

119

MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

A Response to Mike Winger Regarding God’s Law

Recently a brother in Christ by the name of Mike Winger made a video critiquing our theological position concerning God’s Law. Mike is a pastor and Christian apologist who has done great work in the area of apologetics—that is, answering objections to God and the Bible—and we’re truly grateful for the opportunity to engage with his thoughtful critique of our position. At 119 Ministries, we do not normally produce video teachings directly responding to any individual or organization. However, Pastor Mike spent a great deal of time expressing some concerns to 119 Ministries and we felt as though that a kind and heartfelt response was appropriate, and perhaps beneficial to those interested in how we might respond to Pastor Mike’s concerns. It provides an opportunity clarify misperceptions or misunderstandings that would not serve well to leave unaddressed or ignored.

While we certainly differ with Pastor Mike on a number of issues, we were pleased to see how much we actually agree on! So before we begin, we wanted to highlight the common ground that we share, and then we’ll respond to the points he brought up where we differ. Here is what Pastor Mike had to say toward the end of his video:

“Hey, if you believe you’re saved by faith alone, and truly believe it, you’re my brother and sister in Christ. I just think you got some theology wrong here. And if you are part of the Hebrew Roots Movement, and you have fellowshiping with you people who deny the gospel of salvation by grace, you need to separate yourself from those people—regardless of whether or not you keep the law. You gotta separate yourself from those people. It’s a major, major issue.”

We want to thank Pastor Mike, again, for his reasoned arguments, and especially with the kindness in which he presented them. With regard to this statement from our brother Mike, we give a hearty “amen.” We affirm what the Scriptures clearly teach in regards to the gospel—that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, not by our works. And we also agree, 100%, that to deny this fundamental truth is heretical according to Scripture.

Pastor Mike himself says:

“119 Ministries says very clearly in their videos, you are not required to obey the Law in order to

be saved. So they treat it as a non-salvation issue. They think it's an obedience issue."

-Mike Winger, "I've Been Looking Into the Hebrew Roots Movement and Here's What I've Found So Far," YouTube [Starting at 8:32]

While Pastor Mike later goes on to say that he thinks we contradict ourselves on this point, which we'll address in a moment, we want to make this absolutely clear. Pastor Mike and 119 Ministries *fully agree* on salvation. Where we differ is what happens *after* one has entered the plan of salvation. Where we differ is our understanding of what it looks like for followers of Christ to live out the Word or to walk as Christ walked, like John says (1 John 2:6). How are we, as followers of Christ, supposed to live? Is the Law of God applicable to us today—and if so, what does that even mean?

If you follow our ministry, you know that we take a different position than most Christians when it comes to observing certain commandments, such as the Sabbath or the dietary instructions found in Leviticus 11. We will discuss that a little later, but first we wanted to highlight a couple of other areas of agreement.

Toward the beginning of Pastor Mike's video, he stressed the fact that he "loved" the Law of Moses and that he doesn't want to "unhitch" from it. He's not anti-Law, he says.

It's wonderful to hear such positive affirmations from Pastor Mike toward God's Law. We agree when he says that this debate is not about whether Christians are "against" God's Law. The debate is concerning *the application* of God's Law.

We would submit that we are already largely in agreement with most Christians concerning the application of God's Law. For instance, most Christians agree that we should be observing the Law with regard to things like adultery, murder, stealing, caring for the widow and orphan, etc. All of that is part of God's Law. Even those Christians who promote an anti-law position, don't *really* believe what they say. All faithful Christians believe we should obey God—the debate is over the extent of what that means.

So, in a moment, we're going to quickly make a case for our position, and then after that, we're going to offer a rebuttal to some points of disagreement in the video. But first, a couple of things...

Pastor Mike accused us of being emotionally manipulative in the particular teaching of ours that he critiqued, which was "The Pauline Paradox Series – Part 1: Is the Majority Ever Wrong?" In our teaching we made a few statements about how some Christians may feel like "something is missing." Pastor Mike felt like those statements were too salesmen-y, and we were playing with people's emotions. That is an understandable criticism from his perspective.

What we were referencing were the many discussions we have had with people as well as our own personal experiences. All of us at 119 Ministries have shared that same experience as well, because we also all once came from a mainstream Christianity perspective about God's law. After coming to a new appreciation for the Torah, these Christians, like ourselves, told us that they felt like they had found what they had been missing—that the Holy Spirit was leading them to this revelation. They told us how the Scriptures had become much more alive, simplified, and meaningful. It is hard not to be excited about that, or at least comment on that pattern of experiences in our day-to-day exchanges with others. However, Pastor Mike's criticism is duly noted. We agree with him that we ought to base our theology on the truth of the Scriptures rightly interpreted, not on emotions. In fact, that is how the rest of the

Pauline Paradox Series continues, focusing on the Scriptures. So as we proceed with this response, we're going to do our best to make a logical case based solely on the Scripture.

Pastor Mike also felt that we set up several straw man arguments in the way that we defined words like "truth" and "the Word". He accused us of reading our philosophy into the Scriptures rather than letting the Scriptures speak for themselves.

Again, we appreciate Pastor Mike's criticism, and we're happy to leave that for our viewers to decide as we hope they too, test everything and not rely on anything that any man says. Instead of quibbling over those minor points regarding our presentation from a past teaching, we're going to make a case based on the simple exegesis of the Scriptures before giving our rebuttal to Pastor Mike's theological objections. That of course, is the heart of the matter.

How does the Law of God given through Moses apply to New Testament Christians? Well, Messiah Yeshua, that is Christ Jesus, gives us a direct answer to this question in His famous Sermon on the Mount. This is what He says:

Matthew 5:17-19

"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. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

We unpack this passage further in our teaching, [Heaven and Earth and the Law of God](#), and [Pleroo the Law](#), but just looking at the plain text we can determine a few things.

- 1) Yeshua didn't even want people to *think* that He was against the Torah (the Law of God) in any way or that He came to abolish it—that is, render it obsolete. According to the Messiah's own words, rendering God's Law void is *not* what He came to do.
- 2) Yeshua said that His followers would continue to "do" and "teach" even the least of the commandments in the Torah. If commandments like the Sabbath or dietary instructions were about to become inapplicable to believers in light of the New Covenant, Yeshua wouldn't have encouraged obedience to the least of the commandments.
- 3) Yeshua said that not even the smallest part of the Torah would pass away until heaven and earth pass away and all is accomplished. According to scholars—and we would agree—this is a reference to the *eschaton*, the end of our age. So at least until the *eschaton*, even the least of the commandments of the Torah remain applicable to believers.

Here is how New Testament scholar, Dr. David L. Turner, puts it:

The phrases "until heaven and earth disappear" and "until its purpose is achieved" ["until all is accomplished," ESV] refer to the end of the present world and the beginning of the eschaton. Until that time the law is valid. Matthew 5:19 goes on to infer from 5:18's statement of the perpetual authority of the law that it had better be obeyed and taught by disciples of the Kingdom. **It would be**

hard to make a stronger statement of the ongoing authority of the Torah than is made in 5:18.

-Dr. David L. Turner, "Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: The Gospel of Matthew," p. 85

- 4) Finally, Yeshua said that members of the kingdom of heaven are identified as those whose "righteousness" exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. In context, that is righteousness with regard to the Law of Moses.

This is just a simple exegesis of the passage—we're not reading anything into this. Yeshua's direct answer to the question of God's Law is that it remains applicable to believers. Saying that He came to render certain commandments inapplicable goes directly against His own Words when He says He did *not* come to do that. It goes against His imperative to "do" and "teach" the least of the commandments and to surpass the scribes and Pharisees in righteousness.

Put aside the question of the Law for a moment—are these instructions from *our Messiah* applicable to us or not? Because if the Messiah's instructions here are relevant to us, then we already have our answer to the Law question.

It seems that the only response one could make to this clear statement from our Messiah is to say that His words were relevant only to His direct audience—that is, first century Jews, before Yeshua's death and resurrection. We're not accusing Pastor Mike of making that argument, but that objection is often made.

The immediate logical problems with the objection are numerous. For instance, why would Yeshua make a point to affirm the authority of God's Law and encourage His followers to do and teach it, if parts of it were no longer going to be applicable soon thereafter? It just doesn't make any sense.

In either case, we're curious what Pastor Mike's interpretation of Matthew 5:17-20 would be. We certainly don't want to misrepresent him, but there's something he *does* say in his video that leads us to believe that he thinks these instructions from the Messiah applied only to Jewish believers:

"By the way, the law of Moses, it never ever ever applied to Gentiles as something they were all supposed to do. Never."

-Mike Winger, "I've Been Looking Into the Hebrew Roots Movement and Here's What I've Found So Far," YouTube [Starting at 8:32]

So let's ask the question: Does the Messiah's teaching in Matthew 5:17-20 apply to Gentiles or not?

The majority in mainstream Christianity agree that Yeshua's Sermon on the Mount is especially relevant to believers today. And this statement from Yeshua, affirming the ongoing authority and applicability of God's Law, is the foundation of that famous sermon from our Messiah. So, is this small part of the Sermon on the Mount applicable only to the Jews, and only for a short time before Yeshua's resurrection?

Again, the Messiah Himself answers this question for us. We don't have to start with any presuppositions or read anything into the text. Here is the commandment Yeshua gave to His disciples after His resurrection, just prior to His ascension:

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you**. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Yeshua said that we are to teach “all nations,” not just Jews, to observe “all” that He commanded His disciples. Is Yeshua’s Sermon on the Mount included in “all” that He commanded His disciples? Of course! Therefore, Messiah’s imperative to make disciples of all nations includes teaching them to “do” and “teach” even the least of the commands from the Law.

When we read the rest of the New Testament in light of these clear, unambiguous statements from our Messiah, we are not starting with our own philosophies or presuppositions, as Pastor Mike asserts—we are starting with a plain reading of Messiah’s statements on the topic of God’s Law.

Starting from that framework, we shouldn’t be surprised when we see the apostles doing exactly what the Messiah commanded them—doing and teaching the Law of God.

In Acts 2, we see the disciples celebrating the feast of Shavuot which is consistent with the commandment.

In Acts 10:14—several years after Messiah’s resurrection—Peter declares that he has never eaten unclean animals, showing his commitment to the dietary instructions in the Torah.

In Acts 13, 17, and 18, over and over again, we see the apostles keeping the Sabbath every seventh day.

In Acts 20:16 we see that Paul was so committed to keeping the feast days of the Bible that he was in a rush to make it back to Jerusalem to celebrate Shavuot.

In Acts 21:20-24 and Acts 24:14, Paul defended himself against false accusations that he taught against the commandments of the Torah.

In 1 Peter 1:16, Peter instructs Christians to be holy in accordance with the Torah, which he then quotes as the basis for his imperative. Interestingly, in the passages Peter quotes from, being holy is defined as including observance of the Sabbath, feast days, and dietary instructions.

In 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, the apostle Paul instructs Christians at the church of Corinth in how they ought to observe Passover and Unleavened Bread. And it is interesting to note, the church of Corinth was made up primarily of Gentile believers.

But wait! There’s more! The New Covenant writes God’s Law on our heart through the work of the Holy Spirit according to Jeremiah 31:33 and Ezekiel 36:26-27. And Paul confirms this prophecy in Romans 8:3-4 when he tells us that God gave us His Holy Spirit in order to empower us to keep God’s Law. So walking according to God’s Holy Spirit, according to Paul, causes us to obey God’s Law. Interestingly enough, Paul is simply teaching exactly what the prophet Ezekiel teaches in Ezekiel 36:26-27.

There are many more examples we can give, but again, the plain reading of all these passages confirms our position. There’s no reason that the apostles would continue to do and teach the Sabbath and feast days and dietary instructions if those commandments became inapplicable to Christians.

That's not to say that there aren't confusing passages on this topic that seem, on the surface, to conflict with our view. But when we take a closer look at those passages, in light of what we've just established, it's easy to see that everything is in harmony. As we demonstrate in our teachings on Romans, Galatians, Colossians, and so forth, the apostles never taught that these commandments from God's Law are inapplicable to Christians—just the opposite, in fact.

As we move forward, we're now going to offer a response to Pastor Mike's specific theological objections to our position.

The first point we're going to address is his comments on Hebrews 7. Here is what he says:

“But Hebrews 7 verse 11 it says, ‘Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law) what further need would there have been for another priest to rise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron?’

Now here's the logic, I love this book. Hebrews is great. The logic is thoughtful though, it's not simplistic, it's thoughtful. He's saying, in Psalm 110, long after the Levitical priesthood is given, there's a prophecy about a future priesthood. And so he's like, “hey, if the Levitical priesthood was doing the job, if there wasn't going to be a change of the priesthood, then there'd be no prophecy of a whole other kind of priesthood. You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, I have a whole video on that, you should check it out, it's really good, um but that, that's what he's doing. Hebrews is not saying here's my new teaching. Hebrews is saying, here's the old teaching; it's always been this way. And then he goes on. So after he's established the idea that there's a new priesthood coming, verse 12 he says,

‘For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar.’

So then there's this change in the law. Did you catch that? The change in the law is not that the law changes where we're going to go back and edit the Old Testament. No no no no, We're saying the Old Testament itself, God's revealed Word to the Jewish people, it had embedded in it a change that was going to take place when this new priest shows up. It's a new priesthood and therefore it's, there's a different law, a greater law, so to speak. Just as there's a new covenant, there is a new commandment. And so, um, anyway there's a lot more to talk about there but here's a biblical term where the term “change” is used and it's used not in the sense of altering the text, but fulfilling it and bringing about, um, new application. That's the idea. A change in application. New Covenant. New Priest. New Law. And that's based on Old Testament passages in Psalm 110 as well as other places.

Pastor Mike is right that Hebrews 7 is a complicated chapter that requires some deep thinking. But is he right when he says that this passage speaks of a new application of the Torah—which, in Pastor Mike's mind, entails that the literal application of commandments like the Sabbath have changed? In other words, has the literal application of the law to rest on the seventh day taken on some different meaning, negating the literal application?

We don't think so. Here's why.

The goal of the author of Hebrews in this chapter is to explain to his readers how Yeshua is able to be a legitimate priest according to Scripture. The Torah requires priests to be sons of Aaron, so Yeshua doesn't qualify as a priest on the basis of His physical lineage because he is not of the line of Aaron. So the author of Hebrews finds a basis for Yeshua's priesthood outside of the Levitical line in the person of Melchizedek.

Throughout his epistle, the author of Hebrews uses midrashic methods of interpretation, which can often be confusing to modern readers who are unfamiliar with rabbinic logic and reasoning. For instance, the author argues from silence to support his conclusions. That is to say, if the Scriptures don't specifically say something about a person or event, certain determinations could be made based on the silence of Scripture.

This is very common in Jewish literature, and it can sometimes be difficult to wrap one's mind around. But here's a very simple breakdown of the author of Hebrews' argument:

- 1) Yeshua cannot be a priest according to the Torah since the Torah requires priests to be from the line of Aaron.
- 2) Yeshua is not a priest within the Levitical system in an earthly tabernacle. He is a priest of a heavenly tabernacle.
- 3) There are specific Levitical laws that pertain to the earthly tabernacle that do not apply to the heavenly tabernacle.
- 4) Therefore, the Torah does not restrict Yeshua from being a priest.
- 5) In fact, there is a biblical precedent for this! As evidence, the author of Hebrews offers Melchizedek, a priest who was also beyond the Torah's restrictions pertaining to the Levitical system.
- 6) We are told that Melchizedek was a king and a priest, just like Yeshua. Since Scripture says nothing about his genealogy or death, the author of Hebrews then infers that his priesthood continues to this day in the ongoing priestly work of Yeshua the Messiah.
- 7) Melchizedek was not a son of Aaron—his priesthood existed before Aaron. In fact, his priesthood is greater than that of Aaron's since our father Abraham, from whom Levi is descended, gave a tithe to him. (Remember, collecting the tithe is a responsibility of the priesthood.)
- 8) Yeshua is a priest in the order of Melchizedek. He doesn't need to be from the Levitical line to be a priest. In fact, His priesthood was before Levi and greater than Levi.

So with that framework in mind, let's look at these critical passages as it relates to God's Law:

Hebrews 7:11-12

Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well.

When believers read in the Book of Hebrews that Yeshua is a heavenly High Priest after the order of

Melchizedek, many of them automatically assume that the earthly priesthood has been replaced. But that's not what the author of Hebrews is saying. He can't be saying that, otherwise he'd be contradicting Scripture in other places. He would even be contradicting himself when he says that the Messiah cannot be a priest on Earth.

For instance, the apostles continued to participate in the Levitical services long after Yeshua's resurrection. Here are just a few examples:

Acts 2:46

And day by day, **attending the temple together** and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts

Acts 3:1

Now Peter and John were going up **to the temple** at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

Acts 21:26

Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and **went into the temple**, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them.

And of course, let's not forget the author of Hebrews himself, who recognized the ongoing service of the Levitical Priesthood in Jerusalem:

Hebrews 8:4-5

Now if he [Yeshua] were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since **there are priests who offer gifts according to the law**. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain."

But wait! There's more! Both Ezekiel and Zechariah acknowledge the reality of a future earthly priesthood, temple, Levites, and animal sacrifices after Yeshua's second coming (Ezekiel 40-48; Zechariah 14:20-21).

So surely the author of Hebrews is not saying that the Levitical priesthood and the earthly tabernacle have been replaced in light of Yeshua's priesthood. The Levitical priesthood served a valid, ongoing purpose, and it will serve that purpose again in the future millennial reign of Messiah. In addition to conducting the earthly tabernacle services, the Levitical priesthood paints a picture of the Gospel and Messiah's priestly work in the heavenly tabernacle.

So then, what is the author's point in Hebrews 7:11-12? Basically, as he says, the Levitical priesthood could not attain perfection. What does that mean? As scholar J.K. McKee explains:

The source text employs the term *teleiōsis*, meaning "a completing, perfecting...fulfillment, accomplishment; the event which verifies a promise" (Thayer). The perfection that our author is speaking about is the state of people being totally and completely reconciled to their Creator. This was a state that was simply unattainable in the Levitical system, because sacrifices had to be continually offered before the Lord for the propitiation of sins. This does not necessarily make the Levitical priesthood bad, or even "imperfect," because the Levitical priesthood was surely given and established by a God who is perfect. It does, rather, make the Levitical priesthood

incomplete and unable to bring about the complete perfection that is to be established in the lives of God's people.

-J.K. McKee, "Hebrews for the Practical Messianic," p. 107

The sons of Aaron are human. Therefore they have weaknesses. They sin, they grow old, and eventually they die, which means they cannot continue their duties (Hebrews. 7:22-23, 28). The earthly priestly system is made up of sinful humans whose sacrifices, which are made year after year, cannot fully reconcile mankind to God. Only a sinless and immortal heavenly high priest can accomplish this.

Yeshua is that heavenly high priest of a greater and perfect priesthood, and He's the only one who can truly make atonement and reconcile us to God. The Levitical priesthood is the shadow that points to that reality. It's a symbol. But the fact that it serves as a symbol does not take away from its value and purpose.

To make a comparison, the same could be said about things like Baptism. Baptism is merely symbolic of deeper spiritual truths about the gospel, but no Christian believes that the symbol is worthless or should be discarded.

Pastor Mike believes that with the establishment of Yeshua's heavenly priesthood comes a "different law, a greater law," he says. But the author of Hebrews doesn't say that. First, such an interpretation is impossible since the author twice appeals to the prophecy about the New Covenant, which writes the Torah on the hearts of God's people. If the Torah is now replaced, then why does the author affirm the prophecies about it being written on our hearts?

Moreover, even if we assume that this passage is saying that the sacrificial system has been replaced, it still wouldn't follow that commands like the Sabbath, feasts, and dietary instructions have been replaced. That would be an overstatement, since the context is dealing only with the priesthood, not the rest of the Law. Evangelical Old Testament theologian, Walter Kaiser, agrees:

It would be wrong to think that just because the sacrificial system had been replaced therefore the whole law, including the moral law of the Decalogue (Ex 20; Dt. 5) and the Holiness Code (Lev 18-20), had likewise been superseded and replaced."

-Walter C. Kaiser, "The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments," p. 367

Even if we grant Pastor Mike's premise that the Levitical Priesthood has been replaced, his conclusion, that literal commands like the Sabbath have been replaced with a different application, simply doesn't follow.

But again, there's no reason we should even grant Pastor Mike's premise since the author does not say that the Levitical Priesthood has been replaced. Think about it. The very fact that the author of Hebrews makes it a point to explain how the Messiah could be a legitimate priest makes sense only if he considers the Torah to still be applicable to all in the faith.

In summary, the author's argument in Hebrews is that the Levitical laws do not restrict Yeshua from being a priest since Yeshua is not a priest on earth. Because he is not a priest on earth, the laws governing the earthly priesthood do not apply to Yeshua's priesthood in the heavenlies.

Remember, there's a difference between the earthly and heavenly tabernacles—the earthly tabernacle functions as a symbol pointing to the heavenly tabernacle. Yeshua's priestly work within the heavenly tabernacle works within a different system than the Levitical system. Being from the tribe of Levi is a requirement to serve in the earthly tabernacle, but it is not a requirement to serve in the heavenly tabernacle. The primary qualification to serve in the heavenly tabernacle, according to the author of Hebrews, is “the power of an indestructible life.” And of course, Yeshua, following his resurrection, now meets that qualification!

Thus, the author of Hebrews explains to his audience that Yeshua can be our great High Priest, despite not being descended from Levi, because he's a priest of a different priesthood. And thus, there is a different law—or a change of the law, as the author puts it—governing the heavenly tabernacle *when compared* to the law that governs the earthly tabernacle. But the law governing the earthly tabernacle is still in force...on earth! That's why the author of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 8:4

Now if he [Yeshua] were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law (Torah).

Just to drive this point home, here's an analogy that might help us better understand what Hebrews 7:12 is saying:

There are different laws governing civil leadership depending on the country. For instance, if someone living in the United States were an immigrant from Canada, they would not be allowed to become the President of the United States. Why? Because the law governing the office of President of the United States requires you be a natural born citizen.

But if that same person moved to Canada, they would not need to be a natural born citizen of the United States to enter into the office of the Prime Minister. It's a different office of civil leadership in a different location. Canada's requirements are different than America's requirements.

Thus, in this case, when there is a change in the office of civil leadership, there is a change in the law governing civil leadership. Notice the parallel to the wording of Hebrews 7:12 pertaining to a different priesthood in a different location.

What does that mean? America's law for the office of the President does not apply to a citizen of Canada. However, the same citizen moving back to Canada does not change the law of America.

It just means that the law of America *as it pertains to the Presidency* does not restrict a citizen of Canada *as it pertains the office of the Prime Minister*.

In the same way, there are different priesthoods and thus different criteria for being a priest depending on which priesthood you're part of. If Yeshua were on earth, He would not be allowed to be a priest without being a son of Aaron. But if He ascended into heaven to represent the heavenly tabernacle, He would not need to be a son of Aaron to be a priest. It's a different priesthood in a different location.

Thus, when there is a change in the priesthood, there is a change in the law governing the priestly office.

Why? Because the priesthood locations are different! What does that mean? The earthly priesthood's laws don't apply to a priest in the heavenly tabernacle. However, Yeshua's position as priest in the

heavenly tabernacle, of course, does not change the law of the earthly tabernacle. It just means that, as a priest in the heavenly tabernacle, Yeshua is not restricted by the laws of the earthly tabernacle.

Obviously with the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, there is no way for the earthly priesthood to properly function in Jerusalem right now. But according to biblical prophecy, after Yeshua returns, that priesthood on earth will be reestablished, as we explained earlier.

Both priesthoods—the heavenly and the Levitical—are valid and can even function simultaneously since each applies to different office parameters. The author of Hebrews makes that very point by stressing the fact that there are already priests on earth who function according to the Torah.

So Pastor Mike's conclusions based on Hebrew 7 have some obvious problems. While not intentional, and we mean this with all due respect, he makes both the author of Hebrews and Scripture itself, contradict themselves.

The interpretation that we've just given is much more consistent within Hebrews and the rest of Scripture. The author of Hebrews clearly affirms the ongoing authority of the Law as being written on our hearts through the New Covenant, and he affirms the ongoing service of the Levitical Priesthood alongside Messiah's heavenly Priesthood. One does not replace the other. The earthly served, and will serve again, as a symbolic shadow of the heavenly reality.

Let's move on to Pastor Mike's next objection. Everyone, including Pastor Mike, agrees that believers shouldn't practice sin. That's not to say that we'll be completely sinless in this life, but followers of Messiah will strive to live a life that is characterized by obedience to God. But we apparently have some differences with Pastor Mike when it comes to what "sin" is.

We've proposed in past videos that sin is clearly defined, in places like 1 John 3:4, as transgression of God's Law. This would mean breaking the fourth commandment to rest on the seventh day, for example, is considered a sin. However, Pastor Mike disagrees. He interprets 1 John 3:4 differently. Here is what he says:

“... ‘cause this word ‘lawless’ that I’ve highlighted right here. Lawlessness. It doesn’t mean the Law of Moses. That’s why it’s not translated ‘sin is breaking the Law of Moses’. It’s because that’s not what it means. It’s a word, nomos, it just means, errr anomos, it’s it’s the negation of ‘the law’. But but the word nomos doesn’t mean ‘of the Old Testament’ or ‘Law of Moses’, it just means ‘law’, and it’s frequently used, even in the New Testament in ways other than referring to the Law of Moses. It has a variety of uses, you can look them up on your own. There’s a variety of uses here, but in order for the Hebrew Roots movement to kind of be correct here, they have to take one usage and act like it’s the only use.”

Before we unpack 1 John 3:4, it should be pointed out that this verse isn't the only place in the New Testament that defines sin as breaking the Law of Moses. Consider Romans 7:7, for example:

Romans 7:7

What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”

Here Paul is clearly referring to the Law as given through Moses. Nobody disagrees with that. Paul then

references a particular commandment that he read from the Law of Moses—“You shall not covet”—and recognizes that he came to know what sin is as a result of reading the commandment in the law. Paul recognizes that coveting is a sin because the Law says not to covet.

Romans 3:20 is another verse that defines sin in relation to God’s Law:

Romans 3:20

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Again, the Torah reveals the sinfulness of man. It defines God’s standard of right and wrong, and so we come to a knowledge of sin through God’s Law.

So even if Pastor Mike is right about 1 John 3:4, he still has Romans 3:20 and Romans 7:7 to contend with. But let’s look at 1 John 3:4 for a minute.

First, “lawlessness” is *anomia* in the Greek. As scholar Tim Hegg points out:

John makes it clear to us that “sin” (*hamartia*) is defined as “lawlessness” (*anomia*). This Greek word, *anomia*, is the word regularly used to translate the Hebrew word *torah* in the LXX (*the Septuagint*), with a prefixed *alpha* (*alpha privative*), which is equivalent to our English prefix “un” in a word like “unlawful.” Thus, *anomia* could just as accurately be translated into English as “no Torah” in the sense of “against Torah” or “negating Torah.” The attempts of some to interpret *anomia* as, in a general sense, unwillingness to submit to law, disregards the obvious use of the term throughout the LXX, a use which must be taken into consideration when seeking to know how the word is used in the Apostolic Scriptures.

-Tim Hegg, “A Commentary on The Johannine Epistles,” p. 149

Pastor Mike’s complete dismissal of even the possibility that this verse is in reference to the Torah is without basis. When we just look at the words themselves in this verse and how they’re used, there is plenty to warrant interpreting this verse to be in reference to God’s Law given through Moses—in fact, that would appear to be the most obvious conclusion.

Pastor Mike later explains what he thinks 1 John 3:4 means. Here is what he says:

“In first John chapter three, verses 23 & 24, it will tell us exactly what John meant when he talked about obeying his commands...

‘And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he commanded us.’

That’s the commandment. I believe in Him and we love one another. So this is the command John is writing to you, it’s not the old Law of Moses being re-commanded to the rest of the world in the name of Jesus Christ. Rather, it’s love and faith. Faith and love. This is the commandment. It’s very simple. Um, but if you assume ‘lawlessness’ means rejecting the Law of Moses, instead of looking at it in context and realizing this lawlessness is just talking about general unrighteousness, general living a life that you’re not yielded to the goodness and righteousness of God, then you’re gonna create the problem, but not from a study of the text.”

Pastor Mike has created what's called a "distinction without a difference" here. He dismisses the plain reading of the text in 1 John 3:4 and defines lawlessness as just a "general unrighteousness." But he doesn't really substantiate that as something separate from God's Law. God's Law defines righteousness and unrighteousness, as we showed earlier. Righteousness means following the Torah, following the right ways of God. Pastor Mike seems to be imposing his own understanding of righteousness onto the text rather than letting Scripture interpret itself.

Pastor Mike then points to 1 John 3:23-24, and he suggests that John is simply telling his readers to obey the commandment to love each other in some general sense. This, again, is a distinction without a difference. God's Law commands us to love our neighbor, and earlier in the chapter there is an imperative to not practice sin, which is defined as lawlessness. It seems to us that Pastor Mike is the one taking verses out of context. He should read verses 23-24 in light of the plain reading of 1 John 3:4 rather than imposing his own understanding of loving your neighbor onto the text.

Not only that, but what does John mean when he tells us to love our neighbor? Well, John tells us what he means:

1 John 5:2-3

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

Loving our neighbor is not some vague thing in the Bible. John clearly points us back to the commandments of God (Leviticus 19:17-18). There is simply no textual basis for creating a distinction between God's Law and His commandments, especially when John directly references God's law in 1 John 3:4.

In our review, we found that those were Pastor Mike's big objections to 119 Ministries and/or Hebrew Roots in his video.

Again, we appreciate Pastor Mike engaging with our arguments, and we certainly respect his knowledge and perspective—his position used to be our position at one time. However, we think it's clear that Scripture is on our side when it comes to this topic.

There's one last thing we want to clear up before we end. Pastor Mike expressed a reasonable concern about something we've said in one of our teachings about apostasy. Here is what he says:

"What he's done is he's walked you to a place where—and I listened to that clip multiple times, because I wanted to really make sure I understood what he's saying—where you have only a couple of options, right? Option 1: You don't obey the Old Testament Law, but you're just ignorant. You're ignorantly rejecting the Torah. It's less blessings for you. It's sin. But you can be forgiven for that. That's condition number 1. Condition number 2, option number 2, is you knowingly reject the Torah, which means that you're actually rejecting Jesus and you are now apostate. You're like, you're lost. You're apostate. Then he says this: By the way, condition 1 is not available for you anymore, because I've just explained to you that you do have to keep the Torah. Implication, either you keep the Torah or you're apostate. You're rejecting Jesus. Now I have a serious problem. Now they, Excuse me; let me put it this way. Now 119 Ministries has a serious problem. Now whoever believes this has a serious problem. You have just moved into

the place where you've made obedience to the Torah a salvation issue, which is—I don't know how you can read the Bible and get that.”

The issue of apostasy, or rejecting God and walking away from the faith, is a sensitive subject for all believers of all denominations and theological perspectives. We're going to quickly explain our position on the topic, and hopefully this will resolve some of Pastor Mike's concerns, as well as anyone else who might have misunderstood what we meant.

To begin, here is how Got Questions Ministries defines apostates according to Jude:

Jude describes the apostates as “ungodly” and as those who **use God's grace as a license to commit unrighteous acts.**

-Got Questions, “What is apostasy and how can I recognize it?”

The first point we'd like to make is that nobody accidentally becomes apostate. No believer just happens to reject the Messiah and walk away from his or her faith. Apostasy is a willful choice within the heart of the individual. As Got Questions puts it, they “use God's grace as a license to commit unrighteous acts.”

So every Christian believes that apostasy is connected to licentious behavior—that is, the apostate lives a life of complete disregard for God's will and God's ways.

With that in mind, here is what we'll say: A sincere believer in Christ, who desires to live a life pleasing to God, *by definition*, cannot be apostate.

So how does that play in to the topic at hand regarding these disputed commandments within most of Christianity—the Sabbath, dietary laws, etc.?

To put it simply, if a believer does not keep a commandment like the Sabbath, because he or she is convinced through the Scriptures that it isn't required of them, but they love God with all of their heart, they desire to please Him, and they are committed to obeying Him in what they know to be true, they are not apostate. They are faithful followers of Messiah to the best of their knowledge and ability.

And that, we believe, characterizes the vast majority of faithful Christians, like Pastor Mike, who disagree with us on this topic. We think they're wrong, but this is a theological disagreement we have among brothers. Faithful Christians who are unconvinced of our position are not in willful rebellion against God; they're just doing the best they can, like we are. We certainly don't claim to have all the answers either. We're just doing the best we can with what we believe to be true.

Now, on the other hand, if a believer *is* convinced through the Scriptures that the Sabbath *is* applicable to them, and they utterly refuse to obey, thumbing their nose at God, because ultimately they don't care to live a life pleasing to Him—well, we would say, according to Scripture, they are on thin ice.

We explain our position on this matter in depth in our teaching “[The Least, the Greatest, and the Defiant](#)”

Ultimately it's not our place to judge someone's salvation. Only God knows the hearts of man. But these warnings are in Scripture for a reason—to cause us to examine ourselves to make sure our heart and

lives are in alignment with God. None of us have all the answers, and we're all wrong about some things. But it's important that we do our best to honor God to the best of our knowledge and ability.

Once again, we want to thank Pastor Mike for engaging us on this important topic. We look forward to more discussions!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries

WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

TWITTER: www.twitter.com/119Ministries#