

No Part of the Mosaic Covenant Has Ended

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INTRODUCTION

I here intend to demonstrate from scripture that the Mosaic covenant and all of its numerous laws, *in their entirety*, have never been revoked, expired, or altered in any way. Not by the death and resurrection of Christ, nor from anything that has otherwise happened in history. Nor has the Mosaic covenant, or any of its laws, been merged into or *subsumed* by the Church covenant. Nor have they been transmuted into any so-called Law of Christ.

I don't claim that all of the Mosaic laws are presently in full force and effect. Many of them are temporarily suspended until the Jewish temple is rebuilt, and Christ returns to sit on the throne of David to establish His earthly kingdom. However, this suspension does not in any way work to terminate or modify the Mosaic laws as they were first delivered 3,500 years ago. This suspension is not decreed by God, but arises merely from an impossibility of performance under present circumstances. God has promised to correct these circumstances, once again enabling a full performance of the covenant.

Before I detail all the proofs and arguments, rest assured there is nothing to be afraid of in terms of Christian orthodoxy. The Mosaic covenant and the gospel are not, properly understood, incompatible. Nothing I will say weakens, undercuts, or hinders the gospel, because my arguments come straight from scripture. Further, nothing I say will indicate that either Christians or Gentiles are subject to the provisions of the Mosaic covenant and its underlying laws.

I *will* ask you to suspend the inclination to explain away any of the biblical texts we will look at as having a primarily spiritual or allegorical interpretation. I want you to read all of the scriptures we will examine as though the words mean exactly what they say. Think of it as a thought experiment. What if there was a way to understand all the scriptures about the Mosaic covenant and the nation of Israel *literally*, which did not conflict with the ministry of Christ, the Gospel, or the Church covenant? For the sake of curiosity, would you at least want to see what that would look like?

I often get the feeling, when I read allegorical interpretations of some of these scriptures, that the commentator is trying to avoid a literal interpretation that leaves them in a logical box they can't get out of. However, the problems many people have believing the Mosaic covenant hasn't ended don't arise from scripture. Instead, they arise from incorrect assumptions about who the covenant applied to, what it was intended to accomplish, and the effect (if any) of changed circumstances. What I want to show you is that there is a way to read the scriptures concerning the Mosaic covenant literally which is completely logical, and completely harmonious with the rest of the Bible.

The key to this whole matter is to realize that the Mosaic covenant was only ever given to the Jews as a *national covenant*. It never was, and never will be, a *covenant of faith*. The purpose of the Mosaic covenant was not to get anyone saved (past, present or future), nor was it designed to point the world to a Savior. (I can see the hackles raising - don't worry, we're going to deal with the Apostle Paul's view on the subject). It was designed merely to establish Israel as a *national entity* (not a spiritual entity), set up a *civil government*, and lay out rules of conduct for a *holy nation* treasured by God. That's it. And it's pretty plain, if you look at the terms of the covenant itself.

Sure, those rules of conduct included religious ceremonies and a system of worship. I did say the Mosaic laws were for a *holy nation*, after all. But God, and scripture, never said the *purpose* of the Mosaic covenant was to provide for personal salvation. Why do I say this? Because a person did not have to be *saved* in order to be subject to the covenant. Personal salvation, and participation in the Mosaic covenant, were (and are) two completely separate things. If you can keep that one thought in your mind as you read this essay, then everything else will make sense. If you can't accept that idea - well, the overwhelming biblical evidence is against you.

I will not, in this essay, consider the understanding and application of any individual laws given to ancient Israel. I will treat that subject in a separate essay. Here, I want to consider the applicability of the Mosaic covenant as a whole to the Jewish people, and how it relates to and coexists with the Church covenant of the New Testament. So without diving into the particulars of any specific laws, let's find out what the overall covenant is about. And whether anything has happened since its inception that may have caused it to expire, terminate, or become significantly modified.

I assume you know what I mean by the *Mosaic covenant*: the Ten Commandments delivered to Moses on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 20, and the statutes, rules and regulations God gave to Israel through Moses which implemented them. These laws are generally found in the rest of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. I also consider the Davidic covenant of 2 Sam. 7 to be an extension of the Mosaic covenant because it relates exclusively to the throne of the nation of Israel. *But for* the nation and civil government established under the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant would be meaningless.

COMMON VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

Of course, there are a variety of views as to the current status of the Mosaic covenant. For example, Catholics tend to divide the Mosaic law into three components: moral, civil, and ceremonial laws. The moral law (including the Ten Commandments) is viewed as reflecting the natural law and is still in full effect. The ceremonial law is *no longer binding* since Christ's First Advent. And the judicial law is illustrative of natural justice, but is also no longer binding. The Catholic respect for natural law and natural justice is admirable, however, I don't believe Christ's coming had any effect on the Mosaic law. Further, I reject any implication that the Mosaic law was ever binding on anyone other than the Jews.

Reformed theology also divides the Mosaic law into moral, judicial and ceremonial components. Reformed theology tends not to hold as high a view of natural law as Catholicism, though the Ten Commandments are held up as the key to understanding the Old Testament. But although the reasoning is different, the conclusions tend to be the same: the moral law continues to be viable, the ceremonial law has expired, and the judicial law is illustrative (but not binding). Again, I do not believe any part of the Mosaic law has expired, and none of it ever applied to Gentiles (non-Jews).

Further, the division of the Mosaic law into three components is completely artificial, being man-made and not God ordained. There is no statement anywhere in scripture dividing the Mosaic law into component parts. Logically, I can make the argument for dividing the Mosaic law into six or

seven components. But this is merely a human contrivance - it has no divine origin. No matter how you define the “divisions” of the law, in practice they are very difficult to parse. One law, or one verse, may contain elements from multiple divisions of the law. I suggest that’s because from a covenantal view, *the Mosaic law is one unitary whole, indivisible*. If God never announced any divisions of His laws, then why do we accept it as fact?

A significant number of both Catholic and Reformed people also argue for *supersessionism*, or *replacement theology*. Replacement theology holds that the Church has *subsumed*, or taken the place of, Israel in the future plans of God. Thus, all of the unfulfilled prophecies concerning national Israel are now to be understood as applying in a spiritual sense to the Church. Adherents of this view adopt a primarily spiritualized, or *allegorical*, reading of scripture. In their view, all prophecies pertaining to the physical restoration of Israel and promises of future physical blessings are to be understood as having a merely spiritual (non-literal) fulfillment. However, since it is possible to read all such scriptures literally without doing violence to any of them, there is simply no advantage to this view.

Dispensationalists tend to believe the death and resurrection of Christ brought about an effective suspension of the Mosaic law. Thus, the Age of Grace supplanted the Age of Law. However, this is mostly regarded as a mere suspension of the Mosaic covenant, not a termination. Many Dispensationalists believe God will restore Israel in the Millennium period (the Kingdom Age) and the Mosaic covenant will be re-instituted in some form at that time. This view is based on the idea that God dealt primarily with Israel before Christ, with the Church after Christ, and will deal mainly with Israel when Christ returns (and the Church is taken out of the way).

I believe God will physically restore Israel in the future and observance of the Mosaic covenant will resume in full. However, I reach these conclusions on an entirely different basis than Dispensationalists. The Mosaic covenant has been suspended merely as a result of the impossibility of performance brought about by the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and the scattering of the Jewish people. The suspension was brought about by *circumstances*, not a change to the *covenant*. Jesus made no changes to the covenant. I also believe the Church will not be *taken out of the way* in the sense meant by Dispensationalists (*i.e.*, by the Rapture). The Church will be fully functioning in the Kingdom Age, because God is completely capable of running two separate programs or *economies* at the same time.

These are three of the more common views on the subject. There are multiple less common positions, as well. Reconstructionists (also known as Theonomists), an offshoot of Reformed Theology, view the judicial law as applicable today in addition to the moral law. Of course, they mean this in the sense of applying to Gentiles and Christians, which the Mosaic law never did (and never will) apply to. A covenant only binds those to whom it is expressly given.

New Covenant Theology views the entire Mosaic covenant as being cancelled by Christ, and replaced by a so-called Law of Christ or New Covenant law. In other words, that Jesus ushered in a completely new law paradigm, or legal framework. I view this as utter nonsense, because God never acted in a *legislative* (law-making) *capacity* anywhere in the New Testament. When God

enacts a law, He says, “this shall be a statute for you throughout your generations,” or something similar. He never says that anywhere in the N.T., and no matter what you think of the apostles (including Paul), none of them were *legislators*. Plus, God never makes a new law and leaves its discovery to mere implication or interpretation - He comes right out and says, “Here it is.”

Dual covenant theology holds that the Mosaic covenant remains valid and binding on the Jewish people today, while the New Covenant in Christ applies to the Church at the same time. While this may appear similar to my own view, it is not the same. Dual covenant theology regards the Church covenant as applying *exclusively* to Gentiles. Therefore, the Mosaic covenant (and Judaism in general) remains the exclusive means of salvation for the Jews. However, scripture clearly indicates the Church covenant applies to individual Jews as much as any Gentile (“there is neither Jew nor Greek” in the Church). Plus, as I’ve already mentioned, the Mosaic covenant is not a *covenant of faith* - whereas dual covenant theology essentially holds that it is.

It will not here provide a comprehensive survey of all the possible views of this subject. There are obviously interpretational schemes that I have not covered - though for the most part they offer minor variations on the views already mentioned. The point is, that after 2,000 years of inquiry and debate about the matter, nearly everyone has it wrong. Mostly, theological assumptions get in the way of true understanding. For my part, I want to avoid those assumptions and just see what the scripture says.

So, while I have given you an indication of my views on this subject, what we have not yet done is examine the actual biblical evidence to see what God has said. Let’s head in that direction now.

THE DIVINE COVENANTAL PATTERN

Before tackling the Mosaic covenant head on, I’d like to set the biblical context for it. The context consists of all the *other* covenants between God and men described in scripture. When we see what characteristics they hold in common, it will help us see what characteristics to look for in examining the Mosaic covenant. I want to know whether God is consistent with Himself in the way He makes covenants with men. And why would we read the Mosaic covenant inconsistently with the way we read the other divine covenants?

Essentially, all of God’s covenants are eternal. Nothing God does covenantally is temporary. By *eternal* I mean lasting from the time of inception until the creation of the new heavens and new earth (*i.e.*, the end of history). And by *temporary* I mean terminating at any point prior to the end of history. Yes, there will be some limited covenant *modifications* occurring when the Millennium (Kingdom Age) inaugurates, but none of those will impact whether any of the divine covenants are still in effect. Nor will those modifications change any of the purposes of the divine covenants as they now stand. Also, those modifications will arise by the decree of the Almighty or by demonstrable proof of His almighty power, leaving no room for debate or subjective interpretation.

Adamic Covenant

Thus, the Dominion Mandate of the Adamic covenant (Gen. 1:28-30) did not terminate at the Fall, nor was man's dominion *lost* at that point. The curses pronounced on the man and the woman in Gen. 3 made taking dominion more *difficult* from that point onward, but the commands of the mandate itself remain unchanged. *In spite of the fact* that childbirth would become painful, women were still commanded to be fruitful and multiply. *In spite of the fact* that man would need to work for his food, he was still commanded to subdue the earth. The *conditions* of keeping the covenant had changed, but not its *terms*.

When you want to modify a mortgage, an employment contract, or any other kind of verbal agreement, how is that done? The parties get together and either make an all new verbal agreement, or they make an amendment. *It takes new words to change old words*. Just because you lost your job (a change in conditions) does not mean the terms of your mortgage have changed. Just because you move to another state does not change your credit card terms or the amount you owe. Circumstances and conditions do not create changes to the terms of a man-made agreement, much less a divine covenant. Similarly, neither curses nor blessings are an *amendment* - they just make things harder or easier.

Keep in mind that the provisions of the Adamic covenant are non-separable. By that I mean you can't separate its provisions from one another, such as by embracing the continuing mandate to bear children, but rejecting dominion. Both childbearing and dominion were spoken by God to the same people at the same time, in the same context. *It's a package deal*. Accordingly, God wants people to subdue the earth and rule over the animals as long as He wants us to make babies. And if He ever changes His mind about childbearing, He will say so, in so many words. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.

So yes, all you population worrywarts, people are still under a divine imperative to increase the population through childbirth. It is our duty, not merely an option. And yes, all you radical environmentalists, people still are large and in charge over the earth and the entire animal kingdom. No, we have not over-developed the earth, nor is there any authority for civil governments to keep any part of the land in pristine or virgin condition. No, animals are not our equals. It doesn't matter who was 'here first.' God gave people the *authority* to rule the animals, not the reverse. Animals are *things* (i.e., property), not *persons*. And we still are authorized to eat every plant yielding seed. If you don't like it, take it up with God - don't complain to me.

If you're thinking ahead, no, nothing in the Kingdom Age will reverse the curse or the Fall. People will still be born into sin (separated from God). All of the aspects of the Dominion Mandate will still be in effect. Some of the conditions will change - for example, every mountain will be laid low, and every valley raised up, leveling the earth's surface. This will undoubtedly make it *easier* for people to subdue the earth. Plus, the birthrate will explode at that time - whether it means the pain of childbirth will be relieved, the scripture does not say. But the command to be fruitful and multiply will be in full effect, unchanged. So don't assume anything is different now.

Noahic Covenant

Similarly, the Noahic covenant (Gen. 9:1-17), as well as all of its individual provisions, is eternal. There are four primary aspects of the Noahic covenant: 1) a reaffirmation of the command to bear children; 2) an authorization to eat meat (with a proviso not to eat blood); 3) the institution of capital punishment for the unauthorized shedding of blood; and 4) the sign of the rainbow as a symbol of God's promise never to destroy the earth by a flood again. (No, the Noahic covenant is not the same as the seven so-called *Noahide laws*.)

The Noahic covenant is another package deal - all its provisions were spoken by God to the same people at the same time, in the same context. You can't take capital punishment and split it off, saying in effect, "that was then, this is now." As long as the promise of the rainbow still holds (you *are* still relying on that, right?), then the command to kill murderers is still in effect. *Nothing has changed legally, that is, covenantally*. Nothing Jesus did has modified or terminated the Noahic covenant. The Noahic covenant is eternal.

For you forward thinkers, yes, there will be a future change of *conditions*. The authorization to eat meat itself came with a change in circumstances after the flood. Namely, that the friendly relations between people and animals previously would be replaced by a fear and dread. In the Millennium, that fear and dread will be rolled back, so that the relationship between people and animals will revert in large part to what it was before the flood. Whether that will affect the command to eat meat in the future, scripture does not say, and I will not speculate.

But in spite of any future change of conditions, all of the commands of the Noahic covenant will continue to apply. People will still be expected to be fruitful and multiply (and they will multiply exceedingly). People will still be expected to abstain from eating blood. Capital punishment will be enforced (most rigorously, I expect). And the promise of the rainbow will still apply. Meanwhile, for the time being, the command (yes, it's a command - imposing a duty) to eat meat is still operating. Vegetarians and vegans, better get yourselves back in compliance with the will of God.

Did I forget to mention? No one is exempt from the provisions of the Adamic and Noahic covenants. They are both binding on every single person alive today. That's because both covenants are binding on the descendants of the original parties, and everyone alive today is a descendant of both Adam and Noah. That's what happened as a result of the great flood - all the people who were not descendants of Noah were killed. And Noah, of course, was a descendant of Adam. (What - you thought those genealogies were stuck in the Bible for no good reason?)

The biblical accounts of Adam and Noah are not mere morality tales or spiritual allegories. They are *real history*, and the things God said at those times are binding agreements (divine covenants), imposing actual legal obligations on all of us who came afterwards. Here, you should begin to get a feel for the importance of how we regard the divine covenants - not just the Mosaic covenant, but all of them. These things really matter in our lives, and we need to pay attention to them.

Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic covenant is a little more complex than the prior divine covenants, seeing as how it was delivered in three parts over a span of 24 years. *See* Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 15:1-21; 17:1-14. Unlike the Adamic and Noahic covenants, the Abrahamic covenant is not applicable to all people in the world. It only applies as a legal framework to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob (*i.e.*, the nation of Israel). Nonetheless, it is an *eternal* covenant, continuing for all time (even through the Kingdom Age). Plus, the Abrahamic covenant undergirds the Mosaic covenant. That is, without the Abrahamic, the Mosaic covenant could not exist.

The Abrahamic covenant has three major purposes: 1) the promise of numerous offspring to Abraham, among them a great nation (Israel - surprise!); 2) a specific parcel of land (*i.e.*, the land of Israel) given to Abraham's offspring as an everlasting possession; and 3) an everlasting covenant with Israel, signified with the outward sign of circumcision. Both the possession of the Promised Land and the covenant with Abraham's offspring are expressly declared to be eternal (Gen. 17:7-8). The entirety of the Abrahamic covenant is ultimately directed to the nation of Israel - the same people covered by the Mosaic covenant. If the Mosaic covenant was only temporary, then why was its covenantal foundation (Abraham's covenant) expressly made everlasting?

Like the Adamic and Noahic covenants, the provisions of the Abrahamic covenant are inextricably bound together - another package deal. The promise of a great nation and the Promised Land are bundled together in Gen. 12. The promise of numerous offspring and a son of promise are bundled together with the Promised Land in Gen. 15. The everlasting covenant with Abraham's offspring and circumcision as a sign of that covenant are bundled with the everlasting possession of the Promised Land in Gen. 17. These provisions are all inseparable from each other.

The same is true for all the other provisions of the Abrahamic covenant. Thus, the blessing of all the families of the earth is bound together with the great nation (Israel) and Promised Land of Gen. 12. And the example of Abraham's faith as a model for Christians is bound together with the promise of Isaac's birth and the Promised Land in Gen. 15. You cannot separate these things. Do you consider yourself a spiritual son of Abraham (Gal. 3:7-9)? Then you must embrace the eternal viability of the nation of Israel and its unequivocal right to the land of Israel. Take the whole thing, or take none of it - but taking it piecemeal is not an option.

Historically, Israel as a nation has waxed and waned, suffering enormous persecution and many attempts at eradication. Its possession of the Promised Land has been interrupted twice - once for decades, and once for centuries. Even now, while it has regained possession of much of the Promised Land, it does not possess all of it. And most crucially, it lacks control of its most holy site - the Temple Mount. Yet, all of these will be fully restored in the Millennial period - that is the promise of scripture. So despite the changes in conditions over the years (*i.e.*, repeated dispossession), none of the purposes of the Abrahamic covenant (nor any of its *terms*) have changed. It is still in effect, and will continue to govern the nation and the land of Israel, until the end of time.

Other Divine Covenants

What more do I need to say concerning the other divine covenants of scripture, except that they follow the same pattern? The Davidic covenant (coming about 500 years after Moses) is expressly declared to be eternal. It concerns the succession to the throne of Israel by a descendant of David. “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Sam. 7:16). Like the possession of the Promised Land, the occupancy of the throne of Israel has been disrupted by *circumstances* (namely, the deportations of Israel by Assyria and Babylon). As a result, Israel’s throne has been unoccupied since 586 B.C.

Yet, the *terms* of the Davidic covenant have not changed. Thus, at the birth of Jesus, He is expressly shown to be in the royal line of David through Solomon (Mat. 1:1-16). Throughout His life, Jesus is declared to be the Son of David. Scripture names Him as both the root and branch of David. Plus, He was heralded as the King of the Jews at both His birth and His death. These all identify Him as the sole true heir of the throne of David. Now all of that only makes logical sense if the Davidic covenant - despite the change in circumstances - was still in force and effect throughout Jesus’ life.

Further, the Second Coming of Christ, and the establishment of His earthly kingdom, only make any sense at all if the Davidic covenant is indeed eternal. So, perhaps we should take 2 Sam. 7:16 at face value, and admit that this is so.

Similarly, the new covenant in Christ (a/k/a the Church covenant) is also eternal. It is hinted at in the last line of the Great Commission, when Jesus stated, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Mat. 28:20). It is also expressly declared that the ministry of Christ as head of the Church and as high priest on behalf of all who believe will be forever. (Eph. 3:21; Heb. 7:17-24). And the chief attribute of salvation under the Church covenant is the reward of *eternal life*, spoken of in John 3:15-16 and numerous other N.T. scriptures. On the flip side, the reward for those who disobey is eternal destruction, as mentioned in 2 Th. 1:5-9 and elsewhere in the N.T. Yes, the purposes of God for the Church are eternal (Eph 3:10-11).

Thus, the Davidic covenant and the Church covenant, both of which came *after* the Mosaic covenant, are eternal just like all the divine covenants that came *before* the Mosaic covenant. That would seem to suggest the likelihood of a *continuity* among the divine covenants, *i.e.*, that *all* of them (including the Mosaic covenant) are eternal.

I will take it further. The idea that God made the Mosaic covenant (or any part of it) temporary, instead of eternal like the other divine covenants, is contrary to His nature. Similarly, if He made the Mosaic covenant divisible instead of a unitary whole (*i.e.*, a package deal) like the other divine covenants, then it would also be contrary to His nature. Because God exists from everlasting to everlasting, His purposes for mankind are eternal, and His redemption and reward of believers is eternal. This is the nature of who He is. Plus God, who exists in three persons, is one indivisible God. This, too, is the nature of who He is. How could *any* of His divine covenants be anything else?

Therefore, the Mosaic covenant must also be an eternal covenant, the purposes of which remain unchanged to this day, and whose purposes will continued to be fulfilled until the end of time. Though historical circumstances have imposed various changes in conditions, and its full observance is suspended temporarily, it is as viable and effective today as it was in its inception. Nothing has happened in the last 3,500 years to change that. However, I do not wish to make this merely a matter of inference. No, the scriptures are quite explicit: all aspects of the Mosaic covenant are eternal. We're almost ready to look at these scriptures - just bear with me for one more contextual consideration.

WHAT THE MOSAIC COVENANT IS ALL ABOUT

A Civil Constitution

Earlier I made the claim that the Mosaic covenant was/is not a covenant of faith. What do I mean by that? Well, what were the stated purposes of the Mosaic covenant?

“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.” (Exo. 19:5-6).

That's it. A specially treasured nation, and eventually a kingdom of priests (not a reference to the Levitical priesthood, but to all Jews). Holy in the sense of *set apart*, not sinless or saved. What things are missing from these purposes? *Personal redemption, salvation, atonement, faith, and righteousness*. Yep, none of those are in there. Being a Jew was never obtained by faith or belief, but solely by biology - specifically, by being a descendant of the *sons of Israel*. Thus, when I speak of the *nation of Israel*, I mean it in the biblical, which is to say, an *ethnic* sense. The only members of the nation of Israel are biological descendants of Jacob/Israel.

I suggest the Mosaic covenant had, and has, a primarily national purpose, not an individual one. Namely, a national setting apart from other nations and a national identification with Jehovah God. A nation consisting of God's own people, whom He will dwell among, and who are known by God's holy name. This purpose remains unchanged. The Jewish people are still a nation uniquely set apart and identified with Jehovah. The Mosaic covenant isn't directed to individuals at all.

Also consider the context of Exo. 19:5-6. Immediately prior to this conversation, Moses had just set up a nationwide system for the administration of justice - a hierarchical system of judges. (Exo. 18:13-27). Immediately afterwards, God delivered to Moses the Ten Commandments, which according to the scripture, are the substance of the Mosaic covenant. (Exo. 34:28; Deu. 4:13). Since the Ten Commandments are the very essence of the Mosaic covenant, and the covenant is a national one, the Ten Commandments may rightly be regarded as the *national constitution* of Israel.

And of course, following the delivery of the Ten Commandments, the people of Israel were shown to the Promised Land - again serving a corporate purpose, not an individual one. Thereafter, the

throne of Israel was established with the descendants of David. A throne, by definition, does not serve an individual purpose, but a national one.

Remember the Abrahamic covenant, which the Mosaic covenant rests upon, has three chief aspects: the promise of a great nation, a national homeland, and a national covenant. Circumcision - the sign of the Abrahamic covenant - was bestowed on all of Abraham's male descendants *not* because of a profession of faith (how could they, at only 8 days of age?), but merely because of their birth into the Abrahamic line. So again, the Abrahamic covenant, which is the very foundation of the Mosaic covenant, is both national in purpose, and determined solely on the basis of biology, not faith.

I am *not* denying that Abraham was a model of individual faith, or that by keeping the Mosaic covenant one *might* come to a personal knowledge of God. These things are true. However, neither exercising the faith of Abraham, nor coming to know God through the keeping of the law made *anyone, ever, a member* of the Abrahamic covenant or of the Mosaic covenant. And the flip side, of course, is that merely by being a member of either of those covenants (*i.e.*, merely by being born a Jew) never made anyone a faithful believer or follower of God.

The Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are *not antithetical* to faith and belief, but they are *not the same* as faith and belief either. Belief, and participation in the covenant, are two different things. A person can do both, either one or neither one (if a Gentile), but faith or belief on the one hand, and membership or participation in the Mosaic covenant on the other hand, are completely separate and independent. Why do people not get this? How could God have possibly made it more plain?

A Constitutional Analogy

At this point I will borrow an analogy from my good friend, Kerry Morgan. He has pointed out that it is not difficult to show, and many people have recognized, that the U.S. Constitution was founded on covenantal principles consistent with biblical examples. Let's assume that to be true, *arguendo*. Even so, no one would say that by obeying the U.S. Constitution, founded on biblical principles, such obedience would cause a person to become saved. Why? Because being bound by the U.S. Constitution is generally not a faith proposition - no one born a U.S. citizen is required to believe in the Constitution. Plus, the Constitution is not an individual covenant, but a national one. Individual faith or belief is irrelevant to its legal effect.

Similarly, the constitution of Israel (the Mosaic covenant) is not an individual covenant, but a national one. Individual faith or belief is irrelevant to its legal effect. Merely by obeying the Mosaic covenant does not give anyone a legitimate claim to being saved. (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:11). It does not matter that the terms of the Mosaic covenant were founded on biblical principles - indeed, that they were dictated by God Himself. Faith or belief on the one hand, and membership or participation in the Mosaic covenant on the other hand, are completely separate and independent.

A Comparison of Israel and the Church

So let's recap briefly how Israel and the Church compare with each other. If you don't get this right,

you'll never understand how the Church covenant and the Mosaic covenant relate to each other.

| ISRAEL | CHURCH |
|---|---|
| A nation | An association, <i>i.e.</i> , a Body |
| Membership acquired by ancestry/birth only | Membership acquired by faith/choice only |
| Biological (physical) birth | Spiritual (second) birth |
| Covenant is corporate - "we" | Covenant is individual - "I" |
| Faith is not required to participate | Participation requires faith |
| Administered by a human priesthood | Christ is high priest - no human high priest |
| Human priesthood is a segregated class | Universal (lesser) priesthood among believers |
| A physical temple building | Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit |
| Physical circumcision is sign of the covenant | Sealed by the Holy Spirit as a sign |
| Limited to Jews only | Open to all people |
| Sins are covered only | Sins are permanently forgiven |
| Jesus is Messiah, will be earthly king | Jesus is Head of the Body and fellow-heir |

The bottom line is that Israel and the Church have NOTHING in common, except for the fact both were instituted by God. They are apples and oranges compared to each other. They will never merge, subsume, or be the same. One is a physical nation defined by biology. The other is a spiritual body defined by faith. How can Israel and the Church, or the Mosaic covenant and the Church covenant, ever be mashed together? They are completely different kinds of entities - two parallel lines that never intersect. ***Let not man join together that which God has made separate.***

No One Annuls a Divine Covenant

Admittedly, many people have become confused about this, primarily because they take texts in isolation without comparing them to the rest of scripture. Take this text from Galatians, for example:

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. (Gal. 3:23-25).

The confusion centers around the word, *we*. The text makes it sound like the same people who were under the Mosaic law are no longer under it (in some sense), once Christ came. Let us admit this is true - but who is *we*? The writer of Galatians is Paul, a Jew by birth. When he says *we*, who is

he referring to? All Christians, Jew and Gentile alike? *No* - that is impossible. Paul is writing on behalf of himself and the brothers who were with him (Gal. 1:2), of whom he says, "We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners." (Gal. 2:15). Don't just shrug this off - this is key.

Paul wrote on behalf of himself - a Jewish believer - and his fellow Jewish believers. For them, yes certainly, they were born under the Mosaic law. That does *not* mean that you and I, as Gentile believers, are in the same position he was. The work and ministry of Christ will affect us the same, but the relationship we have to the Mosaic covenant is *not* the same. He was under it - we are not, and our ancestors never were, either. The Mosaic covenant was given exclusively to the Jews. You don't become subject to the Mosaic covenant by *choice* - you become subject by *birth*, that is, by being born as a biological Jew.

So in what sense were Paul and his Jewish brothers no longer under a guardian (or tutor)? In the sense that they no longer needed a mere shadow of things to come to lead them to Christ, because Christ has already come. Was Paul, by this statement (*we are no longer under a guardian*) asserting that he was no longer governed by the Mosaic covenant? Hardly. Just a few verses earlier, Paul wrote,

To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, *no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified*. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, *does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God*, so as to make the promise void. (Gal. 3:15-17).

Do you really think Paul was taking the position that the Mosaic law - a God-made covenant - was more susceptible to annulment (less ironclad) than a human covenant? Or that adding to a covenant was bad, but subtracting from it was OK? Rev. 22:18-19 would seem to mitigate against that view.

The point Paul was making is that the Mosaic covenant did not terminate the Abrahamic covenant just because it came along later. No one annuls a covenant ratified by God, *not even God*. Instead of bringing the Abrahamic covenant to an end, one can easily argue the Mosaic covenant (and the Davidic covenant as well) actually *came under the umbrella* of the promises made to Abraham. Thereby strengthening and reinforcing them, not annulling them.

The implication of Gal. 3, of course, is that the new covenant in Christ did not annul the promises given to Abraham (and Moses) either.

Remember also, that Paul is the guy who wrote this: "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised (*i.e.*, the Jews) to show God's truthfulness, *in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs*." (Rom. 15:8). Paul knew that nothing Christ did annulled the Mosaic covenant. He wasn't about to contradict that in writing Galatians. You have to read Galatians 3 in the light of the entirety of scripture - not in isolation, and not in contradiction. Part of that broader context is the expressly stated eternal duration of the Mosaic covenant, considered next.

THE MOSAIC COVENANT IS EXPRESSLY MADE ETERNAL

God doesn't make mistakes. He never has a Plan B, or a contingency plan. Nothing catches Him by surprise, ever. He doesn't have to guess what will happen in the future, and in the strict sense of the word, God never makes *predictions*. What I mean is that God transcends time - He is not bound by it. He exists in the past, present and future all at once. He does need to wait and see what happens in the future - He has already been there, and has already seen it. So when God speaks of the future, why would he say anything - *ever* - except that which He already knows for an absolute certainty will take place exactly as He says? And if God says something is everlasting or eternal - knowing already exactly how long it will last - why would He say anything other than the absolute truth?

Before the Fact

The underlying foundation of the Mosaic covenant, God's covenant with Abraham (confirmed to Isaac and Jacob) is eternal. Here is some of the scriptural evidence:

“And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an ***everlasting covenant***, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you ... all the land of Canaan, for an ***everlasting possession***, and I will be their God.” (Gen. 17:7-8).

God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an ***everlasting covenant*** for his offspring after him.” (Gen. 17:19). *See also*, Gen. 26:2-5.

And God said to [Jacob], “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you.” (Gen. 35:11-12).

And Jacob said to Joseph, “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an ***everlasting possession***.’” (Gen. 48:3-4).

Remember his ***covenant forever***, the word that he commanded, for ***a thousand generations***, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed as a statute to Jacob, as an ***everlasting covenant*** to Israel. (1 Chr. 16:15-17).

By Its Terms

Not surprisingly, when God gives His covenant and laws to the nation of Israel, He declares them to be eternal numerous times. For example, the Sabbath, springing from the creation of the world

as it does, is part of the law of nature for everyone. But under the Mosaic law, the Jews were given specific additional obligations regarding the Sabbath that were unique to them, including the death penalty. This is a special sign between God and the people of Israel *forever*. I think God probably knows what *forever* means. Do you?

You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath ***throughout their generations, as a covenant forever***. It is a sign ***forever*** between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed. (Exo. 31:14-17).

The land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is to be Israel's possession forever.

“Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it ***forever***.’” (Exo. 32:13).

Israel is God's chosen people forever.

“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ... Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to ***a thousand generations***” (Deu. 7:6, 9).

He remembers his ***covenant forever***, the word that he commanded, for ***a thousand generations***, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an ***everlasting covenant***. (Ps. 105:8-10).

In the history of the world there were only 77 generations from Adam until Jesus (4,000 years, for an average of 52 years per generation) according to Lk. 3:23-38. Since Jesus (2,000 years ago) there have been no more than 80 generations, allowing for 25 years per generation. Thus, there have been only a *maximum* of 157 generations since Adam. At that rate, it will take *at least* another 21,075 years from now before there will have been 1,000 generations of people. Actually, however, we have to count a thousand generations from the time of Moses (*i.e.*, Deu. 7:9), not Adam, adding another 2,500 years to the calculation. So effectively, *a thousand generations* means *forever*. But quite literally, it means that God's covenant with Israel can't have ended already, because we are still so far away from having it be in effect for a thousand generations.

However, did you know the Levitical priesthood and the priestly portion originating under the

Mosaic covenant are also eternal? That's right - what I'm saying is the ceremonial law of the Mosaic covenant is expressly made eternal.

“And you shall gird Aaron and his sons with sashes and bind caps on them. And the priesthood shall be theirs by *a statute forever*.” (Exo. 29:9).

Then the Lord spoke to Aaron, "Behold, I have given you charge of the contributions made to me, all the consecrated things of the people of Israel. I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as *a perpetual due*. ... All the holy contributions that the people of Israel present to the Lord I give to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as *a perpetual due*." (Num. 18:8, 19).

And the Lord said to Moses, “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace, and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of *a perpetual priesthood*, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel.’” (Num. 25:10-13).

Then David said that no one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, for the Lord had chosen them to carry the ark of the Lord and to minister to him *forever*. (1 Ch. 15:2).

More Perpetual Statutes

In addition to the instances mentioned above, there are numerous times in the scriptures where specific laws under the Mosaic covenant are designated as *statutes forever*. Here is a partial list (go ahead - check out the references yourself):

- Passover / Feast of Unleavened Bread. (Exo. 12:14, 17, 24.)
- Tending of the priestly lamp. (Exo. 27:21.)
- Priestly clothes. (Exo. 28:43.)
- Ritual washing. (Exo. 30:21.)
- Don't eat fat or blood. (Lev. 3:17.)
- Priestly prohibition of wine and strong drink. (Lev. 10:9.)
- Day of Atonement. (Lev. 16:29, 31, 34; 23:31.)
- Peace offerings. (Lev. 17:7.)
- Feast of Firstfruits. (Lev. 23:14.)
- Feast of Weeks. (Lev. 23:21.)
- Feast of Booths. (Lev. 23:41.)
- The showbread. (Lev. 24:5, 8-9.)
- Manner of sacrifices. (Num. 15:15.)
- Ritual impurity. (Num. 19:21.)

Also consider the words of the Psalmist, who wrote:

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord! ...
I incline my heart to perform your *statutes forever*, to the end. (Ps. 119:1, 112.)

Notice how many of these *forever statutes* relate to the so-called ceremonial law: all the statutes relating to priests and Levites, feasts, rituals, sacrifices and the tabernacle/temple. *That's most of them, by far.* What's the point? If the ceremonial law is eternal, how likely is it that the rest of the Mosaic law will also be eternal? *Pretty darn likely.*

I can see the wheels spinning in your head as you consider these various scriptures. You're trying desperately to figure out how the words *forever*, *perpetual*, *everlasting*, and *irrevocable* can't possibly be taken literally, and yet you still want to hold yourself out as being a biblical literalist. A little fudging for the sake of a good systematic theology is OK every once in a while, right? Well, there are a couple of problems with that.

First, God never fudges. God doesn't have *near misses*, He is never *mostly right*, and He is not *almost perfect*. Nor does God exaggerate, use hyperbole, or allow for unforeseen contingencies. God is precise, accurate, and never wrong. God is the one who demands that his prophets be 100% accurate (Dt. 18:20-22). That's because God Himself is 100% accurate, and anyone speaking the words of God cannot be wrong.

I want you to think *very carefully*. If God meant only that the Mosaic covenant would last roughly 1,500 years (the time from Moses to Christ) when He said it was a *covenant forever*, would that be a lie? If God said the Mosaic covenant was forever, yet He not only knew, but had already seen, that it would last only about 1,500 years, how could that *not* be a lie? All God had to do was say that the covenant would last *until the Messiah came*. But He did not say that. So I ask you - Is God a liar? "God is not a man, that He should lie." (Num. 23:19).

Oh, but you may say, God was speaking *allegorically* - as if that actually explains anything at all. Let me ask you - in any of the instances where God said the Mosaic covenant would last forever, are they presented in a metaphorical context? Is symbolic language being used? Was God speaking merely illustratively? Did the people who heard God's words understand them in a figurative sense? No, no, no and no. If you are reading the preceding verses allegorically, then allow me to suggest you are merely trying to avoid the plain meaning of the words. Call it what you want - I call it fudging.

Second, let's just say, hypothetically, that God actually wanted to say the Mosaic covenant and the Mosaic law were, in fact, *eternal*. (As opposed to what you might think the scriptures mean.) What words would/could/should God have used - you know, instead of the words He actually did use - to convey unambiguously that He meant *eternal*? What words conveying the concept of eternity are so completely clear that no one could possibly misinterpret them? What are the idiot-proof words meaning *eternal* that no one could ever misconstrue - if not the words *forever*, *perpetual*, *everlasting*, and *irrevocable*?

You do realize there are no such words, right? So that if God actually wanted to say the Mosaic

covenant is eternal, He would have used the exact words He really did use. So maybe, by using the words He did, that's what He really meant to say. Suppose the Mosaic covenant really is eternal. How would that be a problem? As we will see (keep reading), it isn't.

After the Fact

Roughly 900 years after the Mosaic covenant was first given, God showed Jeremiah that He was not finished with the nation of Israel yet. This, in spite of their imminent deportation, the destruction of Jerusalem and their temple, and the scattering of the people. Chief among God's promises at that time was the promise of a new covenant with the nation of Israel. This new covenant would modify or perfect the Mosaic covenant and make Israel suitable for a renewed purpose.

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. 31:31-34).

Notice this new covenant cannot possibly refer to the new covenant in Christ, or the Church covenant, because it is expressly made applicable only to “the house of Israel and the house of Judah.” Plus, it was spoken 600 years before the Church even existed. What this new covenant affirms is that God has an everlasting covenant with the sons of Israel and their offspring, *as a nation*. They will never lose their national identity. They will never be absorbed or subsumed by the Church, *as long as the sun, moon and stars remain in the heavens*.

Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar, the Lord of hosts is his name: If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever. Thus says the Lord: If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done. (Jer. 31:35-37).

It makes sense, that if God's relationship with national Israel will last forever, then the tribal divisions which are part and parcel of the identity of national Israel, will also last forever. A key attribute of this tribal division is the separation of the Levites from the other tribes. It should be no surprise, then, that the duration of the Levitical priesthood is tied to the duration of the Davidic covenant, since both are tied to the identity of national Israel. However long Christ's claim to the throne of David is in effect, then so is the Levitical priesthood in effect.

Thus says the Lord: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, then also my covenant with David my servant may be broken, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, *and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers.* (Jer. 33:20-21).

Paul, for his part, wanted to assure Jewish believers that notwithstanding the advent of the Church covenant, God's promises concerning the nation of Israel had not changed.

Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are *irrevocable.* (Rom. 11:25-29).

Thus, from one end of scripture to the other, God's testimony concerning the permanence of His promises to Israel remain perfectly consistent. His covenant with them will last *forever.*

NOTHING IN HISTORY HAS ENDED THE MOSAIC COVENANT

Now, let's deal with some common objections. That is, the idea that even though the Mosaic covenant started out with eternity in mind, things happened afterward that altered, modified and/or completely terminated it.

There are three primary circumstances people point to as bringing about these covenantal alterations: 1) Israel clearly broke the Mosaic covenant; 2) the death and resurrection of Christ obsoleted the Mosaic covenant; and 3) the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. brought the Mosaic covenant to an end in practical terms. Let's examine each of these in turn.

The Mosaic Covenant As A "Broken Covenant"

Again the Lord said to me, "A conspiracy exists among the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words. They have gone after other gods to serve them. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have *broken my covenant* that I made with their fathers." (Jer. 11:9-10).

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, *my covenant that they broke*, though I was their husband, declares the Lord." Jer. 31:31-32.

Let me concede that the Mosaic covenant has indeed been broken. But again, nothing about this took God by surprise. Israel's breaking of the covenant was foretold long beforehand during Moses' lifetime.

And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and *break my covenant* that I have made with them. Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and ... many evils and troubles will come upon them. ... For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give." (Dt 31:16-17, 21).

And we know that from the time of the judges until the Babylonian captivity, the people of Israel pursued idolatry as predicted.

But what is the significance of this broken covenant? When a person "breaks" a law, what does that mean? Say you drive over the speed limit and get a speeding ticket. You have broken the law, and now you must pay a fine. But what happens to the traffic law *itself*? Because you have broken (*i.e., violated*) the law, is the law itself now altered, suspended or terminated? No, of course not. It continues unchanged. The operation of the traffic laws do not depend on whether you keep (obey) them, or break (violate) them. Your actions of non-compliance do nothing to the existence or efficacy of the traffic laws.

So to say that the Mosaic law is a "broken covenant" is to say nothing more than Israel, as a nation, has *violated* the terms of the covenant. But what of the covenant itself? Has it been altered, suspended or terminated? No - it continues unchanged. Israel can do nothing, by its own conduct or volition, to alter, suspend or terminate God's covenant with them. The covenant is eternal, notwithstanding Israel's non-compliance. Israel's compliance is, in fact, *irrelevant* to the question of the *status of the covenant*.

So what things actually change the status of a law? As for traffic laws, only the actions of the legislature - not individual drivers - can actually change the laws. Similarly, as for the Mosaic covenant, only the *lawgiver of the nation* (*i.e., God*, as per Isa. 33:22) can change the covenant. So the covenant continues unchanged unless God acts legislatively to change it. And, I suggest, there is nothing in scripture to suggest that God has acted *legislatively* to change the Mosaic law. Just the opposite, in fact - all the evidence points to an eternal duration, not a temporary one.

Look at the text from Deut. 31 again. God knew Israel would break His covenant with them. But did that change any of God's plans? Did He refuse to take them to the Promised Land and deliver possession to them? No - He immediately commissioned Joshua to take over for Moses and do that very thing. (Dt. 31:23.) God promised that when Israel broke the covenant, "many evils and troubles will come upon them." More curses, as it were. But did that mean God was altering the terms of the covenant He made with Abraham, confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, and delivered to Israel as an everlasting covenant? Not at all. All the promises God made were fulfilled to the letter.

What did change? What changed was the amount of difficulties Israel would experience as God fulfilled His promises. Remember, the blessings of God were *contingent* on Israel's obedience. (Dt. 28:1-2.) If Israel was disobedient (*i.e.*, if it broke the covenant), it would experience curses rather than blessings. (Dt. 28:15.) However, whether Israel obeyed or disobeyed, or kept the covenant or broke the covenant, *the covenant would still exist and be operational.*

It is reminiscent of the Fall, in Gen. 3. Sure, the Fall brought curses on the man, the woman, and the serpent. But none of that changed the terms of the Adamic covenant. People were still under a duty to be fruitful and multiply, to rule over and subdue the earth, and to have dominion over the animal kingdom. The circumstances became more difficult, but the objects or purposes of the Adamic covenant remained unaltered. Same thing for the Mosaic covenant.

Another way of looking at it is to say that even though Israel broke the Mosaic covenant *on their end*, God never broke the Mosaic covenant *on His end*. Before the fact, God promised that Israel's disobedience would have no effect on His upholding of the covenant between them.

“Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and *break my covenant* with them, for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord.” (Lev. 26:44-45).

And after the fact, God reiterated that this was the case. Review again the words of Jer. 31:35-37, where God said that *the offspring of Israel would not cease from being a nation before Him forever, nor would they be cast off for all that they have done*, as long as the sun, moon and stars remain in the heavens. Last time I looked, the sun, moon and stars were still there - you know, in the heavens.

So, no, the fact that Israel broke the Mosaic covenant did not alter, suspend or terminate it.

Jesus Did Not Abolish The Law

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Mat. 5:17-19).

I am constantly amazed at how this text is blatantly misconstrued, sloppily misinterpreted, and deceptively manipulated. *First*, we have to define what - in this context - the word *Law* means. Potentially, it means the entirety of the Mosaic covenant, just as the entire Pentateuch (Genesis through Deuteronomy) are considered the books of *the Law*. Such a reading is consistent with other New Testament references to *the law*, such as in Rom. 3:19-21. So let's adopt that meaning for now. I think you'll see this meaning is confirmed when we look at verse 18 (below).

Second, we must contend with what it means for Christ to *fulfill* the Law and Prophets. By definition, it *cannot* mean that Christ abolished either of them, because He expressly disavowed that possibility (twice) in verse 17. Many, perhaps most, Christians view the word *fulfill* as meaning that Jesus *completed* the law. But in this there is a sleight of hand. Because what does it mean for Jesus to *complete* the law, except to say that what He has completed, is no longer necessary or in effect?

I confess, I am at a loss to describe, define or distinguish how this manner of *completion* is any different from an *abolition*. If something is rendered unnecessary or ineffective, how is it not abolished? What - God rendered the law unnecessary, and then kept it around *dead as a doornail* just so He could say it had not been abolished? What good is a dead law? And how is a dead law still around?

Actually, there is another equally valid, but distinct, definition for the word *fulfill*. Go ahead - look up its definition in any standard dictionary or online search engine. Definitions are: “1) bring to completion or reality; achieve or realize (something desired, promised, or predicted); and 2) carry out (a task, duty, or role) as required, pledged, or expected.” (Definitions provided by Bing.com.) Aha! - more sloppiness. Why do interpreters rarely, if ever, cite the second definition?

In other words, when Jesus came to *fulfill* the law, it means He came to carry out or *obey* the law as required or expected. And isn't that exactly what He did - the man who knew no sin? He completely obeyed the law, and in *this manner* fulfilled it. You know - in the way no one else could. That's what made Him special. And by obeying the law completely, He changed not one *iota* of it. That's right, friends, Christ came to *confirm* the promises given to the patriarchs (including Moses). (Rom. 15:8). He meant what He said.

And verse 18 (“not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished”) precludes the possibility that Jesus' words can be construed to mean that *some* of the law has been abolished (such as the ceremonial law), while the rest of it remains intact. When He said He did not come to abolish *the law*, He meant *not any part of it*, not even a single stroke or a dot. And the ceremonial law is at least a stroke or a dot, isn't it? Therefore, Jesus *must* have had *all* of the Law in view.

Strange, isn't it, the widespread belief among Christians of all stripes that the ceremonial portion of the Mosaic law has ended? Yet Jesus expressly denied He came to do that. All people have to do is adopt the second meaning of *fulfill* in order to avoid making Jesus a liar. But for the most part, they do not. And on goes the universal charade that Jesus somehow completed the ceremonial law (bringing it to an end) without abolishing it. Whether this fraud is being perpetrated intentionally or ignorantly by others, don't *you* get caught in the error.

Third, if I were you, I'd take the warning in Mat. 5:19 seriously. Being called least in the kingdom of heaven is something I know I don't want to be saddled with for eternity. Granted, this warning has a limited context. That is, “whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments [of the Mosaic law] and teaches others to do the same” probably doesn't apply to Gentiles teaching other Gentiles. It would be pretty hard for any Gentile to “relax” a law he or she is not bound to obey to begin with. And the admonition against “teaching others to do the same” would only apply to

teaching biological Jews who also happen to be Christians, *i.e.*, Messianic believers.

So the question for Gentile Christians is whether they paint with too broad a brush - assuming every believer in their local church is a Gentile, when that may not be true. Sure, many Messianic believers belong to a Messianic assembly. But that doesn't mean every believer in every non-Messianic church is a Gentile. The risk is if the message goes out from the pulpit, or a Sunday School class, that the judicial and/or ceremonial laws of the Mosaic covenant have ended (when they have not), then this could lead any biological Jews in the congregation into confusion or error (sin). Which would bring about the conditions of the warning in Mat. 5:19. In other words, telling a biological Jew that the commandments of the ceremonial law have been relaxed is exactly the problem verse 19 addresses. *Therefore, don't do it.* Preachers and teachers - be warned.

Fourth, Jesus said He did not "come to abolish the Law *or the Prophets.*" What significance is it, that Jesus did not abolish the Prophets? You might think He is mainly referring to prophecies concerning Himself. However, the Law and the Prophets are another package deal. Recall that the Law was the law of only one nation, Israel. Much of the content of *the Prophets* is directed to the nation of Israel, as well. In other words, protecting the viability of the Law benefits who? Israel, and Israel alone. What if protecting the viability of the Prophets by Jesus has the same goal?

It would make no sense whatsoever to ensure the Law of Israel would continue, if the people of Israel did not also continue, *as a nation*. The Mosaic covenant was not given to the Jewish people as individuals, but to Israel as a national entity. It is not enough for the biological line to continue - the nation itself is an integral part of the Mosaic covenant. And the Bible is full of prophecies concerning national Israel - its scattering, its regathering, its restoration and prominence, and its future glory as the preeminent nation of the world. Where are these prophecies to be found? In the *Prophets*.

Do you see how it all fits together? The Law and the Prophets don't merely foretell about Jesus - they are both chiefly concerned with the nation of Israel. Of course Jesus, as the king and high priest of future national Israel, will play a prominent role in the fulfillment of those prophecies. But, as I said, it's a package deal. Jesus came to *obey* (fulfill) the Law, and to *complete* (fulfill) the Prophets, neither of which has ended. The Law and the Prophets are all about Israel, folks. Jesus knew that.

DECOUPLING THE BEGINNING FROM THE END

Now it's time to go to the next logical step. Since Israel and the Church are completely different kinds of entities, *the beginning of the Church cannot possibly have any impact on the existence of Israel or its governing covenant*. How can a community of faith by its inauguration terminate the biological descendants of Jacob? It cannot. So then how can the Church covenant (a *faith* covenant) terminate Israel's covenant (a *biological* covenant)? It cannot.

We need to decouple the Mosaic covenant from the Church age. That is, we need to separate and forever dissociate the end of the first from the beginning of the second. Instead of assuming the

beginning of the Church brought the Mosaic law to an end, why not understand the Church as merely being added to what already pre-existed?

It's not as though this hasn't already happened. The Adamic and Noahic covenants, as I already mentioned, apply to every person on earth today, since we are all descendants of both Adam and Noah. When the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants came along, they related solely to the nation of Israel - a new covenantal paradigm, of sorts (applying to one nation instead of all). Did that new covenantal paradigm suspend, modify, or terminate the previous covenants applicable to all nations? Not at all. So why would the introduction of the Church covenant (a divine covenant not tied to any one or more nations, but directed solely to individuals) have any different impact on what came before? In other words, no impact?

Looking forward to the Kingdom Age, we can anticipate that when the new covenant with Israel finally goes into effect (discussed next), it will have no impact on the Church covenant. After all, the Church covenant is both eternal and perfect, needing no modification, right? You don't really think that when the Millennium comes, God is going to throw the entire Gentile world under the jurisdiction of the Mosaic law and religious Judaism, do you? No, of course not - the Gentile world will at that time remain subject to the Church covenant. Then - as now - the Mosaic covenant and Church covenant will both keep running together in perpetuity - not intertwined or commingled, but in parallel, separately. Although, admittedly, Judaism in the Millennium will not be completely old-style Judaism - it will acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and universal Savior.

Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood ... what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek...? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. (Heb. 7:11-12).

Was the law of priesthoods changed when Christ arose after the order of Melchizedek? Yes. Was the nature of that change a termination? *No*. What was the nature of the change? An *addition*. The priesthood of Christ was given to the Church, while the Levitical priesthood continues to function for the Jews. Both exist at the same time, and both are in full operation today. Why can't they operate on different people for different purposes at the same time? The only reason I have ever heard anyone suggest is that God can't deal with the Jews and the Church at the same time. *Says who?* What - your God isn't big enough to be able to do two things at once?

The New Covenant With Israel

Now let's look at one of the principal texts people point to for the proposition that the Mosaic covenant has been made obsolete.

For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first

covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away. (Heb 8:5-13).

The key to understanding this text is rightly understanding the quotation of Jer. 31:31-34 - a text I cited a few pages back. If you recall, I cited Jeremiah for the idea that God isn't done with Israel yet, because He will deal with them in a new covenantal way during the future Millennium. This new covenant with Israel will bring about a perfection of the Mosaic covenant during the earthly kingdom of Christ. It will be a form of covenant modification - but *continuing* the Mosaic covenant, not terminating it.

However, a large number of Christians worldwide do not believe this. Those who hold to a mainly allegorical interpretation of scripture believe God is almost exclusively concerned with spiritual things, not physical or temporal things. The logical consequence of which is that there will never be an earthly kingdom of Christ - all references to such in the Bible are taken to refer to heaven, that is, in eternity. This is the so-called amillennial (*i.e.*, “no millennium”) view. From this viewpoint, Jer. 31:31-34 will never be fulfilled in any literal or physical sense during human history.

On the other hand, those who believe the Church has subsumed or replaced national Israel in unfulfilled prophecy view this scripture as being fulfilled in the present, but (again) only in a spiritual sense. In other words, fulfillment relates to the Church, not the Jews. Such people view Heb. 8 as proof that the Church has fulfilled this particular prophecy. So between these two viewpoints, many Christians simply do not accept the idea that this text in Heb. 8 refers to Israel as a nation in future history.

I just ask that you consider whether the actual words of the text should be taken in a literal sense. Take the opening sentence: “I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made [when I brought them out of Egypt].” First, does God know who the houses of Israel and Judah are, or does He not? Assuming He does know, why would He refer to them as a way of actually referring to the Church? Was God ignorant of His own plans to create the Church, or was He just being deceptive and/or a liar? Where in the Bible are the

Church and the houses of Israel and Judah used as equivalent terms? (*Psst* - nowhere.)

At what point in time was the Church brought out of the land of Egypt? When did the Church no longer “continue in my covenant,” that is, break its covenant with God? Jeremiah says, “I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts.” Where is the evidence that the laws of God are fully - at this moment - written on the hearts and minds of Christians? The obvious purpose of the prophecy in Jer. 31 is that the participants in this new covenant will be noticeably different from everyone else in their knowledge of God and His laws. Is it even conceivable that Christians today are marked in this way?

When was the last time you had a vigorous discussion of God’s laws with other believers - each of whom had an intimate knowledge of the subject? When was the last time all the believers you know were in complete and full agreement about the specific content of God’s laws because it was burned into everyone’s heart and mind the same way? You and I both know that never happened. To read the prophecy in this way - that is, as being currently fulfilled and manifest in present-day Christians - is to gut all the words of the prophecy of having any real meaning. It makes the entire text a sham prophecy. And I’m simply not going in that direction.

Eventual Amendment Of The Mosaic Covenant

So let’s assume the Jer. 31 prophecy applies solely to national Israel, not the Church. Also that it has not been fulfilled yet - because if it had, then all Jews would now be saved (see v. 12: “and I will remember their sins no more”). *See also*, Rom. 11:25-26. With that understanding in mind, now let’s look at the other verses in Heb. 8. Fundamentally, we know that the reason why the Jer. 31 prophecy is quoted here in Heb. 8 *cannot* be for the reason of showing that Jer. 31 has already been fulfilled. It must be quoted for some other purpose.

Start with verse 7: “For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.” What is the *first covenant*? The Mosaic covenant. How do we know this? That is what verse 5 tells us - “For when Moses was about to erect the tent.” What is the *second covenant*? The New Covenant with Israel - *not* the Church covenant. That is why Jer. 31 is quoted - to remind the reader what the second covenant is. The writer of Hebrews is comparing the Mosaic covenant (with Israel) with a future covenant (with Israel) for one basic reason: *to show that the Mosaic law was imperfect from the beginning, and needed to be upgraded (modified) someday.*

But, surprise, surprise! The Church covenant isn’t what modified the Mosaic covenant. The *New Covenant with Israel* is what will modify the Mosaic covenant. Then in verse 6 the Mosaic covenant is compared to the covenant mediated by Christ (the Church covenant), and predictably, the Church covenant is better than the Mosaic covenant. Better in what way? Whereas the Mosaic covenant was imperfect from the beginning, the Church covenant was perfect, therefore the Church covenant will never need to be modified. There - comparison complete.

But, wait! Even though Christ came and offered a covenant made on better promises than the Mosaic covenant, *that still doesn’t solve Israel’s problem.* What problem? The one mentioned in

Romans: “a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” (Rom. 11:25). Merely because the Church covenant is *better*, does not mean the Jews (as a nation) will turn to Christ. They are going to need an extra push. That push will not come until *the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*. When that happens, then the New Covenant with Israel will be implemented.

I said earlier that “it takes new words to change old words.” Actually, to be more accurate, *it takes new words of agreement to change old words of agreement*. It is common for people to think of God as a benevolent dictator. That is, since God is the ultimate sovereign, people really have no choice but to accept His terms in any divine covenant. However, that is only partially true. People do not have the power to *negotiate* terms with God, as such. Nonetheless, God does not *force* anyone to accept His terms - He waits for people to *accept* His terms before the covenant begins.

Sometimes this acceptance is implied by conduct, whether by Noah building an ark (which he was not forced to do), or by Abraham going to the land God would show him, etc. Under the Church covenant, God does not force salvation on anyone, but He extends the gift of grace to all those who believe and accept it. And one thing we know for darn sure is that the people of Israel accepted the Mosaic covenant not by implication or conduct, but by express *verbal consent*. “Then [Moses] took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.’” (Exo. 24:7). *See also*, Exo. 19:8; 24:3.

What I am suggesting here is that in order for the Mosaic covenant to be amended in any way, as to any part, it would take: 1) God verbally informing the Jews of the exact terms of the amendment; and 2) the Jews, *as a nation*, to verbally consent to the change(s). Of course, neither of those things has ever happened yet. Therefore, the Mosaic covenant simply cannot ever have been amended (much less terminated) as to any part - yet. An amendment requires consent by the Jews, period.

The caveat, of course, is when the New Covenant with Israel is implemented, that consent will occur. Jer. 31:31-34 has already announced the terms of the amendment. When Jesus returns and all Israel will be saved, then the Jews will, *as a nation* (with the laws of God written on their hearts) give their verbal consent. So until that happens, the Mosaic covenant continues unchanged.

Which brings us to verse 13. “In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.” Note what the text does *not* say: The Mosaic law (first covenant) has *become* obsolete, has *grown* old and *vanished*. ***None of the verbs in Heb. 8:13 are in the past tense***. They are all in the future tense. *Becoming* obsolete, not *become* obsolete. *Is growing* old, not *has grown* old. *Is ready to vanish* away, not *vanished* away.

Therefore, Heb. 8 does not say the Mosaic covenant is obsolete. It was/is imperfect, it is in need of upgrading someday, and in that sense it *anticipates* becoming obsolete, but it won’t actually be altered or obsoleted until Jer. 31:31-34 is fulfilled. And that won’t happen until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (*i.e.*, Jesus returns).

If the Mosaic covenant were already obsolete *now*, it would have been obsolete when Hebrews was written, and the verb tenses in Heb. 8:13 would all be different. Which means that as of right now - today - the Mosaic covenant is still alive and kicking. *The reports of its death have been greatly exaggerated.*

The Destruction of Jerusalem In 70 A.D.

Some Christians point to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. as the final nail in the coffin that rendered the Mosaic covenant terminated or obsolete. They view the death and resurrection of Christ as spiritually declaring (or predicting) the demise of Judaism. Jerusalem's destruction is seen as implementing a physical completion or realization of the spiritual reality. Heb. 8:13, which speaks of the Mosaic covenant as *becoming obsolete* in the future, is taken as being fulfilled in 70 A.D. As the argument goes, the book of Hebrews was written about 68 A.D., so Heb. 8:13 was a prediction which was fulfilled two years later. Thus, there was a 40 year overlap between the beginning of the Church covenant and the end of the Mosaic covenant.

Still others, among them preterists, post-millennialists, and some supersessionists, believe that Jerusalem's destruction fulfilled most biblical prophecies concerning the Tribulation, and the Millennium actually began at that time. In other words, we are now in the period of the earthly kingdom of Christ, the Kingdom Age.

Granted, the destruction of Jerusalem had a tremendous impact on the practice of Judaism and the ability of Jews to carry out the requirements of the Mosaic covenant. This is due to the destruction of the temple and the concurrent dispossession of the Jews from the Promised Land. We Gentiles don't often realize it, but many of the laws of Israel were directly tied to living *in the land* of promise:

“Therefore you shall do my statutes and keep my rules and perform them, and then you will dwell *in the land* securely.” (Lev. 25:18.)

“See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them *in the land* that you are entering to take possession of it.” (Dt. 4:5.)

The practical effect of dispossession from the land is that many of the Mosaic laws are impossible to perform in a full or literal sense anywhere else. Thus, before the statehood of Israel in 1948, it was impossible for Jews anywhere to keep many of the Mosaic laws as written. Even now, many laws (such as the land laws of Lev. 25) are not observed in spite of the fact it might be physically possible to do so. I know of no particular reason why the Jews could not set up a monarchy (*i.e.*, a throne) in their nation at this time - except they have chosen not to do so. Yet, many laws are still physically impossible to perform at this time.

I'm talking about the bulk of ceremonial laws - particularly the laws of sacrifices - which can only be performed on a regulation altar constructed on the Temple Mount. There is no such altar, even today. Although Israel claims ownership of the Temple Mount, they do not have possession -

possession is controlled by the Muslims, with their Dome of the Rock. That is why there is constant tension concerning access of the Temple Mount by Jews. They simply cannot erect an official altar anywhere else but in the very spot where the former holy of holies stood. So the sacrifices called for by the Mosaic laws remain un-offered by the Jews to this day.

For the Jews' part, they are desperate to resume possession and control of the Temple Mount so sacrifices may resume. Even though the *temple* was destroyed, the priests and Levites designated under the Mosaic covenant still exist. And the Jews are ready, at this very moment, to resume full temple services as soon as they get back functional control of the Temple Mount. The temple implements, priestly clothing, Levites and descendants of Aaron, are all standing ready to resume full operation. Have you never heard of the *Temple Institute* and the *Temple Mount Faithful* (officially, the Temple Mount and Eretz Yisrael Faithful Movement)?

So, what are we to make - in terms of scriptural interpretation - of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.? One thing we have to be careful to avoid is being held captive ideologically to interpretations of scripture that were based on past perspectives. I am speaking here of the view of many Christians before 1948 (the statehood of modern Israel). For 1,878 years, all Christians could see was that Jerusalem had been destroyed and the Jews were scattered around the globe. The longer time went on, the more it seemed certain that Israel would never be revived, and the Jews would never return to the Promised Land. Sure, the words of the various biblical prophecies concerning Israel's restoration were there for all to read, but there was (as yet) no *evidence* that they would be fulfilled literally.

The writings of biblical commentators and prophecy "experts" who lived before 1948 still exist, and influence some scholars yet today. But we are not in the same position today as those people. We have actual and significant evidence that the Jews will be regathered and the nation fully restored. The statehood of Israel is not a complete fulfillment of biblical prophecies regarding Israel's restoration by any means. This is mainly because the prophecies require a spiritual awakening among the Jews at the same time. But the statehood of Israel lends credence to the belief that fulfillment is imminent. The Jewish temple will be rebuilt and sacrifices will resume - not because overzealous Christians want to see their own views of end times prophecies fulfilled - but because the Jews are driven to make them so.

The desire of the Jews and their confrontations with the Muslims and Arabs are not lessening or going away - they are increasing and coming to a head. The Jews are not simply going to allow the Muslims to control the Temple Mount in perpetuity, while Israel controls all the land around it. At some point, the Jews will regain control, and there will likely be a war about it.

But prophecy aside, from a covenantal perspective, I see the destruction of Jerusalem as merely a change in conditions, or circumstances only - just like others we have seen. Just because those conditions have persisted for a long time, does not mean they are permanent. The fullness of the Gentiles *will* come to a close. Or as Luke put it, "Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." (Lk. 21:24.) *See also*, Rev. 11:2. What happens when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (completed)? The Jews will take over.

Regardless of the circumstances, the terms and legal effect of the Mosaic covenant have not changed. Which means that the Mosaic covenant is not dead, or ended. When the Third Temple is built, it will be a temple that conforms to the Mosaic laws. It will be administered by Aaronic priests and Levites according to the instructions given to Moses. The sacrifices, when they resume, will conform to the Mosaic laws. (What else would they conform to?) I suppose, in a sense, you can say the Mosaic covenant is in large part *suspended* due to the destruction of the Second Temple. But that is not the same as being obsoleted, or terminated. Observation of the Mosaic covenant will *come back*. And in order for it to come back, it must remain alive, even now.

THE FUTURE OF THE MOSAIC COVENANT

The Mosaic Covenant Will Resume For Who?

Further proofs that the Mosaic covenant has not ended are the scriptures indicating that the Mosaic system of worship will resume and thrive throughout the Millennial kingdom of Christ. As I have just observed, how can the Mosaic covenant not be alive *now*, if it was alive before now and will be alive after now? How can it have ended, if it will resume? And yes, I'm not just talking about the theocracy and the throne of David (which Jesus will sit on), but I'm also talking about the ceremonial law, and in particular, animal sacrifices.

Ah, but you may object that animal sacrifices are completely antithetical to the high priesthood and sacrifice of Christ *once for all*, and therefore animal sacrifices can never be re-instituted for the Church. Well, if that's your position, then you are *half right*. Yes, animal sacrifices are antithetical to the Church covenant - that much is true. The problem is with the phrase *re-instituted for the Church*. You see, I never once said, suggested, or even hinted that the Mosaic covenant will resume *for Christians*. That's because the Mosaic covenant can't *resume* for people it never applied to in the first place (namely, Christians - or to be more precise, Gentiles).

The Mosaic covenant will resume for national Israel, that is, biological Jews *only*. And for such people, it won't matter if they are individual believers (followers of Christ) or not. In fact, during the Millennium all Jews will be presumed to be followers of Christ ("Christians," if you will). Because the Millennium is the time period when *all Israel will be saved*. (Rom. 11:26; Heb. 8:8-12).

Right now, your head may be spinning. Why on earth would God require the Jews - when they are saved and following Christ - to observe animal sacrifices which are antithetical to the Church covenant? And why would God (in the Millennial worldwide kingdom of Christ) keep the Jews and the Church separate and treat them differently? Let's put the first question on hold momentarily - we'll come back to it shortly. But the answer to the second question, you should already know.

Recall our discussion a few pages back about *apples and oranges* - the ways in which Israel and the Church are completely different. Remember what I said back there:

They will never merge, subsume, or be the same. One is a physical nation defined by biology. The other is a spiritual body defined by faith. How can Israel and the Church,

or the Mosaic covenant and the Church covenant, ever be mashed together? They are completely different kinds of entities - two skewed lines that never intersect.

Nothing about this will change during the Millennium. Just because all Israel will be saved, does not mean God will *redefine* the nation of Israel. Israel will still be a nation defined by biology, not faith. And that nation - biological Israel - will still be God's treasured possession among all the peoples of the world. A worldwide government of Christ does not mean that national distinctions will go away. Even in eternity, the nations will come and go into the New Jerusalem. (Rev. 21:24-26). Remember, *God* created the nations, not people. National distinctions serve God's purposes. And He's going to keep them around *forever*.

Now, let's look at the biblical evidence indicating that observance of the Mosaic covenant by the Jews will resume *in full* during the Millennium. This will get us to the point of answering the question as to why God will require the Jews to observe animal sacrifices, even after they start to follow Christ.

Biblical Evidence Re: Future Resumption of the Mosaic Covenant

Ezekiel's Vision

In 572 B.C., Ezekiel was shown a vision by God that takes up the last nine chapters of his prophetic book (ch. 40-48). This extended vision was given 25 years after Ezekiel is taken captive by Babylon, and 14 years after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple in 586 B.C. In other words, the vision takes place during the 70 year Babylonian captivity.

The vision begins with a description of a future temple complex, beginning with the outer court and the main exterior gates (ch. 40). Then the vision moves to a description of the inner temple (ch. 41), and the surrounding temple chambers (ch. 42). The glory of the Lord filling the temple, along with measurements of the altar area, are described next (ch. 43). Chapter 44 concerns the Gate of the Prince, and rules for the Levitical priests (primarily the sons of Zadok). Next, measurements for the Holy District are given in ch. 45, where the temple complex, the priests, Levites, and the Prince of Israel all have portions.

The feasts and offerings to be observed by the people are described in ch. 46. Chapter 47 begins with a description of a river flowing from the temple eastward to the Dead Sea, and ends with a description of the overall dimensions of the land of Israel. Chapter 48 provides for a division of the land of Israel by tribe, giving the dimensions and position of each tribe's allotment. The chapter ends with a measurement of the external boundary of the city of Jerusalem, and gives names to its twelve gates, one for each tribe of Israel.

Now we know the vision given to Ezekiel concerned the future as to him, because at the time the Jewish temple had been destroyed and Israel's people were dispossessed from their land. There was no present reality corresponding to the vision. The question is whether the vision was fulfilled in the building of the Second Temple (which was itself destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D.), or

whether its fulfillment is still future even as to us (suggesting a fulfillment in the Millennium).

There are a number of reasons which strongly indicate Ezekiel's vision still remains to be fulfilled even now. For one thing, ch. 40-48 are not the only chapters of Ezekiel which relate to visions or prophecies of the end times. For instance, ch. 36 pertains to the restoration of the land of Israel, and its repossession and repopulation by the Jews. Obviously, that process has begun - but has it been completely fulfilled? No. The restoration of Israel will not be merely physical, but also spiritual.

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and *you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses*, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And *I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you*. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And *I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules*. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. (Eze. 36:24-29).

Clearly, this text speaks of the time when all Israel will be saved. And that certainly hasn't happened yet. So, in spite of the recent statehood of Israel, Eze. 36 has not been substantially fulfilled. To remove all doubt, consider this verse: "Thus says the Lord God: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt." (Eze 36:33). This suggests the restoration of Israel that we have witnessed in recent decades is nothing compared to the extent of restoration yet to come.

Similarly, ch. 37 contains the vision of the Valley of Dry Bones. Like ch. 36, this vision concerns the restoration of the nation of Israel. And again, there are verses in ch. 37 describing the spiritual cleanness of the nation when the vision is fulfilled. But the vision goes even further, describing how "My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd." (Eze. 37:24). Clearly, this is a reference to Christ assuming the throne of David, since we know Israel has not, in fact, had anyone in the line of David as king from the beginning of the Babylonian deportation until now. So it would be hard to argue this vision has already been fulfilled.

And then there are chapters 38-39, what most commentators agree is a description of the battle of Armageddon, an event which closes out the Tribulation period. Which means that the four chapters preceding Ezekiel's vision of the future temple are all set in the end times. This is the *context* for Ezekiel's vision.

But even apart from this context, there are several key indicators in the vision itself that lead us to the same conclusion. **First**, the measurements given in Ezekiel's vision have never corresponded to any version of the Jewish temple so far. I'm amazed at how detailed the measurements are in the vision. Exact measurements of walls, gates, circumferences, wall thicknesses, the altar, chambers and buildings, etc. I won't list all of the measurements - but they are detailed to be merely allegorical.

I don't believe God deals in hypotheticals - He never needs to make a *conjecture*. God had no reason to provide detailed *physical* measurements of a temple that would be anything other than a literal, actual, physical structure in human history. He doesn't need to imagine what things *might* be, He already knows what really *will* be. So if He describes a physical structure, you can bet it will exist (at some point in time) exactly as described. Especially when He's talking about a future temple that Christ Himself will build. (Zech. 6:12-13). I think it's likely Jesus will know God's blueprints of the temple - don't you?

Second, the river flowing from the (Third) Temple to the Dead Sea is definitely something that has not happened yet. Eze. 47:1-5 describes water flowing from underneath the threshold of the temple to the east. The river is described as ankle deep 1,000 cubits from the temple, knee deep at 2,000 cubits, waist deep at 3,000 cubits, and too deep to pass at 4,000 cubits downstream. From there the river goes down to the Arabah and eventually enters the Dead Sea, at which point the water of the Dead Sea will become fresh. (Currently, the Dead Sea is one of the saltiest bodies of water on earth.)

The river itself will give life: "every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish ... so everything will live where the river goes." (Eze. 47:9). Additionally, "on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing." (Eze 47:12). Not only that, but Zechariah tells us that, "On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea." (Zech. 14:8). So this must all still be future, if literal.

Third, Ezekiel's description of the division of the land, with its Holy District and tribal divisions, has never even remotely been fulfilled yet. All of which reasons lead me to irrevocably conclude that Ezekiel's vision of the temple will be fulfilled in our future, most likely during the Millennium. Therefore, the ceremonial rituals of the Mosaic covenant described by Ezekiel will resume in the future, including animal sacrifices. Will God have the Jews build an *altar* just for show? I don't think so.

Other Prophecies

Ezekiel is not the only prophet who foresaw the resumption of active observance of the Mosaic covenant in the future.

Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot?" And he said to me, "For 2,300 evenings and mornings. Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state." (Dan. 8:13-14).

"And from the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be 1,290 days." (Dan. 12:11).

Whether you believe the time periods in Daniel are to be taken as literal days, or figuratively as years, I have yet to come across anyone who can convincingly mark out when Daniel's time periods either began or ended in the past. Even preterists, who believe most or all of the prophecies of Daniel were fulfilled in the past, are unable to mark out these time periods with any certainty. And quite frankly, if they have been fulfilled in the past, the time periods should be easily confirmed without a doubt. Which means, to my mind, that these prophecies are yet to be fulfilled. Consequently, the resumption of *regular burnt offerings* is yet future.

But also consider this: what *regular burnt offerings* can Daniel possibly be talking about, except offerings under the Mosaic covenant? Can he possibly be referring to anything else? Not really.

Then we have this promise given by God to Jeremiah:

"The Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to *offer burnt offerings*, to burn grain offerings, to make sacrifices *forever*." (Jer. 33:18).

When scripture says that followers of Christ will obtain *eternal life*, do you take that literally, or allegorically? Why would you read Jer. 33:18 any differently?

Why Will God Require the Jews to Resume the Mosaic Covenant?

Now let's consider the reasons why God will require the Jews to resume the Mosaic covenant. Isn't the Church covenant good enough for them? Actually, on an individual basis, it is. But this isn't about the Church, or salvation, or redemption. More to the point, it's not about any individual Jews at all. It's about the nation of Israel *as a corporate entity*. And as a nation, Israel has both a *unique privilege*, and a *unique burden*.

The privilege, we have already partially identified. Israel, among all the nations of the world, is the only one identified by God as His *treasured possession*, a *kingdom of priests*, and a *holy nation*. Israel is also singled out as the only nation whom God calls *my people*, the people whom God will *dwell among*, and who are identified with His *holy name*. To the Jews alone were committed the oracles of God, that is, the scriptures, (Rom. 3:2). Salvation itself is from the Jews (Jn. 4:22), and only of Israel does God ever say that he will forgive their sins *as a nation* (Jer. 31:34). Further, even the territories of the nations were determined around Israel (Deu. 32:8), and Jerusalem is the center of the world (Eze. 5:5; 38:12). All of that is pretty special, and unique.

Now, for the burden. Consider this scripture carefully:

And the Lord said to me, "Son of man, mark well, see with your eyes, and hear with your ears all that I shall tell you concerning all the statutes of the temple of the Lord and all its laws. And mark well the entrance to the temple and all the exits from the sanctuary. And say to the rebellious house, to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: O house of Israel, *enough of all your abominations*, in admitting foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, to be in my sanctuary, profaning my temple, when you offer to me my food, the

fat and the blood. **You have broken my covenant**, in addition to all your abominations. And you have not kept charge of my holy things, but you have set others to keep my charge for you in my sanctuary.

“Thus says the Lord God: No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the people of Israel, shall enter my sanctuary. But the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, **shall bear their punishment**. They shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the temple and ministering in the temple. They **shall slaughter the burnt offering** and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before the people, to minister to them. Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn concerning them, declares the Lord God, and they **shall bear their punishment**. They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my holy things and the things that are most holy, but they **shall bear their shame** and the abominations that they have committed. Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the temple, to do all its service and all that is to be done in it.” (Eze. 44:5-14).

I read this as an illustration of the principle of Lk. 12:48 - “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.” In other words, *because* Israel was given the unique privilege of being God’s own possession among the peoples of the world, a people on whom God bestowed both His laws and His very presence, they were held to a higher standard. And instead of making the most of their special status in God’s sight, they squandered it, chasing after false gods and breaking His covenant.

For these many abominations God can, and will, forgive any individual Jew. And in fact, as I have said, the assumption is that during the Kingdom Age, all individual Jews will be saved. *This is not a salvation issue*. This is an issue of national (corporate, and ancestral) shame and iniquity. It is, as the scripture clearly indicates, a matter of national *punishment*. It doesn’t mean that any Jews will be denied entry into heaven, or even that they will be denied the many physical blessings God has promised to bestow on Israel during Christ’s earthly kingdom. It simply means, in terms of religious duties, that they will have certain ritualistic obligations the Gentiles will not also have. And this punishment will be imposed not because of anything the Jews at the time will have done, but because of what their ancestors did long ago in the past.

How unfair! you may say. How un-Christian. What about Eze. 18:20, you may say.

The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

All I can say is, God has always dealt with Israel covenantally *as a nation*, or corporately. Even when it comes to their eventual salvation, it will be measured out to the Jews *as a nation*. So when God finally demands the debt to be paid for their past transgressions, the punishment will be meted

out to them *as a nation*. And also this:

Then the word of the Lord came to me: “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. ... Now, therefore, say to the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: ‘Thus says the Lord, behold, I am shaping disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Return, every one from his evil way, and amend your ways and your deeds.’” (Jer. 18:5-6,11).

But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, “Why have you made me like this?” Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? (Rom. 9:20-21).

It’s tough love, people. God can do whatever He wants with His own possession among the peoples of the world. Ours is not to question why, but merely to understand. God has made His intentions known, and they are unmistakable. *They shall bear their punishment.*

CONCLUSION

There are no necessary conflicts between the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and the eternal viability of the Mosaic covenant - if you allow that God has chosen to deal with Israel *as a nation corporately* and the Church *as a body of individuals* separately and distinctly. The problem, for most Christians, is they do not allow that God has chosen to do this. They believe that once Christ died and rose from the dead, some or all of the unique attributes of Israel were obsoleted.

Even those Christians who don’t necessarily hold that national Israel was merged into or subsumed by the Church usually still believe that there was (and is) no need for Israel to maintain a separate system of worship and religious ceremonial practice. “Christ died once for all” is the mantra - even for Jews - and that is all true *for individuals*. “There is neither Jew nor Greek in the Church” - also true, but irrelevant. This essay isn’t about a separate process of salvation or redemption for the Jews. **Observing the rituals of the Mosaic covenant in the present or future is *not* about how to obtain forgiveness for sins or being reconciled to God.** That’s because, quite simply, the Mosaic covenant *never* did those things, even in the past.

The Mosaic covenant never was, is not now, and never will be, *a covenant of faith*. The Mosaic covenant only ever was (or will be) a national covenant (that is, a civil constitution) for biological Jews. There is no way for you to join this covenant if you are a Gentile. No one can *convert* to become a biological Jew. You are either born as a physical descendant of Jacob/Israel, or you are not. Which also means that biological Jews may not *opt out* of the Mosaic covenant, either. Like it or not, every biological Jew is stuck with the privilege, and the burden, of being a member of the ethnic nation of Israel. It is nobody’s choice, except God’s. He chose, and we - Jew and Gentile alike - are stuck with that choice. There is nothing any of us can do about it.

God has chosen the nation of Israel as a special group of people for His own purposes. These purposes do not have to make sense to you. God does not need anyone's permission to deal with national Israel separately and distinctly from the Body of Christ if He wants to. Just because you would do things differently (*i.e.*, treat everyone the same) if you were God, is irrelevant. The only question is, what has God said about the matter?

So What?

You may be asking yourself what difference all of this makes. Actually, a great deal. What is at stake is the integrity of the *laws of nature and nature's God*.

You see, the laws of nature and nature's God consists of two main parts, the first of which is the law of nature (the will of God impressed upon the creation). It's bad enough the way the concept of natural law is trampled on or given short shrift by Christians worldwide. Oh sure, many people recognize that the law of nature is the eternal moral law of God. But instead of viewing that body of law comprehensively, people tend to limit it to verbalized expressions of the law of nature - such as the Ten Commandments - when *by definition* the law of nature is the *non-verbal* expression of God's will in the universe.

So, while acknowledging there is an eternal moral law, they deny the greater part of it (the non-verbal part). They refuse to devote any energy to discovering what God may have told us by way of non-verbal revelation, often with the mistaken belief that the laws of nature, if discovered, can never be on par with the authority of scripture. Then, if someone does bother to investigate the laws of nature, such efforts are dismissed as *merely someone's opinion*. Consider this quote: "The Scriptures are the only organs through which God conveys to us a knowledge of his will about what we are to believe concerning himself, and what duties he requires of us." A. A. Hodge. See how that view totally guts the law of nature of any force or vitality? For shame!

All you have to do is look at Rom. 10:17-20 to see that the law of nature (specifically quoting Ps. 19:4) contains a revelation of the plan of salvation itself. That's because creation itself IS the word of Christ. (Did Christ speak creation into existence, or not?) See, Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:1-3; Gen. 1.

As I said, it's bad enough that advocates of the laws of nature and nature's God have to consistently deal with this ignorant prejudice. But we also get the same resistance on the flip side. After all, the second part of the laws of nature and nature's God is the *laws of nature's God*. What are those laws? They are the *verbalized* laws of God found in the holy scriptures which, when you boil it down, chiefly consist of the terms of *the divine covenants* between God and men.

And just look at the ways in which the divine covenants are denigrated. The Adamic covenant is often viewed as terminated, lost or forfeited because of the Fall. Wrong! - merely a change in circumstances, not a modification of the terms of the covenant or its legal effect. The Noahic covenant is treated as a covenant of redemption (it's not), thereby minimizing it's legal effect. Eating meat is seen as an option rather than a duty, and capital punishment is viewed as "that was then, this is now."

Similarly, the Abrahamic covenant is turned into a covenant of faith (it's not), with the promise of a great nation and the Promised Land spiritualized as applying to the Church instead of to biological Jews. The Davidic covenant is reduced to Jesus ruling in heaven, instead of on the earth. And the Mosaic covenant is largely viewed as either terminated, or spiritualized as being subsumed by the Church. *Ouch!*

It's no wonder most Christians have no concept of the laws of nature and nature's God, and are completely ignorant of its provisions. No one in the churches is teaching people what God's laws really are. Instead, people are everywhere being told that God's laws are just someone's opinion (uncorroborated at best, misguided or anti-scriptural at worst), and/or that such things are past and are now irrelevant. Then, to fill the obvious void created by this lack of regard for God's laws, people invent a so-called Law of Christ, the so-called Regulative Principle of Worship, and other similar **false laws**. For shame!

So you better believe how we regard the Mosaic covenant specifically, and all of God's covenants with men in general, is tremendously important. My encouragement to you is this: don't get taken in by false teachers.

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions. (1 Tim. 1:5-7).

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