

THE GUIDING WISDOM AND LOVE OF GOD'S STATUTES

“I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes...”

~God

Because of the many references in this book to God's awesome and loving Statutes – His Laws - it is felt that an explanation as to their validity for New Testament Christians is appropriate. In the Millennium and as part of the New Covenant, God promised to write His Statutes on our hearts by His Holy Spirit (Ezek.36:27). The New Covenant is applicable NOW for true Christians today (Luke 22:20 & 1 Cor.11:25). Further, Jesus and the apostles set us the example of keeping and teaching the Statutes (Matt.5:31-32, Matt.23:23, James 2:1-9), including the apostle Paul (1 Tim.5:18, Rom.13:8-9, 2 Cor.6:14). Further, since God's Statutes deal quite directly with the subject matter of this book, it makes investing some time with them all the more helpful.

Many people who consider themselves to be Christians have, in essence, been taught the mistaken idea that Jesus came to do away with His Father's laws. The comparatively few who realize that God's Ten Commandments are still in effect, often **pick and choose** which ones they choose to obey. Others belittle their importance by saying “works are not necessary.” Some alter the 2nd commandment to eliminate the portion of it that teaches us not to have or bow down to idols. Also, the 4th commandment – the Sabbath – is usually disregarded or “replaced” with the pagan Sunday, the day of Baal and Sun worship. Of the smaller number of people who do seek to obey the entire Decalogue, most of them consider God's Statutes to be no longer binding for people in the New Testament dispensation. Yet, interestingly, even though they don't seem to recognize it, most churches still do keep and teach a small number of God's Statutes in principle.

For example, **most teachings about loving God (Deut.6:5 & Matt.22:37), tithing (Lev.27:30 & Mal.3:7-12 & Matt.23:23), fornication (Num.25:1 & Acts 15:20), marriage and divorce (Gen.2:24 & Mal.2:14-16 & Matt.19:9), witchcraft or divination (Deut.18:10 & Gal.5:19-21), showing respect for the elderly (Lev.19:32 & 1 Tim.5:1), not being a respecter of persons (Lev.19:15 & James 2:1,9), avoiding racism (Ex.22:21 & Matt.25:44), humility (Deut.17:20 & Matt.23:12), forgiveness (Lev.19:17-18 & Matt.18:21-35), and love toward your neighbor (Lev.19:18 & 1 John 3:11), are all teachings that are rooted and founded on God's Statutes!**

While many churches and people pick and choose which of God's Ten Commandments they will teach or obey, MOST people **pick and choose** which of God's Statutes (if any) they will teach and obey.

For example, many churches still teach God's Statute of tithing (Mal.3:7-12), but they reject the other Statutes that teach us how to properly love and worship God (Deut.6:4-7 & Mark 12:29-30). Many recognize the health value in keeping God's Statutes of eating only clean, healthful meats and avoiding unclean, unhealthful meats (Lev.11), but they don't practice the Statute of teaching their children and grandchildren God's Statutes (Deut.6:17) to turn their hearts to Him (Mal.4). Some keep the Statute of God's weekly Holy Sabbath day mentioned in Lev.23:3, but they reject God's annual Holy Sabbaths and Feasts mentioned beginning with the very next verse! This is even more amazing since Jesus and the apostles both kept and taught the church to keep God's annual Holy Days (John 7:8-14 & 1 Cor.5:6-8), and God reveals them as being likened to a guiding beacon and a sign or picture, teaching us about the wonderful world to come (Ex.31:13 & Ex.37:710 & Col.2:16-17)! God's Statutes make us wiser than either our teachers or our enemies – and they teach us all how to properly and respectfully interact with God and each other (Ps.119:97-112). They teach us how to show love to our neighbor (Lev.19:18 & Mark 12:31).

Why do so many people seem to have such disdain for such a loving royal law (James 2:8 & 1 John 2:4)?

Why all the confusion about Christ supposedly doing away with God's Statutes, when both He and His disciples taught and kept them?

Why do many in God's Church show respect for and keep Deut. 5 (where God's 10 Commands are listed), but comparatively ignore Deut.4 and Deut.6,7,8,9,10,11,12, etc., (where God's Statutes are listed)?

Why do most believe only the 10 Commandments are referred to as God's "Laws" or "Commandments" in scripture – when Christ, Moses, the apostles and prophets, literally hundreds of times in scripture, also referred to God's Statutes as "God's Commandments" and "God's Laws" (Deut.4:1-2, 8, & Deut.6:1, 24-25 & Matt.19:19, James 2:8).

Why have many in the Church of God described the 10 Commandments as the foundation of God's law, and described all the Statutes as merely fleshing out the details of the Decalogue – when Jesus said ALL THE LAW AND PROPHETS HANG ON THE TWO GREAT STATUTES of love toward God and love toward neighbor (Mark 12:28-31) – not the other way around?

Why have so many relegated God's Statutes down to a seemingly lesser, redundant and therefore somewhat unnecessary law by saying God's Statutes merely expound upon the spirit of the 10 Commandments – when an honest examination of God's Statutes will

reveal that MANY or MOST of God's Statutes are not at all related to the subject matter of the Decalogue? Which of the 10 Commandments are the Statutes "expounding" when God commands men not to wear effeminate women's clothing and commands women not to wear men's masculine clothing (Deut.22:5)? Which of the 10 Commandments does the ecological Statute of species preservation "expound" by forbidding the taking both the dam and young birds together (Deut.22:6-7)? Which of the 10 Commandments does the Statute of putting a safety hand-railing around any flat roof top or high decks or parapets relate to (Deut.22:8)? While there are a few Statutes that are similar in nature to God's awesome 10 Commandments, most are not.

To say "the Statutes expound the 10 Commandments," or to say "the Statutes merely flesh in the details of the 10 Commandments," is utter nonsense. Such erroneous statements seem aimed at DE-EMPHASIZING God's Statutes by focusing on the 10 Commandments as the only portion of God's law that is really binding or important for New Testament Christians. Yet that is NOT what Christ or His disciples taught. Indeed, God said, NOT TO ADD TO, OR TAKE AWAY FROM ALL THE WORDS OF HIS LAW (Deut.4:2)!

Why do most, even in the Church of God, seem to neglect most of God's awesome, Royal Statutes – even though God said they were binding forever (Deut.4:40, 5:29, 12:28 & Matt.5:17-19) and even though God said He gave them to us out of love, and for our good (Deut.6:24)? Why?

Has God given men the authority to "pick and choose" which Statutes they will obey? If God's Statutes are not in effect today, why are they so prevalent throughout the New Testament – even right up to the end in the book of Revelation? What did Jesus say regarding His Father's Statutes?

Matt.5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did NOT come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever DOES and TEACHES them, he shall be called GREAT in the Kingdom of Heaven."

After what Jesus said, which one of the laws would you want to disobey and teach others they did not need to obey? Christ, in essence, pronounced a curse upon those who both disobey and teach others to disobey even the least of God's laws, but He pronounced a BLESSING upon those who both keep and teach them! We all want to be blessed and called "great" in God's wonderful Kingdom, don't we?

Now let's review a Statute in its New Testament application, and see how it applies to the responsibility of those in the ministry, and to others, to speak out when necessary and

protect God's flock when they witness the hurtful abuses of authority.

“If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter— if he does not tell it, he bears guilt.”(Lev.5:1)

Silence when we ought to speak is not only cowardly, it is a deceitful sin – akin to lying! Let's share a brief study of God's Word and see how to apply this Statute of God today, in the letter and in its spirit or intent. We'll even see how Jesus Himself applied this law, setting us the perfect example.

Solomon wisely said, “There is a time to speak, and a time to refrain from speaking” (Eccl.3:7). There are times when the most appropriate action to take, is no action at all. There are also times when all involved in a given matter would be better off if we were to just remain silent and mind our own business. Nobody likes a busybody, and God's Word clearly teaches us not to be busybodies (1 Pet.4:15 & Pr.26:17). But, when someone is harmed by our silence, we bear guilt! Or, if someone is not helped because of our silence, when they could have been helped if we had spoken up – that too can be sin to us.

Many of the Proverbs are simply variants of God's Statutes. Look at how this proverb so beautifully fits the principle of Lev.5:1. ***“He who is a partner with a thief hates his own life; He hears the oath but tells nothing” (Prov 29:24)***. Here a man “hears” of an evil that is hurting or will hurt someone, but he tells nothing. This proverb is based upon the principle of Lev.5:1. If a man hears an illegal or inappropriate “oath” (a promised or threatened evil) or if he is otherwise aware of some theft, but he protects the thief through his silence – God calls Him a partner in the theft! His action shows hate for his life and disrespect for the life of others.

Many have shown little regard for their own life **or that of their families** by the company they have chosen to keep, and even protect through their silence. People often like to think they are innocent, because they are not personally committing the hurtful sins they are aware of, but are ignoring or helping to hide. But God may judge those who hold silence, when it hurts others, as if they were a partner in that crime or sin!

The spirit of this law has many applications. It is not limited to the sin of theft. It is a sin to remain silent when you are certain of important facts that would help solve a case in the public interest. The spirit of this law could apply to facts that are held back, that if revealed, could help protect those in need, or even benefit someone if a person stepped forward with the truth. This is not always easy to do and may take real nerve and back bone (or should I say it requires FAITH IN GOD), to fear God more than man!

How would world history have been altered if more people had kept the spirit of this Statute during key trying periods of distress?

How would our own history in the Church of God have been different, if more

ministers and more members had kept the spirit of this Statute, when they saw with certainty, heresy coming and knew better – but they kept silent?

How many people would have been spared a lot of hurt, heartache and spiritual damage, if their shepherds or the leading brethren had taken a stand against the abuse of authority over God's elect by certain misguided ministers – instead of sinning by silence?

Didn't Paul say something about those "*who suppress (or hold back) the truth in unrighteousness*" (Rm.1:18)? It can be a sin to hold back the truth of God's Word from those who want or need it, just as much as holding back the truth from a neighbor or community in need. Love covers sin. Love also does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore there is a time to be silent and a time to refrain from silence. Lev.5:1, and other Statutes and proverbs, tell us how to know when to do which.

Prov 24:10 If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small. 11 Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. 12 If you say, "Surely we did not know this," does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?

God's laws are TRUTH and they bring TRUTH when kept (Ps.119:142).

God is watching us. If we love Him, we will love His law (1 Jn.2:4). David loved God's Statutes, and said they kept him from stumbling. Keeping them brings DEEP WISDOM (Ps.119:97-112)!

Notice the love involved in keeping Lev.5:1! Notice the lack of love for our fellow man when we selfishly do not keep this Statute. God's laws are fulfilled when we are showing love, for love is the fulfillment of the law (Rm.13:8-10).

God's Statutes are God's detailed instructions on HOW we are to show love toward our neighbor and toward God! Therefore, love dictates that we not pervert this Statute by using it as an excuse to harp on someone's personal sins or as a platform to attack those with whom we disagree. This Statute is for the public good to protect people from harm or potential danger in a brotherly neighborly way. It is not to be used to badger others for their mistakes or to become a busybody in other people's matters.

LOVE is the GUIDE! BEING HUMBLE is the WAY! GOD'S STATUTES are the detailed directions of HOW!

Each Passover season, we read passages in scripture where Jesus in His humility held His silence and did not revile in return or even speak to answer His accusers. But when adjured

by the high priest, Jesus broke His silence. Why? What made Jesus suddenly answer, when He had been so silent?

Matt 26:59 Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, 60 but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward 61 and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'" 62 And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" 63 But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" 64 Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

The answer to the question is found in verse 63, quoted above, ***"I put You under oath by the living God."*** What the high priest did by putting Christ under oath was to call Him as a witness in a public or legal proceeding, thus invoking the Statute (law) of Lev.5:1. Once the high priest did that, the law required Jesus to give witness of truth, in a legal or public sense, to the authorities.

Earlier, Jesus was not called to witness in any public or legal sense – nor did his silence hurt anyone – so He was not required to speak. He was setting us an example of humbly not reviling in return (1 Pet.2:19-23). Jesus did not, and would not sin – but once He was called to witness for the public good, He was obliged to answer, as the Statute requires. Jesus was familiar with, and kept the Statutes, setting us an example that we should follow (Jn.13:15 & 1 Pet.2:21).

Let's now review one more Statute with some similarities to Lev.5:1.

"You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am the LORD."(Lev.19:16)

The Soncino translation renders the latter part of this verse ***"you shall not stand idly by..."***

The standard Jewish translation reads: ***"...don't stand idly by when your neighbor's life is at stake."***

We are not to be talebearers, but neither should we remain silent while someone's life is ruined by untrue rumor (tale), or character attack (legally or otherwise), or by abusive authority – when we know better. We ought not stand idly by while someone is being physically or spiritually harmed, and think we are innocent! Faith without works is a dead

faith (James 2:20). It's not just that we DON'T take a stand **against** our neighbor for selfish reasons, but we are required to DO GOOD, when it is in our power to do so (Prov.3:27). God's Statute says we are not to stand idly by while someone's life is being seriously hurt when we could help! God's law requires the action of good (love), as much as it requires ceasing from doing evil. Therefore Lev.19:16 applies not only in matters where death could otherwise occur, but also in important matters of LIFE, such as when a person's well-being is being unfairly threatened in an ungodly way – including their financial well-being, their physical or spiritual welfare, their health or their reputation.

Lev.19:16, is akin, in the spirit of love, to Lev.5:1, which teaches against keeping silence, when taking a stand could significantly help someone, or a community in a legal or public case. **Keeping this Statute helps the innocent, while simultaneously putting a hamper on evil.**

Isn't this the whole principle that Jesus was teaching in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37)? The priest and the Levite did "stand idly by" or "walk by" a man whose life was in danger. In this parable, Jesus was showing in spirit, today's application of what Jesus said was one of the greatest of all the Commandments (Mark 12:31) – the Statute of Lev.19:18 – to ***"love your neighbor as yourself."*** (This is just one of many places where God and Christ refer to the Statutes as "commandments." We too would do well not to assume the word "commandment" in the Bible is only referring to the Decalogue.) All God's Statutes are love in action.

Lev.5:1 & Lev.19:16 teach us it is not neighborly to stand idly by while our neighbor's life is being harmed, when it IS in our power to help. That is not loving, and therefore it is a violation of God's laws.

Lev.5:1 & Lev.19:16 teach us it is not neighborly to keep silent, **when coming forward could help someone, while our silence could hurt them.** That is not loving. It is sin.

These Statutes were kept by Jesus, but broken by those who stood by silently at His trial.

Are we loving? Do we keep and teach God's loving Statutes, as Jesus and the apostles did?

There are times when important truths or principles are held back by silence to the hurt of God's people by the suppression of His Word – when there are people and ministers who know better, but remain silent. This is a great sin. Sometimes it is simply because we don't know better. Other times, some have confused silence with "wisdom," in order to "protect themselves." But at what cost to others, and at what cost to the truth? When shepherds are acting faithfully, they will not do that, nor will faithful leading saints! God's Word tells us to come out of Babylon, and for some to be like billy-goats or "rams" among the flock, helping protect them in the absence of a faithful shepherd (Jer.50:8). On our own, it is hard

to know when to do what. But God's Statutes are love in action, lighting our path. They let us know what to do and what not to do. With faith, they are GREAT STRENGTH! They teach us the wisdom that we need in life, and in keeping them there is great reward (Ps.19:8-11).

If you want to know more about the love and wisdom of God's awesome Statutes, and how they were taught by Jesus and the apostles – and HOW THEY APPLY TODAY, check the “GOD'S STATUTES & TESTIMONIES” section of our website.

LORD, please write your Statutes and Testimonies on our hearts, and strengthen us with your love, your grace, and your powerful Holy Spirit.