

# Chapter Eleven

## Didn't God abolish the ceremonial and civil parts of the Law, requiring of us only the moral laws?

One of the often heard arguments against the on-going viability of the Torah in the lives of those who are followers of Yeshua is that only the moral aspects of the Torah remain since the ceremonial and civil parts have been entirely fulfilled by Yeshua in His life and salvific work. To put this into plain English, this view holds that the moral or ethical commandments of the Torah are eternal and therefore what God requires of all people in all ages, but that the ceremonial and civil laws given to Israel in the Torah have been replaced by the “law of Christ” (Gal 6:2; cp. Matt 7:12; 22:35–40). Moreover, it is not uncommon to hear those who hold this view take it one step further, claiming that all of the moral aspects of the Law are reiterated or restated by Messiah and His Apostles, so that one need not consult the Torah to discover these enduring moral commandments. In other words, the Torah is of no enduring practical value since the ceremonial and civil laws have been fulfilled by Christ and therefore “run their course,” and the moral or ethical aspects of the Torah have been thoroughly repeated and even enhanced by His teaching and example.

That this perspective on the place of the Torah in lives of believers is well entrenched in the Christian Church is proven by the historical Christian creeds:

We believe, that the ceremonies and figures of the law ceased at the coming of Christ, and that all the shadows are accomplished; so that the use of them must be abolished amongst Christians; yet the truth and substance of them remain with us in Jesus Christ, in whom they have their completion. In the meantime, we still use the testimonies taken out of the law and the prophets, to confirm us in the doctrine of the gospel, and to regulate our life in all honesty, to the glory of God, according to his will. (*Belgic Confession* [1561 CE], Article 25)

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral. (*The Thirty-Nine Articles* [1563 CE], Article 7)

19.3. Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament.

20.1 But, under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to

which the Jewish Church was subjected; and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free Spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of. (*Westminster Confession of Faith* [1646 CE])

3. Besides this Law commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel Ceremonial Laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties, all which Ceremonial Laws being appointed only to the time of reformation, are by Jesus Christ the true Messiah and only Law-giver who was furnished with power from the Father, for that end, abrogated and taken away.

4. To them also he gave sundry judicial Laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any now by virtue of that institution; their general equity only, being of moral use.

5. The moral Law doth for ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof, and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator; who gave it: Neither doth Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation. (*London Baptist Confession*, [1677/1689 CE], Chapter XIX)

This division of the Torah into Ceremonial, Civil, and Moral categories is generally defined this way:

- **Moral:** those aspects of the Torah that govern one's ethical decisions and actions
  - usually considered to be summed up in the Ten Commandments
  - prohibition against stealing, sexual sins, murder, false witness, rebellion against authority, etc.
- **Ceremonial:** those aspects of the Torah that deal with modes and methods of worship
  - the sacrificial system in the Tabernacle or Temple
  - ceremonial purities: clean and unclean
  - the Appointed Times (festivals)
  - tzitzit, mezzuzah, tefillin, and other symbols
  - food laws
- **Civil:** laws governing the Israelite society in general
  - property laws (sabbatical year [*shemitta*]; Jubilee [*yovel*])
  - laws relating to servants; indentured slaves; debts; ownership of property
  - marriage laws; divorce laws
  - laws relating to contracts; oaths

At first, this argument seems to carry significant weight. For when we listen to the words of Yeshua and His Apostles, they emphasize the moral or ethical aspects of obeying God and seem to give little attention to the ceremonial and civil categories of the Torah.

But this raises a very significant question: Does the division of the Torah into ceremonial, civil and moral categories have any biblical basis? And a second question follows: Did the 1st Century Jewish community (including Yeshua and His Apostles) view the Torah in this manner? If the Torah was received as a single, unified entity, then it would constitute special pleading to expect Yeshua and His Apostles to emphasize categorical differences in their teachings.

### *The Unity of the Torah*

If we read the Torah with the purpose of discovering whether categories of ceremonial, civil, and moral laws are clearly delineated, we discover that just the opposite is true. Commandments governing all aspects of life are woven together in a unified manner. We may take Exodus 22:19–29 as an example.

**Moral:** 19 “Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. 20 “He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the LORD alone, shall be utterly destroyed. **Civil:** 21 “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. **Moral:** 22 “You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. 23 “If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; 24 and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless. **Civil:** 25 “If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. 26 “If you ever take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, 27 for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious. **Moral:** 28 “You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people. **Ceremonial:** 29 “You shall not delay the offering from your harvest and your vintage. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me.

In reality, it is impossible to distinguish between ceremonial, civil, and moral in most cases. Surely bestiality would be considered a moral or ethical transgression in the Torah, as would worship of a pagan god. But wouldn't making a sacrifice to a pagan god also violate ceremonial commandments? What about doing wrong to a stranger? This could be civil, since doing wrong to a stranger (foreigner) might entail failure to pay wages or return a pledge, or a host of other civil infringements. But such wrongful actions would also be a moral transgression, as the punishment shows, for when the foreigner cries out to God, God's anger is kindled. What about lending money? Does this not fall into the category of civil laws, regulating interest charged on the loan? The charging of interest is illustrated by the taking of a cloak for a pledge and the requirement to return the pledge in a timely fashion. The point is that charging interest impoverishes one's neighbor who may appeal to God Who will hear and attend to his needs. Moreover, to retain the pledge beyond the prescribed time is equal to stealing, for the pledge does not belong to the lender. Is stealing a transgression of a moral or civil commandment? In the end, the one who fails to abide by these civil/moral laws also fails to act as God would act, which would be classed as “ungodly.” Surely this is a moral issue as well as a civil one.

Then, immediately after dealing with issues of lending money and charging interest (including taking a pledge), the negative commandment not to curse God or a ruler of His people is given. One would have to class this as moral, but is it not also civil, since it deals with one's relationship to civil authorities, taking an oath, and so forth? Immediately following is the command regarding the first fruits, which would be classed as ceremonial (having to do with the service in the Tabernacle or Temple). Yet the added phrase “The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me” moves the commandment of first fruits into the category of moral as well, for to withhold the redemption of the firstborn is tantamount to

stealing from God, for the firstborn belongs to Him (Num 3:12). Surely stealing from God would be considered a moral transgression.

In fact, when we read the Torah seeking to understand how the commandments might be neatly categorized into ceremonial, civil, and moral, we discover that such categorization is impossible. For disobeying God, whether within the sphere of daily life or specifically in matters relating to one's worship, always falls within the realm of moral or ethical behavior.

The Sabbath commandment is another excellent example of this. It would be classed as ceremonial by those who divide the Torah into categories. But the Sabbath is also the sign of the covenant (Ex 31:12f) by which Israel is sanctified: "for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you." Thus, if Israel were to disregard the Sabbath, they would likewise be disregarding one of the means by which God intends to make them holy. Furthermore, disregarding the Sabbath draws the death penalty (Ex 31:14) which hardly seems fitting if the Sabbath commandment were strictly ceremonial. Finally, the reason that the Sabbath is to be observed, according to this text, is that in honoring the Sabbath, Israel follows the pattern of God Himself Who also rested on the seventh day from His work of creating. Thus, honoring the Sabbath is to do what God does—to be like Him. Once again, the Sabbath commandment shows the impossibility of separating the commandments into neatly configured categories. Honoring the Sabbath clearly has ceremonial aspects (time, calendar, prescribed activities) but it also functions in the whole matter of making Israel holy (sanctified to God) by being conformed to His ways (resting as He rested).

There is another phenomenon that occurs in the biblical text that emphasizes the unity of the Torah, namely, the use of "commandment" in the singular rather than the plural. Note the following examples from the Tanach:

Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment (הַמִּצְוָה) which I have written for their instruction." (Ex 24:12)

Now this is the commandment (הַמִּצְוָה), the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it... (Deut 6:1)

Only be very careful to observe the commandment (הַמִּצְוָה) and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments (מִצְוֹתָיו) and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul. (Josh 22:5)

The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD (מִצְוַת יְהוָה) is pure, enlightening the eyes. (Ps 19:8)

What makes this use of "commandment" in the singular significant is that it is found in connection with other plural nouns that represent the Torah: "statutes," "judgment," "all His way," "commandments," and "precepts." What this would indicate is that Moses used "commandment" (singular) to emphasize *the unity*

of all the commandments within the overall structure of the Torah.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Teachings of Yeshua & the Apostles*

When we turn specifically to the teaching of Yeshua and His Apostles, we find that they uphold the unity of the Torah, not its division into ceremonial, civil, and moral categories. Note the teaching of Yeshua in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:21–48). He begins in this section with the sixth commandment (v. 21): “You shall not commit murder,” which would surely be classed as a moral commandment. But then Yeshua shows that murder must be understood as encompassing far more than physically taking another person’s life. Just as hatred led Cain to kill his brother Abel, so hatred is the beginning of breaking this commandment and thus the first part of murder. The commandment is therefore civil as well as moral, for it speaks to how people within a community treat each other. Indeed, to defame one’s fellowman as a “fool” puts one in jeopardy of eternal damnation (v. 22). What is more, if one holds a grudge against one’s neighbor, this affects one’s ability to offer a sacrifice, something that would be classed as ceremonial. For Yeshua, the moral, civil, and ceremonial are all woven together in a single cloth of holy living.

In vv. 27f Yeshua speaks to the issue of adultery, something that would fall into the category of moral law. But then Yeshua moves to the issue of divorce (vv. 31f), something that would normally be categorized as civil. What He teaches is that divorce improperly enacted precipitates adultery, which is clearly in the category of moral or ethical.

In the same way, Paul’s use of the Torah shows no rigid boundaries between so-called categories. For instance, in 1Cor 9:9 Paul quotes the commandment from Deut 25:4, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,” a law that would normally be categorized as “civil.” Apparently Paul considers this commandment to still be viable, for he uses it in a *qal v’chomer* argument to prove that those who labor in the work of the Gospel should “get their living from the Gospel” (v. 14). In other words, Paul derives a moral or ethical principle from this “civil” commandment, showing us that as far as he was concerned, there were no rigid boundaries that separated a “civil” law from a “moral” or “ethical” commandment.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Torah in the Millennial Reign of Yeshua*

The whole notion that God separated the commandments of the Torah into the three categories of ceremonial, civil, and moral falls on hard ground when the message of the Prophets is studied, particularly their description of the millennial reign of the Messiah. One of the primary reasons that the Church devised the scheme of dividing the commandments into these three categories was so that the Church could jettison the ceremonial and civil commandments as no longer binding upon believers. The rationale for this doctrine (as noted above in the various Church Creeds that were cited) was that in the salvific work

1 Note that Paul also uses the word “commandment” in the singular as a fitting description of the whole Torah: “I was once alive apart from the Torah; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So then, the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” (Rom 7:9–11)

2 Cp. 1Tim 5:18.

of Yeshua, He abolished the ceremonial and civil laws, which were given as temporary “sign-posts” with a view to the establishment of His Kingdom. Once the Messiah had come, the revelation given by these temporary measures (the Temple service with its priesthood and sacrifices; the theocracy of the nation of Israel; etc) were no longer need—the shadows had given way to the substance. What remained, then, were the moral or ethical commandments which are eternal since they reflect the eternal and unchanging nature of God Himself.

But given such a perspective, how are we to understand the Prophets’ descriptions of the millennial reign of the Messiah? Note, for instance, the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:24–28.

For I will take you [Israel] from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

Here, the regathering of Israel to the Land is envisioned, as well as a spiritual revival on a national scale. Purity language is employed, in which Israel is cleansed from her filthiness and idolatry and given a new heart and a new spirit. Moreover, the Spirit of God resides within Israel. But notice carefully the result of this revival and spiritual renewal: God will cause them “to walk in My statutes (יְקַח), and you will be careful to observe My ordinances (יִשְׁמְרוּ).” If we are to look at how Ezekiel uses these terms (“statutes” and “ordinances”) elsewhere in his prophecy, we discover that they describe the laws of charging interest (18:17), keeping the Sabbath and festivals (20:13, 16; 44:24), and dealing faithfully with pledges (33:15). In other words, Ezekiel clearly states that in the millennial reign of the Messiah, Israel’s spiritual revival is characterized by her careful adherence to those laws that the Church labels as “civil” and “ceremonial,” the very laws that were supposedly abolished forever by Yeshua’s death and resurrection.

Another example: Isaiah 56:6–7:

Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath and holds fast My covenant; even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.

That this section of Isaiah is speaking about the future millennial restoration of Israel is clear from v. 8 as well as from the larger context. Yet notice that in this description, the Sabbath is kept as holy and burnt offerings and sacrifices are accepted by God on His altar in the Temple. Clearly so-called “ceremonial” aspects of the Torah will be observed.

Consider as well the words of Zechariah as he describes the future regathering of Israel and the spiritual revival she will experience on a national level:

And I will remove their blood from their mouth and their detestable

things from between their teeth. Then they also will be a remnant for our God, and be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite. (Zech. 9:7)

Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Sukkot. (Zech. 14:16)

In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "HOLY TO THE LORD." And the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the bowls before the altar. Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day. (Zech. 14:20–21)

Clearly, this is describing a situation that has not yet occurred in world history. But note what kinds of things characterize this future revival: 1) strict adherence to the Torah's prescriptions for food, as to what is clear and what is unclean; 2) worship at the Temple will be reinstated; 3) ceremonial purity on the level of priestly purity will be common for all; the nations will worship in Jerusalem at the appointed festivals (specifically, Sukkot). All of this requires that the commandments of the Torah that regulate these activities be in place.

Once again, if Yeshua had abolished those commandments classed as "ceremonial" or "civil," it would be impossible to reinstate them, for surely what He accomplished at the cross cannot be overturned. The reality, however, is that He did not abolish even the smallest stroke of the Torah, as He plainly states in Matt 5:17–20. In fact, one of the overarching realities of Yeshua's salvific work was to secure His people's obedience to the Torah by accomplishing everything necessary to remove the heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh. What these prophecies make clear is that the final consummation of God's plan of salvation is characterized by a careful, heartfelt, and happy obedience to all of God's ordinances and commandments.

"But," some will contend, "it is impossible to keep many of the ceremonial and civil commandments in the Torah since neither the Temple nor the priesthood is established in our day." This, of course, is true, but our ability or inability to keep those commandments that depend upon the Temple and priesthood does not determine whether or not they remain viable. As I noted in Chapter Three (p. 34 above), the same problem prevailed among Israel when they were dispersed from the Land into the lands of their enemies. In their exile, they had neither Temple or functioning priesthood, yet the promise of God to them in Deut 30:1–3 was that when they were in exile, if they returned in obedience with all their heart and soul to the commandments God had given, He would restore their captivity. How could they do that if so many of the commandments were impossible to keep in the lands of their exile? The answer must be that their willingness to keep all the commandments available to keep would be received by God as a sufficient indication of their true repentance and desire to keep all of the commandments. To put it simply: given the opportunity to obey all of the commandments, would we be willing to do so? The answer God wants is a humble "Yes." Obviously, apart from God's power and the power of His Spirit enabling the believer to obey, keeping any of the commandments would be impossible. But the willing heart is what God seeks.

### *Built-in Obsolescence*

One of the finest voices in Old Testament Studies today is that of Walter Kaiser. His work has been a great help to me personally and in large measure, his positive emphasis upon the value of the Torah and the Tanach for Christians has been a welcome “breath of fresh air” in biblical studies in general. Yet in spite of this strong and text-centered emphasis that characterizes his work, he does side with the typically reformed view of the Torah, that the moral aspects remain while the ceremonial and civil parts of the Torah are no longer required for righteous living. He describes the ceremonial and civil aspects of the Torah as having a “built-in obsolescence,” that is, that from the very giving of the Torah, the ceremonial and civil commandments were destined to obsolescence once they fulfilled their purpose in pointing to Yeshua Who fulfilled them.

In summarizing Kaiser’s position,<sup>3</sup> he notes that the general tenor of the Torah (Law) may be summed up in three corollaries: 1) the Torah proceeds from God, 2) the basis for all obligation to obey the law is the redemption and deliverance of God for His people, and 3) the example of holiness is God Himself: “Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy” (Lev 19:2; cf. 11:44–45).

These three facts point to the priority and the precedent-setting nature of the moral law, which stems from the character and nature of God. Since God’s character will never change, the moral law based on it is as abiding and as absolute as the very attributes, qualities, and nature of God himself.

The remaining aspects of the Mosaic laws, whether they be civil or ceremonial laws, are but illustrations, applications, or situationally-specific implementations of that same permanent moral law. This point can be seen, for example, in the theological and religious motive clauses that were supplied for most types of law throughout the Old Testament. These clauses plead God’s holy character, his nature, and his salvific acts on behalf of his people as a motivation for their observing the law.<sup>4</sup>

Kaiser believes that Yeshua ranked the laws, labeling the moral laws as having greater weight, thus showing that the civil and ceremonial laws had the possibility of becoming obsolete.

The case for the single, monolithic law that refuses to recognize Jesus’ ranking the moral law above all other laws as being of greater weight, significance, and importance must now be scrapped. Indeed, the claim that the law of the Lord, in all its parts, has now ceased to be valid because of Christ’s perfect fulfillment of the ceremonial part of the law ... must itself also be abandoned in light of the teaching of Moses, Jesus, and Paul.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Kaiser wants the middle ground: the eternal viability of the moral aspects of the Torah, with the ceremonial and civil set aside for new “situationally-specific” implementations.

While Kaiser’s explanation and perspective has much to commend it in

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3 This summary is taken from his article “The Law as God’s Guidance for the Promotion of Holiness” in Wayne Strickland, ed., *The Law, the Gospel and the Modern Christian: Five Views* (Zondervan, 1993), pp. 177–99.

4 Ibid., p. 197.

5 Ibid., p. 198.

terms of proving the eternal viability and value of the Torah for the life of the believer, and the manner in which the Torah promotes holiness for those who have confessed Messiah, it does not appear to me that he has sufficiently shown evidence for a clear demarcation of the laws into discrete categories. Moreover, the idea that only the moral laws retain their ability to reveal the character and heart of God Himself seems to me to play into a platonic or neo-platonic worldview, in which the physical realm is viewed as of little value in light of the non-physical world of ideas. What I mean by this is simply that the moral character of God as revealed in the moral and ethical demands of the Torah is best understood and made practical in one's life when one engages in the obedience of what Kaiser would class as "ceremonial" commandments.

For instance, attaching the words of Torah to one's door post would doubtlessly be categorized as "ceremonial." Yet those of us who have followed this commandment have often noted how touching the *mezuzah* when leaving home or returning functions as a constant reminder of how we are to act morally and ethically in the various events of the day. Similarly, (for example) one can gain much from studying the laws of Pesach (Passover), and understanding the 1st Century Pesach seder as background to the words and actions of Yeshua our Messiah. But again, many of us have discovered that when we began to actually celebrate Pesach; when we determined to observe Chag HaMatzot (the feast of unleavened bread); when we did all within our ability to clean the leaven out of our homes—when we engaged in what would be classed as "ceremonial," we discovered a much richer reality in the message of Pesach and the spiritual realities it teaches. This, in turn, offers renewed spiritual strength and growth, which gives greater spiritual ability to live out the moral and ethical norms of the Torah.

What I am saying is this: the *doing* of the commandments that are classed by some as "ceremonial" should not be divorced from the God-ordained methods by which He intends for us to know Him as He has revealed Himself. He knows that we, as beings created in His image, often learn the larger lessons through tactile means—through actual "hands-on" experience in our day-by-day living. If, as Kaiser suggests, the "ceremonial" aspects of the Torah were given to Israel as means of revealing God's moral and ethical norms for daily living, why would anyone think that they have lost this same revelatory ability? Surely the 21st Century is far different than the 1st Century! But mankind, in our basic nature, has not changed. We deal with the same "flesh" as did the Apostles and the Prophets before them. And it seems evident to me that the Torah, in all of its varied commandments, teachings, and instructions, is perfectly crafted by the Almighty to speak to our own essential needs, both through thought (concept) and deed (hands-on life experiences).

As to the idea that Yeshua Himself ranked the commandments, giving to the so-called "moral commandments" greater weight, I would emphasize the wording of Matt 23:23, where this terminology is found:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the Torah: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

Here, Yeshua is not teaching an "either-or," as though the tithing of mint and dill and cummin is to be jettisoned in favor of justice, mercy, and faithfulness. No, His words are clear: "these are things you should have done without neglecting

the others.” Yeshua teaches a “both-and,” not an “either-or.”

In the end, however, I find no sufficient biblical grounds for categorizing the commandments as ceremonial, civil, and moral. Morality or ethics is summed up in obeying God. For one would have to conclude that sin, in whatever realm of human existence, is sin nonetheless.

The argument that Messiah abolished the ceremonial and civil aspects of the Torah, leaving only the moral or ethical aspects to remain eternally, is disproved by the obvious fact that according to the Prophets, the ceremonial and civil commandments of the Torah are well in place during the future regathering and revival of the nation of Israel. Moreover, when the commandments are analyzed in their biblical context, one immediately sees that the categories of “moral,” “ceremonial,” and “civil” overlap to such an extent that they lose such categorical distinctions.

On the contrary, throughout the Torah itself, and then as amplified by the Prophets, Writings and Apostolic Scriptures, the commandments of God are seen as an organic whole, working together to provide for the people of God a standard for righteous living as well as safeguards to maintain a life sanctified unto God. The use of the singular “commandment” throughout the Scriptures to refer to the whole Torah emphasizes this organic unity.