelation:

a ceremonial law, temporary, symbolic, and Christ-centered,

and a moral law, permanent, holy, and universal.

The first pointed to the Savior.

The second still points out sin.

The first was written by Moses in a book and placed beside the ark.

The second was written by God on stone and placed inside the ark.

The first ended at the cross, because it was shadow.

The second remains, because it expresses the character of God.

Therefore, the complete biblical message is not “the law was abolished,” but this:

Christ abolished what announced Him in symbols, but confirmed what eternally reveals the righteousness of God.

And for this reason also, the faithful people of the end do not appear as a people without law, but as a people who have the faith of Jesus and keep the commandments of God.

Final Closing

As we come to the end of this work, one truth shines with sufficient clarity: the cross of Christ did not abolish all law indiscriminately, but put an end to the system of shadows that announced His sacrifice, while

confirming the holiness of the moral law that defines sin.

That conclusion does not arise from a denominational preference, but from the united testimony of Scripture. The law of the burnt offering, offerings, feasts, and sacrifices was a shadow of what was to come (Lev. 7:37; Heb. 10:1). But the Ten Commandments were written by God Himself on stone, as the permanent expression of His moral covenant (Ex. 31:18; Deut. 4:13). One pointed to the Redeemer through symbols. The other still reveals the righteousness of God and the condition of the sinner.

Therefore, Christ did not come to destroy the moral law, but to magnify it. He did not come to make sin something light, but to show its extreme seriousness by paying with His own blood for humanity's transgression. If the moral law could have been annulled, the cross would have been unnecessary. But precisely because the law is holy, just, and good, Christ had to die so that the sinner could be forgiven without divine justice being annulled.

Grace, then, must not be understood as a license to disobey. Grace is the undeserved favor that rescues the guilty, reconciles him with God, and transforms him to live in harmony with the divine will. The new

covenant does not eliminate the law; it writes it on the heart. It does not destroy obedience; it causes it to spring from within through the work of the Holy Spirit.

It should also be clear that this subject is not merely academic. It is not a cold discussion about legal categories. It touches the very heart of the final message. Revelation presents a people who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (Rev. 14:12). These are not two opposing realities. They are two inseparable marks of the faithful people. The faith of Jesus produces obedience. And true obedience can exist only where Christ reigns in the heart.

We live in an age in which many call every defense of the moral law legalism, and call a religion without standard, without repentance, and without reform of life grace. But the Bible does not teach that cheap grace. The true gospel forgives, cleanses, transforms, and restores. It does not leave man in his sins; it calls him to walk in newness of life.

May this book have helped to remove the veil that darkens the understanding of so many. May the reader come away from these pages with the conviction that the ceremonial law pointed to Christ and ended at the

cross, while the moral law continues to point out sin, exalt the righteousness of God, and guide the believer toward a life of obedience born of love.

And above all, may this study lead to a deeper surrender to Jesus Christ. Because in the end, the goal is not simply to win a doctrinal discussion. The goal is to know the Savior better, love His truth more, honor His law more, and live more fully under His grace.

May the Lord grant His people spiritual understanding to distinguish between the abolished and the eternal, between the shadow and the reality, between human tradition and divine truth. And as the final outcome of the conflict approaches, may we remain among those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.

A Call to Keep Sowing

Dear reader:

If this book has been a blessing to your life, if it has helped you understand the Word of God better, or if it has strengthened your faith in Christ and in His truth, we want to ask something very special of you: pray for this ministry.

Behind every free material there is time, effort, study, prayer, and a deep desire that more people may know biblical truth. Our longing is to keep preparing free books, studies, and resources that can reach many lives, homes, and churches, especially people who do not have the possibility of acquiring this kind of material.

If God places it in your heart to support this work, you may do so by sharing this book with others, recommending it, praying for us, and, if possible, also through a voluntary offering that helps us continue producing more materials for the honor of God and the advancement of His work.

Every help, large or small, can become a seed of truth in someone else's life.

Thank you for reading this book.

Thank you for valuing this effort.

And thank you for helping others also receive these messages freely.

May the Lord bless you abundantly, strengthen you in the faith, and multiply His grace upon your life and your family.

With gratitude and hope,

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