

CONVERSION: What Do You Mean?

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CONVERSION: What Do You Mean?

Is Christian conversion inviting Jesus into your heart? Or giving your heart to the Lord? Or professing Jesus is Lord with your mouth, and believing the same in your heart? Demons both profess and believe, but they are not converted.

Do you know when conversion occurs? The word implies that a person has been changed. Is that change being born again? Can we answer Nicodemus' question: "Can one enter a second time the mother's womb and be born?" (John 3:4)?

The answers to these questions begin with circumcision of the heart and mind—just as circumcision of foreskins separated Jew from Gentile, circumcision of the heart separates spiritual Israel from the world

What does Christianity mean by conversion—the question seems simple enough that every Christian should be able to answer it forthwith. After all, the Christian has been converted. Christians aren't born saved, are they?

Herein lies the problem: physical Israelites were separated from their surrounding world through the circumcision of foreskins. These Israelite males were not born with clipped foreskins, but their fathers (or mothers) ordered, when the infant was eight days old, that his foreskin be snipped, thereby causing the infant to become part of the Congregation of holy ones (Exod 19:5–6). The infant did nothing, had no say in the matter, but was unwittingly made a part of physical Israel. The infant male had a life changing decision made for him by his parents, in that he was made a party to a covenant he knew nothing about. He could rebel against the covenant and his lot in life, but that clipped foreskin of his would never allow him to fully identify himself as a Gentile. During the day, he could hide who he was from those with whom he did business, but every woman he with he had sexual relations would know his identity.

Physical Israel and its history is the shadow of spiritual Israel and its history, just as the first Adam was the shadow of the second Adam (1

Corth 15:45–49). Likewise, the first covenant is the physical shadow of the spiritual new covenant. This relationship is seen in a comparison of tablets: the Apostle Paul writes,

[O]ur competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. [paragraph break] Now if the ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came to glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside, how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory? (2 Corth 3–8).

Under the first covenant, the law of God was chiseled in letters on two tablets of stone, but under the new covenant, the laws of God are written on hearts and minds (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10 & 10:16). Thus, the letter becomes the shadow of Spirit. The written laws of God, received first on two tablets of stone, then in the books of the Law, become the shadow of the invisible laws of God written on hearts and minds of new covenant disciples. We can, then, see the Spirit by its shadow, since, according to Jesus, the Spirit is like wind (John 3:8) and not visible to us, even though we have been made

competent to be ministers of the mysteries of God. We minister an invisible covenant in a visible world, to visible disciples. The tools we use to do this seemingly impossible task of showing an unseen glory come as a box of shadows, each a mirror that reflects an invisible image as that which has been.

I have read enough of Paul's writings that I'm beginning to sound like him: in more understandable English, there exists an unfurled dimension in which time is not a linear construct ("unfurled" used as it is in M-Theory, or Superstring Theory). Presently, we are imprisoned in time. We cannot know the end from the beginning, but God, not through prediction, but through observation, does know the end from the beginning, and can show us what the end will be. We, though, need faith to believe an event that occurred centuries earlier exists as the shadow of an ongoing event. Logic will cause us to reject the possibility that the past reflects the future. How can it? How can a course of events that we can read as history govern what we will do today? What happened to free will? And how is predestination to be understood?

Humanity is an ornery species. If we knew that what we do today were the reflection of what others would do tomorrow, we would do something off-the-wall just to screw up the pattern. As a result, God didn't reveal the fullness of how the record of ancient Israel's relationship with its Creator is the visible shadow of the invisible record of spiritual Israel's relationship with God the Father until it was late enough that humanity couldn't contaminate the correspondence. God's object is to bring many sons and daughters to glory. The world doesn't necessarily believe that any supernatural entity exists. However, as humanity experiences the sequence of events known as the Tribulation, it will believe in supernatural powers, one of who will be Satan. Another will be the demonic king of the North., as the beast A third will be the false prophet. All three are spirit beings, capable of sending forth demonic spirits (Rev 16:13-14). So God the Father will defend His claim of being the Most High by

revealing the future not just by prophecy, but by having created the shadow of the future from the beginning.

How does any of this relate to conversion becomes the question that needs answered. Under the first covenant, made with physical Israel when the nation heard the spoken works of *YHWH* from atop Mount Sinai, the commandments of God entered these Israelites ears, but not their hearts and minds. The living words of *YHWH* passed through them without taking root. *YHWH*, then, gave them the same words, written by His finger on two tablets of stone that they carried around in a wooden ark of the covenant. written words were carried don't know what it will take If that isn't impressive, the person won't be impressed even by being thrown into the lake of fire. before When it becomes convinced that some do, then the question becomes one of who is really God, with Satan , which really exists to provide God with enough credibility with humanity that will believe Him as well as believe in Him.

during Jesus' ministry, crowds followed Him, these crowds believing that He could heal their infirmities. They believed the miracles He performed. But Jesus said He spoke in parables so these crowds wouldn't understand what He taught (Matt 13:10-17). He proclaimed what had been hidden from the foundations of the world (v. 35), but He spoke to the crowds only in parables (v. 34), so the crowds couldn't understand. Understanding was only for His disciples (v. 16).

The crowds that followed Jesus recognized Him as a great teacher, but they didn't grasp the meaning of what He taught. That remains a problem. Many people today recognize that Jesus was a great teacher, but they fail to grasp what it was that Jesus taught. A prominent political commentator has recently experienced public scorn for saying that Islam was not a religion of peace. Going unnoticed were his comments about Christianity being a religion of peace. Yet Jesus said, "'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword'" (Matt 10:34).

Jesus told Pharisees who didn't understand His remarks about coming down from heaven (John 6:41) that "[n]o one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me" (v. 44). He even tells his disciples, "For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father" (v. 65).

Jesus' statements are unambiguous. Understanding is only for disciples who have been drawn by God the Father. It isn't for the crowds that followed Jesus, nor for the religious leaders who challenged what Jesus taught. Until a person has been drawn, the person cannot come to Jesus even though He stands in front of the person. A person can argue with Jesus' words, can even agree with most of what Jesus taught, but the person cannot come to Jesus unless the person has been drawn by the Father.

What does being drawn really mean? Does God the Father put hooks in the mouths of wouldbe disciples and literally draw the person out of the world? Or is being drawn to be understood figuratively? If understood figuratively, are Christians a new species of humanoid, the product of 1st-Century philosophical evolution? Did something occur during the Roman occupation of Judea that caused "one new humanity" (Eph 2:15) to suddenly burst from a primordial sea of tribes and nations? Does a person's mother being a Christian somehow automatically make the person a Christian? And how did Christian conversion become so complicated that one self-identified Christian will bear arms against another such self-identified individual in an attempt to prove that the other's conversion isn't genuine? That ought never to have happened, but wars between schisms constitute the entire secular history of Christianity. Each Christian has seemingly used the sword Jesus brought against a brother or sister in the faith. How can that be, other than for the lack of being genuinely drawn?

If Christian conversion occurs as the result of being drawn by the Father and isn't the product of species evolution, when does it occur? How does it occur? Why does it occur?

Why does God the Father draw this person, and not that one? Isn't that being a respecter of persons? It would seem so if no one can come to Jesus, the only way to salvation, unless drawn by the Father.

Is a drawn disciple suddenly perfect? Holy? Righteous? Christ-like in every way? Or is the convert still him or herself, with all of the person's preexisting foibles? And when drawn, did the person hear something, or feel something, or see something that caused the person's conversion? Or is being drawn taking it upon oneself to invite Jesus to live in the person's heart?

Most people know someone who identifies him or herself as a Christian, but who practices deceit, who isn't trustworthy, who isn't someone to whom you would either lend money or a chainsaw, nor someone from whom you would buy a used car. Has this person been drawn by God the Father? If this person has been, why would the Father want this person when there are so many others who don't know Jesus but have much higher morals? And too often, this person will attempt to witness to nonBelievers, thereby doubly sullyng the name of Jesus.

Can you know if the Christian from whom you wouldn't buy a car has been converted? If you can, how? Or does being drawn and converted have nothing to do with how a person conducts his or her business affairs?

If Christianity isn't an inherited condition, passed from mother to child, how was the Christian drawn? How did he or she learn about Christ Jesus? Should Christianity be *sold* as if it were soap or toothpaste? Is it the responsibility of the Christian Church to merchandize Jesus in such a way that an ever-increasing number of disciples are drawn and converted? Or is conversion something that is done to a drawn disciple, with the person having little control over whether or when he or she has been drawn and called?

All of the above questions are both genuine and rhetorical. The fact that any of the questions can be serious inquiries indicates that the Church of God hasn't successfully fulfilled

the work assigned to saints. In his first epistle to the scattered Israelites in exile along the south side of the Black Sea, the Apostle Peter writes, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him [Jesus] who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. / Once you were not a people, / but now you are God's people" (2:9). Christians, as *God's own people*, have been given the task of proclaiming the mighty act of Jesus the Christ. But Peter's identification of Christians as a holy nation is surprising similar to how God, through Moses, identifies ancient Israel: "'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians . . . Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be . . . for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation'" (Exod 19:4-6).

Too often being holy is thought to be the equivalent of being perfect—blemish free, no defects, no character weaknesses. But to be holy means being set apart by God for His use; holy is the state, or condition of being owned by God, and reserved for His use. Ancient Israel was made a holy nation. The terms for them to remain a holy nation required them to keep God's law. The elders of Israel said they would do all that God required of them, but they lied. Forty days after they received the spoken commandments of God, they made for themselves a gold calf and called it *Elohim*, the name of God. They could not keep the law to which they had just agreed, and by their rejection of the covenant, they were eventually rejected as God's holy nation. Jesus said that not even the Pharisees were keeping the law of God which Moses gave them (John 7:19). He also said that by their traditions, they made void the word of God (Mark 7:13). So physical Israelites, from the days of Moses to the time of Jesus' ministry, did not keep the law of God, or the covenant of God by which they would become *a priestly kingdom and a holy nation*. They were rejected. By first divorce, then by the death of the Covenantor, the covenant ratified between God and Israel was terminated. This covenant permanently ceased to exist. This law

with its ordinances, commandments and statutes was forever abolished by Christ's death at Calvary. But the laws of God weren't abolished. Rather, the covenant which would have made of Israel *a priestly kingdom and a holy nation* was abolished, and was replaced by a new covenant.

Ancient Israel serves as our example: they were liberated from slavery, and by promise, they were made a holy nation. They neither did anything to free themselves (except complain), nor did they do anything but agree to obey God to make of themselves a holy people. Everything was done for them. All they had to do was believe God, and have faith that He would do what He said.

But the Israelites that left Egypt lacked the faith necessary to believe God. Forty days after they said to Moses, "Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exod 19:8), they cast their gold in the fire in order to create for themselves their own god. They remade Elohim into a calf, called the calf *elohim*, and rose up to play (i.e., to have an orgy).

Christians are today that holy nation which ancient Israel was to have been. As such, Christians are in a covenant relationship with God. Just as the Israelites that left Egyptian slavery had only to observe the Passover ordinances to be liberated, drawn disciples have only to accept Christ's sacrifice to be saved. But just as ancient Israel remade the Lord into a more familiar image, present day disciples tend to cast God into their image of Him.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Even after seeing all that the Lord did to Pharaoh, the Israelites that left Egypt lacked faith in the Lord's ability to deliver them. They murmured in the wilderness, then believed the report of the ten spies who said yes, indeed, the land ahead of them was a good land, but the people were too strong for Israel to take the land. They were unable to enter because of unbelief (Heb 3:19), which is actual rebellion against God (Num 14:9-10). Then when the Lord sentenced them to fall in the wilderness (v. 28-29), they turned their unbelief into disobedience (Heb 4:6) by trying to enter the

promised land the next day.

Faith is believing God, and to believe God a person obeys God. When told to occupy the promised land, a person obeys God today! not tomorrow. To turn and wander in the wilderness when commanded to do so means that a person turns and starts into the wilderness. When Abraham was told to get up and leave his home, by faith he did. He didn't wait twenty years to leave (because he had to get his affairs in order first). He believed God, and his belief was counted as faith.

When Noah was commanded to build the ark, he did. He didn't tell the Lord that the task was too difficult, or that he didn't see a need for a boat, or that he would rather build a house. He didn't protest; he got to work fitting ribs to the longest keel then ever envisioned. Believing that the Lord's word was reliable, he responded by faith. And yes, it took 120 years to finish the task. He didn't tell the Lord halfway through that he had worked hard enough, that someone else needed to finish the ark. He kept hammering and sawing away, cutting mortises, fitting tenons, forging bolts and nails, each day believing by faith what the Lord said.

After getting their disobedient noses bloodied, the Israelites that left Egypt began their forty years of laps around the mountain. When all but Moses, Joshua and Caleb had perished, the Lord gave to Israel a second covenant (Deu 29:1). This covenant was not like the Sinai covenant, and it was not made with only the assembled children of the Israelites that left Egypt—"I am making this covenant, sworn by an oath, not only with you who stand here with us today before the Lord our God, but also with those who are not here with us today" (v. 14-15). This is a covenant of faith; for by this covenant, judgment of Israel is given to these children of the Israelites who left Egypt—and not only to them, but also to all who will believe God. The Lord declared, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to

him; for that means life to you" (30:19–20). These children of liberated slaves were given control of their destiny. They could choose life by loving God, obeying Him and holding fast to Him. Or they could choose death. Indeed, their judgment was committed into their hands, and they were given what they needed to obey the Lord: "Moreover, the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the hearts of your descendants, so that you will love the Lord your God with all of your heart and will all of you [mind — *naphesh*], in order that you may live" (v. 6).

This second covenant mediated by Moses is Paul's law of faith (Rom 3:27); Paul identifies this second covenant as "the righteousness that comes from faith" (Rom 10:6-8). The writer of Hebrews says the fault of the first covenant was with the Israelites, not with the covenant (Heb 8:8). Because the fault was with the people, the Lord through Moses gave to Israel the second covenant, by which circumcision of the heart and mind were promised (Deu 29 & 30). The people were now without excuse. Circumcision of the heart and mind is the writing of God laws on those hearts and minds; it is the internalization of the law of God. And Jeremiah prophesies that this circumcision would be done to Israelites under the new covenant. No longer would Israelites voluntarily choose to have their hearts and minds circumcised, but hearts and minds would be spiritually modified when the Most High drew the person from the world:

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the new covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I

will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to one another, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (Jer 31:31-34)

Forgiveness of sin doesn't happen until Christ, as the Logos of the Old Testament, is born as the man Jesus, overcomes Satan, and is sacrificed as the sin offering (Matt 26:28) for His disciples. Thus, "those days" occur in the 1st-Century. A Christian has his or her sins remembered no more. A Christian, then, by the same promise of forgiveness of sin will have the law of God written on his or her heart. The Lord doesn't ask permission to circumcise a person's heart, not if the words of this prophecy of promise have any agreed meaning, but the Lord circumcises first so that the spiritual Israelite with know the Lord, and thereby have his or her sins forgiven. Circumcision of the heart, knowing the Lord, and forgiveness of sins come as a package deal—come as bundled software. One doesn't occur without the other two. And the package begins with God intervening in a person's life.

A person doesn't invite Jesus to live in his or her heart, but rather, the Father draws the person (John 6:44, 65) from the world and opens a figurative gate (John 10:3) which causes the person to enter the temple of God—the Christian walk is the pattern of the temple. A Christian becomes the temple of God in that Christ is the three gates between the world and the holy of holies. The Father opens the outer gate (the Way), thereby drawing the wouldbe disciple into the inner courtyard where this wouldbe disciple encounters the altar of sacrifice covered by Christ's shed blood, and the laver in which the priest washed his hands and feet before entering the sanctuary that houses the candlestick, the table of Showbread,

the altar of incense, the rent veil and the holy of holies where the ark of the covenant rests under the mercy seat, symbolic of grace. Before this wouldbe Christian comes under grace, he or she must lay down his or her life on the altar of sacrifice, and must be washed by being resurrected sinfree. This wouldbe Christian figuratively does the first by accepting Jesus' sacrifice, and does the second through baptism. This Christian now enters the sanctuary where he or she will be spiritually illuminated by the light of the candlestick, which is the Word of God. Because this Christian's heart and mind have become the two tablets upon which the Father has written His laws, the Christian's body becomes the ark of the covenant. The Christian will produce good works, which become the offerings the Christian pours out on the table of Showbread. The Christian's prayers are the incense offered to God, and the Christian is now under the Mercy Seat, covered by the two cherubim; the Christian is under Grace. The Christian is no longer under the law, for the laws of God are inside the Christian. Grace as the gift of God remains outside the person; thus, the Christian as the ark of the covenant is under Grace.

As the ark of the covenant, the Christian is in a covenant relationship with God, that covenant being the second covenant, or the new covenant since better promises were added to the second covenant with Christ's death at Calvary. But let's see all of this in Scripture, since the Christian becoming the temple of God has never been well understood. Conversion is the Most High transforming a person into an ark of the covenant, complete with two tablets upon which God has written His law. And beside the ark of the covenant rests the Book of Deuteronomy:

When Moses had finished writing down in a book the words of this law [i.e., the second covenant — chapters 29-31] to the very end, Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant, saying, "Take this book of the

law [i.e., the Book of Deuteronomy] and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God; let it remain there as a witness against you." (Deu 31:24-26)

The difficulty with traditional Evangelical orthodoxy is that the Book of Deuteronomy remains today as a witness against the Christian who practices lawlessness.

Peter tells the exiles of the Dispersion that they have been made a holy nation so that they might *proclaim the mighty acts* of Christ Jesus. Part of that task has been to do what is generally identified as the Great Commission: "And Jesus came and said to [the eleven disciples], 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations'" (Matt 28:18-19). The act of making disciples results from the conversion of individuals who were not previously *God's own people*.

Peter tells these exiles of the Dispersion that they were, at one time, not a unified people, but they have become God's people, even through they remain exiles throughout what is, today, modern Turkey. Conversion occurred. Peter's epistle is to scattered Israelites, who might have considered themselves kinsmen, or one people. But they were not *God's own people*, regardless of what their heritage was. They had to be made into a *royal priesthood*. So the genetics of these exiles didn't cause them to be a *holy nation*, whereas Moses was told to tell the Israelites who left Egypt that they shall be a *priestly kingdom and a holy nation* (Exod 19:6). But spiritual Israel replaced physical Israel. Peter tells the dispersed Israelites that only through conversion could they become a holy nation. No longer did their ancestry matter.

The Apostle Paul writes to "the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus" (1:1) that in "Christ we have also obtained an inheritance . . . so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory" (1:11-12). Linguistically, Paul joins

himself, a Jew brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel and educated in the strictness of the Law of Moses (Acts 22:3), to the Gentile converts at Ephesus, who have become saints. In this same epistle he writes,

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision" . . . remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (2:11-12)

By juxtaposition, conversion is the means by which *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise* have their situation reversed, thereby becoming both parts of the commonwealth of Israel and parties to the covenants of promise.

Paul continues his thought:

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he had made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. (2:13-14)

Brought near what? These Gentiles had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, so the assumption can be made that by the blood of Christ they have been brought near or into the commonwealth of Israel. Likewise, they have been brought near or into the covenants of promise. Conversion, then, requires the application of the blood of Christ, that through His flesh, Christ has broken down the hostility that had previously existed between Gentile and Jew, that existed between those who were and were not a part of the commonwealth of Israel.

Since Peter writes to exiled Israelites who would have been by birth part of the physical commonwealth of Israel, and since he tells

them that were not *God's own people* prior to their conversion, and since Paul tells the saints at Ephesus that by the blood of Christ they have been brought near to the commonwealth of Israel, then the commonwealth of Israel about which Paul writes is, logically, spiritual Israel. Conversion is about being placed in the spiritual commonwealth of Israel, irrespective of whether someone began life as part of the circumcised or as part of the uncircumcised. This spiritual commonwealth stands opposed to "those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews [Gr: *Ioudaios*] and are not" (Rev 3:9). Therefore, whereas no Gentile would have identified him or herself as being of Judah (perhaps the best sense of *Ioudaios*) prior to conversion; and whereas the Pharisees, converted or otherwise, wouldn't be lying if they identified themselves as being of physical Judah, the synagogue of Satan is a spiritual assembly of individuals who believe they have been converted, but have not been. Thus, within the domain of conversion a schism exists between who is genuine and who isn't (1 Corth 11:19), with both factions believing that they are genuine. Both see the other as false, and will continue to do so until some time during the Tribulation. Since the Book of Revelation uses a literary trope to keep its unsealed message sealed until "the time is near" (Rev 22:10), that time being the Tribulation, what has been revealed about the false faction bowing at the feet of the Church in Philadelphia occurs during the time of the end, suggesting that this Philadelphia fellowship has made itself well enough known to the synagogue of Satan that this false faction will know God has loved the Philadelphia fellowship all along. This suggestion indicates that the Philadelphia fellowship, as opposed to the other six fellowships of the true Church, has done an endtime work directed at this false faction, which, linguistically, is far larger and more powerful than the Philadelphia fellowship. In fact, the textual assumption is that the Philadelphia fellowship restores to God so many individuals trapped by the false faction that its sins are covered in the manner James

mentions in his epistle (5:20), and Paul indirectly addresses in his epistle to the Galatians (6:1). Not only does Christ find no fault with the Philadelphia fellowship, but He will keep them "from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth" (Rev 3:10).

Briefly summarizing what can be said about conversion so far: conversion is available to Jew and Gentile, but neither Jews nor Gentiles are automatically part of spiritual Israel, a commonwealth of peoples, who, by the blood of Christ, have been made into one new nation. Within the domain, or model of conversion, there are two factions: one genuine, and one false. Therefore, we can expect at least two models of how conversions occur to be taught within greater Christianity, with one model and its derivatives coming directly from Satan or his henchmen.

The Apostle Paul tells the Gentile saints at Ephesus that at one time they had been strangers to *the covenants* [Gr: *diathekwv*] of *promise*. Covenants is properly plural. So which two or more covenants does Paul address, since modern Christians usually consider the new covenant as a single contract God the Father has made with all of humanity, especially when Paul in the same passage writes, "He [Christ] has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross" (Eph 2:15-16).

How can the new covenant not be a single covenant? And how does two or more covenants affect conversion and converting?

To answer the above questions, we need to return to where the identifying phrase "new covenant" first appears in the prophecies of Jeremiah: "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (31:31). Two peoples, two nations, both sent into the Dispersion. Although God the Logos, in the prophecies of Ezekiel, used the identifying phrase *house of Israel* for the polis Jerusalem (Ezk 12:10), and for the remnant of

the house of Judah not initially taken to Babylon (Ezk 12:9), the concept of Israel as a commonwealth makes more sense when it is understood that the identifying phrase *house of Israel* usually refers to the northern kingdom of Samaria while the phrase *house of Judah* refers to the southern kingdom at Jerusalem. And about these two exiled nations, Jeremiah prophesies, "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them" (31:33). The two nations, the two peoples have again become a single people: the house of Israel. It is with this single people that God makes the new covenant by putting His law within them and by writing it on their hearts.

We, of course, see the new covenant in the book of Hebrews: "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel / after those days, says the Lord: / I will put my laws in their minds, / and write them on their hearts, / and I will be their God, / and they shall be my people" (8:10). Again, we see a single house of Israel, not the separated kingdoms that had existed from Solomon's death to Christ's resurrection. But we now see laws [Gr: *nomous*] as opposed to a single law [*nomos*] being written on hearts and put into minds.

The Christian fellowships that self-identify themselves as the True Church because they teach disciples to keep the law of God, summarized by the Ten Commandments, have traditionally taught that what is written on the hearts of disciples is only the Ten Commandments, each commandment a single facet of the perfect law of liberty. But on two occasions Jesus was asked what a person must do to receive eternal life (Luke 10:25-28 & Luke 18:18-30). On the second occasion, He said, "You know the commandments" (v. 20), and He cites five of the ten, leaving out coveting and the first four about loving God. The rich young ruler assures Jesus that he had kept all of these since his youth. Jesus doesn't now ask about the other five, which has caused scholars to say that the five cited refer to the entire Decalogue, but He tells the rich young ruler to sell all he has and give the moneys to the poor.

We see from the ruler's reaction—he couldn't sell all he had—that his wealth separated him from God. He was guilty both of coveting his own possessions (i.e., loving them more than he loved God), and guilty of having another god ahead of the Creator, that god his wealth, which was proof of his spirituality.

When Jesus asked the young ruler to sell his possessions, He asked the young man to trust in God to provide for him. For the young ruler, selling his possessions was a test of faith. Giving the money to the poor would have been an act of love toward his fellow human. But this rich young ruler neither had the faith to believe God, nor the love for his neighbor that the two acts required. As a result, this young man turned down eternal life in the resurrection of firstfruits. He knew he didn't have eternal life, and he lacked the faith necessary to receive it by promise.

Matthew, in his account of the same incident, had Jesus including one more commandment: "You shall love you neighbor as yourself" (19:19). Paul twice cites this commandment. In his call for the Gentile converts at Rome to love one another, Paul writes, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (13:8-9). Plus, Paul writes to the Gentile converts at Galatia, "For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (5:14). And I wish to shortly return to this commandment.

In the earlier occasion when Jesus was asked about eternal life, Jesus told the lawyer, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" (Luke 10:26). The expression *the law* has any number of referents, from the law of Moses, to the law of God, to the law of faith, to the law of sin and death. Obviously, Jesus expected the lawyer to sort through all of the possible referents for *the law* and to come to the

right one. And the lawyer does: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your spirit [*psuche*], and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (v. 27). Jesus tells the lawyer, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live" (v. 28).

Jesus said *the law* was summarized in two commandments, not one. Those two commandments are found in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, with the lawyer's second commandment (Paul's single commandment) found in the Leviticus passage. Jesus also said the lawyer was to do these two commandments. If he did, he would live; i.e., have eternal life. So according to Jesus, there are requirements attached to receiving eternal life. Those requirements consist of keeping *the law*.

Therefore, the plural laws written on the hearts of converted disciples aren't the codified Ten Commandments, to which the rich young ruler had to add faith; i.e., selling his possessions and giving the money to the poor. Rather, they are more expansive than the Decalogue—they are the laws that Jeremiah would have considered parts of a single law, just as Jesus considered them as *the law*. They are the summary commandments that include everything written in the second covenant, which is Paul's law of faith (Rom 3:27), or Paul's righteousness that come from faith (Rom 10:6).

The second covenant with the better promises added by Jesus is the new covenant. When the second covenant's mediator changed from Moses to Christ, the covenant went from being physical to being spiritual. Same covenant. Same requirements. Better promises. Physical life became eternal life. Physical death became the second death (since the spiritually modified disciple symbolically died when baptized).

Again, what about Paul writing, "He [Christ] has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances" (Eph 2:15)? Paul's referent for *the law with its commandments and ordinances*—for what has been abolished—is

the law that separated circumcised from uncircumcised. That law is the Sinai covenant, by which physical Israel was made a holy people (Exod 19:6). [For a long discussion of *what does Paul mean by the law*, request the booklet by that title.]

So there is no misunderstanding, the law that has been abolished is the covenant by which the elders of Israel agreed to do and to keep all that God spoke, but which they broke forty days later with their gold calf party. It is this covenant that separated the circumcised from the uncircumcised by declaring that Israel would become a holy nation if they kept God's covenant. They didn't, but the covenant was already ratified. God had bound Himself by the covenant. Daniel, in his prayer of national repentance, praises God, saying, "Ah, Lord, great and awesome God, keeping covenant and steadfast love with those who love you and keep your commandments" (9:4). Because there were a few Israelites within the two nations who loved God and kept His commandments—Israelites such as David, and Daniel, and the prophets—God kept His end of the covenant by which He had bound Himself. However, when God the Logos is born as the man Jesus, He tells the Israelites that none of them kept His laws. So the Son of Man isn't sacrificed until the Sinai covenant could be ended by no Israelite keeping the law of God, for the death of Jesus as the Covenantor officially ended the covenant made with Israel at Sinai.

Remember, there will be two teachings about what conversion entails, with both schisms using Jeremiah and Hebrews to come to opposing conclusions about what the biblical text says. One of those teachings will be by the lawless ignorant who twist Paul's epistles to their own destruction as they do the other scriptures (2 Peter 3:16-17); so one of the two teachings about conversion will tell Christian disciples that they don't have to keep the laws of God, while the other will tell disciples that the laws of God have been written on the disciples' hearts and minds. That seems fairly straightforward: if the new covenant has the

laws of God written on hearts and minds, then the spiritual implication is that disciples are to pay attention to what has been written within them.

Clarifying what the referents are for "covenants of promise" (Eph 2:12) will actually answer the questions about what law was abolished, and which laws have been written of the hearts and minds of converts: Paul writes to the converted Gentiles at Galatia, "Now you, my friends, are children of the promise, like Isaac" (Gal 4:28), identifying Isaac as "the child who was born according to the Spirit" (verse 29). So for Paul, the children of promise are children born according to the Spirit, which would make God's covenants with Abraham covenants of promise. Then, the one new humanity reconciled "to God in one body through the cross" (Eph 2:16) is, indeed, a commonwealth of nations that has been joined together from the many nations promised to Abraham: "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations" (Gen 17:4). This single commonwealth is the great nation promised Abram: "I will make of you a great nation" (Gen 12:2). This single house of Israel was created by the sacrifice of the offspring, who is Jesus the Christ, that was promised to Abram/Abraham: "[B]y your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing" (Gen 22:18). And why were covenants of promise made with Abraham: "[B]ecause Abraham obeyed my [God's] voice and kept my [ordinances], my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen 26:5).

Abraham did not keep *the law of Moses*, but he kept God's ordinances, commandments, statutes and laws. This should answer the question of whether "the law with its commandments and ordinances" (Eph 2:15) the Paul says was abolished is the laws of God that Abraham kept (and which form the basis for the covenants of promise made with Abraham), or whether the law that was abolished has a restricted referent even though commandments and ordinances are mentioned.

Allow me to translate the above jargon into

ordinary English: Abraham knew what the laws of God were, and he kept them. Because he did, he was considered faithful—and because of his faithfulness, he received the covenants of promise, the greatest promise being Christ's birth. So through Abraham, there exists a solid link between keeping the laws of God and receiving the covenants of promise. And these laws of God exist prior to Moses, prior to the Sinai covenant, prior to the Moab covenant, prior to the new covenant. These laws are linked to faith and to promise. Paul says, "[T]he righteousness that comes from faith says" (Rom 10:6), and he goes on to quote the Moab covenant, which promises circumcision of the heart and mind [*naphesh*] for obeying God "by observing his commandments and decrees that are written in this book of the law [Deuteronomy]" (Deu 30:10). So the righteousness that comes from faith is obeying God by observing the laws of God, which under the new covenant are written on hearts and minds. Therefore, the only law with commandments and ordinances that Abraham didn't observe and which Paul doesn't include as the righteousness that comes by faith is that part of the law of Moses that was added because of Israelite disbelief. These are the animal sacrifices, and the ordinances pertaining to the Levitical priesthood. These are the dead works of the law, a pun that Paul loves (the dead works are the slaughtering of sacrificial animals).

Circumcision is a symbol of separation. Circumcision of foreskins was the ratifying sign of the covenant of promise by which Isaac's birth was prophesied, and from Isaac, Jacob (i.e., Israel) would receive the birthright. From Jacob comes the twelve tribes, which, upon obedience, were to become a holy nation. But that obedience never occurred. The reason for their lack of obedience, the Logos concluded, wasn't because there was a problem with the laws of God, but because the laws of God were always outside of these Israelites as a disciplinarian. The correction wasn't to the covenant of faith, but to Israelites: the new covenant is the writing of God's laws on a

disciple's heart and mind, so obviously, God's laws haven't been abolished. They predate Moses, and they are codified in the Book of Deuteronomy. The covenants made with Abraham were of promise, based upon faith, as is the Moab covenant, which, again, Paul labels as the righteousness of faith. So the covenants of promise are contingent upon obeying God by observing His laws and decrees, just as Abraham obeyed God.

Circumcision of the heart is the writing of God's laws upon the disciple's heart. As such, this circumcision separates the disciple from the world just as much as the circumcision of foreskins had separated Jew from Gentile.

The Apostle Paul separates the Moab covenant from the Sinai covenant:

Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that comes from faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? / "The word is near you, / on the lips and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim). (Rom 10:5-8)

Moses writes, "These are the words of the covenant that the Lord commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb" (Deu 29:1); so the second covenant that God made with Israel is first made in Moab. It is in this covenant or commandment [singular] that God says He "will circumcise your [the children of the Israelites that left Egypt] heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your [mind], in order that you may live" (Deu 30:6). So righteousness under this Moab covenant

isn't by doing the works of the law, but by having hearts circumcised, a euphemism for the metaphoric expression of having the laws of God written on the hearts of disciples. And about this Moab covenant, Moses writes,

Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us that we may hear it and observe it?" No, the word is near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe. (Deu 30:11- 14)

So this is, indeed, the covenant Paul references when he says righteousness comes by faith. Moses refers to this covenant as a single commandment, or a single law. Thus, this is the law of God about which Jeremiah prophesies; this is the commandment of God that will be placed in hearts to be observed—and what is it that is to be observed? "For the Lord will again delight in prospering you . . . when you obey the Lord your God by observing his commandments and decrees that are written in this book of the law, because you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your [mind]" (Deu 30:9-10). Turning to God with one's heart and mind (or soul) is turning to God in faith, and is obeying the commandments and decrees written in Deuteronomy.

Why will God make a new covenant with Israel? Because the covenant made at Sinai was broken before the Israelites left Sinai. The new covenant "will not be like the covenant that I [God] made with their [the houses of Israel and Judah] ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt" (Jer 31:32 and Heb 8:9). The new covenant won't be like the Sinai covenant, which had the laws

of God written on stone tablets, but will, rather, turn stony hearts into hearts of flesh by writing the laws of God on them—Jeremiah's singular law is the entirety of the second covenant, which becomes for the writer of Hebrews the plural laws of God.

The Moab covenant isn't made with the Israelites that left Egypt, with the exceptions of Joshua and Caleb. It isn't like the Sinai covenant, where the law of God existed as a disciplinarian or schoolmaster (Gal 3:24-25) outside of Israel. Rather, under the Moab covenant, the law will be written on Israelite hearts and put into their minds so that these Israelites will love the Lord God so that they may live (Deu 30:6). These descendants of the Israelites who left Egypt were not given minds to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear what great wonders God was doing (Deu 29:4-6) until their hearts were circumcised. As such, they are directly analogous to drawn Christians who cannot know, nor understand the wonders of God until God writes His laws on their hearts and minds.

Thus, the Moab covenant is the basis for the eternal covenant made between God and humanity. Again, what changes with Christ's death is who can have a covenant relationship with Elohim, and the promises attached to that covenant relationship. The promises made to Israelites under the Moab covenant are for national prosperity and fruitfulness. After the cross—the same covenanting conditions of believing God unto obedience apply—the promises aren't for national prosperity, but for spiritual prosperity and for individuals to receive eternal life as firstfruits in Elohim's plan of reproduction. As such, God promises that He "will forgive their [Israel's] iniquity, and remember their sins no more" (Jer 31:34 and Heb 8:12 & 10:17).

Conversion is being made party to the second covenant by having the laws of God written on one's heart and mind. It is entering into the covenants of promise by faith, that entrance not being determined by one's lineage. It is how Elohim corrected the fault of the first covenant.

Again, the writer of Hebrews tells us that the fault with the first covenant was with the covenanting party, or covenantee. The circumcision of Israelite hearts through voluntarily complying with the terms of the Moab covenant should have corrected that fault, but Jesus says of Pharisees that none were keeping the law Moses gave them (John 7:19). These Pharisees were certainly offering animal sacrifices, and they were outwardly observing many of the commandments as declared by the rich young ruler who came to Jesus to inquire about what more he needed to do to have eternal life. But God is love, as is His law (Rom 13:8-10). Without love for one's neighbor, a person transgresses the law of God, regardless of how righteous the person appears to be. So keeping the law Moses gave Israel consists of more than what Pharisees were doing (Matt 5:20). Therefore, we cannot look to the practices of the Pharisees to find how to observe the law of Moses. They weren't keeping it even though they thought they were.

Under the Moab covenant, which, again, Paul identifies as the covenant of faith, Israel was obliged to do everything written in the Book of Deuteronomy, which includes having love for the fatherless and the stranger within Israel's borders. The Pharisees lacked love for anyone but themselves. In Deuteronomy, your neighbor could eat her fill of your grapes, or of your grain, but if Pharisees were counting mint leaves in order to pay no more tithe than was necessary, do you think these same Pharisees would have allowed anyone to eat of their grapes or grain? Each grape would have borne an invisible vineyard name and number, with the Pharisee accounting for each grape on a tally sheet, ever careful not to pay one grape more nor one grape less than was required to the Levitical priesthood. A person eating a handful of grapes from this Pharisee's vineyard would compel the Pharisee to recalculate the tithe owed. It would be easier for this Pharisee to drive the trespasser away than to let her eat a few grapes.

The identifying phrase "the law of Moses" as used by 1st-Century Pharisees is a

metonymic expression for the writings of Moses as well as the *halakhah*, *midrash*, *aggadah* and moral discourse that had developed since a remnant of Israel had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. In Scripture, one sees these traditional writings "when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around [Jesus:] they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them" (Mark 7:1-2). Mark goes on to explain a little about "observing the traditions of the elders" (verse 3) before relating how Christ rebukes these Pharisees:

[Jesus] said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, / 'This people honors me with their lips, / but their hearts are far from me; / in vain do they worship me, / teaching human precepts as doctrines.' / You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition." (verses 6-7)

Mark continues what Christ says:

Then he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother'; and, 'Whoever speak evil of father or mother must surely die.' But you say that if anyone tells father or mother, 'Whatever support you might have had from me is Corban' (that is, an offering to God)—they you no longer permit doing anything for a father or mother, thus making void the word of God through your tradition that you have handed on. And you do many things like this." (verses 8-13)

So when Pharisees who had become Christians stood up at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) and said that it was necessary for Gentile

converts to be circumcised and "ordered to keep the law of Moses" (verse 5), they were not demanding that the Gentiles keep the covenant of faith, but that these alien converts learn and observe the many traditions that formed a thorny hedge around the law of God, thereby making getting close enough to the law to violate it impossible. But the construction of the hedge was, itself, a violation of the law, which wasn't given as a totem, but as the governing principle to be used in determining how one was to love God and neighbor.

Reviewing briefly, Abraham kept the laws [plural] of God and his keeping these laws is why, according to God (Gen 26:2-5), that the covenants of promise were made with him. Paul separates the covenant made at Sinai from the covenant made in Moab, and calls the second covenant "the righteousness that comes from faith" (Rom 10:6). However, even after the Moab covenant was given, Jeremiah prophesies about a future time when a new covenant is made with the houses of Israel and Judah, a covenant which unites both houses into a single house of Israel. And returning to Abraham, the writer of Hebrews says, "By faith Abraham obeyed" (11:8), implying that the promises made to Abraham were made because of his faithfulness in obeying all that God told him. James says,

Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as

righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. (2:18-23)

Believing God is, therefore, obeying God by faith. God made a covenant of faith with Israel in Moab, just before Israel was to enter the promised land. This covenant has the hearts of Israel being circumcised so these Israelites could love the Lord by walking in His ways and observing His commandments, decrees, and ordinances (Deu 30:16). Likewise, God makes this same covenant of faith with spiritual Israel just before spiritual Israel is to enter its promised land. But under this new covenant, circumcision of the heart isn't voluntary. Rather, God writes His laws on the hearts and minds of disciples. What was offered to physical Israelites is done to spiritual Israelites. The language Jeremiah uses, like the language the writer of Hebrews uses is unambiguous: "This is the covenant that I will make with them / after those days, says the Lord; / I will put my law in their hearts, / and I will write them on their minds,' / he also adds, 'I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more'" (10:16-17).

Under the new covenant, conversion occurs when an individual accepts Christ's sacrifice. At that moment, the person is reconciled to the Father by having his or her sins covered by Christ's shed blood; the person's sins are remembered no more. By the same promise that has his or her sins being remembered no more, the person has the laws of God written on the person's heart and mind. If there is no writing of God's laws on the person's heart and mind, then there has been no forgiveness of sin. These two aspects of the new covenant come together as parts of one covenant of promise.

The assurance a person has of having his or her sins forgiven is the person's desire to obey God, to believe God, even to keeping the laws of God that are now written on his or her heart and mind. Conversion is God causing the person to love Him by obeying His laws by faith—and Paul identifies the righteousness that comes by faith as the covenant God made with

Israel in Moab, which will have Israel keeping all of the commandments and decrees written in the Book of Deuteronomy (Deu 30:10).

The Moab covenant is not the law of Moses that was observed by the religious establishment that controlled the temple. It is, rather, the covenant of faith which Moses gave to Israel. It is the codification of the same faith by which "Abraham obeyed [God's] voice and kept [His ordinances], [His] commandments, [His] statutes, and [His] laws" (Gen 26:5). Those Israelites whose hearts were circumcised would obey the commandments of the Lord their God that Moses commanded them, by loving the Lord, by walking in His ways, and by observing His commandments, decrees and ordinances (Deu 30:16). It is these commandments, decrees and ordinances that are written in the Book of Deuteronomy; it is these commandments, decrees and ordinances that will be written on the hearts of converted disciples, who will, because of their spiritual modification, be able to keep what the Pharisees could not. Conversion isn't inviting Jesus into one's heart. Rather, it is major heart surgery, in that what had been stony becomes flesh. The plural laws are found in the Book of Deuteronomy and are summarized by the two great commandments. The plural covenants begin with Abraham and extend forward to the Moab covenant as initially given, then later modified by having better promises added by Christ. The fault was with Israelites who thought a clipped foreskin automatically produced a circumcised heart.

The law that Paul says was abolished is the Sinai covenant in its entirety. But abolishing the Sinai covenant doesn't effect the laws of God, which existed before the creation of the universe. So by practical application, the law that was abolished is those portions of the Sinai covenant with its additions that are not repeated in Deuteronomy. The writer of Hebrews says, "Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary" (9:1), but these regulations are no longer appropriate due to the resurrected Christ

now being our high priest. And some of the ordinances and commandments of Deuteronomy applied only to the nation of Israel. These ordinances will again be in effect when Christ comes as the all powerful Messiah to rule as King of kings, but some of them cannot be properly applied under a secular government, such as ordinances pertaining to sieges. But the principle of not making war on fruit-bearing trees has some applications in environmental issues, and in how war shouldn't be waged against civilians.

Burnt sacrifices will resume when Christ returns, but there is no reason for them now; so where they should be conducted pertains as a governing principle for where religious services should be held today. Ordinances for animal sacrifices aren't found in Deuteronomy; they aren't a part of the second covenant, which has hearts being circumcised. Likewise, ordinances pertaining to the Levitical priesthood aren't in Deuteronomy—and the Levitical priesthood has been replaced by Christ. However, statutes concerning clean and unclean meats are in Deuteronomy (chapter 14). In addition, a second and a third tithe are commanded (same chapter). Observing the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are commanded (16:1-8), as is the Feast of Weeks [Pentecost] and the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, which will include Trumpets, Yom Kippurim and the Last Great Day as being part of this third feast season. Three times yearly, all of the males shall appear before the Lord, and not come empty handed (16:16).

Much of what greater Christianity labels as parts of the law of Moses, now abolished, in reality is part of the second covenant that originally was mediated by Moses, but ever since better promises were added is mediated by Jesus, who "has now obtained a more excellent ministry, and to that degree he is the mediator of a better covenant" (Heb 8:6). It is a better covenant because of the better promises. The fault of that first covenant wasn't with the promises of national prosperity and fruitfulness, or with the requirements for obtaining those promises. Rather, that fault was with Israel.

They lacked faith. They didn't believe God. And they refused to keep His law, which requires the extension of love to all Israelites as well as to aliens within their midst.

The new covenant is not made with the synagogue of Satan; it isn't made with anyone except the spiritual house of Israel. Paul assures the saints at Ephesus that they have, by Christ's blood, been brought near, or into this spiritual house. So conversion is God putting His laws within disciples and writing His laws on the hearts of disciples, thereby making these disciples part of the spiritual house or commonwealth of Israel. And disciples can read what has been written on their hearts by going to the Book of Deuteronomy. In it is how a converted disciple believes God unto obedience, which is the substance of faith. The Book exists as a witness either for or against a Christian.

The law with its commandments and ordinances that has been abolished is a metonymic expression for the busy work that was added due to Israelite unbelief, which prevented them from entering the promised land. That law pertains only to the flesh. (For a discussion of mimetic, metaphoric and metonymic word usage, see the "Introduction" to *Rereading Prophecy*. Paul uses the icon phrase *the law* in all three levels of representation, so *the law* doesn't necessarily mean *the law*. Context determines level of usage.)

An invitation for Jesus to enter isn't what's written on a disciple's heart, or put into his or her mind—the disciple's heart and mind are figuratively the two tablets of stone on which God wrote His law, and which were placed inside the ark of the covenant that rested under the mercy seat. The converted disciple is no longer under the law, but under grace, of which the mercy seat was symbolic. The law has been involuntarily internalized by the converted disciple, thereby correcting the primary fault with the Moab covenant. Of course, a disciple can choose to erase what the Father writes on her heart, and Satan's false ministers of righteousness will by their clever arguments try to erase the law from where the Father has

written it. But conversion occurs when the drawn disciple agrees to the terms of the new covenant, those terms being a willingness to live by what has already been written on the new disciple's heart and mind. The new disciple will come short of perfection, but as long as the disciple abides by the terms of the covenant to the best of the disciple's knowledge and ability, the disciple will have a part in the first resurrection. This means, though, that the disciple cannot play games with God; for it is the disciple's knowledge that determines the disciple's compliance with the terms of the new covenant. If a disciple knows to do something, and refuses for any reason to do the thing, the disciple has removed him or herself from the covenant relationship with the Father to which He drew the disciple.

Conversion, then, is the state of being spiritually altered to produce compliance in thought and action to the laws, statutes, commandments and ordinances of the Most High God. It is actually done to a person, without respect to the person's ethnicity. It is analogous to being drafted into military service: the inductee is no longer free to live as he or she wishes. The inductee has been made holy by being set apart from the world by God for His service. The inductee has become part of a chosen race (i.e., spiritual Israel), a royal priesthood, God's own people for the expressed purpose of proclaiming the mighty acts of Christ Jesus (1 Peter 2:9). The inductee is as one born out of season. Survival is difficult. Each day is a struggle. The whole world is actually against the inductee. Yet if the inductee will endure in faith, the inductee is guaranteed a place in the first resurrection. So conversion brings to the inductee the best of tomorrow—when the inductee gets there.

In the ark of the covenant were also the jar of manna and Aaron's staff that budded (Heb 9:4). The symbolism of both, a fit subject for a longer discussion, is addressed by Peter in his second epistle: "His [Christ's] divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness" (1:3). Just as the manna supplied

Israel's physical needs, so does knowledge of Christ supply the disciple's spiritual needs until we become participants of Christ's divine nature (verse 4). Peter tells saints that "you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love" (verses 5-7). Thus, love supports faith, with a few pauses along the way. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15) — how is it that keeping the commandments of God has become the great apostasy? Did someone erase from your Bible Jesus' words:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of the commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt 5:17-19)

Remember, there will be two models of what constitutes conversion, one genuine and one of the synagogue of Satan. Look at what Paul writes in Romans 10:9 — who must only confess with their lips and believe in their heart? Is it not the Israelite who already has his or her heart circumcised by being a party to the "righteousness that comes from faith" (verse 6)? Of course it is. There is no other way to assign a referent to the pronoun "you" (verse 9) except to look at the preceding verses in which Paul references the Moab covenant (i.e., the second covenant). The person with a circumcised heart and mind has only to confess

Christ and believe. But this person already has the laws of God written on his or her heart and mind, and as such, will be trying to obey the laws of God that are within the person. This person will be keeping the laws of God, so this person needs nothing more than to confess and believe.

But the person who refuses to keep the laws of God has separated him or herself from the new covenant. This person can argue for a dispensation of Grace rather than a dispensation of Law, but this person only deceives him or herself. This person either has never been drawn and converted, or this person has reservations in the lake of fire.

Conversion is obeying God by observing His laws and commandments, statutes and ordinances — all of them — that have been written on the person's heart and mind. Grace covers the person's failures. Grace does not apply to the person who willingly refuses to be ruled by Christ Jesus. The lawless are not under Grace, but bear their own sins, for which no sacrifice remains if they have been truly drawn by the Father. In the parable of the pounds, seven of the ten servants who received a pound will be slain when the nobleman returns. One doesn't receive much reward, and a legitimate question exists of whether this one with no increase will be in the kingdom of heaven. So only twenty percent of the nobleman's servants receive what all could have had.

As a converted Christian, are you one of the seventy percent who will not be ruled by Christ? If you are, please, for your sake, repent today, while there is still time.

Now to pickup Paul's single law of loving neighbor: the person who has the laws of God written on his or her heart knows God. This person will love God with all of his or her might. Paul doesn't need to repeat what has been written in Deuteronomy, for all of that Book is written on the genuine disciple's heart and mind. Paul only needs to remind disciples to do and keep what summarizes the laws written in Leviticus.

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