

THE HANDWRITING OF ORDINANCES

Many have falsely assumed that Jesus Christ nailed God's law to the stake.

They regard what the apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 2:14 as solid scriptural evidence to support their belief.

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Bible critics claim the handwriting of ordinances refer to the Ten Commandments. And Christ nailed it to His cross.

If Paul was referring to the Ten Commandments, why did he use such an unusual expression as "handwriting of ordinances?" Why did he not simply say "The Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross?"

Because Paul was not talking about the Ten Commandments at all. The Ten Commandments and the handwriting of ordinances are NOT the same thing.

We know what the Ten Commandments are. You can find them in Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

But, what did Paul mean by "handwriting of ordinances"?

The original Greek word "handwriting" means "a handwritten note or bond of indebtedness." In our modern English, it means a promissory note or an IOU.

The Greek word "ordinances" means "decrees or commandments."

The whole expression in English should be translated as "the note of indebtedness in the decrees or commandments." As a result, some have falsely concluded that ORDINANCES refers to God's law, the Ten Commandments!

However, the Ten Commandments are SPIRITUAL (Romans 7:14). They are eternal. They endure forever (Psalms 111:7-8). So they cannot be blotted out, erased, wiped out or done away with.

If they are not the Ten Commandments, exactly what ordinances was Paul talking about? The answer is in verse 20 of Colossians 2.

20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,

21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;

22 Which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

These ordinances or decrees were mandated by men and not those commanded by God.

Before they were called, the Colossian Church had kept these same pagan ordinances. Human religious regulations, restrictions and decrees, distorting the laws of God.

They had broken God's commandments. They sinned!

And Paul was concerned that the Colossian Church was going back to its former pagan ways.

"You were dead in Christ to the rudiments or regulations of the world. You've come out of all that. You're free from all of that. You know the truth now. So don't bind yourselves once again to those ordinances of touch not, taste not and handle not."

Before we were called to God's truth, we also followed those same man-decreed ordinances. So, we kept the commandments of men and not the commandments of God.

We sinned.

The penalty of sin was DEATH! So death now had a claim on our lives.

We owed God a debt! But Christ redeemed us. He paid the note of indebtedness because of sin FOR us!

When God called us, we acknowledged we were wrong. And so, when we repented of our sins, we accepted Christ's payment for those sins. And, God forgave us. The penalty of death was removed.

We were now at peace with God. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ blotted out, wiped away, erased that note of indebtedness. THAT note of OUR indebtedness—our IOU, the promissory note we owed God because of our sins—was nailed to the cross.

Not the Ten Commandments!

The Bible clearly lays out proof after indisputable proof that the Ten Commandments are still in force and effect long after the crucifixion.

Around 56 AD—25 years after the crucifixion—the apostle Paul wrote that he did not know what sin was, except by the law which clearly commanded “You shall not covet” (Romans 7:7).

In 90 AD, long after the crucifixion of Christ, the apostle John wrote that sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4)!

So then what was nailed to the stake?

The Bible clearly reveals that it was the figurative note of our guilt, the record of our sins—the handwriting of ordinances—for following the traditions of men rather than the commandments of God, which Christ blotted out and paid the penalty Himself through the sacrifice of His own life.

So now, we are reconciled with God. And if we hold fast to His law of righteousness all the way to end, we will be saved.

And we will enter into the glorious Kingdom of God that is soon coming.