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Eating Blood and the New Covenant!

"Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything. But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." (Genesis 9:1-6)

In Genesis 1:29-30 we see that man was created to be a vegetarian. Now, however, God added meat to our diet, with a few restrictions. Though today we are able to eat any kind of meat (Acts 10:10-11:7); at this point Noah was only allowed to eat clean animals.

Not only this, but any meat that was eaten was not to have the lifeblood in it (Lev 17:12). Blood is a very important substance as, scientifically and Biblically speaking, it indeed appears to be where life resides. Leviticus gives us further insight into why blood was not to be eaten: "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life"

(Lev 17:11). In other words, if the blood makes atonement for our life and the blood is life, it was the life of the animals that made atonement for our lives under the old covenant law. The animal's blood (life) covered our sinfulness and made atonement for us. This also foreshadowed the ultimate sacrifice to come: "Nor did He [Jesus] enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood [life] that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him" (Heb 9:25-28). Christ's blood (life) was shed once for all (Rom 6:10) to cover our sins permanently, so that the life of animals was no longer needed to preserve our lives.

We see how Satan attempts to distort God's Word today, and in the past. Scripture states that the life is in the blood. The word for life is nephesh, which is "soul." Therefore, our soul is in the blood or our soul is our life. Many following the ways of evil have put into practice in various rituals, the drinking of blood, in hopes that the life or characteristics of that blood would be incorporated into one's own. We see here that this is clearly sinful, and a tool of the devil.

There is one more interesting point dealing with eating meat with blood in it. We often say that the Old Testament laws are not necessary for us today, since we live under the New Covenant of Christ. Indeed, we need not follow these laws for salvation (although we will follow them anyway out of love and devotion); however, what we just read in Genesis is not from the Levitical law which was, in a sense, revoked by the resurrection of Christ. When the Gentiles in the New Testament were being brought into

the church this is what was required of them: "It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood" (Acts 15:19-20; also Acts 21:25). Even in the New Testament era we would do well to abstain from the lifeblood, just as it was stated to Noah.

Let us examine the Acts 15 passage in more depth. The Gentile believers were to abstain from four things: 1) food sacrificed to idols 2) sexual immorality 3) strangled animals 4) and blood. All four of these have a common bond, that being all of them deal with unity or "oneness" with someone or something. First, food sacrificed to idols would be like having communion with false gods. When a sacrifice to Baal or any other god was done, the food was then eaten and you partook of a communion meal with that god. When we think about it, Christ was a "food" sacrificed to the true God. Today we still celebrate this and participate in this ritual in our communion practice. When eating the "bread of life" we take in Christ's flesh and blood into our bodies, becoming one with Him. We read in John, "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the Bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this Bread will live forever" (John 6:54-58). To have this kind of "fellowship" with anything or anyone but Christ would be a grave error.

Second, sexual immorality would also go against the oneness reserved only for Christ. "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one Husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him" (2 Cor 11:2). This is why we

see the parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22 and the final fulfillment of this parable in Revelation: “For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)” (Rev 19:7-8). The Scriptures make it clear that to have sexual relations with someone means to become ONE with them since, “the two became one flesh” (Matt 19:5). We also see this truth in Corinthians where we read, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ Himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with Him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” (1 Cor 6:15-19). Therefore, sexual immorality compromises our unity or oneness in Christ just as food sacrificed to idols did.

Third, not eating meat with blood in it and abstaining from strangled animals are one and the same. An animal that is strangled does not have all of its blood drained properly and, therefore, to eat of this animal would be to eat of its blood. As discussed above, the life is in the blood and, therefore, you are partaking of the nephesh of someone or something other than Christ. This is why Christ’s blood is reserved for us. In communion His blood or nephesh (soul) is taken in, and unity takes place. As seen earlier, “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him” (John 6:56; see also I Cor 11:27). Therefore, all of these commands to the Gentile church deal with the compromising of oneness in Christ. We are to be one with only One.

We must remember that these commands were given to Noah

before the Levitical law was instituted. Noah was given permission to eat meat, and so is the New Testament church (Rom 14; 1 Tim 4:3-4; Acts 10:15). Also, the act of capital punishment was laid out here in verse six and this, too, is accepted in the New Testament church (Acts 25:11; Rom 13:4). This is not to say that capital punishment is always the answer, because in many New and Old Testament examples God forgave men of their sins and did not kill them. The attitude of the heart needs to be measured and true repentance must exist.

Many other similarities exist between the relationship that Noah had with God and the relationship that we have with Christ today. We often feel that Noah, Adam and Abraham lived in the Old Testament and, therefore, under an old covenant. However, this is not the case. Even though the Levitical laws do not apply to us today (although some are still good rules to follow), the Noahic laws seem to still be in effect as they came under a covenant somewhat unknown. We read in Hebrews, “Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 6:20). Melchizedek was a priest of Salem (Jerusalem) in the time of Abraham and of whom we know little about. It is said that he was greater than Abraham since he blessed Abraham. In fact, Abraham even gave Melchizedek a tenth as a tithe showing Melchizedek's superiority. It is said that Melchizedek was “without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever” (Heb 7:3).

Because of the above passage some believe Melchizedek was Jesus in another form. Just like the Angel of Lord who appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Often time this Angel of the Lord was worshipped showing that He was no ordinary angel, rather God Himself. Sometimes the Angel of the Lord is even called the LORD. Therefore, one might say that these patriarchs had a personal relationship with the Lord through Christ in a different

form. It is as if those from the time of Noah to Abraham lived in a period of grace, not salvation by law as those under the Levitical priesthood. They were, “in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron” (Heb 7:11). This can only mean that Abraham, Noah and Adam knew a priesthood just like we do today. After all, what was Melchizedek doing in Jerusalem anyway. At this time in history, there were none of God's called people in that city. All of the Israelites were still in the body of Abraham. This priesthood was, therefore, not just for the Jews but for the Gentiles as well. Perhaps that is why we read of Abraham, “If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness” (Rom 4:2-5). Also, “We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised” (Rom 4:9-11). And, “The words ‘it was credited to him’ were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rom 4:23-24). Therefore, Adam and Noah were saved through faith in God and in Christ as the coming Messiah, just as we too are saved through faith.

Therefore, the Noahic commands were given in a type of New Covenant relationship and thus these commands here are also meaningful in our lives today. We must stop looking at these Old Testament passages as simply Sunday School stories. They are much more. Viewing this "new" aspect of the Noahic Covenant puts a different perspective on the Old Testament. It is still very applicable for us today.