

Exodus 34:1-28 • God Re-Writes the Law

Introduction

Every generation of Believer is faced with the question of whether or not God's Word still applies exactly the same today as it did when originally given so long ago. Often it's supposed that because "today's" culture is so different that at least portions of His Word might not apply in the same way. Or because we live in "modern" or "technological" times that certain contexts have changed the meaning for us today. And yet Hebrews 13:8 states, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." And since we know that Christ Jesus **IS** the Word, we are faced with making the personal decision as to whether or not the Bible applies to us today **exactly** as it did when originally given. This is not a new conundrum for Believers, but an argument as old as the Law itself.

¹Now the LORD said to Moses, "Cut out for yourself two stone tablets like the former ones, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered. ²So be ready by morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain. ³No man is to come up with you, nor let any man be seen anywhere on the mountain; even the flocks and the herds may not graze in front of that mountain."

⁴So he cut out two stone tablets like the former ones, and Moses rose up early in the morning and went up to Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and he took two stone tablets in his hand. ⁵The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD.

⁶Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; ⁷who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth

[Read v.1-5]

Q: What happened to the first 2, original tablets?

A: Moses shattered them in anger, providing visible confirmation that Israel's disobedience had in like manner shattered God's Word. (Exodus 32:19)

Q: Who wrote the original tablets and who is going to write them again?

A: God.

Q: Does God change anything He wrote from the first time to the second?

A: No. He writes the exact same commandments.

Point: Although man may personally shatter God's Word through disobedience, God's Word never changes. Although someone temporarily falls away from God and is subsequently reconciled to Him, God's Word does not change in the interim. It is the same forever, still having the same requirements.

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:17-19

Application: Give an example of what you believe is someone's attempt to "re-write" God's Word; that is, to make a case that "that was then, but this is now" to revise it from it's original meaning. Is it true? Is there **any** example you can think of where the meaning of God's Word has changed because of man, such as history or culture? What does Hebrews 13:8 mean to you: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

[Read v.6-9]

Q: When God first revealed Himself and His name to Moses at the burning bush, what was God's stated purpose for doing so?

A: It was to deliver His people, the work of a Savior.

Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, 'I am indeed concerned about you and what has been done to you in Egypt. So I said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the

generations.”

⁸Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. ⁹He said, “If now I have found favor in Your sight, O LORD, I pray, let the LORD go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession.”

Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, to a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Exodus 3:16-17

Q: At this second revelation to Moses in which He provides His name, what appears to be His chief purpose?

A: To forgive their sin, the work of a Judge.

Q: How do these revelations of God’s purposes to Moses teach us about the work and character of God?

A: He is not just a one-time Redeemer saving us from the old life, but facilitating a new life going forward. He addresses the thing that separates us from Him—sin—under all conditions past, present, and future.

Point: *God here discloses that He is love, but the kind of love in which mercy, grace, long-suffering, goodness and truth are united with holiness and justice. His purpose in redeeming or saving someone is to change them forever going forward.*

[Read v.10-28]

¹⁰Then God said, “Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you.

¹¹“Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite.

¹²Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. ¹³But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim ¹⁴—for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God—

¹⁵otherwise you might make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land and they would play the harlot with their gods and sacrifice to their gods, and someone might invite you to eat of his sacrifice, ¹⁶and you might take some of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters might play the harlot with their gods and cause your sons also to play the harlot with their gods. ¹⁷You shall make for yourself no molten gods.

¹⁸“You shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in the month of

Q: Why is God saying He is “going to make a covenant” with them? Didn’t He already do that?

A: They shattered it; He is establishing it again, exactly as before.

Q: Is the work of God for the Israelites alone?

A: According to v.10, what God does for Israel will be a witness to all the other nations, that “*all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD*”.

Q: But isn’t Israel commanded to destroy all the people around them? If so, who will be left to be an example to?

A: No, they are only instructed to remove specific groups, people that have not only utterly and finally rejected God but actively encourage others to do so, too. God is closing the door of opportunity for those specific groups to return to Him after 430 years of rejection, and opening another door to all the other nations through the example of Israel.

Q: What is the first and most important condition of God’s covenant?

A: To completely remove—even destroy—all false religion and its practitioners so as to be wholly devoted (the biblical term is actually “faithful”) to God alone. **THEY** are to be the influence, not influenced.

Q: According to v.16, to what does God liken those that go after other gods?

A: He likens them to harlots. It’s the ultimate picture of unfaithfulness.

Q: In this summary of the commandments God has previously established, what is the common denominator? What common thread links them all together?

A: They are all things that identify and separate someone as being devoted to God and to no other. The laws concerning feasts (v.18, 22-24), dedicating the firstborn (v.19-20), observing the Sabbath (v.21-23), sacrifices (v.25-26) and even those pertaining to dietary restrictions (v.26) are all unique to the One True God. Observing them identifies the practitioner as a servant of God not just to himself and fellow Jews, but to

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Abib you came out of Egypt.

¹⁹“The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me, and all your male livestock, the first offspring from cattle and sheep. ²⁰You shall redeem with a lamb the first offspring from a donkey; and if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. You shall redeem all the firstborn of your sons. None shall appear before Me empty-handed.

²¹“You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest.

²²“You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, that is, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year.

²³“Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel. ²⁴For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders, and no man shall covet your land when you go up three times a year to appear before the LORD your God.

²⁵“You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread, nor is the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover to be left over until morning.

²⁶“You shall bring the very first of the first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God.

“You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.”

²⁷Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” ²⁸So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

⁵“Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do you say?”

⁶They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

⁷But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

all outside observers as well. To truly follow them negates the possibility of serving anyone else.

Application:

- *How would you answer the age-old question, “If you were on trial for being a Christian, what evidence could be brought into court to prove it?”*
- *Do others know you’re a Christian? Can they tell from your behavior and lifestyle that you live according to a different standard, even a biblical standard?*
- *How do you feel about people that believe the biblical provision for divorce or relationships no longer applies to us today? Do you believe God’s truth is relative or absolute? How does this show in your own life and choices?*
- *Do you see that an inseparable component of God’s love and grace is truth and justice? Do you see clinging to His truth and justice as part of the exchange of love in your relationship with Christ?*

Epilogue

In John 8 the religious authorities of the day try to test Him. They bring a woman caught in the act of adultery who, according to Old Testament law, should be put to death. By Jesus’ day, they weren’t actually following through with such a sentence. In other words, they were no longer literally following the Law and therefore presented this test to Jesus to see how He would apply the Law. Isn’t it fascinating that whatever answer He wrote in the ground, that after being pressured, He simply wrote it again, just like God’s writing the commandments down exactly the same way the second time as the first. What He has written is the same the second time as the first. It never changes.