

Royal Vision



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The LAWS of MARRIAGE

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About the cover Every marriage is governed by immutable, eternal laws that guarantee its success and happiness. Living by these laws now will help us prepare for the future marriage between Jesus Christ and His bride, the Church.
(Allan Parson photo)

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Greetings, Brethren and Co-Workers! . . .

Our Church has been given an inspiring gift. I'd like to give you a little background about it. Under the subhead "The START of the Present Work," Herbert W. Armstrong wrote this in Volume 1 of his autobiography:

As soon as arrangements were completed for starting the new church at Salem, I hurried on down to the Fisher farm to start the new campaign west of Eugene.

Mr. Oberg was starting his new meetings in Harrisburg on Sunday night, July 9. The Fishers and I decided to start the meetings at the Firbutte school the same night. I arrived at the Fisher farm, leaving my wife and children at our home in Salem, about July 5th or 6th.

This was the small—actually infinitesimal—*start* of what was destined to grow to a major worldwide Gospel Work reaching multiple millions of people every week.

But if small, it started with a burst of energy and inspiration. First, it started with intensive and earnest private prayer. To the rear of the Fisher farm home was a fair-sized hill. Running over this hilltop for exercise I discovered a rock about 14 inches high. It was in a secluded spot. It came to mind how Jesus had dismissed the multitudes, and gone up into a mountain "*apart*" to pray—alone with God. I dropped to my knees before this rock, which seemed just the right height to kneel before, and began praying earnestly for the success of the meetings. It became sort of a daily pilgrimage, during my stay at Fishers', to this, which became my "prayer rock." I'm sure that I drank in much energy, spiritual strength and inspiration at that prayer rock.

Dave Todd, a local church elder, searched the area to see if he could find that rock. He believed the rock had been found. Then he took me on a tour of the area. The hill is comparatively small.

The rock we saw is quite level, but not precisely so. The bottom of the rock extended just slightly below the soil's surface. We measured the rock from the ground up. The average height of the rock was exactly 14 inches!

We examined the whole area and could find no other rock suitable to use as a prayer rock. It was also covered with a thick layer of green moss, to make it comfortable to lean on. We believe this is clearly the same rock that Mr. Armstrong used for prayer.

Mr. Todd approached the owner of the land, and told him why we were so interested in that rock. The owner was happy to give the rock to us (after some intense prayer of our own!).

We are going to bring it to Imperial College. It will be used to remind all of us of the power of prayer to our spiritual Rock!

God's work through Mr. Armstrong generally started at that rock. It was the very smallest of beginnings and grew to a globe-girdling work that astounded all of God's people and many in the world! In terms of numbers of people reached, it became the largest work of God ever on this Earth!

If we all can build the kind of prayer Mr. Armstrong practiced, we can have a powerful impact on this world!

Those of you who come to visit headquarters will soon be able to see the "prayer rock." What it symbolizes should inspire each one of us to fervently serve and help build God's end-time work. It is the most inspiring story in this end time!



Dave Todd (left) and Gerald Flurry stand next to the moss-covered "prayer rock"

Gerald Flurry

Gerald Flurry
Editor in Chief

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

PART FOUR

The Love of God

I believe the Apostle John had a deeper understanding of God's love than any of God's apostles. This world does not comprehend God's love. And neither do most of God's own people! Even the very elect need a much deeper grasp of this subject. It is our greatest need. God is love—that is the deepest subject in the Bible.

BY GERALD FLURRY

AT THE END OF HIS GOSPEL, JOHN wrote of himself, "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his *testimony* is true" (John 21:24). The Apostle John gave *true testimony*.

The word *testimony* is translated from the Greek *marturia*, which comes from *martus*, meaning *martyr*. Sometimes the Christian's life really is about dying for a cause. But that is merely the end of a *physical* life. Such an end leads to ETERNAL LIFE.

The word *testifieth* also means to *witness*, and is similar to the word *testimony*. John was a good *witness*. He was willing to be subjected to any trial—even death—in his testimony for Christ. This is the kind of *witness* Christ wants from all of us.

THE WORDS TESTIFY AND WITNESS REVEAL WHAT THE DEPTH OF OUR COMMITMENT AND LOVE FOR CHRIST SHOULD BE. We must understand what it means when Christ says "follow me," or when we say we're 100 percent behind

this work.

Do we bear a righteous testimony in living or in dying?

Bearing Witness

Notice again the beginning of John's first epistle: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the *Word of LIFE*; (For *the life was manifested*, and we have seen it, and bear *witness*, and show unto you that ETERNAL LIFE, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)" (1 John 1:1-2). This is about LIFE—about LIVING!

Notice: in verse 2, John said that he bears *witness* to eternal life. He puts great emphasis on that word, using it 8 times in his epistles and 21 times in his Gospel (the other Gospels use it a combined total of 18 times). The *Anchor Bible* says, "The verb *martyrein*, 'to bear witness, testify,' and the noun *martyria*, 'witness, testimony,' occur a total of 64 times in [the Gospel of] John and the

epistles (verb 43 times; noun 21). The 33 uses of the verb in [the Gospel of] John may be contrasted with a total of 2 uses in the three Synoptic Gospels [Matthew, Mark and Luke], a contrast that indicates the extent to which the *legal and trial atmosphere* dominates [John's] thought." John talked a lot about law, commandments and trials. Why? Because it is through law and trials that we become God! Being a witness means keeping God's law of love—the Ten Commandments. That is how we love God and mankind.

Wescott said, "The message that St. John has to convey in his Gospel is the truth, and this is commended to men by various forms of *witness*. There is nothing in the Synoptic Gospels to prepare for this remarkable development which he gives to this idea." THE WORD WITNESS HERE IS MUCH STRONGER THAN THE WAY THAT WE USE THAT WORD TODAY!

Why does John put so much emphasis on *witness*? The *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible* says, "*Martus* is used as a designation of those who have suffered

death in consequence of confessing Christ." In Revelation 1:5, Christ is called THE WITNESS—the martyr! I Peter 2:21 says we are to follow His example.

Thayer's Lexicon says of *martus*, "Examples that proved the strength and genuineness of their faith in Christ by undergoing a violent death." In other words, *martus* means to bear witness of, or manifest, Christ—WHETHER YOU'RE LIVING OR DYING!

This word *witness* gives us a good insight into what it means to love God.

Most of God's people today are dying. You can't smell the stench of people dying spiritually, but God can SEE IT VIVIDLY! AS A FATHER, WATCHING HIS SONS DIE because they don't love Him is the most terrible thing He could possibly see. That's the worst stench of all to our Father!

IF YOU ARE NOT GROWING IN THIS LOVE, YOU ARE DYING!

The Father tests us to see what kind of witness we will be—how much we love Him. It's only natural that He tests how much LOVE we have in our marriage engagement to His Son! A marriage without love is an awful marriage.

CAN WE PROVE OUR LOVE TO THE VERY END—THE WAY OUR HUSBAND ALREADY HAS?

Notice this success story: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John [the Baptist—not the apostle]. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe" (John 1:6-7). Did people love John the Baptist because he bore witness of Christ? No—actually *he had his head delivered on a platter*. Would we be a witness for God to that extent? John's greatest work was done in prison: To his last moment of life, he was being a witness for God. What a noble ending! Why was he a witness? That people "might believe"—both in John's day, and those who have read and will read about him through the ages! What an example! He died as Christ did. That is a good example of what it means to "bear witness of the Light"! We read about it today, and it strengthens our faith.

Our commitment to God's truth reveals the quality of our love.

John "came for a witness, to bear witness." The *Companion Bible* says that means "WITH A VIEW TO BEARING WITNESS; NOT MERELY TO BE A WITNESS." We must be a *doer* of what we have learned—give proof and evidence to support what we say. Our deeds must match our words. When the burden is heavy, we continue to

We are honorable witnesses when we love others as Christ loved us. That is how we fellowship with God. God is love, and we must express God's love as a way of life.

bear it. It is our *duty* to give a good, honorable report of the fight.

Because of John the Baptist's message and example, he was thrown in jail and later beheaded. He gave his all to God, and God responded by saying, "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matt. 11:11). John proved his love for God, but God first proved His love for John and all humanity. Christ lived and died for each one of us.

The Apostle John emphasized WITNESS and TESTIFY more than all the other apostles combined! Perhaps this was because Christ personally taught him more depth of love. John expresses that love in words like *witness*.

John repeatedly stressed the word *witness*. He hammered hard on this word. He wanted us to understand that we are here to act like our Father's sons—"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). That is how we witness—we live like our Father and Christ. That is how we qualify to become members in His family.

WE ARE HONORABLE WITNESSES WHEN WE LOVE OTHERS AS CHRIST LOVED US! That is how we fellowship with God. God is love, and we must express God's love as a way of life.

Our witness of love—giving and sacrificing for God's work—is how we come out of this world. This is a witness you see only in God's very elect.

What a profound meaning the word *witness* has!

We have been called to make God's message known to mankind through our examples and God's work—"that ALL MEN through him might believe." The *only* way men can believe is through this message. ULTIMATELY, WE

SHALL REACH ALL HUMANITY. WHAT A NOBLE AND MASSIVE CAUSE!

Of course, this is not an easy message to deliver. Men of darkness always try to destroy the light.

BUT IF YOU STAND UP FOR GOD, GOD WILL STAND UP FOR YOU! That is what you want—to be able to hear, at the end of it all, those sweet words: *Well done, good and faithful servant* (Matt. 25:21). *Good witness!* But realize: Getting there could get you killed.

Sacrificial Love

Even in this world, you sometimes see a child dying of cancer or something similar, and a parent so full of love they would do anything to be able to die in place of that child.

That is merely *phileo*, or brotherly, love! Yet it is certainly in the direction of the kind of love God is talking about—where you love God *so much* YOU WOULD RATHER DIE THAN DISAPPOINT YOUR FATHER! *This is my Father and my Husband*, you say. *They've given their lives for me, and I want to be like they are! I want to act like I belong to their family!* And so, you are very willing to die. That is the love of God. We must love our majestic Father and Jesus Christ.

That is how we follow Christ's example. He bore witness of the truth to the end. John 18:37 shows Him standing before Pilate, about to be killed, BEARING WITNESS TO THE TRUTH! Everyone around Him saw that. We read about it and know all about it. CHRIST LOVED HIS FATHER UNTO DEATH.

To bear witness to the truth means to live according to God's truth, even if it gets you killed!

John 3:16 shows that our Father loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son. We are building that kind of love—risking it all physically, because we love God's family. This is the kind of family love that will last forever! There is nothing so beautiful as that!

Jesus said, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true" (John 5:31). He didn't bear witness of Himself! If we bear witness of ourselves, it is not true. That is what the Laodiceans are doing. We are here for one purpose, and that is to BEAR WITNESS OF GOD! *Agape* love, or God's love, doesn't bear witness of itself—it bears witness of the Father and the Son.

God is love. When we say we are becoming God, it means we are BECOMING LOVE—as we live and die for Him.

As 1 John 1:2 says, Christ's eternal life was manifested as a human being. He humbled Himself in that way and allowed Himself to be beaten beyond recognition to be a *witness* for God. We are to "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-8). GOD WANTS US TO THINK AS HE THINKS! Understand the extent of that sacrifice by the Father and Son, and get your mind off YOURSELF! We are all far too steeped in selfishness. This is a SACRIFICING love.

Christ said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I HAVE LOVED YOU, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). This is not letter-of-the-law obedience. Can you comprehend that incredible depth—loving others AS CHRIST HAS LOVED YOU? And He wants us to love God the way HE loved God. He called this a "new commandment" because it is only possible to obey it with the Holy Spirit—it is TAKING THE HOLY SPIRIT INTO OURSELVES and then EXPRESSING THE VERY LOVE OF GOD! This is giving and sacrificing for God and for each other AS CHRIST DID.

This is REAL, ABUNDANT LIVING—EVEN IF WE ARE DYING PHYSICALLY! Over the years in my ministry, I have seen a few people physically rot, right before my eyes, and yet remain loyal to God every step of the way, to the end! Though it must be one of the most grotesque sights to see, at the same time it is one of the MOST MAJESTICALLY BEAUTIFUL—looking at it from God's point of view! Does God think that is ugly? If someone is being loyal in circumstances like that, he or she is BEARING WITNESS OF THE FATHER! What a precious, extraordinary beauty that is! I know I will see those people again, and they will live FOR EVER AND EVER! They won't remember that trial for very long. They will have ETERNAL LIFE! I hope and pray I can have such a noble ending.

Are *you* prepared to trust God to heal you, now or in the resurrection? What dazzling beauty to God. *Well done, good and faithful servant*, He will say.

Eternal Life

1 John 5:6 says "it is the Spirit that beareth witness." Bearing witness this

We must fellowship in the context of the God family and our engagement to Christ. We can't even begin to fathom such depth without God's Holy Spirit.

way is not a *physical* endeavor. *Only* God's Spirit can accomplish something so mighty and wonderful!

As I have written, the Holy Spirit is the greatest gift in the universe. When Christ came up out of the baptismal waters, He saw the Spirit of God "descending like a dove, and lighting upon him" (Matt. 3:16). God wants us to realize that when we are baptized, WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE! It is IN YOU! What is that worth? We can do ALL THINGS with that Spirit of Christ in us (Phil. 4:13). With that Spirit, like John the Baptist *we* can bear witness of the Light. And at the end of it all, we too can hear those words, *well done*. What a future God is offering us.

I can see why sometimes this life has to be so dangerous. With something so wonderful and majestic awaiting us, there has to be a certain danger for us to get there—a risk! Even God the Father and Jesus Christ had to take the ultimate risk, because this is SO AWESOME—the greatest feat God can accomplish: to recreate Himself!

Fellowship With the Father and Son

"That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son.

The Father is mentioned first because He is the Head of the family. HERE IS SOME OF THE MOST DEEP-ROOTED TRUTH IN THE BIBLE. As we grow, this understanding is deepened and our lives become far more enriched.

There are many evil influences in this world which destroy our physical families. Satan knows he can destroy nations by destroying families.

The physical family is only a *type* of

God's family of love. Satan knows he can destroy the spiritual nation of Israel by destroying God's family members.

Satan destroyed God's work through the Laodiceans by getting them to dishonor their Father (Mal. 1:6). They no longer fellowship with the Father and Jesus Christ. FIRST HE DESTROYED THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE FATHER. As a result, the Church became divided; 95 percent of God's people stopped honoring the Father. That is how the Laodiceans broke their engagement with the Son. Now Christ is no longer able to lead them to do His work. They don't love God enough to do His work.

We must fellowship in the context of the God family and our engagement to Christ. WE CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO FATHOM SUCH DEPTH WITHOUT GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. The world does not really understand fellowship with God. Unless our fellowship is with the Father and the Son, we are just another deceived church.

Herbert W. Armstrong was a father to God's Church (as Paul was to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 4:15). All of us came to God through him, either directly or indirectly. Mr. Armstrong was used by God to lead us into a loving family fellowship.

The Laodiceans rejected his office and most of God's revelation through him. That was the single most significant way they stopped fellowshiping with the Father and the Son. Is it logically possible for someone to have family fellowship with God and still reject the man God used to restore all things? (Matt. 17:10-11).

The Father is mentioned 17 times and the Son 25 times in John's epistles. John gives us a profoundly in-depth view of God's family. And today, we not only *teach* this truth, the Philadelphia Church of God *fellowships* with the Father and the Son.

We can have the most personal relationship with our Father. John related in his Gospel that Christ would lead us into the "BOSOM of the Father" (John 1:18). Nothing in this world comes near that level of intimacy.

Being in the *bosom* of the Father is the ultimate love for our Father. There is no closeness in the universe so intimate as this relationship! WE CAN BE IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER! How do we show that closeness? By declaring the God family message to this world as John did. No other religion understands who and what God is. They don't comprehend the Father's mes-

sage. They don't even remotely understand what it means to be in the *bosom* of the Father.

Full Joy

"And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4). Don't forget, this message is mainly for the "last hour." God wanted His Church in this end time to be able to study these words. He wants us to deeply fathom fellowshiping with the Father and the Son—"THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL," even in a trial of fire, as John was experiencing.

IS THE PCG FULL OF JOY? IT SHOULD BE. BECAUSE WE ARE ABOUT TO HELP CHRIST FILL THIS WORLD WITH JOY. We need to get this message written down so we can study and penetrate to the depth of God's love. Christ is about to return!

Our ministers must set an example of joy for the members—to be helpers of their joy (11 Cor. 1:24).

If you lack that joy, stay on your knees until you get it!

Little children who are trained properly are full of joy, and they inspire adults to have joy. Spiritual children should also have joy and inspire it in others. We will set this example, if we let our Father govern our lives. It will bring *full joy*! We must become as little children (Matt. 18:1-3). When we submissively love God, we are given His joy. FULL JOY COMES FROM FELLOWSHIPING WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON. THIS IS AN IRONCLAD GUARANTEE FROM GOD! It is such a wonderful truth.

Satan has full *misery*, and he wants to destroy our fellowship with God and the full joy it brings.

God Is Light

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). God is light. He is the Father of ALL light (James 1:17). God illuminates how marriage and family work, how to have peace and joy. Light removes all mystery.

Most people crave sunshine and light. We must learn to crave *spiritual* light. With the light, we *see* how to solve all our problems. God's light must change our evil, human nature.

With Christ in us, we are the light in this dark and evil world. Soon we will help Christ *fill* this world with light.

"[I]n thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9). The Laodiceans are blind, because they are not in God's light. They receive no new revelation from

Full joy comes from fellowshipping with the Father and the Son. This is an ironclad guarantee from God!

God to give them direction. Their work is only a small human endeavor.

The Vision

The first five verses of 1 John are the foundational vision of John's epistles. Let's look at these verses as one unit. Surely this is one of the most inspiring visions in the Bible. This is the transcendent vision that God's Ephesus Church era lost. And that is why most of the members then and today rebelled!

This is the vision we must DECLARE, as it says in verse 5.

In verse 1, John emphasized the Word. Why? The Father created all things through the Word (Eph. 3:9). Then the Word, who is eternal, came to this Earth and died for humanity.

Word means Spokesman. He speaks for the God family. What a *message* He has for mankind!

JOHN IS GIVING US THE GOD PERSPECTIVE—SO WE CAN SEE THIS VISION AS GOD SEES IT! If we see it through God's eyes, we will never give up.

The Father and Christ are eternal. They were in existence before creation—before the angels, the universe and mankind.

John is the *only* New Testament writer to explain the Word, with a capital W. There is awesome depth in the original Greek word, *Logos*. This must have been a big part of what Christ taught John when He was spending so much time with him. John describes the Logos in his Gospel, his epistles and in the book of Revelation. *Logos* clarifies the God family in a spectacular way. LOGOS COULD BE THE MOST REVEALING WORD IN THE BIBLE! It is a single word that gives depth and meaning to God's master plan. If you comprehend the meaning of this one word, you know that this God Being came to Earth after God's Plan A had failed when Lucifer rebelled, and He implemented Plan B, for mankind.

The apostles "handled ... the Word of life." They knew Him intimately by living with Him for 3½ years. John didn't want himself or any of God's disciples to ever forget who the Word really was.

This was the Logos who was with God before there was any creation and then He came to this Earth and died for us.

THE WORD BECAME FLESH—GOD BECAME A MAN—SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME GOD! THIS IS EXTREMELY CRITICAL HISTORY. WE MUST NOT ALLOW SATAN TO TAKE THIS ESSENTIAL HISTORY FROM US.

This Logos became the "Son of the Highest." Now there is Father and Son—family. Now all mankind is to be invited to be a part of that family and rule over the universe, a job for which the angels failed to qualify!

This vision kept John from losing his first love. Most of the Ephesus era lost their first love, though, because they rejected this vision.

This is the message of the Word, and it must be declared so people can fellowship with the Father and His Son.

Now God is recreating Himself through mankind. Nobody but God is qualified to rule the universe. Only God's own character in us can do that!

No wonder John kept talking about declaring this vision. THIS IS THE MOST INSPIRING MESSAGE THERE IS OR EVER COULD BE! He could hardly contain himself. He had to cry out to the Church and world about this super-incredible future for humanity. And he had followers who were willing to give their lives to help him, no matter how hard the persecution. What God had revealed was going to be declared.

Our Husband is the Spokesman. We are His bride and must help Him deliver His mind-boggling, awe-inspiring vision. THIS IS THE *ONLY* WAY CHRIST SPEAKS TODAY—THROUGH HIS BRIDE! We show love for our Husband when we declare His message.

LET ME REPEAT WHY JOHN WAS SO PROFOUND. HE SAW FROM THE CREATOR'S PERSPECTIVE. He probably spent more time with the Word than did any other disciple.

The other disciples were killed, but John continued to live and learn, dying as an old man. He kept searching out "the deep things of God." And God used him to teach all of us.

NEVER AGAIN, FOR ALL ETERNITY, WILL ANY SAINTS HAVE A GREATER OPPORTUNITY FOR GLORY! Whatever God reveals, we either declare that revelation, or become

guilty of the world's blood. Tragically, John was not getting nearly enough help from God's people, as we are not today. But still the message is proclaimed.

In these five foundational verses, John skips the angelic creation. That is because God now knows the angels are not qualified to rule the universe. Only God's sons, with His character, can rule the cosmos. And God is now recreating Himself in us for that magnificent responsibility.

We are now commanded to build the character of our Father (Matt. 5:48). The angels were never given such a transcendent goal. That is why we face intense trials and tests. The firstfruits are being prepared to rule over angels, the universe and other sons of God! We must be qualified for this most exalted calling God will ever give anyone.

Prophecy indicates that only 50 percent of God's Laodicean people will make it in this "last end." It can't be easy to prepare for a future filled with such majesty and glory. WE ARE GOD'S FAMILY—DESTINED TO BE UNIVERSE BUILDERS!

A German dignitary, Franz Joseph Strauss, said of beautiful Ambassador College under Mr. Armstrong, "You see what you can do for the world when you see Ambassador College."

Today we have Imperial College, patterned after Ambassador College. When you have seen the beauty of both campuses, YOU SEE WHAT WE CAN DO FOR THE WORLD AND THE UNIVERSE!

Mr. Strauss said of his full-day visit to Ambassador College, "It was the greatest spiritual lift I ever had." Just a *taste* of God's master plan lifts our spirits. We begin to see far—far—far into a future filled with incredible potential and full joy! We see this evil, hopeless world coming to an abrupt and catastrophic end very soon.

The Goal of Our Work

The Logos was "manifested" (1 John 1:2). A God from the northern heavens came to this Earth and became flesh and blood, risking the loss of eternal life. Failure would have left the Father alone forever as the only remaining God.

Can we fathom this *loving sacrifice* by God? This universe-shaking truth challenges our imagination. We are the recipients of this unparalleled act of love.

An "eternal life" which was God came and died for us. This ought to excite mankind beyond anything we can imagine. It was the beginning of what will probably become billions of

The goal of our work is to bring all humanity into fellowship with the Father and Son. Anybody who fails to see why we do this work is blind!

sons in God's family.

BECAUSE WE TEACH THIS GOD-ORDAINED MESSAGE, WE ARE ALMOST GLUTTED WITH NEW REVELATION! THIS SHOULD SHOW US WHAT THIS MESSAGE MEANS TO THE FATHER AND THE SON. Revelation comes because we honor our Father and Husband.

The deepest kind of *unity* comes from God. This is the unity God and the Logos have had for eternity. And it is the only future life there is. Everything else is about eternal death!

The 12 disciples saw, touched and handled this Word—God in the flesh. John says they were overwhelmed with joy. They understood how God and the Word became the Father and Son, and what that means to every human being.

THE GOAL OF OUR WORK IS TO BRING ALL HUMANITY INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND SON! Please read that again.

The Ephesus Church quit doing God's work, because they lost their first love. The Laodiceans today stopped doing this work because they became blind to this vision. Anybody who fails to see why we do this work is blind!

We are the very elect of the *first-fruits*. Soon the whole world will be filled with second-fruits from the fall harvest. All mankind will have one mind, one faith, one love and one hope. Each person will be fellowshiping with God—or else!

This is not a limited human vision, but an unlimited God vision. This vision erases all racial hatred and national boundaries. We all become one family of God.

What a mind-boggling future! It doesn't get any deeper than this. I hope you will prayerfully study these

epistles of "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Then you will see how Christ was loving all of us through John.

What a vision of love. What a vision of eternal majesty!

A Family of Joy

FELLOWSHIPING WITH THE FATHER AND SON (v. 3) NEVER LEAVES YOU DISCOURAGED OR NEGATIVE! JUST THE OPPOSITE. IT BRINGS YOU ALIVE AS NEVER BEFORE.

IS GOD DISCOURAGED? JOYLESS? NEGATIVE? NEVER! WE MUST RECEIVE AND DEVELOP THE GOD FAMILY SPIRIT! THIS FELLOWSHIP HAS WORKED FOR ALL ETERNITY. So we know it will work now or anytime.

This is eternal understanding! It is incredible times incredible times incredible. This vision must live in us. If it does, we shall live forever.

HAVING THIS VISION IS HOW WE REJOICE IN FIERY TRIALS. We know that our resurrection to eternal glory is extremely close. It's so real that we can rejoice in our worst trials. This is how we have full joy.

Do people see you as this kind of person? Do you have full joy? (That doesn't mean, however, we don't have pain and maybe don't fight against depression.)

The Apostle John was full of joy, even as most of the members were sad and falling away. He kept right on fellowshiping with the Father and Son, even when he was imprisoned.

Even in physical family reunions, we can see a measure of joy. But it is tiny compared to our God family, fellowshiping in full joy.

These first five verses have unfathomable depth. What we can't get today, we will get after we are born into God's family. This is the message John got from the Logos. He began to declare it, and so must we. What is revealed by our Father and His Son, we must proclaim. The message is jam-packed with *hope*.

Meditate on verse 1. It is first for emphasis. This beautiful verse must be studied, meditated on and prayed about if we are to comprehend it. Focus on the message, not the messenger.

Yearn to Declare!

Imperial College is here to get this message to the world. This message is for the whole of mankind. It produces the opposite of the negative fruits you see in Satan's world.

The Laodicean Church broke down in this area. Satan destroyed their godly fellowship. Then they no longer wanted to declare the Father's message.

We are declaring John's message as fast as we can. THE JOB OF OUR MINISTERS IS TO HELP GET OUR PEOPLE 100 PERCENT BEHIND GOD'S WORK—SO WE CAN COMPLETE THIS WORK AS SPEEDILY AS POSSIBLE. WE ARE IN THE *LAST HOUR*! We must work while we can, *BEFORE* this world is plunged into the Great Tribulation.

We must be so full of this message that we can't contain ourselves! God's very elect must *declare* this message of love and joy!

I visited with Joe Tkach Sr. in 1988. He told me then that they had changed their focus to be on Ambassador College. The college became an end rather than a means to an end. He no longer desired to get the message Mr. Armstrong taught to the world.

Now Ambassador College is dead. And the Worldwide Church of God no longer proclaims an impactful message to the world, as Mr. Armstrong did for 57 years.

When we were first called, most of us were so excited and joyful about God's message that we talked about it to anybody who would listen. But we found that God was not calling those people yet. Sometimes we brought persecution on ourselves.

However, the emotion was good. We should all be channeling that emotion into God's work, as John did. We must yearn and passionately desire to declare our message of joy, so everyone has a chance to repent. We should be so full of joy and excitement for this message that we feel compelled to support it.

Keep that emotion and use it to support this message. We should be moved and stirred to share this magnificent splendor!

John watched most of the Church lose that love and emotion. He prophesied also that this would happen in our time. The Laodicean spirit is all around us.

If people don't accept our message, the *witness* will still help them to repent after all the Bible prophecies come to pass.

WE MUST SEE THAT THIS MESSAGE IS EVERYTHING TO A DYING WORLD! It must be declared now—in this "last hour." It is a message from the Logos, who was with the Father.

God sent an Elijah to restore all things (Matt. 17:10-11). It was an astounding message not heard around the world for almost 2,000 years—two millennia!

And from the early college days to the end, Mr. Armstrong had outstanding, God-inspired spokesman clubs.

Receiving God's message is just half of the responsibility. The second part is communicating it. And what a communication job! This message must be delivered to every person ever born!

There were research and writing classes. THE STUDENTS WERE NOT THERE JUST TO LEARN THE MESSAGE. THEY WERE ALSO TAUGHT HOW TO DELIVER IT, both in this age and in the Millennium.

In Imperial College, our students are taught how to speak like kings and priests. We have a message that must be communicated to all humanity—including, when they are resurrected, all those who have ever lived, and all those who will be born until the end of man's history!

Receiving God's message is just half of the responsibility. The second part is communicating it. And what a communication job! THIS MESSAGE MUST BE DELIVERED TO EVERY PERSON EVER BORN!

What good is the message if it is *not* declared and taught? WHAT A FAILURE IF WE DON'T DELIVER OUR FATHER'S MESSAGE! What a calamity.

We declare it on television, in magazines, books, booklets and on the Internet—any way we can get the message delivered.

Today, the media revolve around sports and entertainment—including vile pornography. It's all about making money, regardless of the damage to our people. And it is inspired by the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4). Humanity is getting the wrong message today.

We must give this world the only message that really matters. We will show this world how to use the media.

The U.S. uploads movies into 65 countries through the Internet. We spread our pornographic movies around the Earth. The world is becoming

more and more addicted to evil until "the transgressors are come to the full" (Dan. 8:23). God will stop this global filth very soon.

America and Britain have the best technology in the world. We are better equipped than any nation has ever been to deliver a message. But our message to the world is dominated by the worst pornographic filth humanity has ever seen!

Never has there been a worse failure to take advantage of a splendid opportunity! And the whole world suffers mightily because of that failure.

Years ago, when the Soviet Union was strong, the Japanese were asked who they feared most. They answered that they feared Russia most militarily, but they feared America most *culturally*. And Japan feared us for good reason. Today the Japanese are saturated with America's vile culture. Our culture is destroying us and other nations morally and spiritually. We prate about how good we are and sing "*God Bless America*"—but God is *cursing* America, Britain and the Jews in the Middle East. He will continue to do so until we see our black sins and repent.

One of the main reasons terrorists attacked the U.S. on September 11 was the impact of our sick culture on the Arab world. God can punish us through evil men. Remember, He raises up Assyria, the cruelest of nations, against an "*hypocritical nation*" (Isa. 10:5-7). Hypocritical—*evil people, who say they are good*. We talk about how good we are, but spiritually we are the sickest nations on this planet—considering the physical blessings God has given us.

In the beginning of America's history, our goal was to establish God's rule on Earth. Would you like to compare that goal with what we have become today?

If only we would remember our history, when God actually ruled us. When we refuse to learn from the past, we can't see into the future. We lose the overview and become blind.

The PCG has bought and paid for 160 acres and all of our buildings. What is it all for? It's about reaching out into and ruling the universe!

God has blessed us mightily. Now He wants to fire our imaginations to see what a marvelous, mind-staggering future this world has. We have the greatest message God has ever given to declare!

Like John, we must never lose this awesome vision of love! ♦

A Marriage Agreement

What was God's purpose for the Old Covenant? Very few people understand the true meaning and purpose behind this covenant God made with ancient Israel.

by Stephen Flurry

FOR MANY CENTURIES NOW, THE BIBLE has been divided into two great parts: the Old and New Testaments. Both parts revolve around two *covenants*. Yet few understand *why*. If we are under the New Covenant today, why did God include so much in the Bible about the Old Covenant? Because together, the Old and New Covenants *reveal all of God's master plan*. Very few people realize this! And that is why so few truly understand God's supreme purpose for man.

Man Created Incomplete

In Genesis 1:26 we see that man was created in the image and likeness of God. But John 4:24 says God is Spirit. *Man*, however, was made out of dirt (Gen. 2:7). So, while we were created *complete* physically, we are *INCOMPLETE* spiritually. Most people believe we were created *complete* physically and spiritually—already having an immortal soul. That is not correct. Nowhere does Scripture support an immortal soul teaching.

Let's notice what Scripture *does* reveal. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Because the CARNAL MIND IS ENMITY

AGAINST GOD: for it is not subject to the law of God, NEITHER INDEED CAN BE" (Rom. 8:7). God gives human beings a human spirit, and Satan begins to influence us via that spirit by injecting his attitudes into human beings at the very earliest possible age. All babies, by the time they are just a few months old, begin to develop a self-centered, carnal nature. That carnal nature, as Paul wrote, is *against* God! But notice the last part of that verse. The carnal mind is not subject to God's law; then Paul says, "NEITHER INDEED CAN BE." *It's not possible!* This life we lead in carnal flesh simply CANNOT PLEASE GOD.

Jeremiah wrote, "The heart [or mind of man] is DECEITFUL above *all things*, and DESPERATELY WICKED: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). Physically, it is impossible to follow God and His laws. There must be a change in *our nature* for that to become possible.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Pet. 1:4). We become partakers of the divine nature, or *God's very*

nature, when we are born again as SPIRIT beings. As John wrote, "That which is born of the flesh *is* flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit *is* spirit" (John 3:6). Yes, that means what it says. When we are finally born of the Spirit, we will BE SPIRIT! At that point, we will be spirit as God is spirit. Our creation will then be complete.

That makes this physical life we now live vitally important, because everything we do in this life is to prepare us for when our creation will be COMPLETE—when we will actually become the BORN children of God. If you are not preparing for that fantastic future *now*, you do not understand God's incredible purpose for man.

That future begins when God imparts a portion of His Holy Spirit to us after we repent of our sins and are baptized (Acts 2:38). From that point on, we are to grow and develop spiritually to prepare for the time when we will take on the divine nature of God. The Holy Spirit plays a significant role in the New Covenant.

But let us now take a look at the *Old Covenant*. Just what is this Old Covenant God entered into with ancient Israel?

The Old Covenant

Many people *misunderstand* the true meaning of both the Old and New Covenants because they don't really know what a *covenant* is. Webster's defines it as "an agreement, usually formal, between *two or more* persons to do or not do something specified." Very simply, a *covenant* is an agreement between *two or more parties*.

This is clearly what God and ancient Israel entered into. They both *agreed*. The terms and conditions of the Old Covenant extend from Exodus 19:1 through 24:8.

Shortly after God led the Israelites out of Egypt, He brought them to Mt. Sinai. Moses went up the mount. There God instructed Moses to tell the people, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and KEEP MY COVENANT, then ye shall be a *peculiar treasure* unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a *kingdom of priests*, and an *holy nation*" (Exod. 19:4-6). Notice the PROMISES of this covenant: They would be a *peculiar treasure*, a *kingdom of priests* and a *holy nation*.

But also notice, God DID NOT promise the *Holy Spirit* as part of the Old Covenant. Neither did God give the promise of *eternal life*. Every promise of the Old Covenant was MATERIAL. If Israel had obeyed, they would have become an exceedingly great nation, dwelling in a land filled with fruitful abundance. They would be God's people and He would be their God. God would walk *among them*, but He never promised to dwell *in them* by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Already we have seen several critical points to remember: 1) A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties. The Old Covenant was the agreement between God and the ancient nation of Israel; 2) the *terms and conditions* of the Old Covenant were clearly spelled out: God would be Israel's God if they would obey His voice. Later, we will see the specifics involved for Israel to obey God's voice; 3) the promises of the covenant were also clear. In addition to being Israel's God, He would also make them a *peculiar treasure*, a *kingdom of priests* and a *holy nation*. In other words, they would be showered with great material blessings like no other nation in the world.

"AND ALL THE PEOPLE answered together and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord."

Exodus 19:8

Old Covenant a Marriage Agreement

Another fact greatly misunderstood concerning the Old Covenant is that it was actually a marriage agreement between God and the nation of Israel. In Ezekiel 16:8, God said, "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the *time of love*; and I SPREAD MY SKIRT OVER THEE, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and ENTERED INTO A COVENANT WITH THEE, saith the Lord God, and THOU BECAMEST MINE." God said He passed over Israel and *spread His skirt over them*, which is an expression that is a sign of *marriage* (see Ruth 3:8-11). At that time, Israel entered into a covenant with God and God said, "YOU BECAME MINE."

In Jeremiah 31:32, God said of ancient Israel, "I WAS AN HUSBAND UNTO THEM." By agreeing to the covenant, Israel was bound to God as His wife and was forbidden to commit adultery by worshiping the gods of other nations. "Take heed to thyself, lest thou MAKE A COVENANT with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Exod. 34:12, 14).

They were forbidden to enter a covenant with another god because they were bound to a jealous Husband. If Israel would agree, the Lord (or the one who was to become Jesus Christ, as we shall see) would be a faithful and loving Husband.

And did Israel agree to the covenant? "And ALL the people answered together, and said, ALL THAT THE LORD HATH SPOKEN WE WILL DO. And Moses

returned the words of the people unto the Lord" (Exod. 19:8).

God Reveals Specific Conditions

Israel said they would be obedient to all that God *said*. That is what God required of them in a broad sense in Exodus 19:5. After the Israelites agreed, God instructed Moses to tell the people to be ready on the third day when He would come down to the people Himself. It was then that God began to instruct the Israelites on the *specific* terms and conditions of the covenant.

First, God informed them that they had to obey the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1-17). God even wrote these commandments on two tables of stone with His own finger! (Exod. 31:18; Deut. 5:22). These commandments were a distinct part of the Old Covenant. In Deuteronomy 9:9, 11, the two tables are referred to as "the tables of the covenant." These tables contained the ten commands that, together, make up God's great SPIRITUAL LAW. God's spiritual law *defines sin*.

After God spoke the Ten Commandments, He then instructed Moses to continue explaining to the Israelites the CIVIL LAW of *statutes and judgments*. These laws would govern and direct them as a nation. While the spiritual law was based on broad principles, the statutes were very specific—forbidding certain things to be done. Judgments were added to render a decision or verdict based on God's law. They prescribed certain punishments for disobedience. Together, the statutes and judgments, or the civil law, AMPLIFIED THE TEN BASIC PRINCIPLES of God's SPIRITUAL LAW.

For example, Exodus 21:12 says, "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death." This civil law detailed the punishment for breaking the Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill" (Exod. 20:13). All of these civil laws were based on the spiritual precepts of the Ten Commandments.

The civil law was *also* a distinct part of the terms of the Old Covenant. It can be found in Exodus 21-23.

We have seen how the spiritual law of God was written on tablets of stone by God Himself. The civil law was also written. Only the civil law was written down by Moses IN A BOOK (Exod. 24:4). This became known as the "book of the covenant" (v. 7). So the Israelites had to obey the TABLES of the covenant (the Ten Commandments) *and* the BOOK of the covenant (the civil law).

Even after being given all the details of the spiritual law and the civil law, the Israelites still felt absolutely confident that they could obey God's commands. Notice Exodus 24:3: "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with *one voice*, and said, ALL THE WORDS WHICH THE LORD HATH SAID WILL WE DO" (see also v. 7).

After they agreed, the covenant was sealed with blood. "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the BLOOD of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words" (v. 8).

God's Law in Force Long Before Sinai

It is necessary at this point to cover one important subject so that no one jumps to conclusions. Contrary to popular belief today, God's SPIRITUAL LAW—the Ten Commandments—was in existence LONG BEFORE the Old Covenant began at Mt. Sinai. The Bible is filled with abundant proof concerning this point.

Hundreds of years before God spoke to Moses at Mt. Sinai, He said this about His servant Abraham: "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, MY COMMANDMENTS, MY STATUTES, and MY LAWS" (Gen. 26:5). Yes, Abraham obeyed the Ten Commandments *as well as* the statutes and other laws, or judgments.

Exodus 16:28 and 18:16 also show that God's spiritual law, as well as the statutes and judgments, were in full force before Mt. Sinai.

In Romans 5:12, Paul wrote, "Wherefore, as by one man *sin entered into the world*, and DEATH BY SIN; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Sin entered the world through one man—ADAM. And Paul says death entered *because of sin*. Notice verse 14: "Nevertheless death reigned FROM ADAM TO MOSES, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of ADAM'S TRANSGRESSION, who is the figure of him that was to come." How do we know God's law existed before Moses? Because "sin is NOT imputed when there is no law," as Paul wrote in verse 13 (see also Rom. 4:15). If there was no law, then there could not have been sin; for sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). And if there was no sin, then there would have been no death. But as Paul said, "*death reigned*

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from Adam to Moses." There was death. THAT MEANS THERE WAS SIN!

There are numerous scriptures referring to those who sinned prior to the time of Moses. God told Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, SIN lieth at the door" (Gen. 4:7). Cain ended up sinning terribly. He *killed* his brother and then *lied* to God about it.

There are numerous "no law" preachers today who insist that the Ten Commandments *began* with Moses at Mt. Sinai as part of the Old Covenant. Then, the reasoning goes, when Christ died, the Old Covenant ended, thus ending the need to observe the law. Don't be deceived! The Old Covenant *has* ended! But God's law *has not* and NEVER WILL! Remember, a covenant is *an agreement between two or more parties*. The Old Covenant is not THE LAW. It is true that the *terms and conditions* of the Old Covenant *revolved around God's law*. But when that covenant ended due to Israel's rebellion, THE LAW DID NOT END. It was the COVENANT, or *agreement* between God and Israel, that ended!

The Ministration of Death

But if God's spiritual law did not end when the Old Covenant ended, what about the civil laws of Moses? After all, the civil law states, if you kill a man, you are to be put to death. Why doesn't the Church today enforce the death penalty for those who disobey the Sabbath or kill someone? This question has been raised by some, but it need not be confusing.

There *was* an administration of DEATH contained within the civil laws of Moses. If you killed, you were to be killed (Exod. 21:12).

Notice what Paul wrote about this type of retribution: "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:6). The letter in the civil law killed. Verse 7 continues, "But if the MINISTRATION OF DEATH, written and engraven in stones, was *glorious*" Remember, the principles of the Ten Commandments were the basis for the civil law of Moses—the statutes and judgments. When the Israelites broke the law, they were punished by the civil authorities, or *ministration*. Paul refers to that "ministration of death" as being glorious (see also v. 11). How could that be *glorious*? The Israelites constantly sinned. God constantly reminded them of this fact. And today it serves as an example for us (1 Cor. 10:11), showing that we must have God's help! That is why, as we shall see in a later article, the New Covenant is based on the *spiritual*.

Notice verse 8 of II Corinthians 3 from the Moffatt translation: "Surely the ADMINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT must be invested with still greater glory." Remember, the Old Covenant had no eternal promises. There was no promise of the Holy Spirit. With the New Covenant there is! Paul made that abundantly clear in verse 6.

This administration of death was to continue until it was superseded by the administration of the Spirit. That's the key. A new administration was needed. NOT A NEW LAW. The civil servants in Moses's day could not grant eternal life. They were an administration that could only require obedience by the letter, and exact physical death in cases where the law required it.

The administration of the New Covenant, beginning with Jesus Christ, can pardon human beings who repent of breaking God's law and ultimately promise them eternal life! That is why Paul says it is *more* glorious. Because of the spiritual aspect.

Let's notice exactly when this ministration of death began. It was not at Mt. Sinai. It was instilled shortly after the Flood. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). Before the Flood, this ministration did not exist. God did not put Cain to death after he killed his brother. Instead, He placed a mark upon him (Gen. 4:15). God ordained the ministration of death after the Flood for the

same reason He reintroduced it at Mt. Sinai. It was to remind all people of the consequences for disobeying God's law.

But not only that, the administration of death was there to protect the rights of the ancient Israelites. Today, Christ instructs us to endure an obvious wrong that may have been done against us (see Matt. 5:38-42; 1 Pet. 2:19-20; Rom. 13:1-7).

Because of the new administration under Christ, we have the chance to be pardoned, or forgiven of our sins, if we go to God in repentance of our evil ways. Again, people want to turn this unbelievable grace of God into a license to disobey (Jude 4). We can be forgiven. But only after repentance. And repentance means change—not just being sorry (II Cor. 7:10). The administration under the New Covenant has the authority, unlike the judges of the Old Covenant, to give eternal life! That is why it is more glorious.

Christ Magnified the Law

The new administration was started by Christ when He raised up the true Church. It was a new administration operating under the same law! Under the Old Covenant, Christ gave clear instructions to the civil government of ancient Israel. Under the New Covenant, Christ gives clear instructions to the government within His spiritual organism—THE CHURCH.

In Matthew 5:38-39, Jesus said, "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." Christ introduced this passage in Matthew 5 by saying He did not come to destroy the law. Furthermore, Christ said, "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 ..." (v. 19). Christ then proceeded to give the MAGNIFIED APPLICATION of such laws as an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Read the entire chapter. Christ is *expanding* the meaning of the law—including the statutes and judgments. No longer were they narrow commands dealing with the strictness of the letter. Now there was added a great spiritual plane to regulate the Church *today*—and the whole of society *in the future*.

To understand the spiritual application of the civil laws, we must comprehend the overall principle of God's law. That principle is love (I John 4:8).

JESUS SEPARATED

God's law of love into two great commands: love toward God and love toward man. Few people realize that these two great commands of Jesus Christ can also be found within the civil law of Moses! God commanded this from the beginning!

God's spiritual principles summed up in the Ten Commandments are based on love (Rom. 13:10). Jesus separated God's law of love into two great commands: love toward God and love toward man (Matt. 22:36-39). Few people realize that these two great commands of Jesus Christ can *also* be found within the CIVIL LAW OF MOSES! (see Lev. 19:18 and Deut. 6:5). God commanded this from the beginning! (II John 5-6).

The civil law of Moses expands the Ten Commandments and tells us how the spiritual principles of God's laws are to be *applied*. They were not abolished. Christ MAGNIFIED THEM. Through the Holy Spirit, we are to keep them in their obvious spiritual intent, not just in the strictness of the letter, as they did in ancient Israel, when they had no promise of the Holy Spirit and no understanding of spiritual matters! How plain! Dr. Herman Hoeh clearly explained this matter in the *Good News* (August 1972). Notice:

"[T]he instructions given to Moses about 'an eye for an eye' were not intended as some people take them. They were laws set up to regulate a human society, with all its faults, in a fair and just manner. And these *principles* are still in effect today.

"Many have read the command in Exodus 21:24-25 with shocked amazement at the assumed 'cruelty' of the God of the Old Testament. They suppose anyone causing a person accidentally to lose sight of an eye would immediately be seized, held down, and have *his* eye gouged out in just retribution!

"But is this a right understanding of the verse?

"The context in which we find this command of 'eye for eye, tooth for

tooth' is explaining the principle of *just recompense* for any wrong done. The very next verse shows that if a person causes his slave to lose his eye or tooth, the slave must be freed as a PAYMENT for the injury—workmen's compensation. Verses 18 and 19 of the same chapter discuss the matter of one person injuring another. What is the punishment? '... he shall *pay* for the loss of his time, and shall cause him to be thoroughly healed.' It was a matter of *payment* or *recompense*—not revenge by inflicting the same injury. ...

"The whole context of the 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth' command is concerned with the matter of *just recompense* or *payment* for the injury caused—an 'eye-value' for an eye, a 'tooth-value' for a tooth."

God's law is not outdated! The Ten Commandments are living active laws which have been in motion from the very beginning. They did not start at Mt. Sinai. They did not end with Jesus Christ. The statutes of God gave the magnified application of the Ten Commandments. Jesus Christ clearly taught us how these laws are to be applied under a different administration. He did not bring with Him a new and different set of laws. God says, "I am the Lord, I *change not*" (Mal. 3:6).

But doesn't the New Testament plainly reveal that there are certain laws which were abolished with the death of Christ? Again, let us turn to the Bible for the answer.

The Sacrificial Laws

The Ten Commandments were the basis of the agreement in the Old Covenant. God wrote these ten great laws *personally*. The civil law, made up of statutes and judgments, was written up in a book *by Moses as revealed by God*. This became known as the LAW OF MOSES. It is important that we realize this distinction. NOWHERE in Scripture is the law of Moses referred to as the Ten Commandments. There is a clear distinction between the Ten Commandments and the civil laws of Moses.

But there is also a clear distinction between two sets of laws *within the law of Moses*. If you review the terms and conditions of the Old Covenant in Exodus 19-24, you will not read *any verses* about ritualistic offerings or sacrificial laws. That is because they were not a part of the original law of Moses. "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I

brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning *burnt offerings or sacrifices*" (Jer. 7:22). The law of Moses, as plainly revealed in Exodus 21-23, originally contained certain statutes and judgments only. God did not speak to them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices when they came out of Egypt. That's because they were *added later*. You can see this quite clearly if you read the chapters written *after* Exodus 24 (when the Old Covenant was ratified). After the covenant was sealed with blood, the Levitical priesthood was later established and soon God instituted the ritualistic LAWS (see Exod. 28). These ritualistic laws BECAME A PART OF THE LAW OF MOSES—but they came later, *after* the Old Covenant had already been sealed.

Why did God add these laws? Paul said they were "added BECAUSE OF transgressions [or sin]" (Gal. 3:19). God's *spiritual* law WAS NOT added *because of* sin. God's great spiritual law *defines* sin! (1 John 3:4). We are commanded to keep these spiritual laws. The ritualistic and sacrificial laws, however, *were added* to the Old Covenant BECAUSE OF SIN. They were instituted to remind the Israelites of sin! Jesus Christ had not yet come as the Passover sacrifice. His sacrifice had not yet abolished the sacrifices of goats and calves (Heb. 9:9-14).

It becomes clear then that the law of Moses contained two distinct parts—the civil laws and the ritualistic laws. When Christ died, it was the ritualistic part of the civil law that was accomplished in His death. Those laws are abolished. The other part—the statutes and judgments—we are expected to observe in its New Testament magnification under the *new* administration of the Church.

Who Was Israel Married To?

We have already seen that the Old Covenant was a marriage agreement between the ancient nation of Israel and God. God actually *spoke* to Moses and Israel when He delivered the terms and conditions of the covenant. Yet Christ said, "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither HEARD HIS VOICE AT ANY TIME, nor seen his shape" (John 5:37).

God spoke to Moses, yet Christ says the Father has never spoken to man. If it wasn't the Father, then who was it? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). The Word is the

one who later became JESUS CHRIST (v. 14). The other Being mentioned in verse 1 is the one who became the Father. Jesus Christ was the Word, or the Spokesman for God.

If the Israelites heard God's voice, it had to be the voice of either God the Father or the Word. John 5:37 proves it had to be the Word—or the one who became Jesus Christ! This will become very significant as we look at the New Covenant in a later article. Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament. He was the one to whom Moses spoke. And more importantly, He was the one with whom Israel agreed to enter into a marriage covenant!

Referring to ancient Israel, the Word said, "I was an husband unto them" (Jer. 31:32). Israel stated the wedding vows in one accord: "All that the Lord hath said will we do" (Exod. 24:7). They bound themselves to remain faithful to their Husband. They promised to avoid adultery with other false gods (Exod. 34:12-17). They were bound by the Old Covenant! Why? Because a covenant is an *agreement*. Israel *agreed*.

Israel Broke the Covenant

It did not take long at all for Israel to fall back into the evil ways of this world. God reminded the Israelites of the terms of the agreement about nine months later in Leviticus 26:1-3. They were already losing sight of what God had promised them if they obeyed (vv. 4-13). But He also explained what would happen if they refused to obey (vv. 14-39). And that's just what Israel did. The God who became the Word said, "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I AM MARRIED UNTO YOU ..." (Jer. 3:14). God pleaded with Israel for over 700 years to turn from their wicked ways. But it was to no avail.

Finally, look at what happened: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; WHICH MY COVENANT THEY BRAKE, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31:31-32).

Israel failed. They broke the covenant. So God DIVORCED them! Because of their disobedience, God withdrew the many promises associated with the first covenant. Instead of obtaining

great material prosperity, Israel went into Assyrian captivity in 721-718 B.C. (Ezek. 20:23-24). The nation of Judah (which had separated from Israel long before this time) also went into captivity. They were overthrown by the Babylonians from 604-585 B.C. (II Kings 23:27). The Old Covenant was broken because of the *people of Israel*—not because the law was bad or because it was too harsh.

Man Cannot Obey God

At the start of this article we saw how the carnal mind of man is actually AGAINST GOD. Man, of and by himself, simply cannot please God. It's impossible. Remember, there were NO SPIRITUAL PROMISES in the Old Covenant. *Why*, if God knew man could not please Him without the Spirit? Because God was proving that very fact! We have hundreds of years of recorded history about a nation which God put under the best possible conditions, *physically*, to obey Him. Yet they failed miserably! That's because they did not, as a nation, have access to God's Holy Spirit.

They could have, and should have, kept the letter of God's law. But they didn't even do that! They were a wretched failure even judging by the letter of the law. But why? What was God trying to show mankind?

"O that there were such an HEART [or nature] in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" (Deut. 5:29). God knew the Israelites just didn't have the *heart* to obey Him. That is the problem with man. We don't naturally have the heart, or nature, within ourselves to please God. We must have God's Spirit. Israel's history proves that!

Israel broke the Old Covenant. But the problem was not God's. The problem was with the people. And because of that, God had to make a new covenant—A NEW MARRIAGE AGREEMENT! The terms and conditions of this covenant are again based on God's law, but the promises revolving around the covenant are spiritual. This time, God calls people out of this world as *spiritual* Israelites and imparts a small portion of His Spirit in them so they might be able to do what Israel could not possibly do—PLEASE GOD and OBEY HIS VOICE. *Royal Vision* will have a future article on the subject of the NEW covenant. ❖