Q&A

Church of the Eternal God
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Is the Old Covenant still in force and effect today?

There were, in fact, numerous "Old Testament" covenants. Our free booklet, "And Lawlessness Will Abound...", explains the different Old Testament covenants in detail. Bible scholars sometimes refer to "the Old Covenant," but when they do, they basically talk about the covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai, as described in Exodus 19. When Israel broke that first "old" covenant, by worshipping a golden calf, God made a new "old" covenant with Israel (Exodus 34:10, NIV). Later, God made a third "old" covenant with the younger generation of Israel, in Moab, just prior to their entering the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 29). By that time, the sacrificial system, which was added due to Israel's sins, had become part of that covenant made at Moab. When scholars use the term, "the Old Covenant," they include the sacrificial system that was added and became part of the package, as Israel broke the laws on which the original first "old" covenant (in Exodus 19) was based. A covenant is an agreement between parties based on law. When one party breaks the agreement, the other party is no longer bound by that agreement, either. God says that because they did not keep the Old Covenants (mainly the ones described in Exodus 19, Exodus 34, and Deuteronomy 29), He "disregarded " them (Hebrews 8:9). He did, in fact, divorce them and sent them away (Jeremiah 3:8).

Because Israel, being carnal, could not and did not keep the Old Covenant(s), God began to build a New Covenant relationship with His people whom He would call. Some Old Testament personalities already lived under New Covenant conditions, as we do today (such as Abraham, Moses, David, etc.). However, this does not mean that all of the Old Testament covenants are still in force and effect today, even for physical Israel (although certain LAWS, including the Ten Commandments, as well as certain statutes and judgments, that had been part of the Old Covenants, clearly are still in force and effect, as explained in our booklet, "And Lawlessness Will Abound...").

Some say that the "Old Covenant" has not yet vanished away. However, Hebrews 8:13 states: "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He HAS MADE the first OBSOLETE." In the next part of the sentence Paul explains what the word "obsolete" means: "What is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." But he does not say here that the "old" is BECOMING obsolete -- rather, he just said that God "HAS MADE IT" already obsolete. The Authorized Version translates this as "he hath made the first old." W.E. Vine explains that the Greek word for "old," i.e. palaioo, means, "shall be made old" or "worn out" and may have the meaning of "to abrogate."

Most translations agree with the New King James Version, that the word should be translated here as "obsolete." The NIV, RSV, NRSV, Revised English Bible, New American Bible, Rotherham, Goodspeed, Twentieth Century NT, and Amplified New Testament, all translate, "obsolete." Berkeley says, "he puts the first out of date." Knox writes: "he has superannuated the old." Moffat states: "he antiquates the old."

This understanding is correct, as God abolished the previous old covenants with the nation of Israel because Israel broke the covenants, and because certain laws on which the covenants were based were changed or abolished -- i.e., the rituals and sacrificial laws, among others. Paul is mainly talking about rituals and sacrifices in Hebrews 8:13, as part of the "Old Covenant" system. But when Paul wrote his letter to the Hebrews, sacrifices were no longer required -- not even for the nation of Judah. Paul was telling them that the temple would soon be destroyed, and that then they could not even give the sacrifices anymore (although they did not have to be given anyway, since Christ, the Supreme Sacrifice, died once and for all, proving that sacrifices cannot perfect the ones who offer them, Hebrews 10:1-9). Hebrews 10:9 says that

God "TAKES AWAY THE FIRST THAT HE MAY ESTABLISH THE SECOND."

The sacrifices, that were no longer required, but that were still given by the Jews at that time would be vanishing away. Paul explained to them that the whole sacrificial system had already become obsolete in any event -- that it was no longer necessary, but "taken away." The Nelson Study Bible explains: "At the time the author of Hebrews wrote these words, the ceremonies of the Mosaic covenant were still being conducted in the temple of Jerusalem. In A.D. 70, the Roman general Titus destroyed the temple, fulfilling these words."

If it were true that the "Old Covenant(s)" were still valid today for the modern nations of Israel and Judah, then the Israelites and Jews -- unconverted and converted -- would have to abide by all the laws that are mentioned in those Old Testament covenants, including sacrifices, circumcision, ritual washings, etc. However, it is made clear in the New Testament that circumcision and the sacrificial system, as well as certain other rituals, are no longer binding. In the future, sacrifices will be reinstated, at least on a temporary basis, but GOD will NOT reinstate the Old Testament sacrificial SYSTEM. That is, the sacrifices before (Daniel 12:11) and in the Millennium (Ezekiel 40:38-43) are not those which were part of the old covenants with the nations of Israel and Judah. The New Testament tells us that the sacrifices, as a part of the Old Testament system, are no longer valid. The Levites will still officiate over sacrifices, but these sacrifices will not be given pursuant to the same system that existed in the Old Testament, under Moses. As our booklet "And Lawlessness Will Abound..." points out, there are other ritual laws which were part of the Old Testament covenants with the nations of Israel and Judah, which are no longer valid, either. This means, the Old Testament covenants with the nations of Israel and Judah are no longer valid, as Israel broke them, and as certain LAWS on which the Old Testament covenants were based, are NO LONGER VALID. However, there are SOME Old Testament covenants, which ARE still valid today. Our above-mentioned booklet explains which ones they are.

In conclusion, Hebrews 8:13 very clearly teaches that the "Old Covenant" or "Old Covenants" of Exodus 19, 34 and Deuteronomy 29, that were made with the unconverted nations of Israel and Judah, are no longer valid.