

Did Abraham Observe the Law?

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It has been taught that the commandments, statutes, and law given to Moses at Mt. Sinai were done away after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It has also been taught that the commandments, statutes, and law given to ancient Israel were not known, or observed, prior to their introduction by Moses.

However, if Holy Scripture were to reveal that another human being kept the law, commandments, and statutes prior to the time of Moses it would be difficult to support the latter teaching. Even if one individual kept the commandments, statutes, and law of God prior to the time of Moses, it would prove that they were instructed to do so by one of Almighty God's heavenly servants because no mortal being would be able to create these same commandments, statutes, and law.

Prior to God's commandments, statutes, and law being given to the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai, Almighty God made a clear connection between His example of a Sabbath rest in the Genesis account of creation, and the fact that this example was to serve as a constant reminder for those He had created,

And the Lord said to Moses (prior to the law being given at Mt. Sinai; cf. Ex. 20), "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? ²⁹See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days"... (Ex. 16:28-29a; NJKV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Almighty God did not introduce the Sabbath commandment shortly before Israel arrived at Mt. Sinai. Instead, He gave it to all of mankind following their creation (Mk. 2:27). The fact that individuals and nations neglect, forget to keep, or just ignore the law and commandments of God, is not proof that they are no longer in effect,

And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (set it apart for a special purpose), because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made (Gen. 2:2-3; Ed. note in parenthesis).

It is important to note that the weekly Sabbath always falls on the seventh day of the week referred to as Saturday in the secular calendar (see study: The Weekly Sabbath). Sunday is a high day in the pagan system of worship and was introduced into Christianity sometime in the late second century following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see study: Pagan Practices). The Sabbath commences at dark on Friday night and ends at dark on Saturday night (see study: How to Determine the Beginning and End of the Day).

As Abraham was regarded as a friend of God (2Chr. 20:7; Jas. 2:23) and the father of those who are faithful to Him (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7-9), it should not come as a surprise that he knew about the commandments, statutes, and law of God,

Then the Lord appeared to him (Isaac) and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. ³Sojourn (reside temporarily) in this land, and I will be with you

and bless you; for to you and your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will perform the oath (promise) which I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (prophetic promise regarding Jesus Christ); ⁵because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments (SHD # 4687), My statutes (SHD # 2708), and My laws (SHD # 8451). (Gen. 26:2-5; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added)

It is important to note that when some of the writings in the Second Covenant appear to say that God's law and commandments are of little significance, the context needs to be examined closely because they refer to the animal sacrificial system and/or the Levitical priesthood (see study: What Was The Change In The Law That Paul Referred To In Hebrews 7:12?).

In Genesis 26:5, the Hebrew words translated into the English words, "commandments", "statutes", and "laws" are the same as those used during the time that Moses was given God's law, commandments, and statutes at Mt. Sinai. Ancient Israel was reminded that disobedience to the same laws, commandments, and statutes that Abraham obeyed would result in national captivity (Deut. 28:15-68). Upon repentance for breaking these, God said that He would forgive their sins.

The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body (offspring), in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, ¹⁰if you obey the

voice of the Lord your God, to keep His commandments (SHD # 4687) and His statutes (SHD # 2708) which are written in this Book of the Law (SHD # 8451), and if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul (Deut. 30:9-10; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

As Almighty God does not change (Mal. 3:6), the same punishment that was prescribed for ancient Israel will apply to those who persist in disobeying God's law and commandments today. It should be noted that there were approximately seven hundred years between the time that Moses gave God's law, commandments, and statutes at Mt. Sinai, and the captivity of Jerusalem (588/587 BCE). Therefore, the scriptures that attest to God's patience and longsuffering are confirmed (Ex. 34:6; Nu. 14:18; Ps. 86:15; 2Pt. 3:9).

Unfortunately, most people interpret God's patience as license to disobey His law and commandments. In other words, "we haven't gone into captivity; so this is proof that our conduct is acceptable to God." It is clear that God's people will again be taken captive by foreign nations because they are gathered from these countries after the return of Jesus Christ (Isa. 11:11-12; 66:20). This gathering is not limited to those of the tribe of Judah (the Jews) who comprise only a small portion of the twelve tribes of Israel. This gathering will include many non-Jewish people from the other tribes of Israel who are now living in nations around the world (see study: Messiah's Message to the Jewish People).

Abraham learned God's commandments, statutes, and law because he was taught by Almighty God's servant, who would later

become known as Jesus Christ (see study: Who Did The Early Church Think Jesus Christ Was Prior To His Birth As A Man?; cf. Heb. 13:9). Because Abraham was instructed in the ways of God, he acted as priest of his own household and was responsible for administering God's commandments, statutes, and law,

So He (the Lord) said to him (Abram), "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."¹⁰Then he (Abram) brought all these to him (the Lord) and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two (Gen. 15:9-10; Ed. notes in parentheses).

This is My covenant which you (Abraham) shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised (Gen. 17:10ff; Ed. notes in parenthesis; emphasis added).

And the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, ¹⁸since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? ¹⁹For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice (cf. Ps. 119:142, 160, 172), that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him (Gen. 18:17-19; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Although Abraham was priest of his own household, he recognized a higher priest who represented Almighty God and carried the title of king.

Then Melchizedek king of Salem (Peace; cf. Isa. 9:6) brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. ¹⁹And he (Melchizedek) blessed him (Abram) and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;²⁰and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he (Abram) gave him (Melchizedek) a tithe (tenth) of all (Gen. 14:18-20; cf. Heb. 7:1-2; Ed. notes in parentheses).



THIS IS MY COVENANT WHICH YOU (ABRAHAM) SHALL KEEP, BETWEEN ME AND YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS AFTER YOU: EVERY MALE CHILD AMONG YOU SHALL BE CIRCUMCISED.

Genesis 17:10ff; Ed. Notes in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Melchizedek, king of Salem, does not have a beginning of days like other human beings and remains a priest continually (Heb. 7:3; see study: Who Is Melchizedek?). As Abraham knew about Melchizedek and how he should relate to him, there would have been communication between the two of them on more than one occasion. It appears that Melchizedek continued as High Priest until the time of Moses and the institution of the Levitical priesthood. Among other responsibilities, the Levitical priesthood administered the animal sacrifices according to all the instructions in the law of God. This aspect of God's law ceased after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the destruction of the temple in 70CE.

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood [for under it the people received the law] (regarding animal sacrifices) what further need was there that another priest should rise (in a resurrection from the dead) according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? (Heb. 7:11; Ed. notes in parentheses).



AND THE PRIEST SHALL BURN THEM
ON THE ALTER AS FOOD, AN
OFFERING MADE BY FIRE FOR A
SWEET AROMA; ALL THE FAT IS THE
LORD'S.

Leviticus 3:16; emphasis added

Abraham and others, that God worked with prior to the time of Moses, were obedient to the commandments, statutes, and law. From the very beginning the requirement for a sacrifice to cover sins was taught and possibly by the one who carries the title, Melchizedek king of Salem,

Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics (SHD # 3801 - coverings) of skin (SHD # 5785 – the hide of animals), and clothed them (Gen. 3:21; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

As no human being has seen or heard Almighty God (Jn. 5:37), it is possible these coverings were made by Melchizedek through the sacrifice of some clean animals. This may be a summary example explaining how Cain and Abel understood the requirement for sacrifice and also to present offerings to God. Presumably, Adam would have taught his sons the importance of bringing an offering because of the instruction he received shortly after he and Eve had sinned.

And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. ⁴Abel also (in addition to the fruit of the ground) brought of the firstlings (firstborn) of his flock and of their fat... (Gen. 4:3-4a; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It is interesting to note that Abel obeyed the law regarding animal sacrifices in very specific details including the fat belonging to God and the use of the firstlings of the flock.

And the priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma; all the fat is the Lord's (Lev. 3:16; emphasis added).

All the firstborn males that come from your herd and your flock you shall sanctify to the Lord your God; you shall do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. ²⁰You and your household shall eat it before the Lord your God year by year in the place which the Lord chooses. ²¹But if there is any defect in it, if it is lame or blind or has any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the Lord your God (Deut. 15:19-21; emphasis added).

It is highly unlikely that Abel came up with the idea of these offerings himself. They resemble specific instructions given to Moses too closely to be a coincidence. Therefore, Cain and Abel were instructed in God's law and were commanded to obey. Apparently, Cain was reluctant to follow the instructions he was given, and this was reflected in his offering (Gen. 4:5). Some Bible commentators claim that God's people learned about sacrificing animals through the Gentile, or pagan, nations and then adopted

these practices. However, this cannot be correct if Genesis 3:21 is properly understood because Gentile nations did not exist at this time in human history.

It is far more likely that the pagan nations copied the practice of sacrificing animals from God's people as it began with Adam and Eve's family, carried on through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and finally was given as a law to the entire nation of Israel.

Noah also sacrificed to God confirming that he was either taught by God's heavenly servant, or learned from a family member who understood the commandments, statutes, and law of God. Not only did Noah sacrifice, but he also knew that only clean animals would be acceptable, Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar (Gen. 8:20).

Therefore, the claim that the law regarding clean and unclean animals was introduced to Israel through Moses at Mt. Sinai and ended after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is false (Lev. 11:2-47; Deut. 14:1-21).

Again, because every detail of the commandments, statutes, and law given to Moses, is not mentioned prior to Moses, is not sufficient evidence to state these were not taught, understood, and obeyed by God's people prior to that time. The book of Genesis is a very brief summary of man's history covering thousands of years. Some claim there is proof of man's settlements dating back to 10,000 B.C., or even earlier. As the book of Genesis ends with the death of Joseph approximately 1780 B.C. (Gen. 50:26), it is possible that the history of Genesis spans over 8,000 years. As Genesis

consists of fifty chapters, this would amount to each chapter covering one hundred and sixty years of man's history. In contrast, the combined books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy consist of 137 chapters covering the lifespan of the nation of Israel under Moses, who lived for one hundred and twenty years (Deut. 34:7). This would equal less than one year of history per chapter. Therefore, it should be no surprise that the commandments, statutes, and law of God are recorded in greater detail in the four books just mentioned than in the book of Genesis.

The next question that will arise is how God's people should observe the law, commandments, and statutes today when there is no Levitical priesthood and no animal sacrificial system. It is very important to note that this was a big issue in the early church of God following Christ's death and resurrection. The key that distinguishes the actions of the early church, compared with the actions of Christianity today, is that those in the early church wanted to make sure they understood and obeyed God correctly. They certainly did not approach law-related issues by stating that Christ did away with the commandments, statutes, and law of his Father in heaven (Mt. 5:17-20). Instead, they examined and discussed each issue very cautiously and respectfully with the desire to please and obey God. One example was the subject of circumcision, which pre-dated God's commandments, statutes, and law being given to Moses at Mt. Sinai (Gen. 17:10). The members of God's early church, along with the apostles and elders, assembled to discuss this matter because it was causing confusion and had the potential for causing division within the body of Christ,

And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."²Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question (Ac. 15:1-2).

And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. ⁵But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses (animal sacrifices and associated ordinances) (Ac. 15:4-5; Ed. note in parenthesis).

As the temple in Jerusalem was still operating at this time, and would continue to do so until 70CE, it caused confusion especially for those early church members who were previously involved with officiating at the temple. This dilemma took on a sense of urgency because Gentile converts were coming into fellowship in large numbers, and in the First Covenant these people could not fellowship with Israel, or participate in God's festivals, unless they were circumcised,

And when a stranger sojourns with you and wants to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.⁴⁹One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who sojourns among you (Ex. 12:48-49).

In order to settle this dispute, the early church examined prophetic scriptures dealing with Gentile nations coming into a spiritual relationship with Almighty God. This relationship would not involve a physical temple, and it would not occur because Gentiles would offer their own blood, symbolically pictured through the act of circumcision. Instead, it would be by God's action through the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:11-22). No other blood would cover the sins of the Gentiles. The main requirement would be repentance of sin (Ac. 2:38), which Paul described as a circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29) and abstaining from anything that God defines as contrary to His law and commandments (1Jn. 3:4). The apostle James pointed out that the Gentile converts didn't need to be troubled by participating in the animal sacrifices because they would learn about its purpose and meaning, along with sin, as it was explained every Sabbath through readings in the synagogues.

And after they (all the brethren) had become silent, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, listen to me; ¹⁴Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. ¹⁵And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: ¹⁶After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up (cf. Heb. 9:8-15), ¹⁷so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does all these things (Ac. 15:13-17; Ed. notes in parentheses). Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, ²⁰but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is

strangled and from blood.²¹For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath (Ac. 15:19-21; NASB; Ed. notes in parentheses).

This is only one example of God's people working together to solve an issue that could end up causing division. The lesson for people today is to respectfully approach God's law and commandments with a desire to understand how they should be observed,

But he (Christ) answered and said, "It has been written, **'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'**" (Mt. 4:4; RNT; Ed. note in parenthesis; bold portion denotes OT quote; cf. Mt. 7:21-23).

Therefore, claiming that God's law and commandments were done away upon Christ's death and resurrection is a lie (1Jn. 2:4), and contrary to numerous scriptures that teach otherwise (Mt. 5:17-19; Mk. 10:17-19; Jn. 15:10; 1Cor. 7:19; 1Jn. 3:24; 5:2-3; 2Jn. 6; Rev. 12:17; 22:14; NKJV). The job of anyone claiming to know Almighty God is to examine His word with the desire to obey it in the correct manner. It is clear that Abraham observed God's commandments, statutes, and law before Moses gave them to the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai. He also taught these to his family (Gen. 18:19).

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart;⁷you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand (everything that you do), and they shall be as

frontlets between your eyes (everything that you think).⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house (foundation of the family) and on your gates (foundation of your community and nation) (Deut. 6:6-9; cf. 11:18-21; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Abraham is regarded as faithful because he trusted God and his trust was proven by his obedience to God's commandments, statutes, and law. Even when commanded to offer his son Isaac, Abraham obeyed (Jas. 2:14, 17-26).



BUT HE (CHRIST) ANSWERED AND SAID, "IT HAS BEEN WRITTEN, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD'"

Matthew 4:4; RNT; Ed. Note in parenthesis; bold portion denotes OT quote; cf. Matthew 7:21-23.

The majority of those, who regard themselves as true Christians today, have a problem obeying even the most basic of God's commands and do not understand that Almighty God requires that they need to go above and beyond these as Jesus Christ stated,

Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not.¹⁰So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do' (Lk. 17:9-10; cf. Mt. 5:41; 23:23).

Abraham was called a 'friend of God' because he was completely faithful to Him and kept all of His commandments, statutes, and law. And since he trusted God explicitly and was willing to sacrifice whatever was necessary in order to faithfully obey every word of God, he will take part in the first resurrection along with all of God's elect. He is therefore an outstanding example for God's people today who are in fact instructed to "follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham" (Heb. 11:8-12, 17-19; Rom. 4:1-12).

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