

Are Christians Under the Law?

By Stephen M. Golden
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Sometimes people ask, “When did Jesus ever rescind the command to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy?” Other times, some Christians will stress an adherence to the Ten Commandments.

While the Ten Commandments are important, the bedrock of the Law, and the foundation of God’s instructions for the Israelites, they are for the most part, scaffolding for Grace. Once a building is built, the scaffolding is removed. We don’t leave the scaffolding in place so we can get to the second floor from the outside. We remove the scaffolding and get to second floor using the stairway on the inside.

Galatians 3:24-26

[24] So the Law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

[25] Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the Law.

[26] You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,

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The requirements of the Law are only for those who are under the Law.

Romans 3:19

[19] Now we know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

This indicates there are those who are not under the Law.

We [Christians] are righteous apart from the Law.

Romans 3:21-22a

[21] But now a righteousness from God, apart from Law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

[22] This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

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Our righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:28

[28] For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the Law.

We are released from the Law.

Romans 7:6

[6] But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the Law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

Those who rely on observing the Law are under a curse.

Galatians 3:10 (NIV)

[10] All who rely on observing the Law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

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Paul writes to some Corinthians who are trying to impose the Law on other Gentile believers:

Galatians 4:21...31

[21] Tell me, you who want to be under the Law, are you not aware of what the Law says?

...

[31] Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

The Gentile believers are not under the same restrictions as Jewish believers

Acts 15:24-29

[24] We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. [25] So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— [26] men who have risked their lives for the name of

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our Lord Jesus Christ. [27] Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. [28] It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: [29] You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.

Acts 21:25

[25] As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.”

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Paul rebuked Peter for trying to force Gentiles to follow the Law.

Galatians 2: 4-5, 11-21

[4] [This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. [5] We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

...

[11] But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. [12] For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. [13] The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. [14] But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live

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like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

[15] “We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; [16] nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. [17] “But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! [18] “For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. [19] “For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. [20] “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. [21] “I do not nullify the

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grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”

Christians are not under the Law. In the same way, Gentiles are not required to be circumcised or to perform animal sacrifices as the Law demands.

So, to answer the question, “When did Jesus rescind the commandment to ‘remember the Sabbath and keep it holy’?” He didn’t—but the commandment wasn’t given to Christians, only to the Israelites.