

Messenger!

A Journey Through the Burden of Malachi

Malachi 4:4

14- Remember the Law of Moses, My Servant

December 1, 2019

Malachi 4:4

Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the* statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.

To the Glory of God

Now Malachi makes a very simple but profound Statement here in verse 4. He commands the people of God, to:

Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the* statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.

... and if nothing had changed since Malachi made that Statement, then this Sermon and our relationship with God would be very cut and dry:

The Pathway to Favor with God comes about through
our adherence to the Law of Moses.

... and so, as genuine believers, we would spend all of our time studying and teaching and learning all about what God, through Moses, commanded His people in the 39 Books of the Old Testament. And then we would all work very hard to try to obey what we had learned.

But the Reality is that very powerful and momentous things happened about 400 years after this Prophet uttered these words that changed *everything*. And that Reality requires us to ponder just how, what Malachi speaks here, applies to us today as we live and serve underneath the infinitely *superior* Covenant brought about by the Birth, Life, Ministry, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Ongoing Ministry of Jesus, the Christ.

So, just how are Christians supposed to understand the Law of Moses? How should New Testament believers approach all the Statutes and the Ordinances of what God gave to Moses, some 1450 years *before* Jesus was born? How should followers of Jesus comprehend the various Commandments that God gave, and how should we then conduct our daily lives in light of all that Jesus said and did?

Generally speaking, the "Law of Moses" is that "Body of Teaching" that God gave by way of Inspiration to Moses in the Mountain as the children of Israel were wandering in the wilderness. And this "Body of Teaching" is found in the first five Books of the Bible.¹ And until Jesus brought in the fullness of God's Revelation to Mankind in the 27 Books of the New Testament, those first five Books were known as the "*Didactic Books of the Scriptures*".

Now the word "*Didactic*" comes from the Hebrew word that means: "*Teaching/Instruction*". So, these five Books *taught* or *instructed* people on how to have a "Right Relationship" with God. And having a "Right Relationship" with God is called "*Righteousness*". So, the main theme of the first five Books of the Bible is Righteousness. And so, these five Books, also called the "Pentateuch" (Hebrew for "*five scrolls*"), tell people what to do and what *not* to do, so they can "become" and then continually "be" Righteous.

And even though the concept of "Righteousness" has fallen on hard times in our day, we should all be very concerned about what God has infallibly revealed concerning this Subject, because the Reality is that nobody goes to Heaven to be with God unless he is *just as Righteous as God Himself is Righteous*. So, how a person "becomes" Righteous and how he *continues* to "be" Righteous matters.

And repeatedly and very clearly, the Law of Moses teaches that human beings *become* Righteous and they *maintain* that Righteousness through "Obedience". And "Obedience" is defined by God as "Adherence" to the Commands and Ordinances and Statutes of what God gave to Moses in the Law. So, first, *knowing/understanding* the Law, and then, secondly, *obeying/adhering* to the Law is *required*, if anyone desires to be Righteous, so they may escape the Judgment and Damnation of God. But *nobody* can obey what he doesn't understand, and *nobody* can understand unless he is taught. So, if anyone will become Righteous, then it involves two things:

¹ Genesis; Exodus; Leviticus; Numbers; Deuteronomy

1. Comprehension of God's Commandments
2. Obedience to those Commandments

So, for many, many centuries, those who were truly saved spent an enormous amount of time studying and reading and learning and being taught what God had revealed in the first five Books of the Bible. They asked Questions, and they pondered, and they thought, and they meditated, and they memorized, and they sang, and they struggled to know and comprehend and understand what God required of them.

But then came the hardest part of all. These people, who now understood struggled to obey. They struggled to adhere. They struggled to *restrict* their behavior, and to *alter* their behavior, and to *change* their behavior, so that they were in accord with what God required.

And God provided His people with "Divine Incentives" to "help" them to become Righteous and to maintain that Righteousness. He gave the children of Israel *brehtaking* Promises of Good that He would do *to* them and *for* them if they obeyed. And God also gave them terrifying Threats that He would do *to* them if they did *not* obey.

And God did all of this to illustrate what it meant to "set aside" a people for His Own Glory. And we call that "setting aside" "Holiness". So, God called the Jews to be His *exclusive* people to live in an *exclusive* land, "Israel". God "set His Love" upon the Jews as a people, and Israel as a nation, *to the exclusion* of every other people, and every other nation on earth.

So, these people had a real and tangible Relationship with the one, true, and living God that no other people and no other nation on earth had. But we need to understand what that meant. The Jews and Israel were NOT the only people on earth. They were NOT the most advanced culture NOR were they the most sophisticated. They were NOT the freest NOR the most educated people on earth. They were NOT the wisest NOR were they the most clever. Israel as a nation, and the Jews as a people, did NOT have the best technology, they did NOT build the best roads, they did NOT have the finest houses.

Being God's Holy and Righteous people afforded the Jews something that nobody on earth at that time had, a real and tangible Relationship with God. They were God's people, *exclusively*. And God was their God, *exclusively*.

So, while the Chinese invented gun powder, God did NOT deal with the Chinese. And while other peoples and nations in Africa and in South America and in North America built great pyramids, and traveled across the Oceans, and created Accounting, and invented Languages, and cultures and Governments and astounding Civilizations, God did NOT deal with them. He did NOT give them His Word, He did NOT cover them with His Spirit, He did NOT send them His Prophets, He did NOT give them His Law, and He did NOT gather them to Himself. That special and unique Relationship was reserved *solely* for the Jews and for Israel.

And to *facilitate* that special and unique Relationship, God sovereignly gave the Jews their land, and their Religion, and their Government, and their language, and their customs. Because before God chose the Jew to be His people, there were no Jews. God sovereignly took barbarians and pagans and idol worshippers from several different people groups, *that were already in existence*, and God sovereignly MADE them to be His people. And God sovereignly and violently uprooted other people who were *already* living on the land, and who had legal title to their property, and God sovereignly and forcefully gave that land to His people.

And so, in every sense of the word, the First or the Old, Covenant was a "Come and See" Religion. God chose a special people and set them into a special land so that the nations of the world would marvel and see that there was no one like God. And so, if you wanted to find God, you couldn't go to Beijing. You couldn't go to Calcutta. You couldn't go to Rio or London. You couldn't go to Mexico City or Germany or Greenland or the North Pole or New York. You had to come to Israel, and you had to ask a Jew. And if you wanted God to bless you, or forgive you, or heal you, or be with you, you had to travel to one city, Jerusalem, and you had to stand in one place, the Temple.

Before God placed the Jews into the land of Israel, there was not a single nation on earth that could say that God was their God. And before God chose the Jew, no other people group on earth could say that God was their God. And as you read the Bible, you see clearly a very amazing thing. The Jews had no control over any of this. They didn't choose themselves to be God's people. They didn't even choose God. They had no say-so, no vote, no input, no voice, no agreement, no cooperation, and no yielding. God simply spoke, and then God did. God

didn't ask Permission, He didn't seek any Cooperation, and He didn't wait for them to agree. And, initially, the Jews were as amazed and astounded at what God did *with* them, and *to* them, and *for* them, and *through* them, as everybody else.

And what God required of the Jews, and from the Jews, involved everything from the clothes on their backs, to the food they ate, to the way they could conduct Construction, to the way they were to raise animals, to the way they buried their dead. God's Commandments involved the way they could plant crops, to the way they harvested those crops, to the way they stored and cooked those crops.

But every bit of this was to illustrate what both Righteousness and Holiness looked like. And being in "Right Standing" with God (Righteousness) and being "Set Aside" for God's Glory (Holiness) illustrates what loving God looks like. So, the entire Law of Moses, the entirety of what God was doing with the Jews and with Israel underneath the Law of Moses, was to accomplish what God said in the very beginning:

Deuteronomy 6:4&5

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

... and then, later on, God also said:

Leviticus 19:18

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.

So, the complete Purpose of the Law of Moses that was taught and studied and learned and struggled with and practiced for many, many Centuries was all about just two things:

- 1. Loving God**
- 2. Loving people**

So, if you love God, these are the Commandments you will obey. And if you love people, these are the Commandments you will obey. In other words, obeying these Commandments is what loving God looks like. And obeying these Commandments is what loving people looks

like. But that also means that if you *violate* these Commandments, you prove that you do NOT love God. And if you *violate* these Commandments, you prove that you do NOT love other people.

Now as fantastic as it was the way Moses received the Law, obeying the Law was even more fantastic. Because, as the Jews began to put these Commandments into practice, they began to notice something amazing. Even though God had promised wonderful Blessings, and even though He had warned them with horrific Curses, the Jews still *wanted* to disobey. They *longed* to violate rather than adhere. They realized that, even with all that God had done in them and for them and to them, their hearts still loved Disobedience much more than Obedience.

So, they would go through the motions in public Worship. But as their hands were in the air, and as they chanted the chants, and memorized the verses, and sang the Psalms, and heard the Commandments repeated over and over and over and over again, their hearts loved Darkness rather than Light, and their minds were planning on how to disobey.

And they would watch as friends and neighbors would receive the Curses. They looked at terrifying Destruction that they knew came only from God. They saw, first-hand, Divine Calamity and Invasion and Penalty and Punishment. And it would scare them into *temporary* "Forced Obedience". It would frighten them into *momentary* "Fearful Adherence". But as soon as the immediate problem abated, they reverted right back into Disobedience and Rebellion.

After watching God's Judgment fall on them time after time after time, you would think that common sense would convert them. But the Reality is that the devastating effects of the Fall are so *pervasive*, so *ingrained*, and so *deep seated*, that unless God does something sovereign, and powerful, and permanent, nobody would ever be saved.

So, what we needed was not more Laws, nor more Rules, nor more Commandments. What we needed was a new heart, and a new mind, and a new spirit. What we needed was the Gift of Love for God! The problem with Obedience is *not* a matter of misunderstanding, or a lack of Rules. No, the problem with us obeying God is a lack of Love. We don't love God. Because of the Fall, our natural inclination is to love Self and Sin. But human beings do not *naturally* or *normally* love God. Loving God is *not* normal. It isn't natural. It doesn't simply flow out

from us. It must be *created*. And that is *exactly* what God provided in the New Covenant. The Apostle John said it best when he wrote:

1 John 4:19

We love [God and each other]- because He first loved us

And so, rather than simply put forth more human effort, we now have been empowered and enabled to love God. And our Obedience flows out from that Love. So, in Jesus Christ we now have been given the Gift of loving God. And that means that Salvation is not merely that God loved us, but that He loved us enough to save us. And that by saving us, we would be changed, and we would love God! And now Obedience to God flows out of a grateful and thankful heart that has been visited with a real and powerful Love for God.

But this Love is the product of "seeing", of "beholding". The Bible says that as the veil is removed from our eyes and mind and heart, we "see" the Excellence and the Beauty and the Glory of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. So, the Goal of every genuine believer is to "see" Jesus Christ as the Treasure of the Universe, and then to *respond* to what we see in two ways:

1. We *love* what we see (Jesus)
2. We are *changed* into what we see (the likeness of Jesus)

So, in reality, *all* of our Obedience, and *all* of our Service, and *all* of our Thoughts and Actions concerning the Lord, are human *responses* to what we see. Jesus said this in **John 14:15**:

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

... and in **John 14:23**:

If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

... so, the "keeping" of God's Word and God's Commandments, which is what we call "Obedience", is simply a response to "loving" Jesus. And

loving Jesus is a response to seeing Him in His Beauty and Glory. This is what the Apostle Paul meant in **2 Corinthians 3:18**, when he said:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding [seeing] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

... and in **2 Corinthians 4:6**...

For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

... where the term **"face of Christ"** here has to do with the *"Person of Jesus Christ"*. So, the *epitome*, the *zenith*, the *height* of the *"Glory of God"* is found *not* in waterfalls, or supernovas, or microscopic bacteria, but in the pristine Character and Nature of Jesus, the Christ.

And that means that any attempt at Obedience that is *not* based in this Love for God is a *false* Obedience, a *manufactured* Obedience, and a *humanly engineered* Obedience that does *not* glorify God, and that only leads to more and more Self-righteousness.

But there is something about this that we don't usually think about. And that is that the *"Glory of Jesus Christ"* shines more clearly when we see Him in His proper relation to the Law of Moses. Our dear Lord has a magnificent relation to *all* that was written. And that really shouldn't surprise us because the Apostle John was *"carried along"* to write that Jesus is called the **"Word of God made flesh"** (**John 1:14**). So, would not the *"Word of God incarnate"* be the *sum* and *consummation* of the *"Word of God written"*?

So, how should Christians view the Law of Moses? Consider these five Truths:

1. All of Scriptures bears witness to Jesus Christ. Moses wrote about Jesus:

John 5:39

You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;

... and...

John 5:46

For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.

2. All the Scriptures are about Jesus Christ, even where there is no explicit prediction. In other words, there is a “Fullness of Implication” in all the Scriptures that point to Jesus, and is satisfied only when He has come and done His Work. Graeme Goldsworthy, the Australian Evangelical Anglican Theologian, specializing in the Old Testament and Biblical Theology said:

“The meaning of all the Scriptures is unlocked by the Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ”²

Luke 24:27

Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He [Jesus] explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

3. Jesus came to fulfill all that was written in the Law and the Prophets. All of it was pointing to Him, even where it is not explicitly prophetic. Jesus actually accomplished everything that the Law required.

Matthew 5:17&18

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

4. All the Promises of God in the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. That is, when you have Christ, sooner or later you will have both Jesus Himself and all else that God promised through Him.

2 Corinthians 1:20

For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

² Graeme Goldsworthy; *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*; pg. 54

5. The Law was kept *perfectly* by Christ. And all the Penalties that the Law threatened against God's sinful people were poured out on Jesus, as He hung screaming on the Cross. And that means that the Law is now manifestly NOT the Path to Righteousness; Faith in Jesus is. And we are saved by His Life and His Obedience, not our own. So, the ultimate Goal of all that is contained in the Law is that we would look to Jesus Christ for both Forgiveness and Righteousness, and NOT Law-keeping.

Romans 10:4

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Therefore, with the Coming of Jesus Christ, virtually *everything* has changed:

1. Animal sacrifices have ceased *forever*, because Christ fulfilled all that they were pointing toward. Jesus was the one, final, and unrepeatable Sacrifice for all of the Sins of all of God's people.

Hebrews 9:12

and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

... and, this is so true that for *anyone* to sacrifice an animal for any reason today, *even as a worship of God*, is insulting the once for all Death of Jesus on the Cross, and is committing blasphemy.

2. The Human Priesthood, that stood between the worshiper and God, has ceased *forever*.

Hebrews 7:23&24

The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently.

.. and this is so true that for any "religious organization" to either "have" or "promote" a human priesthood is *minimizing* the ongoing Priesthood of Jesus Christ, and is *ignoring* the Priesthood of all believers, and is committing blasphemy.

3. The physical Temple has ceased *forever* to be the "Geographic Center of Worship." Now, Christ Himself is the "Center of all true Worship." Jesus *personally* is the "Place", the "Tent", and the "Temple" where we meet with God. Therefore, Christianity has no "Geographic Center", no Mecca, and no Jerusalem.

John 4:21, 23&24

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

John 2:19-21

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body."

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

The Revelation 11:8

And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified."

... and this is so true that for anyone to suggest or teach that there is special spiritual significance today in the Temple or in Jerusalem, or even in Israel, is *minimizing* the "once for all finished Work of Jesus on the Cross", and is committing blasphemy

4. The "Dietary Laws" that set Israel apart [holy] from the other nations of the world have been fulfilled and ended *forever* in Jesus Christ.

Mark 7:18&19

And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?"

(*Thus He* declared all foods clean.)

1 Timothy 4:1, 3-5

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons... *men* who forbid marriage *and advocate* abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer.

... and, this is so true that for anyone to teach that Favor with God is brought about by or through the eating of certain foods, while abstaining from others, is *minimizing* the "one for all finished Work of Jesus Christ on the Cross", and is committing blasphemy.

5. The establishment of Civil Law on the basis of an ethnically rooted people, who are ruled directly by God, has ceased *forever*. The "people of God" consist of people from every nation, tongue, language, and culture on earth, and are no longer a "Unified Political Body" or an "Ethnic Group" or a "Nation-State", but are "Exiles" and "Strangers" among all Ethnic Groups and all States. Therefore, God's Will for individual States is NOT taken directly from the Old Testament "Theocratic Order", but should now be *re-established* from place to place, and from time to time, by means that correspond to God's sovereign Rule over *all* peoples, and that correspond to the fact that genuine Obedience, rooted as it is in Faith in Jesus Christ, *CANNOT* be *coerced* by Law. The State is, therefore, "grounded" in God- but NOT expressive of God's *immediate* Rule.

Romans 13:1

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

John 18:36

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

Romans 2:28&29

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

.. and, this is so true that for anyone to believe or teach that Israel or the Jews exist on a separate and distinct Path toward Salvation and God's Favor outside of that for the Church, he is committing blasphemy.

So, what remains of the Law for Christians are the "Moral" aspects. And the Moral aspects of the Law of Moses are eternal, because they are based on the Character and Nature of God Himself. So, whatever is in the Law that lends itself to loving Jesus and responding to God's Love for us, by loving each other, even loving our enemies, is eternal.

So, it is always wrong to worship other gods, or to believe false teaching, or to NOT love God. But it is always right to show Mercy, and to be Kind, and to do Good to others, even your enemies; *especially* your enemies. But, if we love each other, we will not commit Adultery, or tell each other lies, or steal from each other, or kill each other. So, what the New Covenant brought in was NOT a means by which we can live any way we choose, but rather, through the Life and Death and Resurrection of a sinless Savior, we now have the Power to love God and to love people.

Now there have always been various groups, who call themselves "Christians", who believe that in order to honor God's Authority in the Old Testament we must *continue* to obey both the Dietary and Ceremonial parts of the Law of Moses, lest we be found in Disobedience. And I want to address that for a moment. And much of the division that these people bring always has to do with two areas of the Law of Moses:

1. The Dietary Restrictions
2. The Ceremonial Aspects

... and much time and energy has been spent by these people in trying to get others to not eat certain foods and to worship God on the Old

Testament Sabbath (sundown Friday to sundown Saturday). And these people use Old Testament Scriptures to justify their positions.

And, on the one hand, there is a very *good* Impulse in this. And the good Impulse is the desire to obey God. And there's nothing wrong with that. The desire to humble and to submit to the Authority of Scripture is *exactly* what Salvation brings to us, and what it fundamentally means to be a Christian. So, even when the Issue is a *partial* or even a *false* understanding of the New Covenant and what it brought about, the *desire* to obey is Good. So, we must be careful that we don't kill the desire to obey as we correct the false understanding of *how* to obey. The wayward effort to obey can be corrected over time by good, solid Teaching, and by providing a concrete example of a proper Obedience.

But, on the other hand, there is also a profoundly *bad* Impulse in this. And the bad Impulse is the failure to honor Jesus Christ Who teaches us *how* to obey God in regard to the Old Testament. So, the good Impulse starts with a Passage like **Matthew 5:17&18**, where Jesus said:

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

... and the bad Impulse puts the emphasis on the part of Jesus' Words that say:

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law... I did not come to abolish... For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law...

... and this *partial* and *wayward* emphasis causes them to go about to keep the Law of Moses, *ignoring* the rest of what Jesus said, and almost *everything* that He did. So, the bad Impulse *neglects* the part of Jesus' Statement that says:

... I did not come to abolish but to fulfill... For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

In other words, the bad Impulse fails to see, in Jesus, the kind of *Fulfillment* and the kind of *Accomplishment* of the Law and the Prophets that God always intended in the Old Testament as the *Consummation* and the final *End* of both the Ceremonial and Dietary aspects of the Law.

So, for example, the Issue of the Sabbath is crystal clear. God originally established the *last* Day of the week (sundown Friday to sundown Saturday) as the "Day of Rest". But when God chose to raise Jesus Christ from the dead on the *first* Day of the week (Sunday), He brought in a *superior* way to worship God, on the "Lord's Day". So, God made this change, not Man.

But it isn't sinful for people to worship God on the original Sabbath. In fact, we should worship God every day! But the "assembling" of the elect to worship God is *best* carried out on the Lord's Day, because that honors Jesus and what He did.

So, people are free to worship God on Tuesdays or Thursdays or even on the Old Testaments Sabbath. But when you command people to ONLY worship on the Sabbath, and then *ignore* what Jesus did on the Lord's Day by teaching that Lord's Day worship is wrong or sinful, you cross a line, and you use the Old Testament to *dishonor* Jesus. And that is a very terrible thing to do. As you read through the Gospels, what the Pharisees attacked Jesus about the most was His *refusal* to go along with their understanding of the Sabbath.

In the same way, the effort to hold on to the Divine Prohibition of eating pork is, in effect, a *refusal* to submit to God's Plan for the *fulfillment* of the Law in Jesus Christ.

The Divine Prohibition of certain foods as "unclean" was a *temporary* part of God's Way of making Israel "distinct" (Holy) from the other nations of the world. But with the Coming of Christ, dramatic changes took place in the Way God governs His people. So, we are no longer a "political-ethnic people" like the Jews were. Under the *infinitely* superior New Covenant, believers are a "global people" from every tribe and language and ethnicity and race.

In Jesus Christ, Christians are now woven into every culture on the planet. And so, we face literally hundreds of ethical dilemmas about what aspects of those cultures to share (i.e., *what* to eat, what *not* to eat, *when* to eat, *how* to eat, etc.). But God never solves the Problem

of us being “distinct from the world” (holy), which we still should be, by *preserving* the Old Testament Ceremonial aspects of the Law like physical circumcision and food restrictions and Sabbath Worship.

This is *exactly* why God the Holy Spirit “carried along” the Apostle Paul to write the **Epistle to the Galatians**. What is the place of circumcision and days and months and years in the life of New Testament believers? (**Galatians 4:10**). Paul’s clear position in **Galatians** is that physical circumcision is of absolutely no effect. And, then he says:

Galatians 5:6a

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything..

... and, he says this in spite of the clear Command under the Law of Moses for every male to be circumcised. But notice how Paul ends the discussion. He doesn’t simply say “*Don’t circumcise*”. He says:

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

... which is an infinitely *superior* Truth. And the very same logic applies to the Dietary aspect of the Law. The Apostle doesn’t teach, “*Go ahead and eat pork*”, which would *diminish* the Law. Rather he teaches, “*Neither eating, nor not eating pork counts for anything, but only faith working through love*”, which *elevates* Obedience of the partial Truth of the Law into a *better* Way.

So, for example, we are free to eat pork, but **Galatians 5:2** makes it stunningly clear what we are *not* free to do with pork. Here is what it says:

Galatians 5:2

Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

Whoa! I thought you said it doesn’t matter whether we have circumcision or not. Paul said we can “have it or not have it”. He said that in verse 6. But what Paul *meant* was:

If you embrace circumcision (or pork eating, or any other aspect of the ceremonial or Dietary portions of the Law) as a *necessity* for Justification, or, in the case of the Galatians, even a Path for ongoing, real, mature, spiritual, genuine Christian maturity, you are cutting yourself off from Jesus Christ.
And that is very serious.

... so, the final Answer is:

If a person chooses *not* to eat pork for various nutritional reasons or preference, that is no big deal. You are free to eat or not to eat. But the moment that Abstinence is invested with “Biblical Authority” as a “Path to Obedience”, or an example of “Spiritual Maturity”, or even a “Requirement for Salvation”, a line is crossed that *contradicts* Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

Paul said in **Colossians 2:16&17**:

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

... so, when you have Jesus Christ as your Treasure, and your all-satisfying Food, you are free to eat or not. But you should never require circumcision, and you should assemble to worship God on the Lord’s Day.

Amen. Let’s pray,

© 2019 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729
Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse “journey” through the **Book of the Prophecy of Malachi**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.