

The Scope of the Covenants: Is Christ's New Covenant Only for Christians?

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Introduction

In the early 1950s W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett were disturbing churches with their hobby that drew a distinction between *gospel* and *doctrine*. They alleged that only the “gospel” of the New Testament as they defined it (i.e., the plan of salvation) applied to alien sinners, and that the “doctrine” of the New Testament as they defined it (i.e., all of the remainder of the New Testament) applied only to Christians. They made this artificial distinction primarily in an attempt to legitimize their contention that it was sinful for a preacher to serve with a single congregation over an extended period of time (commonly called the “anti-located preacher” hobby). (Of course, they alone were qualified to determine what an “extended period of time” was!) In 1954 the late E.C. Fuqua affirmed in a written debate with Thomas B. Warren that non-Christians are not under Christian law and that the world is in no sense under any Law of Christ.¹

In the mid-1970s the late James D. Bales, long-time Bible professor at Harding University, began publicly asserting that only those who are “in the covenant” are accountable to its precepts (although he admits that he had held this position, at least in some of its parts, as early as the 1940s).² Since alien sinners are not “in the covenant,” they are not accountable to the law of Christ, he argued in several books he published, beginning in 1979 and in at least two written debates in the early 1980s. Dan Billingsly, who likewise denies that the alien sinner is accountable to the Law or Covenant of Christ, has widely circulated his views through radio programs, periodicals, and several oral debates, since about 1981. Beginning with the contentions of E.C. Fuqua and continuing to the present, the principal application of this novel doctrine has been to Divine Law on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. While the above-named men have not all agreed in every particular and do not use identical terminology, they are in agreement concerning one significant contention: The alien sinner is not accountable to the Law of Christ. They all assert that alien sinners are accountable to one law system, while only saints of God are accountable to the New Testament. This distinction may be charted as follows:³

NAMES OF TEACHERS

DIVISIONS OF LAW

	SINNERS	SAINTS
Ketcherside, Garrett	Doctrine only	Gospel only
Fuqua	Civil law	Law of Christ
Bales	Law in the heart, entrance requirements for sinners	Covenant law for the church
Billingsly	Great moral law— sinners invited to obey law of salvation	Covenant law of Christ for the NT church

Many dire, drastic, and destructive implications and consequences inhere in the view that alien sinners are not accountable to the law of Christ, some of which I will demonstrate and discuss in this chapter. While it is not possible for one human being to perfectly judge the motives of another, I strongly suspect that many have found it convenient to deny that alien sinners are accountable to the New Testament because of the implications of this doctrine concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage. They are seeking a way to relax what they perceive to be the Lord's overly strict legislation on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. I once was actually told by a fellow-preacher that, due to the large percentage of men and women who are in adulterous marriages, if we did not find some way to "reinterpret" Matthew 19:9 besides the "traditional" interpretation, we would soon run out of anyone whom we could urge to obey the Gospel without their having to dissolve their marriage! Could it be that he was more honest than many others dare to be?

I will begin by setting forth a summary of the major contentions of those who deny that alien sinners are accountable to the New Covenant of Christ, with a brief response to each of them.

Some Basic Assertions of the *Non-Amenability* Argument

The space limitations of this chapter will not allow a detailed statement of the various arguments that are made in an effort to deny that alien sinners are subject to the Law of Christ (i.e., the New Testament). However, the following assertions are perhaps the most common ones and are sufficient for one to grasp the salient points of the contention:

1. The law of Moses was given only to Israel, was not addressed to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles who lived during its authority were not subject to it nor will they be judged by it. In like manner, the law of Christ is addressed only to the church, is not addressed to alien sinners who have lived since the death of Christ, and they are not subject to it nor will they be judged by it.

2. Alien sinners who have lived since the cross are accountable to some God-ordained law, else they could not be sinners (Rom. 4:15; 5:13). They are under “civil law” and/or “ecclesiastical law” (Fuqua), “the law in the heart” (Bales), or “the great moral law” (Billingsly) until they obey the Gospel plan of salvation. Those who die as alien sinners will be judged, not by the Law of Christ (the Gospel), but by one of the aforementioned respective law systems (depending on which teacher one follows).
3. The word *covenant* means a multilateral contract between two or more persons or entities, which is binding only on those who agree to its terms. Since alien sinners do not “agree” to keep the covenant of Christ they are therefore not bound by it.
4. That alien sinners are not bound by the law of Christ is demonstrated in the fact that alien sinners are not commanded to repent and pray for forgiveness of their sins (Acts 8:22), observe the Lord’s supper (Acts 20:7), or give their money into the church treasury (1 Cor. 16:1–2), and such like.
5. God’s laws pertaining to marriage, divorce, and remarriage (Mat. 5:31–32; 19:9; Rom. 7:1–4; 1 Cor. 7:1–40) were addressed only to believers, those who are “in the covenant.” Since neither Christ nor Paul addressed their legislation to alien sinners, they are not accountable to those laws.

Response to the Foregoing “Basic Assertions”

So that the reader may follow my responses to the basic assertions listed above, I will discuss them in the order of their appearance:

Is the New Testament binding only on the church?

True, the Covenant God gave through Moses (the Law of Moses) was addressed only to Israel (Exo. 25:22). However, it is not Scripturally precise to say that Gentiles were in no way subject to it. The “stranger” (Gentile) that lived in Israel (the domain of God) as a sojourner was most certainly obligated to obey the law, even though he was not actually a part of God’s nation of Israel (12:48–49; 20:10; Num. 9:14; 15:14; et al.). In other words, there was only one law for both Israel and the sojourner within her borders. While the Law of Moses was primarily a national law for Israel alone, the Law of Christ is not merely national, but universal in its scope (Mat. 28:19–20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46–47; Acts 1:8). The **whole world** is the field in which the seed of the kingdom (the Gospel, the Law of Christ) is to be sown (Mat. 13:37) and over which the Christ reigns (Mat. 28:18; 1 Tim 6:14–16). Thus all of mankind in the world must be accountable to the Law of Christ, or it would be pointless to take it to them. “But,” someone objects, “if this is so it makes aliens in the world citizens in the kingdom of Christ.” Not so! A Canadian does not become a citizen of the United States by merely crossing the border into the United States. However, while he is within the territorial boundaries of the United States he is accountable to United States law. Since the “territory” of the domain of Christ includes the entire

world, all who are in the world are thereby accountable, amenable to His Law (Acts 10:34–35; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 6:14–16).

Alien sinners are under what law?

If it were true that aliens are not accountable to the Law of Christ, then it would follow that they will not be judged by that law. What Paul stated in Romans 3:19 about the Law of Moses is true in principle concerning any system of law: “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it speaketh to them that are under the law.” In an effort to be consistent, those who deny that alien sinners are accountable to the Law of Christ must find some other “law system” besides the Law of Christ to which aliens are accountable and by which they will be judged. As already noted, various teachers have suggested various standards, which I will briefly consider in turn.

1. Fuqua actually suggested two standards—“civil law” and “ecclesiastical law.” True, God has ordained civil government and men are obligated to obey civil law as long as it does not conflict with Divine law (Acts 5:29; Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–15). Men will therefore be called to account by the Lord in the Judgment if they disobey civil law and do not repent of it, but this is hardly the same as the concept that one will be judged by civil law. Fuqua invented “ecclesiastical law” as a standard of judgment in an effort to cover those who confessed Christ, but who were in religious error.
2. Bales took Paul’s phrase, “the law written in their hearts” (Rom. 2:15) and manufactured an unwritten, instinctive system of moral guidance, which he confuses with conscience.⁴ However, if one will carefully notice the context of Romans 2:14–15, he will observe two facts, both of which expose the Bales “law in the heart” contention: (1) the Law of Moses was the law under consideration in these two verses, not some other imaginary unwritten law; it was the **work** of the Law of Moses that was written in the hearts of the Gentiles; (2) the ones under discussion in these verses were Gentiles who lived while the Law of Moses was still in force, **before** Christ died and nailed it to His cross (Col. 2:14); thus Paul’s description of Gentiles in Romans 2:14–15 does not apply to any who have lived since the death of Christ. Bales’ “law in the heart” is unmitigated fantasy (he was challenged for years to produce a copy of it, but never did), but, according to his doctrine, it is by this figment that the impenitent alien sinner who has lived since Pentecost will be judged at last.
3. Billingsly calls his system of law for alien sinners the “great moral law,” which he also identifies with “the law of sin and death” and “the law written in the heart” (as Bales):

This law of sin and death was revealed to Adam in his transgression. The knowledge of good and evil came to the human race through Adam, and has been passed on to each succeeding generation. This moral law, this knowledge of good and evil, is the Divine law of God, which has ruled over every generation in the absence of covenant law.... Aliens will be accountable for their sins against God as revealed in the law of sin and death.... The only universal law known by all is the moral law of sin and death written in the heart of all men (Gen. 2; Rom. 1–8).⁵

While God most certainly has a moral law which reflects His perfect moral nature, I deny that it came to man through Adam's transgression and has since been passed on as some sort of innate guidance system (which Billingsly sometimes identifies with the conscience, per Bales). No man can know the way God expects him to behave in either moral or religious matters without His revelation of His will (Jer. 10:23; 2 Tim. 3:16–17). Rather than having some inborn system of moral law as Billingsly alleges, Paul, speaking as a representative of all men, said that he would not have had knowledge of sin apart from God's revealed law. God's law for man since the death of Christ has been the universal Law of Christ, which contains all of God's law for all men, including His moral law. Note also that Billingsly asserts that it is to his mythical innate "moral law" that aliens are accountable, and, by implication, by which they will be judged. Note finally that Billingsly conceives of his "great moral law" (rather than the Law of Christ) as the only universal law, which contention at least borders on blasphemy against the Gospel and the Christ who died to empower it. Billingsly has been repeatedly challenged to produce a copy of his "great moral law" which, of course **he cannot do because it does not exist** as he conceives of God's moral law (i.e., an instinctive moral guide that is separate from and other than the Law of Christ).

I have shown that the alternate systems of law set forth by those who deny that alien sinners are amenable to the Law of Christ are imaginary, mythical, fictional, and thus, anti-Biblical systems. Further, I must emphasize that **all men** (including alien sinners) who have lived since the cross will be judged by one standard—the Law of Christ. The Lord made this plain: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings [words, KJV], hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Surely, it is clear that Jesus is describing all who reject Him and His Word, including both apostate disciples and alien sinners. If aliens who have lived since the cross are not accountable to the Law of Christ (per Fuqua, Bales, Billingsly), but will be judged by it nonetheless (John 12:48), then these men make of the Lord a cruel and unjust Judge indeed! No! Those who reject Christ by rejecting His Word (whether Christians or non-Christians) will **still** be judged by that very Word!

Do God's covenants require man's agreement?

One of the most crucial and fundamental errors of the belief system I am reviewing in this chapter (especially Billingslyism) is a false assumption concerning the meaning of *covenant* when it pertains to God-given covenants with men. That the common dictionary definition of a covenant between men (i.e., a contract which is binding only upon those parties which agree to its terms) does not apply to Divine-human covenants is apparent from the following brief overview of God's covenants with men in the Bible that demonstrates the true nature and

definition of Divine-human covenants. The following chart should help the reader see the way the Scriptures use and define *covenant*:

The Way Scripture Uses and Defines Covenant

1. God **establishes** His covenants with men (Gen. 6:18; 9:9)
2. Ten Commandments called “covenant” (Exod. 19:5; 34:27–28; Deut. 4:13; Heb. 9:4)
3. *Covenant* and *law* used interchangeably (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16)
4. “Covenant” described as “statute,” “ordinance” (Josh. 24:25)
5. “Covenant” is **commanded** (Josh. 23:16; Deut. 4:13; Heb. 9:20)
6. God **gives** a covenant (Acts 7:8)
7. God **makes** a covenant (Deut. 5:2; Acts 3:25; Heb. 8:8, 10; 10:16)

Summary

1. God’s covenant to man was/is a sovereign dispensing of grace
2. Man must obey God to receive the grace
3. If man rejects the covenant, he is punished
4. Bilateral, but only in the sense that two parties are involved—God and man
5. Unilateral in the sense that God alone determines blessings and conditions
6. Man is unilaterally amenable, whether he agrees to obey or rejects God’s covenant⁶

God’s covenant with Israel was simply a way of referring to the commandments and the law He delivered to Israel (Jos. 23:16; Heb. 9:19–20). The New Covenant is also defined as the “law of God” (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16). It is therefore evident that the inspired writers used *covenant* to refer to the authoritative Law of God which He gave to men and to which they were accountable, whether or not they agreed to keep it.

Standard reference works of uninspired writers (Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, and word studies) reflect the Biblical use and definition of *covenant* as demonstrated above.

The following chart provides a sampling of said definitions and explanations:⁷

The Way Various Authorities Define Covenant

1. “A *diatheke* is a will that distributes one’s property after death according to the owner’s wishes. **It is completely unilateral**....(emph. DM)”⁸
2. “A **one-sided disposition** imposed by a superior party (emph. DM).”⁹
3. “As man is not in the position of an independent covenanting party, **such a covenant is not strictly a mutual compact**...(emph. DM).”¹⁰
4. “It advises us again how **alien to the covenant-concept** is any notion of compact or **contract between two parties**. The thought of **bilateral agreement is wholly excluded** (emph. DM).”¹¹

5. “*Covenant* in the strict sense, **as requiring two independent contracting parties, cannot apply to a covenant between God and man** (emph. DM.)”¹²
6. “In its Biblical meaning of a compact or agreement between two parties, the word **covenant is used**—1. Properly, of a covenant between man and man..., 2. **Improperly, of a covenant between God and man** (emph. EM).”¹³

Why do these authorities give this definition to Divine-human covenants? Because the Scriptures demonstrate this definition so clearly that it is demanded. God’s covenants have always been the expression of His plan, His will, His order, His law, His commandments. God created man as a creature of free will who could choose to obey or reject His will, but who is still amenable to it in either case (John 12:48). Those living in rebellion to the Law of Christ (i.e., alien sinners) are no less accountable to His law just because they do not “agree” with its terms or conditions. As I earlier emphasized, to argue otherwise would be parallel to arguing that one who is not an American citizen and who rejects American laws is thereby not accountable to them while he resides within American territory.

Does The Fact That Aliens—As Aliens—Are Not To Keep Certain Points of The Law of Christ Imply That They Are Not Amenable to It?

Both Bales and Billingsly give a great amount of emphasis to answering the foregoing question in the affirmative. They apparently believe it is a powerful and compelling assertion. It has admittedly confused some, and these men like to play as fully as possible on that confusion. It is evident, of course, even to a novice in the Scriptures, that aliens—**as aliens**—are not to repent and pray in hope of forgiveness of their sins, as are saints (Acts 8:22). Nor are aliens in a position to Scripturally partake of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7). Bales and Billingsly believe that such illustrations prove that aliens are not under **any** of the Law of Christ, but of course, it does not. Let us test the assertion.

The following principle of application of any system of law to specific individuals has long been understood: One may be unable (due to certain prerequisite conditions) to obey every single statute in a given body of law, but may nevertheless be accountable to that body of law as a whole. Consider the following examples:

1. Our Lord was not in a position to be a priest under the Law of Moses because He was of the tribe of Judah instead of Levi (Heb. 7:14; 8:4). Therefore, the statutes concerning priests did not **directly** apply to Him. Did this mean that He was not amenable to the Law of Moses as a whole? Absolutely not—He was “born under the law” (Gal. 4:4).
2. There are certain statutes in the Texas Code of Law that apply **only** to state legislators. I have not fulfilled the prerequisites (i.e., by becoming a state legislator) that make those specific regulations apply **directly** to me. This fact does not mean that I am not accountable to the body of law of the state of Texas as a whole, however.

3. Jewish women were answerable to the Mosaic covenant as a whole. However, the commandment of circumcision did not **directly** apply to them because they did not (and could not) meet the prerequisite condition—being male.

One might almost endlessly list such illustrations, but the force of them all would be the same as those above. Just because a specific commandment of the Law of Christ does not **directly** apply to an alien sinner, it does not follow that he therefore is not accountable to the Law of Christ in its entirety.

I would also have the reader see that the old adage, *That which proves too much, proves nothing*, is true of the contention we are now examining. Let us grant for the moment that, because one or a few commandments of the Lord's New Covenant do not **directly** apply to the alien sinner, he is thereby not accountable to any of it. Will the advocates of this doctrine apply the same principle to Christians, who, they insist, are not only amenable to the New Covenant in its fullness, but that they are the **only** ones who are? I think not, for when they do they will, **by the same reasoning**, destroy the amenability of every **Christian** to the Covenant of Christ. This would render the New Testament an absolutely useless piece of Divine Legislation, for no one on the face of the earth (either aliens or saints) would be accountable to it. Consider the following examples:

1. Christian wives are no less accountable to the New Covenant **as a whole** regardless of the fact that they are not (and never will be) in a position to obey, "Husbands, love your wives" (Eph. 5:25), a specific command of said covenant.
2. Christian bachelors are no less accountable to the New Covenant **as a whole** regardless of the fact that they are not in a position to fulfill the mandate, "The bishop therefore must be...the husband of one wife..." (1 Tim. 3:2), a specific statute of the Law of Christ.
3. Christians are no less accountable to the New Covenant **as a whole** regardless of the fact that they are not **directly** addressed by the New Testament command, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins..." (Acts 22:16).

If the fact that an alien sinner is not **directly** addressed by the command to repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:22) (a part of the Law of Christ) means that he is not accountable to any of it, then consistency demands that the same principle must be applied to the Christian and his accountability to the Law of Christ. The application to Christians of the Bales/Billingsly contention concerning alien sinners and "covenant amenability" illustrates the absurdity and falseness of their contention concerning alien sinners.

Does God's marriage, divorce, and remarriage law apply only to aliens?

Do Matthew 5:31–32, 19:3–9, and 1 Corinthians 7 apply to any besides Christians? That is, are these passages universal in their application, thereby embracing alien sinners and

saints? As already demonstrated, Bales and Billingsly deny that alien sinners are under the New Testament at all (except, of course, what they call the “entrance requirements”), thus excluding them from any accountability to the Lord’s teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The case I have already set forth demonstrating that alien sinners are accountable to the Law of Christ demands the conclusion that alien sinners are therefore subject to Christ’s laws concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage. However, I want to provide more information concerning why Matthew 19:9, the most-often attacked passage on this subject, cannot be restricted merely to Christians. I submit the following list as compelling reasons why we should understand Matthew 19:9 as universal language, thus binding upon alien sinners and upon Christians as well:

1. Jesus used universal language: “Whosoever shall put away his wife....”
2. Jesus clearly includes more than Christians, because He originally spoke it to Jews.
3. Jesus rooted His teaching in God’s Law which had been in effect from “the beginning” (Mat. 19:4, 8), before He made any “covenant people” distinction through Moses’ Law.
4. Jesus reinforced God’s all-time, universal law of marriage—one man, one woman, bound to each other by God for life (Gen. 2:24), only adding the one Divinely-allowed exception of fornication. The statement of this exception in no wise affects those to whom it applies.
5. Universal language must be allowed to be absolutely universal unless (1) something in the immediate context limits it, (2) it is qualified by some remote context, or (3) it is impossible or illogical to understand it in an absolutely universal sense. Neither of the latter two conditions are true of Matthew 19:9. While Jesus does exclude certain ones (vv. 10–12), I believe He does so (as explained below) in an employment of strong irony to actually emphasize that there really are **no exceptions** to His Legislation. Thus there are **no** valid reasons for rejecting the absolutely universal application of Jesus’ Law.
6. The only ones not able to receive His teaching (thus excepted by Jesus from His Legislation) are eunuchs, who are not candidates for marriage (vv. 11–12). The effect of His statement is to emphasize that **all married or marriageable persons** are subject to His Law.
7. Jesus used **whosoever** in an absolutely—and indisputably—universal sense in the nearby context of Matthew 18:4, making it most unlikely that he meant something less than universal in Matthew 19:9.
8. Jesus gave similar legislation in Matthew 5:32, in which He used the two universal terms, *everyone* and *whosoever* with no contextual qualifications.
9. If Jesus had intended to make His statement in Matthew 19:9 universal, how better could He have done so than by the use of the universal terminology He employed?
10. There is no reason why the Lord’s Legislation on marriage, divorce, and remarriage should be for Christians only when separate standards do not exist for alien sinners and saints on other moral issues (murder, lying, theft, et al.) (1 Cor. 6:9–11).

Some argue, however, that since 1 Corinthians was addressed to the church, what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians (1) must apply to Christians only and (2) could not apply to aliens. None will question that Paul addressed his epistle to the church in Corinth. I am even quite willing to admit that Paul was addressing Christians on the subject of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7. However, this does not in itself necessarily exclude the application of these things to aliens as well, which is what Bales and Billingsly must prove. When one is addressing a specific group of people he may say what is appropriate to them and mention only them in the context without necessarily excluding others to whom his words may apply. Paul teaches that those who belong to Christ will be resurrected at His coming, without mentioning that those who do not belong to Christ will also be resurrected at that time (1 Cor. 15:23). Are we therefore to conclude (with the annihilationists) that the unrighteous will not be raised since they are not mentioned in this context? One is mistaken to so conclude because Jesus taught elsewhere that the righteous and the unrighteous will be raised simultaneously (John 5:28–29).

Further, I have shown that (1) alien sinners are accountable to the covenant of Christ in general and (2) that Jesus' teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage is universal legislation. Thus, while 1 Corinthians 7 is specifically addressed to Christians (because they were the ones who asked the questions to which Paul responded), Paul's teaching applies to aliens as well.

Some Affirmative Arguments Proving That Alien Sinners Are Accountable to the Law of Christ

In the previous section I provided negative responses to the assertion that alien sinners are not under the covenant of Christ, but that they are under some sort of unwritten, unrevealed, innate moral law. I now turn to some affirmative arguments to prove that alien sinners are accountable to the Law of Christ. I will set these forth in chart form:

One Part—All Parts Principle

1. If all men who are answerable to part of a body of law are answerable to said body of law as a whole, and if all men are commanded to repent and be baptized as a part of the Law of Christ, then it follows that all men are answerable to the Law of Christ as a whole.
2. All men (a) who are answerable to part of a body of law are answerable to said body of law as a whole (Gal. 5:3; Jas. 2:10), and all men (b) are commanded to repent and be baptized as a part of the Law of Christ (Acts 2:38).
3. **Therefore**, all men are answerable to the Law of Christ as a whole.¹⁴

In Galatians 5:3 Paul wrote, "Yea I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision that he is a debtor to do the whole law." Here item 2(a) in the foregoing chart is plainly set forth—if one is accountable to one point of God's Covenant, he is accountable to the Covenant

as a whole. Further, James 2:10 declares: “For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all.” If one becomes guilty of violating all of God’s law by violating only one point of it, then one must be amenable to God’s Law as a whole if he is amenable to any one precept of it. The command to repent and be baptized issued by Peter on Pentecost was for “everyone” (Acts 2:38), and he so commanded because the Christ had commissioned the apostles to take the Gospel (His Law) to every nation, all the world, and the whole creation (Mat. 28:19; Mark 16:15–16). The foregoing conclusion (item 3) must follow. Note, as previously demonstrated, this conclusion does not mean that every person accountable to the Covenant of Christ will be in a position to obey every single statute in it, without regard to prerequisites. He must obey each statute as and when he is qualified to do so.

Some Persons—All Persons Answerable Principle

1. If some persons are answerable to the Law of Christ as a whole which contains specific commands not directly applying to them, then all men **may** be answerable to the Law of Christ as a whole which contains specific commands not directly applying to them.
2. Some persons are answerable to the Law of Christ as a whole which contains specific commands not directly applying to them (Heb. 7:14; 8:4; Eph. 5:25).
3. **Therefore**, all men **may** be answerable to the Law of Christ as a whole which contains specific commands not directly applying to them.¹⁵

I call your attention to the following proofs of item 2, some of which I have already set forth in an earlier context: (1) Jewish women were accountable to all of the Law of God given through Moses (axiomatic), but the commandment to be circumcised did not **directly** apply to them (since they had no foreskins). (2) Jesus was answerable to the Law as a whole, but the laws concerning priests did not **directly** apply to Him since He could not be an earthly priest (Heb. 7:14; 8:4). (3) Christian women are accountable to the Law of Christ as a whole, but the command, *Husbands, love your wives...* (Eph. 5:25) does not apply **directly** to them since they are not and never can be husbands. I have thus proved that all men **may** be answerable to the Law of Christ as a whole although it contains specific commands that do not directly apply to them. What I have demonstrated **may be the case** with all men, I will now prove **is the case** with all men, which Bales and Billingsly adamantly deny.

All Men Are Under the New Testament as a Whole

1. **If** there is one—and only one—universal body of spiritual law (the New Testament) in force under Christ, which is to be preached to and obeyed by all who would be saved (Christian and alien sinner), **then** it follows that all responsible persons are amenable to this body of spiritual law (the New Testament) as a whole.

2. There is one—and only one—universal body of spiritual law (the New Testament) in force under Christ, which is to be preached to and obeyed by all who would be saved (Christian and alien sinner) (Isa. 2:3; Jer. 31:33; Mark 16:15–16; John 17:17; Acts 6:7; 8:4; Rom. 1:16; 6:17–18; Gal. 3:23; 1 Tim. 4:1–5; Heb. 8:10; 10:16; et al.).
3. **Therefore**, all responsible persons are amenable to this body of spiritual law (the New Testament) as a whole.¹⁶

I call your attention to the demonstration of item 2. The Roman saints were saved by obeying **the Gospel** (Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:15–16), yet Paul says they were saved by obeying **the Doctrine** (Rom. 6:17–18). The Jewish priests were obedient to **the Faith** (Acts 6:7; cf. 2:37–47), which is the same as **the Gospel** and **the Doctrine** of Christ. When the saints were scattered from Jerusalem they preached **the Word** (Acts 8:4), obviously a reference to **the Gospel** we are commanded to preach to all the world (Mark 16:15). **The Law** and **the Word** of the Lord were prophesied to go forth from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3), which occurred when the consummated **Gospel** was first preached on Pentecost. **The Truth** is the same as **the Word** and **the faith** (John 17:17; 1 Tim. 4:1–5). The **New Covenant** is referred to as **the Law** of God (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16). **The faith is the New Covenant** (Gal. 3:23). These various terms do not describe several different bodies of spiritual law, but they all refer to God's one body of spiritual Law He gave through His Son (Mat. 28:18; Acts 3:22; Heb. 1:1–2; et al.).

Now I will demonstrate that the one Covenant of Christ, referred to under one or more of the aforementioned designations, is for **alien sinners and saints** alike. **The Gospel** is for the whole world (Mark 16:15) and for the saints (Rom. 1:15). **The Doctrine** of Christ is for sinners (Acts 5:28) and saints (Acts 2:42). **The faith** is for sinners (Acts 6:7) and saints (Jude 3). **The Word** is for sinners and saints to obey (Acts 13:5–7; 2 Tim. 4:2). **The Law** of the Lord was preached to sinners (Isa. 2:3; Acts 2), but saints are under it (1 Cor. 9:21). **The Truth** was for sinners and saints to obey (John 8:32; Gal. 2:5). **The New Covenant/Testament** was/is for sinners (Heb. 9:15–18), and surely none will deny that saints are amenable to it. As a will or testament, it became effective when Christ died (cf. Col. 2:14). **It is the Law of God for all men today**. Having proved that God has only one body of spiritual Law for mankind under Christ and that it is to be preached to and obeyed by all men, all men are therefore accountable to it.

Some Implications of Denying That Alien Sinners Are Accountable to the Covenant of Christ

The implications of a doctrine, assertion, premise, or argument can help us determine whether it is true or false, helpful or harmful. Readers should bear in mind that **any doctrine that implies a false doctrine is itself a false doctrine**. Let us see some of the implications of the denial of alien sinner accountability:

Two systems of law instead of one

If the contentions of Bales and Billingsly are true God has a separate Law for alien sinners who have lived since the cross from that which He has for Christians. But the Bible teaches (as I have demonstrated) that He has only one universal Law—the Gospel—and that all men are amenable to it and will be judged by it.

Universal Damnation

If the contentions of Bales and Billingsly are true no one can be saved. They argue (and correctly so) that alien sinners are not saved until they obey the Law of Christ. However, they also contend (incorrectly) that alien sinners **are not accountable to the Law of Christ** until they obey it (the contention I am addressing). Thus if their doctrine is true, the alien sinner is caught in a classic *catch twenty-two* predicament—God requires the alien sinner to obey His Law in order to be saved (2 The. 1:7–9), but it is impossible for him to obey God’s Law because he is not accountable to it for it does not apply to him (Rom. 3:19)!

Only saints should be baptized

According to the Bales/Billingsly doctrine, only saints are amenable to the Law of Christ (the Gospel, the New Testament, the Faith, the Word, the Covenant of Christ, et al.). Baptism is a part of the Law of Christ. It is certainly not a command of the Old Testament. Even if Bales could find a copy of “the law in the heart” or if Billingsly could find a copy of “the great moral law,” neither of them would expect to find baptism to be a part of it. Since (1) alien sinners are not accountable to the Law of Christ (per their contention), (2) only saints are accountable to the Law of Christ (per their contention), and (3) baptism is a command of the Law of Christ, then it must follow that the only ones accountable to the command to be baptized are saints.

Denominational preachers do not sin when they preach error

No one can violate a law to which he is not accountable (Rom. 4:15). Denominational preachers go beyond, fall short of, and teach things contrary to the Law of Christ (“faith only” salvation, instrumental music, inherited sin, infant “baptism,” perseverance, hierarchical government, separate and titled clergy, et al.). Yet, as alien sinners, according to Bales and Billingsly, they are not accountable to the Law of Christ and thus cannot violate it. Therefore, they do not sin when they preach their false doctrines, if Bales and Billingsly are correct.

Adulterous marriages (including polygamy) are sanctioned

According to Bales and Billingsly, since the teaching of Christ on marriage, divorce, and remarriage is “covenant doctrine,” no alien sinner is accountable to it. One becomes subject to this teaching only when one becomes a Christian and is married to a Christian. Thus the alien

sinner (or the saint married to an alien) can marry several wives either concurrently (where civil law allows) or successively with God's approval. The alien sinner (or the Christian married to an alien sinner) could also live in a "group marriage" situation where he and other men were "married" to several women (or vice versa) at the same time and all shared sexual privileges among them. In fact, an alien sinner would not violate God's Law by simply living with one of the opposite sex without marriage because, practically speaking, it would be impossible for an alien to commit adultery or fornication.

When one is baptized one is to remain with one's current mate

Since alien sinners are not accountable to the Law of Christ on marriage, divorce, and remarriage (per Bales and Billingsly), God is not concerned with how many times they have been married before they become Christians. They may (in fact they should, we are told) stay with their current mate, even if they had five others before the current one, none of whom had been sexually unfaithful to them.

These are by no means all of the false, disastrous, far-reaching, and immoral implications of denying that alien sinners are accountable to the Law of Christ. However, I believe that these few are so reprehensible as to allow the Truth-loving reader to see the atrociousness (as well as the error) of the doctrine. It is truly a damnable doctrine.

Conclusion

As I earlier indicated, I seriously doubt that the doctrine that denies the alien sinner's accountability to the Law of Christ would ever have been thought of and would certainly have never been taken seriously had men not been seeking some means of circumventing the plain language of Jesus in Matthew 19:9 regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The popularity of this doctrine has increased in almost direct proportion to the increase in the number of divorces and remarriages among (1) those who are already Christians and (2) those who want to be baptized, but who have been divorced and remarried. In this issue we see a classic case of the accommodation of the Will of God to the worldly and immoral ideas and practices of men and women (Rom. 12:1-2). We must see our selves and help others see that all human beings of normal intelligence who have lived since Christ died on the cross are subject to the Law of Christ and will therefore be judged by it.

Endnotes

1. *Divorce and Remarriage: Are Non-Christians Amenable to the Law of Christ? The Warren-Fuqua Debate*, Thomas B. Warren and E.C. Fuqua (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, 1985 rep.), pp. 3-4, 10.

2. Dub McClish and Dan Billingsly, *The McClish-Billingsly Debate: The Amenability of Alien Sinners to the Law of Christ* (Denton, TX: Valid Pub., Inc., 1986), pp. 15–16, adapted and used by permission.
3. James D. Bales, *The Scope of the Covenants* (Searcy, AR: James D. Bales, 1982), pp. 245–46.
4. James D. Bales, *The Law in the Heart* (Dallas, TX: Gospel Teachers Pub., Inc., 1981), p. 55.
5. McClish and Billingsly, pp.109, 167–68.
6. Ibid., p. 20, adapted by permission.
7. Ibid., p. 21, adapted by permission. In preparation for my debate with Dan Billingsly I consulted a total of 6 Bible dictionaries, 3 Bible Encyclopedias, and 12 word studies authorities and they unanimously agree with the quotations on this chart.
8. Merrill F. Unger and William White, Jr., ed., *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1980), pp. 82–83.
9. Merrill C. Tenney, ed. *Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1967), p. 186.
10. Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1977), p. 244.
11. J.D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1962), pp. 264–67.
12. A.R. Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1977), p. 140.
13. John McClintock and James Strong, ed., *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1970 rep.), 2:544.
14. McClish-Billingsly, pp. 36–37, adapted by permission.
15. Ibid., p. 51, adapted by permission.
16. Ibid., p. 53, adapted by permission.

[Note: I wrote this MS for and presented a digest of it orally at the Power Lectures, hosted by the Southaven, MS, Church of Christ, August 18–22, 1996. It was published in the book of the lectures, *The Two Covenants*, ed. B.J. Clarke (Southaven, MS: Southaven Church of Christ).]

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