

Shadow and Substance:
Why Old Testament Rituals
Became Obsolete for
New Testament Christians

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Strong judgments

- Any uncircumcised male .. shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant. (Genesis 17:14)
- You shall not eat any of their flesh... they are unclean to you... You shall regard them as detestable. (Leviticus 11:8,11)
- If anyone ... fails to keep the Passover, that person shall be cut off from his people. (Numbers 9:13)
- Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. (Exodus 31:15)

Old and New Covenants

- **Judaizers** insisted that Christians had to keep Old Testament laws (circumcision, food restrictions, special days) to be saved.
- **Gnostics** said the Old Testament was bad, and its evil lord should be ignored. Marcion's Bible was a few edited New Testament books.
- **New Testament Christians** said Christ fulfilled Old Testament signs and shadows. These had been good, but passed away with the coming of Christ, the fulfillment and substance.

Following signs toward a destination brings you closer and closer until you arrive.





The sign's purpose is not to draw attention to itself, but to point you to the goal. When you reach the goal, you delight in it. You don't focus on the sign.





If you glimpse the goal but then turn away and prefer to go back and gaze at each sign, you are missing out and are heading farther away from the splendor.





**Jesus is the final destination.
Jesus is the ultimate splendor.
Don't go back to distant signs—
the old covenant regulations.**

Judaizers

- **Circumcision:** required for salvation
- **Food and drink:** kosher laws, no pork, meat must be certified as killed properly, hands and utensils must be ritually washed, no sharing meals with Gentiles
- **Festival:** Passover, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles, and more
- **Sabbath observance:** kept making rules stricter and more detailed than ever

Christ plus circumcision?

But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” ... But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.” (Acts 15:1,5)

The Spirit revealed that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised or follow Mosaic rituals.

Circumcision without hands

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.

(Colossians 2:11-12)

Paul insisted that baptized believers in Christ already had all the circumcision they needed.

Inward Jews

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.
(Romans 2:28-29)

Tied to law, cut off from Christ!

I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. (Galatians 5:2-4)

If you got circumcised because you thought faith in Jesus wasn't enough for salvation, you would lose Christ and salvation.

We are the circumcision

Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. (Phil 3:2-4)

Jesus accomplishes what OT circumcision was only a sign of:

† *Pain and blood to satisfy God's law*

† *Changing hearts, not just foreskins.*

Circumcision in Scripture

Circumcision in the Old Testament

- picture foreshadowing blood and pain as punishment for sin
- sign of faith and belonging to God's people
- mark of commitment to keeping God's law
- symbol of stripping away sin within

Circumcision in the New Testament

- fulfilled in Christ's blood and pain
- replaced by painless, bloodless baptism
- mark of trusting law, not grace in Christ
- symbol of obsession with externals

The circumcision party

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families...

Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. (Titus 1:10-15)

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Faith in Christ, not foods or festivals

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17)



Let no one pass judgment on you

- If a judge retired because his area of law became outdated, would you let him jail you for having bacon for breakfast?
- If a corrupt judge was fired, would you listen to him if he said he would imprison you for peeling potatoes on Sunday?

Questions of food and drink

Colossians 2:21-22 ...regulations— “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch,” referring to things that all perish as they are used.

Mark 7:18-19 Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?

Thus he declared all foods clean. (7:19)



Peter's vision

(Acts 10)

“I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”

“What God has made clean, do not call common.”



Paul had to remind Peter (Galatians 2)

“If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Preparing for Christ

The law, rightly understood, was to prepare people for Christ in at least two ways:

1. Revealing our desperate need for Christ's salvation by showing the sinfulness of sin.
2. Foreshadowing the reality of Christ by sacrifices and other rituals.

If people want the law instead of Christ, they miss the point of the law. If people want to add dependence on law and ritual to dependence on Christ, they deny the sufficiency of Christ.

Back to slavery?

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles [*stoicheia* = elemental spirits] of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? **You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.** (Galatians 4:9-11)

A better hope

The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God. (Hebrews 7:18-19)

Old covenant regulations of food and festivals were weak and useless except as pointers to Jesus. If these God-given rules are set aside, surely man-made rules are not binding.

These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things.... But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises... the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities. (Hebrews 8:5-6, 10:1)



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A shadow of the things to come

Before baby arrives, an ultrasound is your best view.

- After the child is born, do you keep looking at the ultrasound and kissing it?
- No, you file the shadow away in a scrapbook, and you focus on your child.



Back to sacred systems

- **Food and drink:** meatless Fridays
- **Festival:** church year, Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, feasts for saints
- **Priestly ritual:** vestments, liturgies
- **Holy land:** pilgrimage, holy relics, sacred sites, sanctified souvenirs
- **Messianic:** observe festivals and food laws while accepting Jesus as divine Savior

How to handle foods and festivals?

? You must keep regulations of foods and festivals, or you will not be saved.

✝ **You must not put your faith in foods and special days, or you will not be saved.**

? You must keep regulations of foods and festivals to be an elite Christian, though you can be saved without them.

✝ **Foods and festivals are matters of personal preference, so long as you focus on Jesus.**

Let no one pass judgment

2 One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables.

3 Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. 4 Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (Romans 14:2-4)

Whatever you do with shadow, honor the substance: the Lord

5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:5-6)

Not eating and drinking, but serving Christ in the Spirit

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. 18 Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. 19 So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. (Romans 4:17-19)

The substance (body, reality) belongs to Christ

...the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (1:27)

...Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (2:3)

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. (2:9-10)