

*Everything follows the intention of the heart.  
—Tosefta Yebamot, 2*

### Why don't Christians observe all the Torah's commands?

Although the Hebrew Scriptures connect Judaism and Christianity, they can also separate us, because...

*"...many Jews wonder why Christians do not obey the Mosaic Law more rigorously, joining them in keeping kosher and so forth. For that matter, even Christians sometimes wonder why our tradition allows us to ignore many commandments in the Hebrew Scriptures. After all, Jesus had this to say on the subject:*

*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. (Mt 5:17-18) NIV*

*"But Christians also wonder why Jews have 'added' so many traditions to the Torah with their Talmud, when the Scriptures themselves say we must not add to the Torah or subtract from it." [Dt 4:2] (TGAM)*

#### First Reason: Talmud is not Torah.

*"...Judaism teaches that Moses received the oral Torah along with the Pentateuch on Mt. Sinai... According to an article entitled "Written Law" in The Encyclopedia of the Jewish Religion, p. 405, this belief is based partially upon Exodus 34:27 which can be literally translated: 'Write thou these words, for according to the mouth of these words I have made a covenant....' The idea of two Torahs, written and oral, is found in the phrases 'write thou' and 'according to the mouth.' ...Christians do not agree, just as most Jews do not believe God inspired the New Testament. So Christians do not follow the traditional rules contained in the Talmud because we do not believe they came from God. But we do believe the written Torah is of God, and try to obey its commands in our own way..." (TGAM)*

- ▶ How do we know the New Testament is divinely inspired scripture?
  - ✓ The Gospel so perfectly fulfills the Hebrew prophecies. (See "Prophecies Fulfilled in the Passion" for partial list.)
  - ✓ Jesus' doctrine of love, even love of enemies, is unique, yet it has the unmistakable ring of truth. (Jesus, by dying for us "while we were still sinners" passes the test he gave in **Mt 7:15-20**, "by their fruit you will know them," but Buddha, Vishnu, and Muhammad do not.)
  - ✓ Archaeological evidence supports the historical accuracy of the Gospels, which in turn suggests the spiritual accuracy. (See handout of recent Pool of Siloam discovery. (**Neh 3:15** and **John 9:7**) This same thing has happened with the Pool of Bethesda (**John 5:2**) and the Stone

GOD LOVES  
AN HONEST QUESTION!

(continued)

Pavement (**John 19:13**), both of which were also believed to be nonexistent until archaeologists uncovered them.

**Second Reason:** Some laws are now impossible.

*"...both Jews and Christians do not observe many of the Torah's commandments because they can only be obeyed at the temple in Jerusalem, but of course that temple was destroyed about forty-six years after the crucifixion of Jesus." (TGAM)*

- ▶ Why might God have allowed the temple in Jerusalem to be destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD? (Hints: compare **Mt 24:1-2**, **John 2:19-20**, and **Mt 12:6**. See also **Mt 26:59-61** and **Mt 27:39-40**)

- ✓ From **Mt 24:1-2**, **John 2:19-20**, and **Mt 12:6** we know Jesus used the temple as a metaphor for his own Passion, just as God had used the tabernacle rituals for the same purpose in the day of Moses. Also, consider this possibility:

*"I have often pondered the timing of this event. For me it is yet another basis for Christian faith. I believe it is possible the temple was destroyed at precisely the moment in history when the news about Jesus' passion and resurrection was finally delivered to every Jew on earth. The temple was not destroyed earlier, since that would have breached the covenant between God and those Jews who had not yet heard the "good news." Conversely, if the temple remained in place beyond that moment, Jesus' claim to be the fulfillment of the rituals practiced there would ring less true, because it seems unlikely that God would allow the prophetic symbolism to continue when the thing symbolized had actually come." (TGAM)*

- ✓ This makes sense in light of Jesus' reference to himself as a temple that would be destroyed and rebuilt in three days, the fact that this was used by the Sanhedrin to condemn Jesus to death for blasphemy (**Mt 26:59-61**), and it was used to mock him as he hung on the cross (**Mt 27:39-40**).
  - The destruction of the temple in fulfillment of Jesus' prophetic teaching about himself was a final sign of Jesus' divinity for the Jews of the time.

- ✓ The destruction of the temple is an encouragement to Christians, as the first of a series of signs of Jesus' second coming. (See **Mt 24:1-5** and **John 14:29**)

- ✓ Even Jesus' warnings about the false Christs to come should encourage Christians, because it is one prophesy even Rabbinic Jews acknowledge has been abundantly fulfilled:

*"In modern times, the European-Jewish martyrs of the holocaust actually went to their deaths singing, "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though he tarry I daily hope for his coming. The Messiah concept has also brought misfortune and disillusion. The suffering of the Jewish people has always made them yearn for the coming of the Messiah. In times of trial and stress, therefore, they have been psychologically ripe for the appearance*

GOD LOVES  
AN HONEST QUESTION!

(continued)

*of pretenders claiming to be the Messiah. From time to time these false Messiahs set the people agog, kindled their imagination, and awakened in them boundless enthusiasm. This could only be followed by an inevitable let-down and disillusionment.” (“Messiah,” The International Jewish Encyclopedia, Rabbi Ben Isaacson and Deborah Wigoder, Prentice-Hall, 1973, p. 209)*

### **Third Reason:** The Holy Spirit is now our guide.

*“In the Tanakh...God “puts” his Spirit “on” certain people (Joshua and David for example). The Holy Spirit also departs from some people, or is “on” them only for limited times and reasons. (Compare for example, 1 Samuel 11:6 where Saul receives the Spirit for the second time (the first being 1 Samuel 10:10), and 1 Samuel 16:14 where the Spirit departs from him.) But Jesus promises that those who trust in him will receive the presence of the Holy Spirit in a new and permanent way. (John 14:16–17) Christians believe the Holy Spirit now lives within our hearts in exactly the same way the Spirit or Shekinah once lived within the tabernacle in the midst of the Hebrew camp. We believe this “indwelling of the Spirit” changes us from persons who are comfortable with sin, into “new creatures” whose fundamental desire is now to be obedient. (Romans 7:6) This core change of our nature is what we mean when we talk about being “born again.” (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; Ephesians 2:18–22) It is not a uniquely Christian concept, but has its roots in a promise found in the Hebrew Scriptures:*

*“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you to move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Eze 36:26–27) NIV*

- ✓ See also **Jer 31:31-34** where it says: “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.”
  - Note also that this passages describes a “new covenant” that is “not like” the one made with Israel at the time of the Exodus (the Law of Moses).

*“Just as the Shekinah’s presence in the camp once inspired the people of Israel to obedience, Christians believe the Holy Spirit guides our obedience to God’s will. This means another large class of Torah law became redundant for Christians: those laws that were intended to reinforce love for God and a sense of connection with him. If God’s Holy Spirit is within my heart working to increase my commitment to him, no external command could improve upon his divine effort.” (TGAM)*
- ✓ *Shekinah* - Not found in the Bible but in the targums. From *shakan* “to dwell,” from whence comes *mishkan* “the tabernacle.” God’s visible manifestation in a cloudy pillar and fire; the glorious light, enveloped in a cloud and thence bursting forth at times (**Ex 16:7-10**), especially over the mercy-seat or *capporeth*. (Fausset’s Bible Dictionary)

**GOD LOVES  
AN HONEST QUESTION!**

## The Gospel according to

# MOSES

(continued)

- ✓ Note that the Holy Spirit is not a divine power, but a divine person in the same sense as God the Father and God the Son.
  - It is essential to remember this to avoid idolatrous thinking.
  - If He were a power, we would use Him; but He uses us.
- ▶ What portion of the Torah's laws became unnecessary when Jesus sent his Spirit to dwell within us? (Hint: remember the Second Reason, and see **Ex 29:42-46** and **Heb 9:1-14**.)
- ✓ Everything associated with the tabernacle or temple became unnecessary when the Holy Spirit came to dwell permanently in believers. Remind class that the temple was destroyed about 35 years after Jesus' ascension. This is why that was allowed.
- ✓ In recognition of the Holy Spirit's new dwelling place, Paul pointed out that our bodies are now "a temple of the Holy Spirit," and calls for us to "honor God with your body" in the same way the ancient Israelites honored Him with the Mosaic Laws concerning the tabernacle and temple. (**1 Cor 6:19-20**)
- ✓ The Holy Spirit seems to be present in believers after Jesus' ascension in a different way than he was in most believers before, although there may be some exceptions.
  - He came and went in Saul (see **1 Sam 11:6**, then **16:14**, then **19:23**)
  - He came again and again in other people indicating that he must have left in between (see Samson in **Ju 13:25, 14:6** and **14:19** and Ezekiel in **Eze 2:2 & 12**, and **11:5**).
  - But Jesus promised He would "be with you forever," because "I will not leave you as orphans." (**John 14:16-20**)
  - And Paul said there was a "veil" covering Israel's hearts during the time of Moses, which is removed by the Spirit "only in Christ." (**2 Cor 3:12-17**)
- ✓ The "Holy Spirit" (*hagios pneuma*) or "Counselor" ("Comforter" in KJV, *paraklete* – terms used only in John's Gospel and also of Jesus himself in **1 John 2:1**), sent by Jesus after his ascension, has **three primary goals** in mind between now and Jesus' second coming:
  - Teach the world about Jesus directly and through his inspiration of the scriptures (**John 14:26, John 16:12-13, 1 Cor 2:9-16, 2 Peter 1:21**) Note that this was previously accomplished by the Law of Moses.
  - Draw people to Jesus (John 15:26)
  - Reproduce Jesus' character in believers, or the sanctification of believers (**Gal 5:22-23**) Note that all the characteristics in this list are one "fruit of the Spirit" (singular).

GOD LOVES  
AN HONEST QUESTION!

Copyright © 2006 Author Author, Inc. All Rights Reserved.  
This document was obtained under license for use at no charge by study groups only,  
and may not be distributed, copied or used for any other purpose without advance written permission.

Contact Author Author, Inc. at [www.AtholDickson.com](http://www.AtholDickson.com)

(continued)

- ✓ Discuss the dispensationalist view of the Trinity's work in time. Note that there is a connection between Jesus and the Spirit's roles, therefore it makes sense that the Spirit would operate differently in time after the Passion's work was done.
  - Father = Creator; Son = Savior; Spirit = Sanctifier
  - Father = Creator; Son = Recreator; Spirit = Transcreator (creator of transition)

#### Fourth Reason: Some laws were really prophecy.

*"At Chever Torah, I learned about mishpatim and chukim, two terms often found together in the Torah, and translated as "laws" and "decrees." (See Leviticus 18:4, for example.) Some of the Talmud's rabbis believed these corresponded to two distinct legal classifications: casuistic law and apodictic law. Casuistic law is case law, the kind we live by in daily life, the kind that is derived in response to known circumstances. I must not steal, lie, or murder, for example, and the reason for these prohibitions is self-evident from long experience. But apodictic law is different. There is no clear explanation for such a law. It is simply ordered on the authority of God or the whim of a king or dictator, and I obey without understanding the rationale behind the command. In the Torah, there are many such unexplained, incomprehensible laws, most of them connected directly with sacrifice or, like those in the so-called "holiness code," arising as prerequisites for the offering of a sacrifice. ...Christians believe these laws were actually prophetic rituals laced with symbolism, designed to make God's identity more clear when he later entered human history as a humble Jewish carpenter. ...the prophecy contained in the sacrificial and holiness rituals was fulfilled with Jesus' death and resurrection. This is what Jesus meant when he said nothing in the law would disappear until everything had been accomplished. Since we believe those laws were really prophetic, and since the prophecy has now been accomplished, there is no longer any need to follow them. ...symbolism becomes redundant when the real thing comes along." (TGAM)*

- ▶ What are some commandments in the Torah that seem to be prophecies of the Gospel?
  - ✓ The Red Heifer sacrifice for ceremonial cleanliness, and the other cleanliness ordinances
    - See handout: "The Red Heifer Sacrifice and the Passion."
  - ✓ Every commandment associated with the Passover.
    - See handout: "The Passover and the Passion."
  - ✓ Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*).
    - One goat (*seh*, meaning either lamb or kid—so the "Lamb of God" applies here, too) sacrificed to "make atonement" for sins per **Lv 17:11**. (*Kaphar*, or atonement, literally meaning "to cover," used 17 times in this section on Yom Kippur and first used of the pitch on

GOD LOVES  
AN HONEST QUESTION!

(continued)

Noah's ark in **Ge 6:14**.) This symbolized the forgiveness of Israel's individual sins.

- Second goat, the "scapegoat" (*Azazel*, from Hebrew for "goat" and "depart," by Jewish tradition, the name of one of the fallen angels/demons, a word used only four times in the Hebrew Scriptures, all of them here). The priest lays hands upon it and confesses all of Israel's sins, symbolizing the transfer of Israel's sins to the goat, then sends it outside the camp into the wilderness. (Compare **Lv 16:20-22** & **Heb 13:11-12**) This final part of the ritual did not symbolize the forgiveness of believers' sins, but the removal of their sins altogether. ("The goal of the regular purification offerings was forgiveness... In contrast, this annual ritual is intended to dispose of the sins of the people." *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, p. 159) See also **Heb 10:11-12**)

**Fifth Reason:** Jesus gives single laws to replace many, instead of many laws to protect one.

*"The rabbis of the Talmud, recognizing the extreme difficulty of observing all of God's commands, chose to defend against disobedience with an approach they called "a fence around the Torah..." This Talmudic concept adds requirements and prohibitions not specifically found in the written Torah, with the intention of keeping a person far from any situation where it might be possible to violate the core Torah commands.... [In contrast] while the Talmud supplies many rules to avoid breaking one in the Torah, Jesus offers single commandments to summarize and replace many others." (TGAM)*

- ▶ Do Christians every try to put a "fence around the Torah"? How? Is this wise?
- ▶ What commands did Jesus give that sum up many others in the Torah, thereby making them unnecessary? (Hint: See **Matthew 5**)
- ✓ "...he warns that "lust in the heart" is actually adultery. If I concentrate on refusing to think sexually about anyone other than my spouse, I need not concern myself with the many Torah laws that forbid sex with various other people."
- ✓ "Jesus teaches that unrighteous anger is equivalent to murder, and forbids me to allow such anger to control my actions. Thus, anything that engenders or flows from anger (physical or verbal fights, revenge, etc.) is forbidden on a de facto basis, and another large class of Torah law becomes redundant if this one command is obeyed."
- ✓ "But even these kinds of comprehensive commandments—no adulterous lust, no unrighteous anger—become unnecessary when Jesus sums up the law and the prophets by quoting the Torah's commandments to 'love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.' ...I were successful in loving God wholeheartedly, I would not need to concern myself with the balance of the Torah's

GOD LOVES  
AN HONEST QUESTION!

(continued)

commands because my love for God would keep me far from all disobedience. In other words, if I love God wholeheartedly, obedience to the other commands will follow naturally.” (TGAM)

- ✓ See handout: “Jesus’ Teaching on the Law of Moses”.

### Sixth Reason: Obedience to Jesus is obedience to the Torah.

*“In Christianity, there is a mystical link between Jesus and the creative aspect of the Word of God:*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1–3 & 14) NIV*

*“For Christians, this “Word” by which God created the universe is the pre-incarnate Jesus.*

*For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Col 1:16–17) NIV*

(TGAM)

- ▶ What insight does this give on the story of **Mt 12:1-8**?
  - ✓ It reminds us not to place the symbolism of the Scriptures above the One they symbolize.
    - Again: “...symbolism becomes redundant when the real thing comes along.” (TGAM)
- ▶ Why might John have chosen to introduce Jesus to his readers as “the Word”? (Hint: look for the phrase found in all of these verses: **Ge 1:3,6,9,11,14 & 20**)
  - ✓ Note that the Greek for “spirit” is *pneuma*, which comes from the root word for breath
- ▶ Compare **Prov 8:22-30** to the Colossians quote above. Note that no Hebrew word in Proverbs 8 can be correctly translated to mean that God “created,” or “made” wisdom. What connections do you see between Paul’s teaching and Proverbs 8? What insights does this give on the relationship of Jesus and the Torah?
  - ✓ The Law is not merely a set of rules to guide human behavior; it is also a description of God. (“To be a disciple of Jesus was not simply, like a pupil of a great rabbi, to study Torah and its interpretation; it was to study Jesus, to be apprentice to his works, to hear Jesus’ words, spoken with authority, and to do them.” - *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, p. 57)—see also **Luke 6:47**; cf. **Mark 8:34-38**)

GOD LOVES  
AN HONEST QUESTION!