

# Are Alien Sinners Amenable to the Law of Christ?

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## Introduction

It is exceedingly strange that anyone claiming to be informed in the Word of God would deny that alien sinners are accountable to the law of Christ. However, there have been in the past and there presently are those who advocate this fatal error. In essence, those who advocate this view divide the Gospel into separate bodies of spiritual law, with one for aliens only and the other for the church only.

A brief history of past and present proponents of this heresy is in order. In the early 1950s brethren Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett began insisting that there is a Scriptural distinction between “Gospel” (the plan of salvation) and “doctrine” (the rest of the New Testament), arguing that only aliens were to hear the “Gospel” while the “doctrine” was to be taught only to saints. At about the same time the late brother E.C. Fuqua began denying that “the World” – alien sinners – were subject to any spiritual law of Christ but were only under civil law. He was effectively exposed and discredited by brother Tom Warren in a written debate in 1954.<sup>1</sup>

In the early 1970s brother James D. Bales began “testing the waters” with his doctrinal system denying that aliens were accountable to the law of Christ on the grounds that they were not “in the covenant” of Christ. He argued that aliens are only under a “law written in the heart” and the “entrance requirements of the covenant” (the plan of salvation).<sup>2</sup> He soon began dedicating all of his considerable abilities to writing several books and engaging in several written debates to promote his doctrine.<sup>3</sup>

A few years ago brother Dan Billingsly began indicating that he was sympathetic with the Bales view of the covenants. In the early 1980s he began teaching this doctrine constantly through his local pulpit, church bulletin and radio program, and through tracts and booklets. At about this same time he began challenging various brethren to public discussions of this issue. In 1984 he began two monthly papers for the sole purpose of promoting his doctrinal hobby. I met him in an oral public debate on this issue June 16–17, 1986.<sup>4</sup> He continues to press this doctrine with unabated zeal.

The motives behind adopting this doctrine are worthy of mention. The Ketcherside/Garrett motive was originally to support their radical anti-located preacher stance.

They have since switched to radical liberalism, but they have kept their *Gospel/doctrine* dichotomy, using it as the foundation of their *unity in diversity, fellowship everybody* heresy. Fuqua and Bales adopted their respective views in order to avoid the application of Christ's law of marriage, divorce, and remarriage to alien sinners. (After all, if aliens are not subject to the Law of Christ and Matthew 19:9 is part of His Law, they need not consider His marriage law at all.)

Billingsly denies holding the *Fuqua/Bales* views on aliens and Matthew 19:9, alleging that this passage is part of a separate "Great Moral Law" to which aliens are amenable until they "enter the covenant." (How he knows this is still a great mystery!) Since he alleges that the marriage, divorce, and remarriage errors are not Billingsly's motivations, what might they be? From close observation of and dealings with him (living in the same city with him for five years and meeting him in an oral debate) I have been forced to conclude that his motivations can only be ego and vainglory ("By their fruits ye shall know them," Mat. 7:16).

Sadly, due to the widespread ignorance of the Bible, coupled with the deadly twins of spiritual apathy and the prevalent hyper-tolerance among brethren, these doctrines are finding a growing acceptance. My assignment in this manuscript is to set forth the basic Scriptural evidence that all men (including alien sinners) who have lived since the law of Christ went into effect are subject to His Law. Having done so, we will have exposed the errors of those who deny same, regardless of their motivations. Let us now turn to the evidence.

### **Christ Possesses Universal Sovereignty**

The universal sovereignty of Christ is a frequent subject of prophecy. Concerning the Christ, the prophetic Psalmist wrote, "Thou hast made me the head of the nations: a people whom I have not known shall serve me" (Psa. 18:43). Isaiah foretold: "In that day shall there be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek" (Isa. 11:10). Zechariah prophesied: "And he shall speak peace unto the nations: and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zech. 9:10).

While it is true that in the Old Testament God is said to rule over all, the authority and rule promised to Christ was to be distinct from that exercised by God before His coming; otherwise there would be no point in the prophetic announcements. Isaiah specifically said that "the isles [Gentiles] shall wait for his law" and that he would be given "for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isa. 42:1, 4, 6). Thus, the rule of Christ over the Gentiles was to be by means of a covenant, also called his "law." In the ages before Christ came God

exercised his rule over men in a direct way, both before and during the Mosaic age. It is manifest from these prophecies (and several others) that Christ would exercise justice, judgment, and authority not only over Israel, but over all men, by means of his Covenant, His Law.

We see the universal sovereignty of Christ by means of his Word in the great commission. "All nations" are to be made disciples in contrast to the "one nation" of Israel (Mat. 28:19). "All the world" and the "whole creation" (not merely the Jews) were addressed by the Law of Christ (Mark 16:15-16). "Repentance and Remission of sins" (a synecdoche for the entire Gospel) was to be preached "unto all the nations" (Luke 24:47). The unifying theme of these three passages is the universality of the Law of Christ (which is the same as the Covenant, the Doctrine, the Gospel of Christ, et al.). Since the Law of Christ is addressed to all men, it follows that all men are accountable to it. (The Mosaic Law was addressed to all Israelites; therefore, every Israelite was accountable to it.)

The Universal sovereignty of Christ is seen in the claims of John the Baptizer: "He that cometh from above is above all...he that cometh from heaven is above all... The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands" (John 3:31, 35).

Christ's universal sovereignty is seen in the claims He made of himself: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Mat. 28:18); "Even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh" (John 17:2).

The titles that belong to Christ prove his universal sovereignty. He is "head of the nations" (Psa. 18:43). "He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth" (96:13). "He is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36). He is "...the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15; cf. Rev. 17:14). He is "Ruler of the earth" (1:5, KJV).

The universal sovereignty of Christ is seen in the apostolic claims for Him. "Christ...is over all, God blessed forever" (Rom. 9:5). "God made Christ to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:21). (While it is true that verse 22 says that Christ is also head of the church [which I freely grant and constantly preach], his headship of the church is said to be in addition to his universal sovereignty. Bales/Billingsly have no more right to add *only* in connection with the Lord's headship over the church than the Baptists have to add *only* in connection with faith!) God has given Christ a

name that is above every name (Phi. 2:9). Angels, authorities, and powers are subject to Christ (1 Pet. 3:22).

By means of six categories of evidence I have demonstrated that Christ has authority over every human being. The only way to deny this is to deny the meaning of common, ordinary words used by the Holy Spirit to declare the universal sovereignty of the Son of God. Since Christ possesses all authority, it must follow that all men are accountable to His Will, for this is the means by which He exercises His authority.

### **Christ Will Be the Judge of All Men**

The Psalmist prophesied that Christ would “...judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth” (Psa. 96:13). The Lord claimed the power of universal judgment: “For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son... and he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man” (John 5:22, 27). Paul said that Christ would judge all men: [He] [God] hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

Each person will be judged by the spiritual law under which he lived (Rom. 3:19). All who have lived since the law of Christ (the Gospel) went into effect will be judged by it. Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: **the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day**” (John 12:48, emph. DM). Furthermore, when Christ comes, He will render vengeance “to them that know not God, and **to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (2 The. 1:8, emph. DM). Since all men who have lived since the Gospel of Christ went into effect (including those who reject Christ and obey not the Gospel) will be judged by the Gospel, it must follow that all men are accountable to the Gospel, the Law of Christ. To deny this (as Bales/Billingsly do) is to affirm that Christ will judge alien sinners by a standard to which they are not accountable.

### ***The Answerable to a Part—Answerable to Whole Principle***

The Scriptures teach the principle that one who is answerable to part of a body of spiritual law is answerable to said body of law as a whole. Jesus said:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Ye blind guides, that strain out the gnat, and swallow the camel! (Mat. 23:23–24).

Notice the similarity between what Bales/Billingsly teach and what these scribes and Pharisees were doing – picking and choosing which parts of God's Law to which certain ones are amenable. The Lord said these men were answerable, accountable to **all** of the law!

Paul warned those who sought to place themselves and Gentiles who would obey the Gospel under only one principle of the Law of Moses: “Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law” (Gal. 5:3 ). Here the argument is clearly set forth that if one is under one point of God's Covenant, he is under (amenable to) the Covenant as a whole.

Similarly, James wrote: “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all” (Jam. 2:10). If one becomes guilty of a body of law as a whole by violating one precept thereof (as this passage affirms), then one must be amenable to the law as a whole if he is amenable to anyone precept thereof.

It is important to notice that acceptance of this principle does not imply that every person under a system of law (whether civil or spiritual) will be in position or qualified to obey every single statute in said law, without regard to prerequisites (a “straw man” which Bales/Billingsly constantly and erroneously erect). However, one is still accountable to the body of law as a whole; he must obey each statute as and when he is in a position to do so.

The following cases will illustrate the truth stated in the previous paragraph. Although the scribes and Pharisees (Mat. 23:23–24) were not **directly** addressed by the purification rites for women in the Law of Moses, this did not prevent their being accountable to the Law as a whole. While I am amenable to the sum of the Law of the state of Texas, there are certain statutes that apply only to state legislators. These do not **directly** apply to me because I am not a legislator – I have not fulfilled the prerequisites for those regulations. Likewise, Jesus was not in a position to be a priest under the Law of Moses because He was of the tribe of Judah rather than of Levi (Heb. 7:14; 8:4). Therefore, the statutes governing priests did not apply to Him **directly**. Did this mean that He was not amenable to the Law as a whole because some of its specific regulations did not **directly** apply to him? Absolutely not! However, this is the logical implication of the *Bales/Billingsly* heresy.

Those who are impressed with the force of Scriptural evidence now perceive that all men who are answerable to part of a body of law are answerable to said body of law as a whole.

### **All Men Are Answerable to Part of the Law of Christ**

Based on the truth of the previous Scriptural principle, if I can now demonstrate that all men are accountable to **even one command** of the Law/Covenant of Christ, I will have proved that alien sinners are accountable to the Law of Christ as a whole. Note that **all men** are commanded to repent and be baptized as part of Christ's Law. God commands men through Christ that they "...should all everywhere repent" (Acts 17:30). Further, Christ commanded that the Gospel (His Law), including the command to be baptized, should be preached to "all nations," "all the world" and to "the whole creation" (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). These are combined in a single statement addressed to believing alien sinners on Pentecost (Acts 2:38).

In spite of the fact that Bales/Billingsly concede that aliens are amenable to the commands to repent and be baptized – and that these are part of the Law or Covenant of Christ – they continue to deny that aliens are accountable to the Covenant of Christ **until** they "get in the covenant." However, we have shown that one who is accountable to one part of a system of law is accountable to that law system as a whole. Since aliens are accountable to **part** of the law of Christ, therefore, **aliens are accountable to the law of Christ as a whole**. The fact that the *Bales/Billingsly* theology adamantly denies this Scriptural principle amply demonstrates their glaring error and inconsistency.

### **Some Persons Are Answerable to a Body of Law as a Whole, Although Some Commands Do Not Directly Apply to Them**

This principle takes us one step beyond the two previously discussed principles. I can demonstrate from Scripture that **some** persons are answerable to God's Law as a whole, which contains specific commands which do not **directly** apply to them. If this is the case with **some** (as I will soon demonstrate), then it may be the case with **all** (which I will also demonstrate).

I have already proved that it is true that some persons are answerable to a body of law as a whole containing specific commands that do not **directly** apply to them, but let me further emphasize it. Jewish women were answerable to the Mosaic Law (Covenant) as a whole (Mat. 23:23-24; Gal. 5:3), but the commandment to be circumcised did not **directly** apply to them. Likewise (as previously noted), Jesus was answerable to the Law of Moses as a whole, but the commands of the Law for priests did not **directly** apply to him (Heb. 7:14; 8:4).

All of the impenitent Jews who heard the apostles preach on Pentecost were commanded to “repent and be baptized” (Acts 2:38), although not all fulfilled the prerequisites to do so by receiving the Word in faith (v. 41). Were those who did not receive the Word in faith any less answerable to “repent and be baptized” than those who did? Both Philip and the Ethiopian understood this principle. When the Ethiopian asked, “Behold, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36), he indicated his understanding that there could be prerequisites to baptism. When Philip replied, “If thou believest thou mayest” (Acts 8:37), he stated a prerequisite to baptism. Had the Ethiopian denied Christ, would he have been any less answerable to the command to be baptized, though clearly not meeting the prerequisite of belief in Christ? Likewise, the Athenians were no less accountable to the command to repent because they failed the prerequisite of faith by continuing in their idolatrous infidelity (Acts 17:30, 32).

All Christians are answerable to the Covenant of Christ as a whole (conceded by Bales/Billingsly), but there are some commands in the law of Christ that do not **directly** apply to some Christians. Christian wives are hardly in position to obey the command, “Husbands, love your wives” (Col. 3:19). The command to be the “husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2) does not **directly** apply to every Christian man, only to elders. Further, the “covenant” command to be baptized (Acts 2:38) does not **directly** apply to **any Christian**.

A non-citizen visiting our country is accountable to American law as a whole while within our territory, yet the laws regulating the privilege of voting do not **directly** apply to him. I am answerable to the law of Texas as a whole, but certain specific laws (such as a license necessary to fly an airplane) do not **directly** apply to me until I meet certain prerequisites.

Bales/Billingsly argue that the alien sinner is not accountable to **any** of the Covenant of Christ because there are certain commands (e.g., observing the Lord’s supper, repenting and praying for forgiveness, giving money each Lord’s day, etc.), which admittedly he is not in position to do **acceptably** while still an alien. However, in the cases cited I have demonstrated that some persons (including both alien sinners and saints) are answerable to the law of God as a whole, although some of the specific commands in that law do not **directly** apply to them. This alone proves that the major contention of the *Bales/Billingsly* doctrine is false. However, to prove that this is true of **some** persons is also to raise the possibility that it **may** be true of **all**. I will demonstrate below that this is indeed the case.

## Christ Has Only One Body of Spiritual Law for All Men

There is one – and only one – body of spiritual law in force under Christ for all men. It is variously called “the Gospel,” “the doctrine” (i.e., “teaching”), “the faith,” “the Word,” “the law of Christ,” “the Truth” and “the new/second covenant.” The Roman saints were (as are all men) saved by obeying the “Gospel” (Mark 16:16), yet Paul wrote that they were saved by obeying the “doctrine” (Rom. 6:17–18). This same “Gospel” and “doctrine” is called “the faith” (Acts 6:7). When the saints were scattered from Jerusalem they went everywhere “preaching the word” (Acts 8:4), which is obviously the “Gospel” of Mark 16:15. In prophesying about the preaching of the “Gospel” on Pentecost, Isaiah called it the “law” and the “word of the Lord” (Isa. 2:3; cf. Jam. 1:21–25). The “Truth” is the same as the “Word” and the “faith” (1 Tim. 4:1–5; John 17:17). The “new covenant” is called “the laws” (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 10:16) and “the faith” refers to the “covenant” of Christ (Gal. 3:23). By these passages (many others can be supplied) it is evident that all of these terms simply refer to the one body of spiritual law authorized by Christ.

It is important to notice that this one body of spiritual law was (and is) addressed to **both non-Christians and Christians**. The Gospel is addressed to alien sinners (“the whole creation”) (Mark 16:15), but also to saints (Rom. 1:6–7). Aliens were subject to the doctrine (teaching) (Acts 5:28), but so were saints (Acts 2:42). The faith was delivered to non-Christians (Acts 6:7), and to saints (Jude 3). The Word was addressed to sinners (Acts 13:5–7) and to saints (2 Tim. 4:2). The law of Christ was addressed to sinners (Isa. 2:3), but saints were under it (1 Cor. 9:21; Jam. 1:25). The Truth is for both sinners (John 8:32) and saints (Gal. 2:5). The new Covenant went into effect for all men (including alien sinners) when Christ died (Heb. 9:15–18) and Bales/Billingsly concede that saints are accountable to it.

The foregoing passages conclusively demonstrate that all men (including alien sinners) are addressed by and are therefore accountable to the Law of Christ as a whole.

### Conclusion

The consequences and implications of the *Bales/Billingsly* position are many and dire. If aliens are not amenable to the Law of Christ, then it follows that:

1. Christ has two limited laws (one for aliens and another for saints), instead of one universal body of law.
2. Aliens are not amenable to the Gospel, since the Law of Christ is the same as the Gospel.
3. We should not encourage aliens to obey the Law of Christ.



4. Only saints should be baptized (baptism is part of the Law/Covenant of Christ and only saints are under it, a la Bales/Billingsly).
5. Christ does not possess universal sovereignty.
6. Christ will not judge all men who have lived since his Word went into effect by that Word, his Gospel.
7. A system of unrevealed, innate law ("law in the heart" or "Great Moral Law"), separate and distinct from the Gospel, has to be invented as the only law of God addressed to aliens and by which Christ will judge them.

These are but a few of the serious consequences that inhere in this false doctrinal system.

I have not discovered anyone who argues that alien sinners are not accountable to the Law of Christ who does not have some subjective reason for doing so. Subjectivism is a terribly unstable basis for adopting and advocating any religious principle. The arguments and principles in the foregoing material are both Scripturally and logically sound; that is, they are based on the objective Word of God. This being the case, the fundamental doctrine of the *Bales/Billingsly* system of theology is proved false and the truth stands that all men (alien sinners and saints) are amenable to the Law of Christ.

### Endnotes

1. *The Warren-Fuqua Debate*, Thomas B. Warren and E.C. Fuqua (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, 1952). I highly recommend this book for further study of this issue.
2. For an excellent summary and refutation of the Bales doctrine in his own words see *Studies in 1 Corinthians*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Pub., Inc., 1982), pp. 415-30.
3. I also highly recommend the following materials refuting the Bales doctrine: *The Bales-Moffitt Debate — A Review of Bales' Position on Divorce and Remarriage*, and *Bales' Position Explained and Denied*, Jerry Moffitt (San Antonio, TX: Thrust, 1982).
4. *The McClish-Billingsly Debate*, Dub McClish and Dan Billingsly (Denton, TX: Valid Pub., Inc., 1986).

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