

The WildBranch Ministry

*...thou bearest not the root, but the root
thee. Romans 11:18*

The Moral Law and the Ceremonial Law

Introduction

Every now and then I receive an email concerning the issue of what the difference is between a commandment, a statute and an ordinance. Of course, these are English words, but the Hebrew text does make a distinction between them. Many times the context of the question is attached to a teaching that proposes that the ordinances of 'Ivrim 9:1-10, the middle wall of partition in Ephesians 2:14, and what was nailed to the cross in Colossians 2:14 were the statutes and ordinances and not the Ten Words or Ten Commandments of Sh'mot 20:1-17. The conclusion of this teaching is that New Testament believers are responsible to observe the Ten Commandments and not those instructions found in the ordinances and statutes. This specifically addresses all things pertaining to the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices, the offerings, instructions concerning servants, vows, planting, harvesting, jubilee years, disease, dietary laws and last but not least, the feasts of YHVH. These things, they say, were nailed to the cross and were instructions from Moses to Israel that were placed in the 'side' of the ark and not 'in' the ark.

In all fairness, this teaching is very provocative and the pearls are strung very convincingly. I submit to you, however, that it's conclusion is not a just weight, and it is only presenting the scriptures that seem to support it's premise. How these words are defined and used will support this premise or collapse it. The basic premise is this: There are two distinct laws. The moral law, as displayed in the Ten Commandments, and the ceremonial (a.k.a. Jewish) law, as given by Moses. The proposition is that Yeshua' died to free us from the ceremonial law but not the moral law. I am sure you have heard this line before. In this teaching series I will address as many of the so-called prooftexts of this view as I can. The following quotes are typical examples of the theology behind this teaching.

"The moral law was written and spoken by God (Exodus 20:1,22; 31:18; 32:16) and the ceremonial was written and spoken by Moses (Exodus 24:3-4; Deut 31:24)." ceremoniallaw.com/net

"If a man sinned, he broke the moral law of the Ten Commandments. Then he brought his offering according to the ceremonial law, the law of sacrifices, and he received forgiveness. For sin is the transgression of the moral law, the Ten Commandments. 1 John 3:4" ceremoniallaw.com/net

"Jesus Christ permanently took the place of the ceremonial law when He cried out 'It is finished' and bowed His head and died" ceremoniallaw.com/net

**"The Bible presents two laws: one changeless and eternal, the other provisional and temporary. One presents the duty of man to God and to his fellow men, the other was given because of man's disobedience to God's requirements." sdarm.org
Seventh Day Adventists Reformed Movement**

"Many theologians divide Old Testament laws into three general categories: moral, ceremonial, and civil." Jesus-is-savior.com

"If you look at the difference between moral and ceremonial aspects of the law, the moral part is the part in our hearts, our love for neighbour or for God. The ceremonial part is the part outside of that, the ritual part, the externals." theotokos.co.za

"The ceremonial laws given in the Old Testament pointed to and were fulfilled in Jesus Christ." Americanvision.org

This is just a tiny example of a plethora of web sites teaching the difference between the ceremonial laws of God and the moral laws of God. There are as many sites that divide God's commandments into moral, civil, and ceremonial laws. Either way, I am not sure whether the *mitzvah* frog would rather be slowly boiled in water or placed under the scalpel in the anti-Torah biology labs. It is this author's opinion that this teaching is evolutionary and Darwinism at it's best. There are quite a few aspects of this issue that have already been addressed in other teachings on our web site. I am not going to revisit those. I would like to begin by briefly addressing the terms **ceremonial** and **moral**. Let's begin with some clear, verifiable facts, which I will strive to be fair and balanced about. Given my nature, I want to address some words first. There is no place in scripture that uses the terms moral or ceremonial to divide up the commandments of our Creator. These are interpretive words, drawn from their own presuppositions and biases. I told you I would be fair and balanced. We ALL have our presuppositions and biases. There are two kinds of people in the world. Those who admit they interpret scripture through presupposition and those who try to convince the masses that they have none and are always looking at scripture with an objective lens. Trust me, there is only ONE who sees things without bias. The second person is self-deceived.

The terms **ceremonial** and **moral** must be derived from the evidence they choose to present. Since the scriptures make no mention of these two groups of laws, their conclusion must be based upon inference, whether clear, muddy or contrived. However, the Word of God does mention commandments, laws, ordinances, statutes and precepts. I

choose to define these words concretely and then to search them from Genesis to Revelation. So, before we conclude that some laws are for Jews in the Old Testament and some laws are for Christians in the New Testament, let's define some of the terminology.

The English word **commandment** is translated from several Hebrew words. Most often it is the verb **command** or *tzvah*. As a noun, it is *mitzvah*. As a noun, or commandment, it is used over 200 times in the Tanakh. Obviously, from the anti-Torah point of view, this many occurrences would be expected. Its Greek equivalents in the New Testament are *prostasso* and *entole*. They appear almost 100 times in the New Testament. The abstract use of this word as a command, order or charge stems from its ancient picture of a *tzadi* and a *waw*. The *tzadi* pictures a man laying on his side, as in waiting. The *waw* is a nail, stake or pin that connects. The ancient picture is of a son or even a soldier waiting for that which connects, hence a command. Here are a few examples including the first use of the word as a verb and a noun.

B^ere'shiyt 2:16

"And YHVH 'Elohiym **commanded** the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:"

B^ere'shiyt 26:5

"Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my **commandments**, my statutes, and my laws."

Sh'mot 20:6

"And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my **commandments**."

Yochanan (John) 14:15

"If ye love me, keep my **commandments**."

Commandments begin in the beginning. A good place to bring them forth considering that YHVH loves the whole world. You may also notice that Abraham obeyed the *mitzvot* of God as well, long before Mt. Sinai. Adam chose NOT to obey them and ends up being the founding father of disobedience and its results. Further detail and even more relevant meaning can be seen in another Hebrew word that is also translated many times as commandment and that is the word *peh*. You may recognize this word as one of the letters of the Hebrew aleph bet. *Pe*h is the letter of the mouth, or that which speaks. It is that which comes out of the Father's mouth. It is a familial term.

Sh^emot 13:6-9

"Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to YHVH. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which YHVH did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that YHVH's law may be in thy **mouth** (*peh*): for with a strong hand hath YHVH brought thee out of Egypt."

Sh^emot 17:1

"And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the **commandment** (*peh*) of YHVH, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink."

D^evariym 8:3

"And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the **mouth** (*peh*) of YHVH doth man live.

It is every word that proceedeth out of the mouth/commandment of YHVH that man doth live by. This statement is repeated in the New Testament (surprise, surprise) in Mattityahu 4:4. What comes from the Father's mouth is for the children. Now the commandments of God are not what is in question here. It is the dissecting of the words from His mouths, making them for some and not others. It is also noteworthy that even many of those who concede that the Ten Commandments are moral laws and for the New Testament believer, still reject the Sabbath as being a moral law. Speaking of morals, it is morally reprehensible that for centuries pinheaded intellectual theologians have decided for the rest of us which words from our Father's mouth we should follow and which ones were for faithless Jews living in primordial soup ponds. It is those whom I believe Yeshua' will spew out of His mouth (*peh*). It may be interesting to note that the numerical (*gematria*) value of *tzvah* or commandment, is the same as the Hebrew word for vomit.

It might behoove us to give some attention to the numerous times that God's people are warned about keeping our Father's commandments and not turning away from them. I have included the several occasions in which the Hebrew words translated as ordinances, statutes and precepts were also translated in the KJV as 'commandments'.

'Amos 2:4

"Thus saith YHVH; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of YHVH, and have not kept his **commandments** (*choq*), and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:"

D^evariym 31:29

"For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have **commanded** you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of YHVH, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands."

M^elakhim Bet 17:34

"Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not YHVH, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and **commandment** which YHVH commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;"

Mizmor 119:10

"With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy **commandments**".

Mattityahu 5:19

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least **commandments**, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Hitgalut 12:17

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the **commandments** of God, and have the testimony of Messiah Yeshua'."

D^evariym 12:32

"What thing soever I **command** you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

I hope that in this introduction that I have been able to establish what most Christian theologians generally agree with anyway. Next time I want to begin to define ordinances, statutes and precepts and their relationship with the commandments of our Creator. Before part two I would like to reiterate that the scriptures DO NOT divide the commandments of God into moral, civil or ceremonial laws. Men do that, our Father does not.

Shalom Alecheim!
