

The New Covenant versus The Old Covenant

There are fundamental differences in morality between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament allows many things which are contrary to the New Testament: divorce, polygamy, owning concubines, slavery, wealth, war and vigilante violence. I agree with those who argue that you can justify all sorts of violence by citing the Old Testament. That is why we have to base our morality upon the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as understood by his first followers. Whatever the uses of the Old Testament, it is wrong to use it in such a way that it negates the morality of the New Testament. Which is just what Secular Christians have been doing since the time of Augustine and before. [see *The Church of the Empire*]

Is the Bible a *unified inspired book without any true contradictions* ? Try DUOFIED--the bible is properly divided into *the books of the old covenant* and *the books of the new covenant* as they were once rightly called. And the crucial question for a follower of Jesus Christ is this: "what is the relationship between THE OLD COVENANT AND THE NEW COVENANT ? " *Testament* is a poor translation of the Greek word for *covenant*--*diatheke*. The more scholarly translations use *covenant* in place of *testament*. For example the new King James says *this is my blood of the new covenant* [Mt. 26.28, Mk 14.24, Lk. 22.20, 1 Cor 11.25] where old King James says *blood of the new testament*.

People rashly conclude that there is a perfect harmony between them by quoting several verses that seem to say that, but you can't read the scriptures that way. You have to read all of it, not just the bits you like. That is what people do when they pick out a half verse like *Do not judge* and rush to the conclusion that Jesus told us not to make moral judgments.

THE OLD COVENANT PASSES

Clearly, the author of *Hebrews* sees the new covenant as replacing and abolishing the old covenant. Hebrews 8.13: *In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.* Hebrews 8.8-12 quotes Jeremiah 31.31-34 which spells out that there is to be *a new covenant* in place of the old. This text notes two major differences between the old covenant and the new covenant: 1) the moral law will be written in our hearts instead of in a book of rules; 2) the individual will have a direct personal relationship with God, contra the old covenant where only Moses could talk to God directly. It makes it clear that there is a fundamental moral and spiritual change from the old covenant to the new. And the consequence is this: just as the new covenant has replaced the old covenant, so the books of the new covenant have replaced the books of the old covenant as our moral and spiritual guide book. Basing your moral and spiritual life on the books of the old covenant is like relying upon a 1940 repair manual to work on a 1980 airplane. You are headed for a crash.

But there is a greater consequence, which is this: **we are no longer tied to the books** as the Jews were, when God spoke only to Moses and everyone else had to depend upon what Moses wrote down in the books. As Peter spells out in his first sermon, quoting from Joel, (Acts 2.16-18) the individual followers of Jesus now receive that Holy Spirit, which was once reserved exclusively to the Lord's official prophet. If we are worthy of the name of *CHRISTIAN*, we have the Holy Spirit for a personal teacher. (John 14.26 and 16.13; 1 John 2.27) We learn from the Spirit. (1 John 2.20) Without that Spirit, the books are absolutely **no use to us**. In fact, they are harmful to us, because we cannot understand them, and, by misunderstanding them, we plunge deeper into spiritual darkness. Like the scribes and the Pharisees--see below. Like contemporary bible abusing evangelists--turn on any so-called *Christian* TV or radio station for proof of that.

The moral law must be *written in our hearts* (Hebrews 8.10 and Jeremiah 31.33). And, if it isn't written there, it is no use our going back to **The Law** as it was written in the books of the old covenant. That is what Saint Paul tells us: *by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified* (Galatians 2.16) *if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain* (Galatians 2.21) *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.* (Galatians 5.1) Secular Christians, who read The Bible without the Spirit essential to understanding it, are *the blind leading the blind*, and headed right for the pit.

TWO COVENANTS: BOND OR FREE

Galatians 4.24 and 2 Corinthians 3.6 also stress the fundamental differences between the old and the new covenant. *two covenants . . . one bond, one free . . . able ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.* Romans, chapter 7, argues that we are **freed from The Law of the Old Covenant** like a widow is freed from a husband who has died. Clearly he means that the old law is a dead letter for us. In Galatians 3.13-29 Paul makes the argument that the covenant by faith with Abraham was continued in Jesus Christ but that it bypasses the law of Moses.

It shows his attitude towards the law of Moses and you have to keep that in mind when you read 2 Timothy 3.16. What did he regard as *scripture* and how did he interpret it? Look what he does to the law of Moses with his argument in Galatians 3.13-29. Similarly, whether Paul wrote it or not, look what is done to the whole of the Jewish religious establishment with the argument in Hebrews chapter 7. Why would these teachers instruct us to disregard so much that is part of the old covenant--the Jewish religious establishment and all its endless rules and regulations and expect us to still hearken to the passages in which all this was established ?

So are *the books of the old covenant* equally **scripture** for our moral instruction with *the books of the new covenant* even after the old covenant has been replaced by the new covenant? Hebrews says the opposite: *Which stood only in meats and drinks and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.* (Hebrews 9.10) **Meats and drinks and divers washings and carnal ordinances** perfectly describes most of the contents of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy and Hebrews clearly means that they are no use to us now that *the time of reformation* has come. The commandments about wave offerings and heave offerings (Exodus 29.26-27 and many other verses) are no longer binding upon us.

The new commandment to **LOVE YOUR ENEMIES** (Mt 5.44) is binding upon us and we cannot use the old testament as an excuse for disregarding it, as so many false Christians have done. They have misused *the books of the old covenant* to evade the moral law of the new covenant. They use the example of Jacob and Joshua to cancel the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. They have used them to justify war, wealth and slavery. Some of them, like the Mormons, have used them to justify polygamy--with equal justification. In fact, you can justify any and every kind of immorality by misusing the books of the old covenant as secular Christians misuse them, although they are never logical and consistent enough to do it so thoroughly. They use the old testament to justify war and wealth, and maintain a discreet silence about the passages that justify slavery and polygamy. But you can justify one as readily as the other by the way they read it. From the time of Augustine and right down to modern times, secular Christians did use the old testament to justify Christians owning slaves and dealing in slaves. [see ***The Church of the Empire***]

Jesus Christ teaches us to love our enemies, to shun the pursuit of wealth. He teaches us that his kingdom is not of this world. The worldly Christian says "I can't live with that ! But here is some stuff in the old testament that says the opposite. I'll go by that instead !"

THE COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION

There was an argument going on in the early church between those who wanted to preserve every *jot and tittle* (Mt 5.18) of the old Jewish religion based upon **THE LAW** and those who insisted that *the prophets and THE LAW prophesied until John.* (Mt 11.13) It shows up in the differing accounts that Acts and Galatians give as to whether Paul continued to conform to Jewish observance. It appears in Acts 15 where the first major church council dealt with the question of circumcision. Acts 15.1: *And certain men which came down from Judea [to Antioch] taught the brethren and said: Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* Acts 15.24: the letters which were issued by this council said: *Forasmuch as we have heard that certain [men] which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying: Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment . . .* (cf Acts 16.3, 1 Cor 7.18, Gal 2.3 and 5.1-6)

The old covenant was *THE COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION* (Acts 7.8) and so the question of circumcision is central to the question of whether the old covenant is still in effect. The overwhelming evidence of these new testament writings is that it is not. And yet circumcision was something more than a *jot* or a *tittle*. It was the first law of the old covenant: Genesis 17.14: *And the uncircumcised man child . . . that soul shall be cut off from his people. He hath broken my covenant.* (cf Gen 17.11, Ex 4.24-26, Joshua 5.2) Nonetheless, the new Christian church made it null and void. As 1 Corinthians 7.19 says, *circumcision is nothing*. Galatians 5.2 *if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing*. As Jeremiah 4.4 said, it is our hearts that need to be *circumcised*. Jeremiah 9.25: *all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart*. Stephen says: *ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears*. Acts 7.51

So neither **circumcision** nor the **old covenant of circumcision** are binding upon us. So neither do the **books of the old covenant** teach us as if the new covenant had not displaced the old or had replaced it in an imperfect way. We are not bound to avoid pork. We are bound to love our enemies. These things and many others are in line with the new covenant and contrary to the old.

THE JUDAIZERS

A century later, there were still Jewish Christians who rejected the writings of Saint Paul because of his negative attitude towards **The Law** of the old covenant. It is notable that Justin Martyr ignores the epistles of Saint Paul. But the early church fathers insisted, just as Saint Paul did, that Christian belief was a **radical** and **reformed** departure from Jewish belief (Hebrews 9.10). So Ignatius of Antioch writes to the Magnesians (8,9) about the year 110 AD, just before he was martyred in Rome: *Do not be led astray by wrong views or by outmoded tales that count for nothing.* (apocryphal Jewish legends and allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament) *For if we still go on observing Judaism, we admit we never received grace. The divine prophets themselves lived Christ Jesus' way. That is why they were persecuted, for they were inspired by his grace to convince unbelievers that God is one and that he has revealed himself in his Son Jesus Christ, who is his Word issuing from the silence and who won the complete approval of him who sent him. 9 Those then who lived by ancient practices arrived at a new hope. They ceased to keep the Sabbath and lived by the Lord's Day, on which our life as well as theirs shone forth, thanks to Him and his death . . . 10.3 For Christianity did not believe in Judaism but Judaism in Christianity.*

In his letter to the brethren at Philadelphia (5,6) Ignatius makes a basic distinction between the prophets and the old religion of Judaism: *And the Prophets, let us love them too, because they anticipated the gospel in their preaching and hoped for and awaited Him, and were saved by believing on Him. Thus they were in Jesus Christ's unity. Saints they were, and we should love and admire them, seeing that Jesus Christ vouched for them and they form a real part of the gospel of our common hope. 6 Now, if anyone preaches Judaism to you, pay no attention to him. For it is better to hear about Christianity from one of the circumcision than Judaism from a Gentile. If both, moreover, fail to talk about Jesus Christ, they are to me tombstones and graves of the dead, on which only human names are inscribed.*

But the letters of Ignatius show that the argument between these two contending parties was still going on (as it is even today.) This argument is often reflected in the writings of the new covenant and the additions of the judaizers have been used ever since then to keep the door open to the laxer morality of the old covenant. In the time of Constantine, the lapse into a pre-Christian standard of morality became absolutely necessary to justify the corrupt and compromised official church establishment of the Roman Empire. Augustine justified war, wealth and slavery by using verses from the books of the Old Covenant to negate the Christian morality of the New Covenant. (As discussed at length in *The Church of the Empire.*)

DIVORCE IS MORE THAN A *TITTLE*

Look at Luke 16.16-18: *The law and the prophets were until John . . . it is easier for heaven and earth to fail than one tittle of the law to fail . . . Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, commiteth adultery* This passage is a sandwich in which the assertion in the middle runs counter to the ones on either side of it. The last verse abolishes the law of divorce laid down by "The Lord" (aka Moses) in Deuteronomy 24.1-2, as Matthew 5.31 and 19.3-10 spell out. This is something more than *one tittle*--it is a major provision of the old Law. Not only does Jesus allow it to *fail* or *pass away*, he gives it a good boot to help it along.

This can be accurately described as a contradiction between what "The Lord" decreed as law and what Jesus established as law. Jesus says that this law wasn't from God at all and that Moses allowed it because of the hard-heartedness of the Jews. But it is presented in Deuteronomy as one of the *commandments, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord your God commanded to teach you.* (Deuteronomy 6.1) So is the lawgiver of Deuteronomy the same as Jesus? Jesus here plainly states that he isn't, and that what is presented as the word of "The Lord" in Deuteronomy 24.1-2 is in fact the word of man or even the word of the devil--it is a commandment which is contrary to the ordinance of God (Matthew 19. 4-8).

That is not the only place that Jesus replaces the law of the old covenant with a new law. The teaching of Jesus Christ can only be understood when we see that he has given us a new law, a ***new commandment***, as he himself says. Whatever he meant in saying that he wanted to preserve every *jot and tittle* or *least commandment* of the law, (Matthew 5.18-19) he clearly does not mean that we are still to go by all the strange and wicked ordinances that are presented as "law" in the books of the old covenant. (see the discussion below of Exodus 21.1-6, 21.7, and 21.21)

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the major teachings of Jesus Christ. You cannot call yourself a "Christian" if you ignore it, if you cancel it out in effect by taking the back door exit into the Old Testament. That is just what worldly "Christians" do. They quote a half verse from the preface to the Sermon on the Mount and then use that as their excuse for ignoring the rest of it. You dig a spiritual grave for yourself when you do that.

BUT I SAY

In Matthew, chapter 5, Jesus repeatedly uses the formula: *Ye have heard that it was said . . . but I say . . .* and in each place he shows us the old law and the new law with which he replaces it. *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also . . .* (Mt 5.38-39) Where have we heard it said: "an eye for an eye etc.?" In Exodus 21.24, in Leviticus 24.20, in Deuteronomy 19.21. It is the very heart and spirit of the law of Moses, that is, the law that "the Lord" delivers through Moses. Exodus chapters 21, 22 and 23 was known as the Book of the Covenant, the old covenant of the circumcision. And what is Jesus doing with it here--preserving every jot and tittle of it? Clearly, he nullifies it and replaces it with a different law. A law which breathes a new and different spirit: The Spirit of the New Covenant.

Resist not evil . . . turn the other cheek . . . the Secular Christian cannot take in these teachings. He dismisses *turn the other cheek* with a joke. He evades them and cancels them by every kind of sophistry. But Jesus wasn't joking. These commandments are the central teaching of Jesus Christ. They define the difference between the old covenant and the new. If you can't take them in, you are not a follower of Jesus Christ. You have taken the name in vain. (cf. Matthew 7.23)

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies . . . (Matthew 5.43-45) In the books of the old covenant, "The Lord's" insistence that righteousness requires them to hate their enemies is a central theme: *thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them* (Deuteronomy 7.2) *he shall eat up the nations his enemies, and shall break their bones, and pierce them through with his arrows* (Numbers 24.8) *utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass* (1 Samuel 15.3) "The Lord" decrees this massacre of babies because of a 200 year old grudge. He punishes Saul for sparing the livestock.

Love your enemies isn't a minor modification of the old covenant. It is a commandment that is entirely contrary to the spirit that permeates the books of the old covenant !

In the books of the old covenant the commandment *thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* (Leviticus 19.18) is placed in a long list of peculiar ordinances. The next verse, 19.19 prohibits cross-breeding cattle, or wearing a linen / wool garment. (A jot and tittle acquaintance, who feels bound by that ordinance, will not wear a cotton / polyester shirt.) But Jesus Christ elevates *love thy neighbor* to the status of the second greatest commandment and says that *on these two commandments hang all*

the law and the prophets (Matthew 24.40). That in itself constitutes a drastic revision of the law as it is found in Deuteronomy. In Matthew 7.12 he tells us to do unto others as we would be done by *for this is the law and the prophets*. Does this **golden rule** accurately summarize Exodus 21.1-6: be a slave forever or leave your wife and children behind; 21.7: about selling your daughter; 21.21: about beating your servant to death? Not hardly. These laws have the fingerprints of carnal man all over them, just as the law of Moses about divorce. Jesus says as much: *in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.* (Mark 7.7)

Are these the ordinances of God the Father? Are these the teachings of Jesus Christ? Were they inspired by the Holy Spirit? If you say yes, you slander the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit by making them the authors of ***carnal ordinances***. (Hebrews 9.10)

Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord warns against the ordinances attributed to him: *I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life; and I defiled them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first born, that I might horrify them; I did it that they might know that I am the Lord.* (Ezekiel 20.25-26) That is a good reason for doubting the eternal validity of ordinances like that found in Exodus 22.29: *The first born of your sons you shall give to me.* Jeremiah 7.31 denies that the Lord ever gave such a commandment. Both prophets agree in disowning it on the Lord's behalf.

WHAT YOU CAN EAT

In Mark 7.15 Jesus denies the validity of the basic Jewish laws which forbid you to eat all sorts of things. What "The Lord" commands in Leviticus chapter 11 and Deuteronomy chapter 14--you can eat locusts, beetles and beef but not oysters, eagles or pork, etc., etc.--is summarily junked by Jesus Christ in Mark 7.14-23. (cf Acts 10.9-16) It is **what comes out of your mouth**, not what goes into it, that makes you *unclean*.

Leviticus 20.10 decrees that *the adulteress shall surely be put to death*. But Jesus Christ, confronted with such an adulteress (John 8.1-11) refuses to sanction this decree. If the death penalty required by The Law can be imposed only by one who is himself free from sin, then it cannot be imposed. Which squares perfectly with what Jesus says in Matthew 5.38-39 replacing the law set forth in Deuteronomy 19.21: *life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth*. (Contra the injunction of Deuteronomy 4.2 that *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you.*) Jesus did not sanction the death penalty. His followers can't sanction it either, as Tertullian states in chapter 17 of his work **ON IDOLATRY**. [see *Does Jesus Agree with the Death Penalty?* and *Life for a Life: Blood Atonement*]

So Jesus explicitly abolishes and replaces various laws of the old covenant and He implicitly challenges the very spirit of the rest of it by what He teaches, and by what he does. In John chapter 5 he not only cures a man on the sabbath but he tells him to carry his bed away, contrary to the strict sabbath day rules of the Pharisees. Couldn't the bed have remained where it was until after sundown ? But Jesus seems determined to challenge their rule bound religion and the incident precipitates the showdown with the Jewish establishment, as 5.16 states.

THE TIME OF FULFILLMENT

In Matthew 5.17, Jesus says *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am come not to destroy, but to fulfill.* What does he mean by this "fulfillment"? Or, to ask a related question, when does it happen? In Luke 24.44, Jesus says that by his death and resurrection He has now *fulfilled all things which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.* That is, the fulfillment is now done. Saint Paul says the same in Romans 10.4: *Christ is the end of the law.* So also Luke 16.16-17 and Matthew 11.13 say that the law and the prophets were until John. That is, they were fulfilled in Jesus and brought to an end. This basic Christian doctrine was mangled by Augustine to justify the Church of the Empire. (see *The Church of the Empire* page 126)

One source of confusion is this phrase: *the law and the prophets.* It is much easier to see how Jesus fulfilled the prophets, how he fulfilled the prophecies they made about him, (Luke 18.31) than it is to see how he fulfilled something written in the law proper. One clue is this: *the law and the prophets* is a set phrase that describes the Jewish service. In Acts 13.15 it relates how Saint Paul got up to speak *after the reading of the law and the prophets*, that is, after they read passages from the old covenant books.

Matthew spells out that Jesus is fulfilling the prophets. (1.23 etc.) Jesus himself says: *this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears* after reading a prophecy from the book of Isaiah in the synagogue in Luke 4.21. Luke 24.25-27 describes how the risen Christ instructed two of his disciples, *beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.* Peter's first sermon in Acts 2.14-40 proclaims that the *last days* prophecy of Joel is now fulfilled.

The fulfillment of the law is harder to understand. In Matthew 5.22 and 5.28 fulfillment seems to mean a strengthening of the moral law so that it includes evil thoughts as well as evil acts. There is a further major change in that He decrees a moral and spiritual punishment in a life beyond this one, in place of the immediate criminal penalty The Law demanded for immoral acts. And, obviously, you can't very well stone someone for lustful feelings. *I was just admiring her hat !*

In other places Jesus "fulfills" the law by new commandments that tell us to love even our enemies. Saint Paul echoes this in Galatians 5.14: *for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* In all these places it is clear

that there is a new Spirit, a new law and a new covenant; that fulfillment means a replacement of The Law of the old covenant--the 613 laws of the 5 books of Moses--not its preservation.

Clearly, the two great commandments **fulfill** the 10 commandments. The **GREAT COMMANDMENT** to love God with all your heart *fulfills* and goes far beyond the injunctions of the left hand tablet to avoid strange gods, keep holy the Lord's Day, and avoid taking His name in vain. The **SECOND GREATEST COMMANDMENT** fulfills the injunctions of the right hand tablet as Jesus shows us in Matthew 19.16-19 where He substitutes *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* for the *covet* commandments in the right hand tablet. It fulfills them and goes far beyond them by adding hatred and lust to the proscriptions against murder and adultery. Obviously you cannot kill your neighbor or steal from him or bear false witness against him if you observe the second greatest commandment. So the 10 commandments are in fact **FULFILLED** by the two great commandments. As Jesus says, they are **the whole of the law**.

Obviously these **two great commandments** have no reference to the other 601 commandments of **THE LAW**: Deuteronomy 24.1-2: divorce your wife by handing her a *writ*; Exodus 21.21: you can get away with beating your maid to death if you keep her alive til morning; Leviticus 16.7-11: sacrifice a goat to atone for your sins. The essential distinction between the commandments of Jesus and The Law of the Jews, made by Paul and the early church was obscured by Augustine and the other apostates of the 4th century to justify their deal with the devil.

A TASTE FOR BLOOD

The prophets tell us that God has little taste for much of what "the bible" sanctions. Isaiah 1.11-17 says *I delight not in the blood of bullocks . . . your appointed feasts my soul hateth*. That runs contrary to what is laid out at length in the five books of Moses. In Leviticus chapter 23 "The Lord" lays out a whole list of appointed feasts with their attendant sacrifices of bullocks, rams etc. And he keeps saying: *It shall be a statute forever* (Leviticus 23.14)

Jesus tells the pharisees: *go ye and learn what that meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice* (Mt. 9.13, Mt 12.7) And it refers them to Hosea 6.6 which emphasizes that the prophets themselves had a different understanding of God from that which is found in the earliest books of the old covenant. Our modern pharisees need to go and learn it also.

In Isaiah 1.15 God rejects them because *your hands are full of blood*. But the Jews of Exodus and Leviticus must have had perpetually blood-stained hands if they carried out all "The Lord's" injunctions in respect to slaughtering people and animals. "The Lord" of the pentateuch is literally bloodthirsty. The Lord of the new covenant shed no blood except his own. That isn't a minor difference that can be explained away by a random bible verse.

DAVID DID IT ! SO CAN WE !

Is King David a model for the Christian life? May we do as David did and trust that the Lord will see it as righteous? Was it all right--was it righteous-- for David to have many wives? Was it all right for him to have concubines as well? There is nothing said about The Lord disapproving of it. So is it all right for you and I to own a concubine? What if you can't afford to own one--is it all right to rent one for an hour? Can you bring home a second wife and a couple of slave girls and tell your wife: *Look in the Book, honey! Jacob's example sanctifies my doing this.*

People use the example set by the Old Testament heroes as a standard of moral behavior without recognizing that what they did is often contrary even to Old Testament law. The harems and the treasures of King David and King Solomon (cf 1 Kings 10 and 11) are contrary to the commandment of Deuteronomy 17.17: *Neither shall [the king] multiply wives to himself . . . neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.*

In other cases, it is clear that the example they set is to be admitted only in a limited way. Rahab the harlot (Joshua 2.1-6) is cited as an example of faith in Hebrews 11.31 and as an example of works in James 2.25. Can we also follow her example in telling lies? We might just as well conclude that it is okay for a woman to be a harlot. Acts 13.15 suggests that the history books of the Jews, with their many scandalous tales, were not used for moral instruction in the Jewish service as were the books of *the law and the prophets*. How could they use the story of Lot's daughters in Sabbath Day school ? ! In fact, the rabbis do not claim divine inspiration for the history books of the bible.

TWO COVENANTS TWO SPIRITS

There is a Spirit in the books of the new covenant that runs contrary to the spirit of the old covenant, and Jesus says as much. In Luke 9.54-56 James and John urge Jesus to *command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, even as Elias did. But he turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.* Elias, alias Elijah, displays the fundamental spirit of the historical characters of the old testament. Having defeated the false prophets, he orders them put to death. (1 Kings 18.40) It seems to have been the fundamental belief of everyone in the old testament that it was wicked to show any mercy to a defeated enemy, and that righteousness required the extermination of every living thing except maybe the fruit trees. (Deuteronomy 20. 16-20) In 2 Kings 1.9-12 Elijah calls down *fire from heaven* to consume two companies of 50 of the king's soldiers. He doesn't do this because they are attacking him or anyone else. He does it to display the power he wields and the superiority of his status such that he doesn't need to respond to the king's summons until he is good and ready. Having snuffed the lives of 102 men just to make his point, he finally condescends to go.

DON'T CALL ME *BALDY* !

In 2 Kings 2.23-24, Elisha [the Greek form of *Elijah*] sics two bears on the children that called him *baldy*. Compare that with the prophet who teaches us to *bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.* (Matthew 5.44) Elisha causes 42 kids to be chewed by bears because they call him *baldy*. Jesus does nothing to the adults who mock him, spit on him and beat him with a whip. He stops someone from using a sword on his behalf and heals the injury. He prays for those who are crucifying Him: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23.34) If *turn the other cheek* means anything, it surely means that we must abate that prickly self pride which is the source of 99 % of our quarrels. We must at least suffer such insults as *baldy* without flying into a homicidal rage and invoking massive retaliation on those who mock us.

Look at the difference between these two prophets. Look at the contrast between the spirit of the one and the Spirit of the other. If you can't see it, there is no use arguing with you. You have *eyes and can't see, ears and can't hear*. You are the true son of a false church. You have not the Spirit that can enable you to discern the truth of what is written in the scriptures, whether from the old covenant or the new. You would do better to take every bible from your house and give them to the thrift store. Otherwise, you will deceive yourself and others and you will stand on the day of judgment with those to whom Jesus will say: ***I never knew you.*** (Matthew 7.23)

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

There is a progressive revelation of God in the books of the old covenant which leads up to the final revelation by Jesus Christ. Each prophet adds to our knowledge of God and corrects the imperfect knowledge of the past. But it is only through the teaching of Jesus Christ and the inward revelation of his Holy Spirit that we come to the knowledge of God. What shows up in the early books of the old covenant cannot be substituted for the full revelation that comes to us only through the new covenant, as Paul says in Ephesians 3.3-5: *by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote afore in few words 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.*

Some argue that Jesus Christ was God long before Abraham and that therefore everything that "The Lord" teaches in the books of the old covenant is also the teaching of Jesus Christ. That may seem logical to you but then your faith is in your own logic, which is a very poor substitute for faith in the teaching of Jesus and the understanding that only comes from the Spirit.

The Word was before Abraham, but Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, the God who became a man, was born in a certain year and in a certain place, like every other man. That is the great mystery of Jesus Christ, his unique identity, that He is both *the Son of God* and *the Son of Man*. His life, his teaching, his battle with *the prince of this world* all take place in historical time. And the consequences only begin then. If The Word had given a complete and final revelation to Abraham or Moses, we wouldn't need the baby born in Bethlehem, the Sermon on the Mount, his Crucifixion, his Resurrection. But we do need them ! There is no salvation outside them !

It is only through the teachings and the doings of Jesus of Nazareth that God is revealed to us, that we are able to understand that revelation, that we are given the spiritual power to live up to it. John says: *the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* (John 1.17) Just before this John says: *In the beginning was the Word* (1.1) and *the Word was made flesh* (1.14). But here he says *Jesus Christ*, not "the Word" and he says *Moses*, so as to emphasize the *man* and the historical moment of that man. *Grace and truth* were not given to Moses by the Word in the time of the old covenant. The *truth* was only revealed after the Word was made flesh, after He appeared as a man among men, as Jesus Christ. That *truth* is the full revelation of God. That *grace* is the Spirit by which we are enabled to understand that truth. It is only through Jesus Christ in the NEW COVENANT that we receive that *grace*. It is only through that grace that we can perceive the *truth* which was fully revealed by Jesus Christ and recorded in THE BOOKS OF THE NEW COVENANT.

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

And the revelation from Jesus Christ required something more: his death upon the cross. His teaching was still a closed book to us until the shedding of his human blood somehow opened it. The blood that dripped from a man nailed to a post was the sacrifice that opened the book of life for us, just as Moses ratified the first covenant by the blood of animals, as Hebrews 9.11-28 tells us (nKJ): *18 Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats . . . and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people . . . (as told in Exodus 24.7-8) 14 How much more shall the blood of Christ . . . purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*

The difference between the blood of Jesus Christ and the blood of the sacrificial animals is the difference between the new covenant and the old covenant--is the spiritual gulf between them. *For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sins.* (Hebrews 10.4) As Jesus Himself says: *this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* (Mt 26.28)

So there is no salvation in that old covenant or in the books which pertain to it, any more than there is salvation in the blood of bulls and goats. Those who turn away from the teaching of the new covenant to justify their compromised lives by whatever they can find in the books of the old covenant are like men who hope to save

themselves by the blood of bulls and goats instead of by the blood of **GOD'S LAMB**. It won't work! As Paul says *no one is justified by the Law* and THE WORKS OF THE LAW are useless for salvation. [See ***Faith and Works: Luther's Distortion of Paul's Teaching.***]

It is only through the God who became a man like us that we can become the adopted sons and daughters of God. John 1.12: *to them gave he power to become the sons of God*. No one in the Old Testament dares to address God as **OUR FATHER**. It is only because Jesus Christ became a man like us and only because he takes us home with him that we have this new relationship with God which gives us the right to call him *Father*. Romans 8.15: *the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*. No one knows God except God. (John 1.18) We know God only because we have been allowed to share in the nature of God through the human and divine life and death of Jesus Christ. So Jesus says of us who have received this new nature: *Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*. (Matthew 11.11)

THE RIGHT SPIRIT

In respect to reading the scriptures, the most important consideration is this: you can read them all you want but you cannot understand them if you do not have the Holy Spirit in you. Without the Holy Spirit you would be better off never opening those books, because, like Satan, you will only use the scripture to deceive yourself and others. (cf. Matthew 4.5-6, Luke 4.10) The church is full of men who read the scriptures with a false spirit and who use it to deceive themselves and others. They arrive at every kind of falsehood and evil and use the covering of the scripture to make it seem good and true.

The scribes and the pharisees had all the scriptures of the old covenant including the prophets who foresaw the coming of Jesus Christ. Before the age of the printing press, they had access to these handwritten books as others did not and they studied them constantly. And the result was that nearly all of them were in spiritual darkness and moral corruption. Without the Holy Spirit, the scriptures were a source of error to them. (Acts 13.27) They used them to discredit Jesus Christ. They are still used that way today by our modern Pharisees who call themselves "Christians."

The same lesson can be learned from the followers of Jesus. They all heard him preach the gospel. They could ask questions. But they understood little or none of it (John 12.16, Luke 18.34) until they received the Holy Spirit after the Resurrection of Jesus. (John 20.22; John 14.26 and 16.13; Acts 2.4) Look at the thousands who heard Jesus preach and yet who did not take in what he said. They heard a pure source of the knowledge of God and it did them no good. They had *ears but could not hear, eyes and could not see*, because they did not have The Spirit.

Like the scribes and the Pharisees, false Christians read the scriptures with a false spirit and they find the word of the devil there, not the word of God. In Matthew 4.6 the devil quotes psalm 91.11-12 to challenge Jesus to jump from a pinnacle of the temple. "Saint" Augustine finds in the second psalm a mandate for the Roman army to massacre the Christians of North Africa who would not conform to the state church of the Roman empire. (*Letters CLXXXV* 19-36 as discussed in *The Church of the Empire*) So down through the centuries men have read every kind of falsehood and evil into the bible or out of it. They justified slavery for 15 centuries by misusing the books of the old covenant. They continue to justify war and wealth by the same kind of argument. Beware of doing such things! It is one thing to sin, it is another to sin against the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 12.31) And what does that mean, except teaching that what is evil is good and that what is good is evil, as Secular Christians do when they use *the scriptures* to negate the teachings of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is our Teacher, not the bible. And without the Holy Spirit, the bible is a false teacher. It isn't enough that the scripture be inspired. He who reads the scripture must also be inspired--he must have the Spirit in him. It is only when we are born again into the new covenant with God by the blood of Jesus Christ that we receive that fullness of the Spirit which teaches us all things. (John 14.26)

It is necessary to test what we believe by the standard of what other Christians believe, and especially by the standard of what those first Christians believed. What I believe must square with what John or Paul or Polycarp believed and what they wrote down. But the Holy Spirit also teaches us directly, without the bible or the church for an intermediary. 1 John 2.20 says *you have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things. I have not written to you because you know not the truth, but because you know it.* 1 John 2.27 says *Because of the anointing you need not that any man teach you . . . it teaches you all things.* 1 Corinthians 2.10-13 says that only the Spirit of God reveals to us the things of God. That ties in exactly with Jeremiah 31.34 and Hebrews 8.11 which quotes it--in the new covenant each one of us has a personal relationship with God who teaches us directly and personally about Himself.

The Holy Spirit is the very *Breath* or *Spirit* of Jesus himself. They are the same word in the ancient language. John 20.22 says *he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles describe how later Christians received the Holy Spirit. John 14.26 promises *The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* By *Comforter* is meant the **Encourager** in King James English--the one who gives us the Courage to live the Christian life and to Bear Witness to the Truth. John 16.13 promises that *when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.* The Spirit of Jesus leads us to the Truth and gives us the Courage to Bear Witness to the Truth. He gives us the Love we need to live the Christian life. He is the Spirit of the New Covenant.