



*"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"*

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## **Mini Study**

### Can The Law Save You?

*Do not suppose that I came to tear down [abolish] the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to tear down but to fulfill. For positively, I say to you, until the heaven and the earth pass away, by no means shall one iota [i.e. the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet] or one tittle [i.e. a stroke of a letter] pass away from the Law, until all [things] happen. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of these commandments, the least (e.g. Deuteronomy 22:6f), and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of Heaven. But whoever does and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven. (Mat 5:17-19pp)*

*Oh how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day (Psalm 119:97pp)*

For Jews, God's Law is everything. There is, however, a certain ambivalence among Christians as to the role the Law of God should have in our daily life. Quiz most people - believers and non-believers - and there is a consensus that at least some of the Law (summed up in the Ten Commandments) is a good basis for an orderly society. We ought to honour our parents, refrain from violence, have stable marriages, refrain from theft, do not commit perjury and be content with what we have. These laws teach us how to love our neighbour. But is the observance of the Law essential for salvation?

- ...certainly the Old Testament stalwarts had a high respect for the laws of God. They "loved" it. They ordered their lives by it. They meditated on it. The first Christians, too, lived by it (e.g. Acts 25:8)
- ...Jesus "filled full" the Law. He revealed, for us, the full depths of its meaning. Nor did he himself transgress it in any way - for that is one definition of sin (cf I John 3:4, Romans 3:20) and he - uniquely among men - never sinned (Hebrews 4:16)
- ...all this most believers accept. Sadly, many draw a veil over those other Commandments which teach us how to love God. Too many, who claim to be Christian, place other "gods" before the LORD of the Bible. And those commands which define our worship are distorted with pagan days being substituted for the only worship days God has ever revealed
- ...what role, then, does the Law of God have in our salvation? Can we "get away" with failing to keep it? It is a matter of vital importance, for the apostle Paul warns of a "different gospel" (Galatians 1:6-11) - one that, where followed, brings a curse. The remainder of his letter to the Galatian believers implies this has something to do with the Law of God
- ...perhaps strangely, Jesus (Matthew 5:17-18) implies that some will be in "the kingdom of the heavens" who don't "do and teach" the Law. Those who "do and teach," however, will be "called great"

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- ...no Christian, surely, would knowingly desire to do what God's Law expressly forbids. After all, if "Christ is in you," you would wish to do what he does ("WWJD"). But will you be in his Kingdom if you don't?
- ...note that the Jews of the time of Jesus (at least those who were religious) were fastidious in keeping the Law - down to the last "jot and tittle." Yet Peter had to call on them to "repent" (Acts 2:38). That is, change. Why repent? Clearly, their observance of God's Law wasn't enough to save them. The Law reflected God's will, how He wants us to live - but it didn't save
- ...there was one focus of Peter's address to the Jews: Jesus. All their law-keeping could not remove the taint of their - of our - sin. All the law did was to point out and define, their sin; but it didn't take it away, or didn't earn forgiveness. Only Jesus, their - and our - Messiah, can do that through His sacrificial death and resurrection
- ...while we are burdened with sin we can't do without that forgiveness, for "...*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23) Outside of God's mercy expressed in Jesus, there is no hope
- ...true repentance (II Corinthians 7:9) opens the way for us to receive God's Spirit, the very mind of God - supernaturally implanted. When that Spirit is truly in us, we - by our acts of will - voluntarily implement the teachings of Jesus as revealed in the Scriptures. We learn to love and observe God's Law. But that observance doesn't save us. Only the sacrifice of Jesus, voluntarily accepted, does that
- ...none of us perfectly observes all the Law, though as Christians our intent is to do so. We intend, for example, to observe the Biblical Sabbath. But how many observe it perfectly? Do we even know how to observe it as Jesus would wish, as he did? Do our failures thus exclude us from the Kingdom?
- ...by faith our many failures are covered by Christ's sacrifice. "*For by grace you are saved, through faith, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, that not anyone should boast; for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God before prepared that we should walk in them*" (Ephesians 2:8-10pp)
- ...Christians, from the heart, seek to observe the divine Law; yet know they do not always maintain its precepts. We can rest assured in Christ's covering sacrifice: "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us*" (1 John 1:9-10pp)

(All Scripture references are KJV unless otherwise noted. [pp:paraphrased])

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