

The Conscience, Adam & the Law

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In this study the issues of the conscience, Adam, and the law are pursued, especially as they relate to us today. This is not a study pertaining to the conscience and morality as much as it is a study pertaining to the conscience in relation to forgiveness of sin.



There is some disagreement as to whether the law has any binding effect on people today. There are those who believe in Jesus Christ who disagree as to whether the law is the rule of life for Christians. Then there are those who are believers in Jesus Christ who do not believe that the law is the rule of life for Christians but believe that all non-Christians are under the law, even though it was the law of Moses given to Israel. Of course there is also a debate among preterists concerning this latter issue. It is an incredibly difficult topic especially as we consider the fact that the law of Moses was given to Israel.

I believe that an examination of the individual conscience will help us immensely in trying to decide whether the law is still a useful tool for today. Of course I do not claim that this article necessarily solves all of the difficulties involved--far from it. However, I think it will at least get us to examine the issues with which we need to grapple.

The passage that first comes to mind concerning the area of the conscience is found in the book of Romans:

Romans 14:1-2 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. {2} For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

Here we have an obvious problem. There exist those who are weak. Notice what is considered weakness. Eating herbs. Now it is very likely that this is referring to OT dietary laws. The Bible says we should not despise such a one but rather regard him as weak.

Romans 14:3 Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

In 1 Corinthians Paul also stresses this issue:

1 Corinthians 8:4-12 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. {5} For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) {6} But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. {7} Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. {8} But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. {9} But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. {10} For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat

those things which are offered to idols; {11} And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? {12} But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

Likewise the weaker brother should not despise the one who is free. It seems the passage is supporting freedom in Christ, *nevertheless*, the one who does not feel free to eat is still regarded as weaker.

Romans 14:5-8 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. {6} He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. {7} For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. {8} For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

These texts in 1 Corinthians and Romans are crucial, I believe, in understanding the issue of a man's conscience before God. Now in the Romans passage, OT holy days are probably in mind. Regardless, Paul is expressing the fact that there is liberty in Christ. It seems clear, however, that just as the one who felt the necessity to eat only herbs was called weak, so also I think that we should infer that the one who observes days are weak. But remember whether weak or strong they can both regard such days as unto the Lord, but they *cannot* hold them as binding upon *each other*. That is where legalism abounds. Again:

Romans 14:5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

But here is the issue. Obviously the Gentiles were not under the law. But they were commanded to abstain from certain things:

Acts 15:19-21 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: {20} But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. {21} For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

It seems that the concern was not to be a stumbling block to the Israelites.

Now, back to Romans 14:

"Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Is this not telling us that this is a conscience issue? In other words, whatever you do, make sure you are *fully* persuaded that before God you are doing what is right, i.e., if you do not observe certain days and dietary laws, make sure that in *your mind* you are *fully* persuaded that what you are doing is good and pleasing to God and fearing God. This is not teaching disobedience to certain obvious commands like believing in salvation by grace, loving your neighbor, etc. This is talking about certain observances apparently associated with OT law. These people were *not* believing in a works/grace mentality, for then Paul would have called that gospel an "accursed" gospel. Rather, it seems to be referring to Christians who were feeling the need to continue observing certain commands.

Concerning this issue of being fully persuaded in one's own mind, this sheds enormous light on the issue of conscience. In Romans 14 we have people that have obviously been given freedom from dietary observances and observance of days, yet they still feel compelled to keep certain laws and days-NOT for salvation but rather, thinking that they are in obedience to God, perhaps as a manner of lordship or whatever. What is fascinating is that the context continues to shed light on this issue of the conscience:

Romans 14:7-8 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. {8} For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

So we see that everything should be done unto the Lord and *not* before men or to please men or ourselves.

Of course Paul emphasizes also the necessity for those who are free not to put stumbling blocks in the way of those who are weaker:

Romans 14:13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

But then again Paul elsewhere emphasizes that those who are free should not allow anyone to place bondage upon them:

Romans 14:14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Colossians 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

1 Timothy 4:3-5 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. {4} For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: {5} For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

But I believe we should make a distinction between those passages in Timothy and Colossians in comparison with those in Romans. Those in Timothy and Colossians who were placing these bonds on the Christians believed that by not observing certain things you would be damned:

Acts 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

These men were accursed.

But those in Romans simply were thinking that people should observe certain days or dietary laws, obviously not for salvation but simply as thinking that they were obeying Christ, like being gentle would be obedient to Christ. But Paul gives liberty and says that each must be fully persuaded in his own mind and *not* to place a bond on others concerning these commands. Likewise, the one who is strong in his own mind should not do things to make the weaker brother stumble. I think a perfect modern day example would be the issue of eating red beef. I have actually met Christians that say it is a sin to eat red meat. Now they would not say, 'I am unsaved for eating a big piece of ultra rare and practically bloody filet mignon,' but they would say it is not right. So then, they are weak and I am strong. So what is my obligation? Not to make them stumble. What is their obligation? Not to

place any bond upon me, but rather to be *fully persuaded* in their own mind that what they choose to do, make sure it is unto the Lord, whether they eat or do not eat.

So then, in Romans it is not a matter of whether the law was still binding upon these individuals. Rather, it was an issue of whether the individual still regarded certain practices as binding, not in terms of saving power but in terms of obedience to Christ under the New Covenant. Now, here is the issue: It is much more serious concerning the conscience of either side. Paul continues:

Romans 14:14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Look at what Paul says: "But to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, *to him it is unclean.*" We are talking about a personal conscience issue before God and *not* a universal binding quality of the law. That is, the man before God must consider whether he feels free before God to observe or not to observe.

There is the famous story of a preacher who preached to a congregation among which was Charles Spurgeon. The preacher proclaimed that it was sin to smoke and questioned how anyone could do it to the glory of God. Of course everyone knew Charles Spurgeon smoked cigars. Spurgeon then stood up and proclaimed, "I will smoke my cigars to the glory of God." Needless to say, Spurgeon felt free, before cigarettes carried cancer warnings. So then, to the individual, if he regards something as unclean, to him it is unclean, but that does not necessarily make it unclean for others...only for himself. Paul continues:

Romans 14:15-17 But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. {16} Let not then your good be evil spoken of: {17} For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Paul here says that it is an issue of love pertaining to whether we are causing our brother to stumble. God forbid that we might transgress the law of love as we exercise our freedom. But then Paul addresses the conscience of those who eat, offending their weaker brother:

Romans 14:16-21 Let not then your good be evil spoken of: {17} For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. {18} For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. {19} Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. {20} For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. {21} It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Take note that the motivating factors behind the whole chapter is whether we are doing it as unto the Lord and because the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (this is another fascinating study concerning the conscience of God as it becomes free from the guilt of sin through faith in Christ...and specifically for the first-century saints, at the destruction of the Temple when their conscience was made perfectly clear when Jesus appeared without sin unto salvation).

So we see that Paul is calling this issue of the stronger brother an issue of love. It is simply not love to put stumbling blocks in our brother's path. This becomes a serious issue, for then we are dealing with transgression in not loving one another. "He who loveth not his brother abideth in death." Therefore, we must give this great attention.

However, there is the other side in regard to the weaker brother's conscience:

Romans 14:22-23 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. {23} And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

The stronger brother is happy in the things which he allows, but he that doubteth is damned if he eats. It is not that he is breaking any dietary law that damns him; rather it is that he is *fully persuaded* that in *his own mind* eating certain things is sin and yet commits himself not to obey his conscience before God. Therefore if he eats a certain food even though the food is not unclean of itself,...

Romans 14:14 I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

... to that man it is unclean in his own mind. Therefore, if he eats believing it is sin, then in *his own mind* he is sinning before God because he is not eating in faith:

Romans 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

Now remember, this was after Paul had been given freedom from the law through the law of Christ (Romans 8:1-4). Therefore, it is not a matter of whether the law was done away. It is a matter of whether in *our minds* we impose any laws upon ourselves.

Some people think that the regard of the conscience is a bunch of philosophical hogwash. One man wrote me saying: "all this philosophical stuff about the conscience and the mind are nowhere to be found in the pages of scripture." But I strongly contend with this ignorance: Paul said:

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

For Paul, as an Old Covenant man, had his conscience awakened to the fact that what he was taught was sin.

Romans 7:8-9 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. {9} For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Obviously something happened to Paul's conscience once he was confronted with a law that told him he was a transgressor. Consider the law to Adam:

Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Of course we know that Adam was already naked before the law:

Genesis 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Notice that before the law they were not ashamed. They were in the presence of God. Certainly they were naked, showing their need for clothing. But they were not ashamed in His presence, for there was no conscience of sin. But notice what happens upon disobedience:

Genesis 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

At this point we should clarify that Adam was very aware of the law before his sin:

Genesis 2:16-17 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: {17} But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Eve's response to Satan's temptation is also revealing of his knowledge of the command:

Genesis 3:2-3 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: {3} But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

It was because they were *fully* persuaded in their own minds that it was wrong to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is not to say that they were free (in the Romans 14 sense) to disobey this command, for the law was given to them and they were under it. But something happened to their conscience when they disobeyed. The law that they had been given was that law that determined whether they could stay in the garden with God. However:

Romans 7:10 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.

What took place in the garden was similar to what took place with Paul. Upon receiving the law he realized that he was a transgressor of that law regardless of how old he was. The fact was, when the commandment came, Paul was made aware of his transgression. This is called conscience of sins:

Hebrews 10:1-3 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. {2} For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. {3} But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

In the sacrifices was a constant reminder that the Israelites were sinners under the law. Those sacrifices were a reminder to their conscience that they were still sinners, and that when the high priest made atonement each year they could not enter into the holiest of all. The sheer fact that they could not enter into the holiest of all was the explicit testimony to them that they could not do something that only the high priest could do and that is to enter into the holiest of all. That is precisely why there is so much significance to be placed upon the destruction of the Temple. Consider how much stress the Bible places on the existence of the Temple:

Hebrews 9:6-10 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests go always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. {7} But into the second, the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offers for himself, and for the errors of the people: {8} The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all is not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing: {9} Which is a figure for the time present, in which are offered both gifts and sacrifices, that cannot make him that does the service perfect, as

pertaining to the conscience; {10} only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, being imposed on them until the time of reformation.

So it is clear that there is association between the existence of the first tabernacle and the conscience of sins. The rest of the chapter testifies of this conscience of sins and that the complete purging of the conscience of sins was yet future for these first-century believers, while the first tabernacle was still standing:

Hebrews 9:11-14 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; {12} Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. {13} For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: {14} How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your *conscience* from dead works to serve the living God?

The ultimate goal of the Messianic work and kingdom was to remove the conscience of sin (this is what Adam and Paul lacked, i.e., removal of the conscience of sins under the law). This was the final state and fulfillment of all Old Testament Biblical prophecy. Some professing Christians might argue that they still have a conscience of sins. If this is so, then they would have to fall under the category of still remaining under some type of law, for the Bible says:

Hebrews 10:1-2 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. {2} For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

The writer of Hebrews is saying that if those sacrifices could make the comers thereunto perfect and purged, they should no longer have any conscience of sins. But we must consider the context of chapter 9:

Hebrews 9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

In performing His High Priestly duty Christ would accomplish something that was never able to be performed under the Old Covenant. He could actually bring the worshippers into the holy place with Him where the presence of God would be. But this way was not manifest while the first tabernacle (Temple) was still standing:

Hebrews 9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all is not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing.

The destruction of the Temple was the outward sign that the worshippers of God were now completely brought into the presence of God, having their conscience completely purged of sins:

Hebrews 10:19-22 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, {20} By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; {21} And having an high priest over the house of God; {22} Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Similarly, the high priest purged all the vessels with blood:

Hebrews 9:21-23 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. {22} And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. {23} It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

So also, during the transformation Christ was purging the body of Christ (the house which consisted of individual vessels) from dead works while she was growing up into the image (complete righteousness of God). Just as there were various vessels that required cleansing, vessel by vessel, likewise, during the transformation while Christ was in the holy place, He was preparing the house of the Father which contained many vessels purged for the Master's use. This process of purging was taking away the veil for the believers in Christ:

2 Corinthians 3:14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is being done away in Christ.

This is that same veil into which Christ had entered but into which they were entering:

Hebrews 6:19-20 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which is entering into that within the veil; {20} Whither the forerunner has for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Once Christ finished purging all the vessels in this house (the house of Israel) He would then appear a second time without sin unto salvation. Finally He would perform that which no high priest could ever perform and that is the complete gathering of the household of God into the holiest of all. This is synonymous with the conscience of sins being purged. They were finally restored to paradise and complete communion and intimacy with God. This intimacy and communion is brought about by faith in Jesus Christ. Those who believe on Christ enter into the gates of the city. Remember how Adam was ashamed of his nakedness.

Genesis 2:25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed...

Genesis 3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons...

Genesis 3:10 And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

That is, he had a conscience of sins. He was cast out of paradise. Under the New Covenant we no longer have that conscience of sins, neither are we ashamed:

Psalms 119:5-6 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! {6} Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

David said he would not be ashamed when he was directed to keep the statutes and commandments of God. Ezekiel predicted this time:

Ezekiel 36:25-27 Then will I sprinkle (pure or purged) water upon you, and ye shall be clean (purged): from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. {26} A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. {27} And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Notice the complete obedience to the commandments of God, the sprinkling, and how David longed not to be ashamed (i.e., have a conscience of sins), and compare with Hebrews:

Hebrews 10:19-22 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, {20} By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; {21} And having an high priest over the house of God; {22} Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (i.e., shame), and our bodies washed (cleansed) with pure (clean) water.

David desired this day wherein he would not be ashamed or have this conscience of sins. He longed for this salvation:

2 Samuel 23:4-5 And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. {5} Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

The prophets spoke of this time when shame would be swallowed up:

Isaiah 45:17 But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed [have a conscience of sins] nor confounded world without end.

Isaiah 49:22-23 Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. {23} And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed (have a conscience of sins) that wait for me.

Isaiah 54:4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed (have a conscience of sins): neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more.

In this last passage the context is speaking of the contrast between the Old and the New Covenants:

Isaiah 54:1-5 Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. {2} Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; {3} For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. {4} Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. {5} For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

The reason she would not be ashamed (have a conscience of sins) is that she would be married to her Husband (i.e., face to face with Him in the holiest of all). Paul quotes Isaiah 54 as the fulfillment of the New Covenant:

Galatians 4:22-27 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. {23} But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. {24} Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. {25} For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. {26} But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. {27} For it is written, (from Isaiah 54) Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

Paul declares that shame is removed through belief in Jesus Christ:

Romans 10:9-11 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. {10} For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. {11} For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed (have a conscience of sins).

The second appearing of Jesus Christ coming out of the Temple without sin would be proven through the destruction of the Temple. This would bring the complete removal of the conscience of sins for believers. John testifies of this:

1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed [have a conscience of sins] before him at his coming.

On the contrary, God pronounced judgment upon those who held to the Old Covenant and attempted righteousness without faith:

Isaiah 65:13-19 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink (Of the living waters of Christ), but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed (have a conscience of sins): {14} Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. {15} And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord GOD shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: {16} That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes. {17} For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind:

We must expound upon these last two verses. Isaiah declares that the former troubles shall be forgotten and shall not come to mind. Jeremiah gives us insight as to what these former troubles were:

Jeremiah 3:12-17 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever. {13} Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD. {14} Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: {15} And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. {16} And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to

mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. {17} At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

Notice verse 16. It says that they will no longer say the ark of the covenant of the Lord (i.e., the Old Covenant) neither shall it come to mind (there would be no more conscience of sins). Hebrews speaks of this ark and the conscience of sins in the same passage:

Hebrews 9:1-9 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. {2} For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary. {3} And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; {4} Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; {5} And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. {6} Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests go always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. {7} But into the second, the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offers for himself, and for the errors of the people: {8} The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all is not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing: {9} Which is a figure for the time present, in which are offered both gifts and sacrifices, that cannot make him that does the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.

Isaiah speaks of the former things being forgotten in another place:

Isaiah 43:18-21 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. {19} Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers (the living waters of Christ) in the desert. {20} The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. {21} This people have I formed for myself; *they shall show forth My praise.*

Of course we know that this praise would be shown forth in the calling of God's people out of darkness into His light:

1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should *show forth the praises* of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:

Isaiah touches on this time of showing forth the praises of God in the following chapter:

Isaiah 60:5-6 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. {6} The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall *show forth the praises* of the LORD.

The whole context of Isaiah 60 is concerning the uniting of the Gentiles with the Israelites and their being glorified together by God. Isaiah 65 continues in declaring the contrast of the new things as opposed to the former troubles that would be forgotten neither come to mind:

... {18} But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. {19} And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

It seems very clear that through the removal of the curse of the law of sin and death by the work of Messiah, weeping and crying would be abolished. This of course refers to the sorrows and grief removed by Christ:

Isaiah 53:4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

At this point we should acknowledge that for Israel the law was added *because* of transgressions. There are several passages that show this truth.

1 Timothy 1:8-10 But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; {9} Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, {10} For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

The law here is said to have been made for the lawless and disobedient. However, does the passage have any qualification concerning those lawless and disobedient people, i.e., Israelites and Gentiles or just Israelites? Well, in the context Paul does say:

1 Timothy 1:5-7 Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: {6} From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; {7} Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

So we are very likely dealing with Israelite teachers. However, these teachers were frequently trying to impose the burden of the law upon the Gentiles. James wrote to the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:

Acts 15:24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment:

Now to say that these teachers were "subverting" their souls seems to be implying that the Israelites were indeed bringing the Gentiles into bondage with their law.

Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

This implies that there may have already been transgressions of the law even though they were not necessarily made aware of it yet. At first this may sound like a contradiction to Paul's statement in Romans 4:

Romans 4:15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

This verse needs to be carefully examined in light of Galatians 3. If Galatians 3 is telling us that the law was added because of transgressions, then this proves that there were transgressions before the law was given. However, transgression of the law only works the wrath of God once the conscience is made aware of its transgressions, "for where no law is, there is no transgression," or act to work the wrath of God. In other words, God deals with people based upon their conscience of law, whether OT law or NT law or laws people impose upon themselves before God.

So then it seems to follow that it was God's intent to show Israel's need for a Savior through the law. This law would drive her to Him. It is very conceivable that God gave Adam the law (thou shalt not eat) to drive Adam to Himself. But Adam instead used fig leaves to cover Himself. Those fig leaves seem to represent self-righteousness. This was the response of Israel to the law. Instead of being driven to find mercy at the hands of the Lawgiver, she resorted to justifying herself by attempting to obey the law for righteousness rather than looking unto God for deliverance. Paul seems to address the issue of transgression and accountability in these passages:

Romans 5:12-14 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: {13} (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. {14} Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Now concerning the "all" of verse 12 I think it is important to know to whom that is referring. Verse 13 is very enlightening. It says sin is *not* imputed when there is no law. However, we cannot stop there, for the very next verse says "*nevertheless* death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." The context seems clear: those of whom Paul is speaking in vv. 12-14 are the same people. Those in verse 13 were sinners, but that sin was not imputed, for there was no law. However, they still fell underneath the curse of death incurred by Adam's transgression even though they had not sinned after that similitude. Exactly what this similitude is, is very difficult to discern. But we must note that sin entered the world by Adam and therefore death by sin. So then we establish that "death" or awareness of sinfulness is by sin--hence Paul's analysis of his own situation:

Romans 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

He doesn't say sin was non-existent. He is simply saying that he was made aware of his sin when the law came forbidding that sin. For example, Paul could have lusted after a woman before the commandment came, however, he was not aware that lust was a sin until the commandment came:

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

What is evident is the fact that in spite of Paul's lack of knowledge it was still sin in the eyes of God. But that sin was not imputed to Paul until the commandment came. But Romans 5 says that death is by sin. So then this death (awareness of transgression [conscience of sins]) comes through the knowledge of law. But Paul says he had not known sin except the law had told him that he was a sinner--hence, sin *revived* and Paul died. So it is clear that sin was existent, but Paul did not *know* sin because he had not *known* the law.

Paul in essence is saying exactly what he taught in Romans 5. Because Paul did not *know* the law, sin was not imputed. Again, it is not saying that Paul had not sinned. It is merely saying that Paul had not *known* the sin he was already committing. This is where I think we may have to reexamine

Adam's state before the fall. The Bible says Adam was naked. But it says he was not ashamed. That is, he did not have any conscience of sins. Once he sinned with actual knowledge of the law God had given him, he was ashamed (had a conscience of sins), for he realized the nakedness that was present *before* he sinned. Paul seems to be in the same situation. Paul did not realize he was naked (a sinner) *before* the law came.

Therefore, is it really implausible to think that Adam may very well have been sinning (hence his nakedness) *before* the law came, and then once the law came he (Adam) was made aware of his sin? In other words, is it possible that Adam was sinning (eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil) *before* God gave him the command? Remember, Galatians tells us that the law was added *because* of transgressions. So then we must ask why God gave Adam law. Really, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents the law. "Thou shalt not eat..." Keep in mind that nakedness is never a good thing, for nakedness implies the need of clothing. But a man does not see his need of clothing unless he first realizes he is naked. This realization of nakedness is what the Bible identifies as conscience of sins.

Another aspect of Adam's transgression is found in Romans 5:

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

This clearly teaches that death is a result of sin. But it is important to realize whether this sin was *before* the law or after the law:

Romans 7:8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin was dead.

It is not saying that without law sin does not exist, but rather it is saying that without law sin is dead. That is, sin is not imputed.

Paul also says:

Romans 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Here Paul declares that he was alive (no conscience of sins) without the law once, but in Romans 5 it says death came by sin. So then, it can be established that before the law came, Paul was alive, i.e., having no knowledge or conscience of sin:

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Therefore, once the commandment was revealed to Paul concerning covetousness, Paul was made aware of his sin and sin was revived (made known to Paul) and Paul died (recognized his transgression before God). This brings us to a problem: If Paul was alive (having no knowledge of the sins he had already committed) before the law came to him (and Adam for that matter), then how is it Paul can say this:

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Paul is clearly saying that sin entered into the world through one man. But it also says that death came by sin. Therefore this death must be that sin that was committed *after* the hearing of the law and not before, for like Paul, Adam was alive before the commandment came--naked but alive. The following phrase is extremely important: "and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

This is with no uncertainty declaring that the death which comes as a *result of* hearing the law and transgressing it, comes *after* the transgression when one has already heard the law. This is not arguing for an age of accountability but rather a *time* of accountability, i.e., when Paul heard the law that told him he should not covet, he was immediately awakened to the fact that he was covetous. The sin of covetousness he had already committed *before* the law came was now *known* to him. It was at this point that Paul died. Here are the two passages compared:

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Romans 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Again, in order for sin to revive it had to have already once taken place. But the distinction is made between the committing of sin versus the committing of sin with the knowledge of the law that says it is sin.

With these things in mind, this passage is a little clearer:

Romans 4:15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

In other words, God's wrath was not working upon Paul or Adam before the commandment came because they did not yet have any conscience of sin. This is also seen here:

Romans 2:12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;

Notice that there is a difference. Those who sin without law (sin is transgression of the law, therefore this sin is before the law ever came to the given individual) perish without the law. However, those who sinned in the law or under the law shall be judged by the law. It appears then that there is no judgment upon those who have sinned *without* law. Since death comes by sin (sin *after* the knowledge of the law), those who sinned without the law were alive (having no conscience of sins). This brings us to a particular struggle with one of Paul's statements in Romans 5:

Romans 5:12-14 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: {13} (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. {14} Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Since Adam and Eve seem to be a strong type of Israel under the law (Eve) bound to her old man (Adam, or the first man), it might follow that just as there was sin among Israel before the law was given, but that sin was not imputed, so also it seems there may have been sin in the world before Adam, but that sin was not imputed either. So then when Paul speaks of the entrance of sin into the world, he seems to be addressing the specific sin of Adam, i.e., his knowledge of the law of God given to him and the consequent disobedience to that law. The question is, How did death pass upon

all men? The answer is "that all have sinned." Obviously sin here is sin after the law was given to Adam because it brought death. Remember, Paul was alive without the law but when the law came sin revived and he died. But what law if there was no law between Adam and Moses?

Romans 5:13 For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

Obviously Adam died in the day he ate. The sin (*after knowledge* of the law) was first, *then* the death. So likewise, death passed upon all men *for that* (or because) all have sinned. Therefore, the Mosaic law of verse 13 not coming into the world until Moses does not negate the fact that men still incurred death upon themselves through actual transgression of Adam *after* law was made known to him. For we know that sin is transgression of the law (1 John 3:4).

Romans 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

But Paul's thought is difficult in Romans 5:

Romans 5:12-14 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: {13} (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. {14} Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Since we have already learned that death comes when the commandment comes, vv.13,14 seem to contradict this idea. But this is where we must examine the covenantal nature and corporate impact of Adam's transgression. Consider the rest of the context:

Romans 5:15-19 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. {16} And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. {17} For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) {18} Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. {19} For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Here it appears that God caused the death Adam incurred to pass upon all men even though all men did not necessarily sin under the law of Moses, because that law had not yet been given. Thus, Adam's original sin covenantally affected all descendants inasmuch as Christ's original righteousness affected all in Him. In other words, just as we did not necessarily do anything to earn Christ's righteousness and yet it was imputed, so also those under the death of Adam did not necessarily transgress any revealed law to earn Adam's death, even though we're told that death passed upon all men for that all have sinned. Through Adam's transgression of *revealed* law, the curse of death passed upon all men who were committing sins even though law was not yet revealed to them. They still died because Adam, the first covenant man, sinned, thus contracting death for all descendants, even those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.

So likewise, through Christ, the second covenant Man, all in Him and His covenant have life, even though they did not directly do anything to earn that life in Him. Certainly those under the covenant of the death of Adam sinned, but they did not sin with revealed commandment. In the same way it

could be said that those under the covenant of Christ believed (specifically Old Covenant believers before Christ), but they did not necessarily believe having received the revealed Gospel of Christ. So then, under the law of Moses, the revealed law worked wrath and they were judged by that law. Likewise, under the law of Christ, the revealed law (the Gospel of Christ) worked life to those who believed God under the Old Covenant. Also, that same law of Christ works wrath to those who disobey, and they are judged by that law of Christ:

John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Hebrews 10:28-29 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: {29} Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

John 12:48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

But for those who are believers, whether those who were still under the first covenant or after the consummation of the second covenant, through that faith, the law of Christ brings them righteousness. Thus, we can understand more clearly the forbearance of God for those who were still under the Old Covenant yet who believed in Him:

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Habakkuk testified that the just would live by faith (2:4). Certainly the *revealed* Gospel was not proclaimed to these men under the Old Covenant. However, they believed in Christ as the concealed Gospel (Hebrews 4:2). They just did not believe in Christ as the crucified and risen Savior. That is the revelation of the Gospel. Therefore, the faith that they had under the Old Covenant was accounted to them for righteousness. This seems to be the implication of this passage:

Romans 1:16-17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. {17} For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

From "faith to faith" could very well be referring to the fact that the righteousness of God is revealed from faith (faith in God under the Old Covenant) to faith (faith in God under the New Covenant with the revelation of Christ and Him crucified).

The rest of the context of Romans 5 solidifies the connection of those with the covenant of the first man Adam and those with the covenant of the last Man Christ.

Romans 5:15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

Just as the offence of Adam covenantally affected those who were underneath him, so the gift of grace by Jesus Christ covenantally abounded to those underneath Him.

Romans 5:16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

Again, here we have the same thought. We are speaking of those who are under a covenant, whether of death or life.

Romans 5:17-19 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) {18} Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. {19} For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Notice that the offence of Adam came upon all men (all under the covenant of death, for that all had sinned) and that the free gift of the obedience of Christ came to all men (all under the covenant of life), resulting in justification to life.

So our final analysis could be stated as such:

Through Adam's transgression of the revealed law of God, death passed upon all men who sinned even though their sin was not necessarily transgression to the revealed law of God. So likewise, through Christ's obedience to the revealed law of God, life (because of the New Covenant law of Christ) passed upon all men who believed even though there was not necessarily a *revealed* New Covenant law to believe (speaking of course of Old Testament believers).

So then, what is our conclusion concerning Cain? The Bible is clear that Cain disobeyed God:

Genesis 4:7-8 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. {8} And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

So we see that sin was lying at Cain's door. Cain sinned in murdering Abel. The question is, Was that sin under *revealed* law or was it sin unto death because of Adam's transgression? Let us examine the progression of the conscience of Cain in the context:

Genesis 4:1-16 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. {2} And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. {3} And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. {4} And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: {5} But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. {6} And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? {7} If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. {8} And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. {9} And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper? {10} And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

{11} And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; {12} When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. {13} And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. {14} Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. {15} And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. {16} And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

First, we recognize that they were bringing offerings unto the Lord. It is highly improbable that these men suddenly had this desire to offer up sacrifices to the God of heaven. This is especially evident when one considers the unacceptable sacrifice of Cain. The sacrifice was at least unacceptable for one of two reasons: either it was a command to bring an animal sacrifice, or his heart was not right before God in making the sacrifice, or both. If the case has to do with Cain's heart not being right before God, why on earth would he be offering a sacrifice in the first place if it was not commanded? It seems far-fetched to assume that Cain would suddenly conjure up a desire to offer a vegetable sacrifice unto God when he did not want to offer it anyway. Therefore we should conclude that both men understood a command to offer sacrifices unto the Lord. This command was very likely carried to them from Adam or God. Adam certainly knew of sacrifice upon the provision of God for his nakedness with the sacrifice of an animal for the skin:

Genesis 3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

We also know that God communicated with Cain:

Genesis 4:4-5 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: {5} But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

Clearly there was some way in which the Lord demonstrated to Cain that He was displeased with Cain's sacrifice. Cain was upset at God's disapproval, therefore he murdered his brother. Now we must consider several things here. Not only have we concluded that Cain and Abel knew they were to offer sacrifice. We also must realize that for Cain to understand that his sacrifice was unacceptable and yet his brother's acceptable in the sight of the Lord shows that Cain must have had awareness that God was pleased with Abel. Therefore, if God was pleased with Abel, Cain must have also known that to kill Abel because his sacrifice was pleasing to God would be to kill him of whom God approved. Thus Cain very likely knew that to kill Abel was heinous in the sight of God.

Also, consider this statement of God:

Genesis 4:6-7 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? {7} If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

God asked Cain, "If you do well, will you not be accepted?" Here we see command for obedience and reward for obedience. Regardless of the obedience, it is clear that Cain was under a law that commanded him to do well and that his doing well would earn acceptance in the sight of God.

After the murder of Abel, God questions Cain:

Genesis 4:9 And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

I suppose it could be argued that Cain never had any *revealed* law that said he should not lie, but it is difficult to believe so with such direct questioning by God. But since this cannot be proven with as much certainty as Cain's clear transgressions, let us continue.

God declares:

Genesis 4:10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

Again, the blood of Abel would cry because it seems that it was a law not to murder.

Cain is then cursed from the land for killing Abel:

Genesis 4:11-12 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; {12} When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

This assures us that now Cain is aware of the punishment for his murder as testified by Cain's own acknowledgment:

Genesis 4:13 And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Now certainly Cain would not declare this as punishment unless he knew that what he had done was transgression. Otherwise Cain, like most men, would cry injustice to God.

Cain even seems to believe that the murder he committed deserved a just recompense, though he certainly was fearful of this recompense:

Genesis 4:14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

Another important question is this: Who were the others that comprised the "every one that findeth me"? Our text strongly implies that Adam and Eve had only Cain and Abel. But Cain does not seem to be concerned so much with his family. His concern seems to be for those other people who were also part of God's creation of mankind. People who as well had received the law of God concerning murder, for why would they desire to slay Cain for his murder of Abel unless they believed that murder was wrong? It seems that the origin of the absolute immorality of murder was known among these people. Not only this but God proclaimed that He would take vengeance upon any that slew Cain:

Genesis 4:15 And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

So then the punishment of Cain was accomplished:

Genesis 4:16 And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

Just a brief note concerning the presence of others besides Adam, Cain, and Abel:

Genesis 4:17 And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch.

It seems strange that Enoch would build a city for five or six people. Most likely those for whom this city was built were enough people to comprise a city. And it would seem that through the association of these men to whom the law condemning murder was given, this city would certainly be made aware of the transgression of murder and for that fact the existence of God and His the retribution He imposed for murderers. Hence, the knowledge of the "everyone" whom Cain was afraid would slay him; that to kill Cain would earn them the seven-fold vengeance of God. Evidence of the knowledge of the people of this seven-fold vengeance of God is seen with Lamech's statement:

Genesis 4:23-24 And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. {24} If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold).

Not only this, but many generations passed before Abraham and Jacob went to offer sacrifices before the Lord. It would appear then that at least the commandment not to murder and to offer sacrifices were carried from the time of Cain. Even more, consider these words of Jude:

Jude 1:14-15 And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, {15} To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Most translations place vv. 14, 15 in quotations as the citation is from 1 Enoch. The amazing thing is that Enoch was the seventh from Adam. Consider the elements mentioned to those who were present at the time of Enoch's prophecy:

The execution of judgment.
The conviction of ungodly men of ungodly deeds.
The hard speeches of ungodly sinners against God.

Now even though this was a prophecy against those in the first century, nevertheless it seems to apply at least to all who preceded the first century. And it would seem to follow that if Enoch made this prophecy, those around him would have some understanding of judgment, conviction of ungodly deeds, and hard speeches of ungodly sinners against God. If this is the case, then there was plenty of awareness at the time of Enoch of at least certain laws that God had commanded. So in this respect there may very well have been those who truly did have law *revealed* to them, hence, "when the commandment came, sin revived and they died."

Also remember how Esau was designated:

Hebrews 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Obviously fornication was found before the giving of the Mosaic law in that Esau worshipped his birthright over God. Thus he committed what Israel committed in forsaking her Husband-- (fornication or adultery).

And:

1 John 3:12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

Certainly we see that Cain's works were considered evil.

Consider the case of Abimelech:

Genesis 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.

This is clearly before the Mosaic law, and God speaks to Abimelech as if he should understand that to take a man's wife is sin. Observe Abimelech's response:

Genesis 20:5 Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this.

Abimelech did not say, 'But God, no one told me it was wrong to sleep with another man's wife!' Rather, Abimelech justified his willingness to lie with Abraham's wife because Abraham lied to Abimelech in saying that she was his (Abraham's) sister. Beyond this Abimelech says that in the integrity of his heart and innocency of his hand he had done this. The implication is that if he had known that it was Abraham's wife, his heart would not have had integrity nor would his hands have been innocent. Thus, his statement is clearly declaring that he had knowledge that in adultery there is no integrity or innocence. Therefore, there is guilt. Why? The only conclusion is that God had revealed these laws to them. Though it is not recorded in explicit terms, nevertheless we can deduce from Abimelech's response that he understood that adultery was a sin. Even God identified it as sin:

Genesis 20:6 And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.

God also declared what would have been the judgment for Abimelech:

Genesis 20:7 Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

God would have slain Abimelech.

Upon confrontation with Abraham for his lie, Abimelech addresses the wickedness of Abraham and the identification of adultery as sin:

Genesis 20:8-10 Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid. {9} Then Abimelech called Abraham, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that

ought not to be done. {10} And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?

Abimelech calls adultery sin and also accuses Abraham of bringing upon him and his kingdom a great sin; and that the deeds Abraham had done to Abimelech ought not to have been done. So then not only is adultery seen to have been forbidden, but also lying and bringing disaster upon a kingdom through allowing a man to sin in not warning him. Obviously Abraham and Abimelech were well aware of certain sins and the punishments due unto them for those committing those sins.

Joseph recognized adultery as sin as well in his fleeing the temptation of Potiphar's wife:

Genesis 39:9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

His identifying the sin as great wickedness conveys the fact that God viewed adultery with severe distaste.

Even the brothers of Joseph were aware of their sin in that they were in acknowledgment of guilt thinking they had slain their brother:

Genesis 42:21-22 And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. {22} And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required.

So we see the brothers declaring their own guilt and Reuben declaring their sin.

Even the Gentile Pharaoh was aware of his sin against the God of Israel:

Exodus 10:16-17 Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. {17} Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only.

We conclude then that we are not necessarily dealing with men who were without law or conscience of commandments at all. Rather, we are dealing with the offspring of Adam who had much knowledge. Also, it would seem that through Adam the laws were given and spread to those underneath that particular covenant. Whether Pharaoh was of the lineage of Adam or not, nevertheless he understood his rebellion against God (whether he ever truly repented or not).

Under the New Covenant, the revealed law or command is specific:

1 John 3:23 And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

This is the revealed law of the New Covenant. Those who transgress this law remain under sorer punishment than those who transgressed the Old Covenant law of Moses. Jesus described this unbelief as sin:

John 16:8-9 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: {9} Of sin, because they believe not on me;

John 5:40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

So then, back to our original issue: How is the conscience made aware of sin today? Certainly the conscience is made aware of the sin against New Covenant law when that law is revealed. In fact, there is evidence that it had been better if some who heard the law of Christ (the way of righteousness) had never known it:

2 Peter 2:20-21 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. {21} For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

We should note that if they had never known the way of righteousness, these apostate Israelites still would have undergone the destruction by the Romans. So then the fact that it would have been better if they had not known the way of righteousness implies that there would be a greater spiritual judgment different from the destruction by the Romans.

The Gospel, therefore, is the means by which God judges men. Their conscience is exposed to the holiness of Christ and His deity, thus they run from the light just as the Jews did lest their deeds should be exposed. They love not the Lord Jesus Christ:

1 Corinthians 16:22 If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha.

The passage does not say if any man disobey the law of Moses let him be Anathema. The focus is on the hatred of men for Jesus Christ. Those to whom the Gospel is revealed fall under the terrible judgment of Christ and the separation from His glory under that dreadful judgment. Regardless of whether that judgment continues after physical death is not the issue. The fact is that the judgment comes upon presentation of the Gospel and the subsequent rejection of that Gospel by the non-elect. This execution of judgment upon the heathen since A.D. 70 was foretold:

Psalms 149:5-9 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. {6} Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand; {7} To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; {8} To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; {9} To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

Through the presentation of the Gospel, the heathen have their consciences awakened to the reality of a reigning King who is the dreadful and terrible Sovereign of creation. Other passages speak of this judgment upon the heathen:

Revelation 2:26-27 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: {27} And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Revelation 19:11-21 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. {12} His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. {13} And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. {14} And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. {15} And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. {16} And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. {17} And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; {18} That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. {19} And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. {20} And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. {21} And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Some would like to suppose that nations here refer to Israelites. However, when compared with similar passages dealing with the rod of iron, this position seems untenable:

Psalms 2:8-9 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. {9} Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

The heathen clearly represent the Gentiles:

Psalms 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

Acts shows this prophecy as fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ which was accomplished by God through the Israelites as well as the Gentiles:

Acts 4:25-27 Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? {26} The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. {27} For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.

This next passage is very strong concerning the judgment that comes upon the nations as a result of not worshipping the King of kings:

Zechariah 14:16-19 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. {17} And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. {18} And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. {19} This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

The reason for the above passages is to show that the revelation of the Gospel has been made known to the nations, and that those nations fall under the judgment of that Gospel.

Again we are dealing with the conscience and its exposure to the Gospel. Here we need to analyze what we did in the beginning of our study, and that is each man's conscience before God.

As we noted, Romans 14 is very clear concerning what the Christian individual regards as sin:

Romans 14:5-6 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. {6} He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

There is not necessarily sin in either case, rather the passage identifies a weaker brother and a stronger brother. Neither should be against the other in terms of judgment but by love serving one another by not causing the other to stumble.

Paul makes a very strong statement concerning freedom:

Romans 14:22 Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

Then concerning the weaker brother he writes:

Romans 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

The issue here is that there is no bondage or command concerning dietary laws. As far as Paul is concerned those things were abrogated. Therefore, Paul is dealing exclusively with the conscience that condemns itself before God for whatever reason. The word for condemned apparently is exclusively used in a sense implying that there would be no salvation for such a one. Paul simply uses the example of days, eating, and drinking to show that if certain people believe that there are certain things they can or cannot do, not only should those who are stronger not cause them to stumble, but those who are weaker should be *fully persuaded* in their own mind. If they believe in their own minds that eating or drinking certain things is sin, then they should follow through with abstinence. Why? Not because it is sin to partake of those things, but because their mind is fully persuaded that it is sin but they are willing to transgress anyway. This shows their mindset toward God in regard to those certain issues. Even though their profession is legalistic they do not follow up with their profession. Thus they are damned if they eat because they are not eating in faith that it is just and pure before God.

Paul exclaims that whatever is not of faith is sin. That is the problem. It is a conscience issue before God and has nothing to do with binding laws. This brings us to an extremely important issue concerning the law and commands. If a person in his own mind honestly believes that certain aspects of the law which was given to Israel applies to him, then what is the difference between him and the person in Romans 14? After all, the person in Romans 14 was not bound by the law, yet Paul said if he does impose certain laws upon himself, they should obey those laws being fully persuaded in *his own* mind. Thus it boils down to an issued between God and the individual rather than the individual under the law of a particular covenant nation.

Certainly in the New Testament there are commands to love each other, to be patient, longsuffering, etc. However, there are abrogations of commands such as sabbaths, new moons, etc. But there were and are weaker brethren who do still regard certain days or drinks, etc., as still binding--not for salvation, but thinking they are still necessary under the New Covenant. Of course those who believe they are for salvation are condemned:

Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

It seems to me that those who, in their own mind, place themselves under the law that was given to Israel, whether in part or in whole, still fall under the category of justifying themselves by works. For even though the law has passed, nevertheless they believe in *their own* minds that they are under it. Therefore, they are obligated by God to keep it. And certainly they cannot, therefore they are damned, believing they can attain righteousness by self-effort. The same is true with any obligation an individual places upon himself. If he places such an obligation to justify himself, he is damned. If he claims to be a Christian and says its not required for salvation, yet is a command, and just disregards it in doubt, he is damned according to Paul. Why? Because it is not in faith. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." It seems that the faith here does not necessarily stop at faith that the obedience or lack thereof is right or wrong. It is probably connected with the fact that if we are truly believers in Christ, we will not impose commands upon ourselves that are extra-Biblical only to break them in lack of faith and doubt. Paul seems to be saying that in doing so, one shows there lack of faith in God altogether. Paul is not arguing for perfection in obedience in order to be saved. Rather, he is arguing that the mind who imposes a certain law upon itself and yet disobeys it, is most likely a legalist who really is trusting in his self-righteousness just as the Pharisees:

Matthew 23:4 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

However, through Christ we have freedom and our conscience is not under law but purged from sin. Therefore we follow the law of Christ in believing Him and loving His people:

1 John 3:14-24 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. {15} Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. {16} Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. {17} But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? {18} My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. {19} And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. {20} For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. {21} Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. {22} And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. {23} And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. {24} And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.