

Transition Period of the Church Age

A. Patriarchal Age – Adam to Moses

B. Age of the Mosaic Law -

1. (Exodus 20 to Malachi)
2. Intertestamental Period
3. Incarnation to Pentecost (Transition Period of Age of the Mosaic Law before the Church Age)
(Birth, Ministry, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Great Commission, Ascension of Jesus)

C. Church Age

1. Pentecost (Acts Chapter 2)
2. Apostolic (Confirmation of Verbal Teaching Phase)
(Acts 2 to Acts 15)
3. Apostolic (Confirmation of Written Word Phase)
 - a. Acts 15 (50 AD) to 70 AD
 - b. Post Israel (5th cycle of discipline phase - 70 AD to completed NT Word (Hebrews, Jude, Gospel of John, 1st, 2nd and 3rd John, Revelation))
4. Post Canon Phase to end of the Church Age

A. Gospels – The Great Commission

B. Book of Acts –

1. Miracles/temporary spiritual gifts (Confirm Word) vs. Spiritual Life of Believer

2. Water Baptism (Ritualism) vs. Reality of Baptism of HS

3. Circumcision and the Law of Moses (Being under the Law) (Legalism) vs. Freedom of Spiritual Life of Believer

4. Value of the Word of God – Sanctification, spiritual growth

Great Commission of Jesus

Matthew 28:18-20 ¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Mark 16:15 ¹⁵ And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Luke 24:44-49 44 Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, **47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.** 48 "You are witnesses of these things. 49 "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Acts 1:1-8 Acts 1:1 The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. 3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God. **4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."** 6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; **8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."**

The apostles being led by the Holy Spirit obeyed the great commission by Jesus by preaching the gospel beginning on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem which began the church age. They began establishing the church first in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria.

Miracles and Temporary Spiritual Gifts

During this Transition Period in the Book of Acts there were teachings, commands, rituals, signs, miracles and spiritual gifts that had a temporary purpose to birth and grow the early church until the New Testament canon of scriptures was completed

So during this time period of the early church, miracles, signs and wonders accompanied the apostles preaching the gospel:

1. To prove to Israel that God was speaking through them
2. To confirm the Word of God to them.

It would be almost 20 years later that the first books of the New Testament would be given in written form.

Hebrews 2:1-4 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, 3 how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? **After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.**

These gifts are listed in **chapter 12 of Romans, chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians, and chapter 4 of Ephesians.**

Included in this list of temporary spiritual gifts are: apostles, prophets, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discerning of spirits, miracles, gift of healing, tongues and interpretation of tongues.

During the transition period, the permanent spiritual gifts are also found in the same three chapters. Included in this list of permanent spiritual gifts are: evangelists, pastors, teachers, service, exhortation, giving, mercy, administration, and faith.

All these permanent gifts of the Holy Spirit work in harmony with the Word of God to feed and **encourage the church to be unified and grow to spiritual maturity.**

And He gave some as **apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,**

for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” **Ephesians 4:11-13**

2 Peter 1:2-4 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4 For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

Here is a summary of the specific purposes of the temporary spiritual gifts:

- To prove to the nation of Israel that God was speaking through the apostles
- To prove to the nation of Israel that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God
- To establish the early church in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria
- To prove to the apostles and Jewish believers that Gentiles were saved and accepted in the church on the basis of faith and not by complying with the Law of Moses
- To prove to the Gentiles that God was speaking through the apostles and that Jesus is the Son of God and that He died for their sins and was resurrected from the dead
- To establish churches in the Gentile nations

- To establish unity in the church among the Jewish and Gentiles believers and reveal the mystery of uniting both Jews and Gentiles into the one body of Christ
- To shepherd and mature the early church until the canon of scripture was completed
- To confirm the Word of God
- To complete the canon of scripture to be sufficient for everything pertaining to life and godliness for the believer to grow to maturity

1 Corinthians 13:8-10 8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

Some believe that the “perfect” may refer to Jesus when He returns. If this were true, then the word “perfect” would be in the **masculine gender** in the Greek. But it is in the **neuter gender**, so it cannot refer to Jesus. When he said, “we know in part and we prophesy in part”, he meant that God’s Word was not completed at that time. “But when the perfect comes”, refers to the completed canon of scripture that was yet future. “The partial will be done away” refers to the **temporary spiritual gifts** that bridged the gap between the time when the first century church only had the Old Testament scriptures and the time when the New Testament scriptures were completed. Once they were completed, the **temporary spiritual gifts would “cease” and “be done away”** because they already fulfilled their purpose of **confirming the written Word of God.**

The temporary spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit and some miracles, signs, and rituals were used to lead the nation of Israel to accept Jesus Christ who was prophesied in the Old Testament to be the Son of God and their Messiah. These spiritual gifts were phased out as the “mystery doctrine” of the Church Age was revealed by Paul, Peter, James and John. Their purpose to reveal the Messiah to Israel was no longer necessary once the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 when the Jews were scattered throughout the world because Israel as a whole had rejected their Messiah. (5th Cycle of Discipline)

Most of the teachings concerning the Church Age were derived from Paul's, Peter's, James's, and John's epistles to the church and from Peter's and Paul's ministry recorded in Acts. To add the miracles, signs, rituals, and temporary spiritual gifts of this unique transition period to the progressive revelation taught in Paul's epistles is a serious mistake that causes confusion which can lead to the adoption of false doctrines.

Churches today who believe that these temporary spiritual gifts are still in effect today do not understand that their purpose was accomplished and usually leads to emotionalism and are many times used to manipulate and control other people. This leads them away from the spiritual life which emphasizes living by the power of the Holy Spirit, renewing the mind with divine viewpoint, sanctification and spiritual growth.

Acts 2:1-16 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.** 5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, **devout men from every nation under heaven.** 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were **bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.** 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "**Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?**" 8 "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?" 9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia,

Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs-- **we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.**" 12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine." 14 But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. 15 "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; 16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: **(Acts 2:1-16)**

God gave the apostles who were all Galileans the gift of tongues so that those from all these nations listed here who did not speak Hebrew could understand the gospel in their own language. The gift of tongues was also a sign to Israel that they would be under judgment if they did not accept Jesus as their Messiah.

Acts 2:22-24 22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: **Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst**, just as you yourselves know-- 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Why did Jesus perform all these miracles?

Jesus performed these miracles, wonders, and signs to prove to Israel that He was the **Messiah** who had been prophesied all through the Old Testament and that He was the **Son of God** who would pay the penalty of the sins of the whole world (unlimited atonement) and be resurrected from the dead to declare Him as the Son of God with power and prove to us who He was and give us hope of our resurrection and eternal life.

Romans 1:3-4 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, ⁴ who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

1 John 3:2 2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

Baptism (Ritual Vs. Reality)

Another important subject that is unique to Paul's "mystery" doctrine was his teachings about baptism. So much confusion has revolved around this word that many misunderstandings and divisions have occurred over it. First, the Greek words for "baptize" or "baptism" are defined as immersion, dipping, sinking, or washing. Many times, these definitions cause confusion when trying to interpret verses by using these words out of context. For example, **baptize may mean to immerse, dip or wash in water if water is mentioned in the verse. Actually, the word "baptize", no matter what the context, can mean to "identify with".** An example is when a piece of material is dipped in dye, it is identified with the color of the dye.

In the New Testament, baptism was introduced by John the Baptist. Those who responded to his message were being baptized in water “confessing their sins” **to publicly show that they were receiving or identifying with his message which was “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”**. Isaiah prophesied of John crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.

“As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.’ John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.” **Mark 1:2-5**

John boldly confronted the leaders of Israel to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance” because in their arrogance of saying “we have Abraham for our father”, **they were thinking that they would enter the Kingdom of God because they were descendants of Abraham.** They were blind to the truth and were leading the entire nation away from God.

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, **‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, We have Abraham for our father; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Matthew 3:7-10**

The crowds also were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he might be the Christ and he answered them by saying the following.

“Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, John answered and said to them all, **‘As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’**” **Luke 3:15-17**

John's baptism in water was uniquely different than water baptism in the book of Acts because it was **to prepare the way for the Messiah to be manifested to Israel. It was to prepare their hearts so that they would be open to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.** When Paul ran into disciples of John many years later after the church began in Jerusalem, he told them that "John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus".

"It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said to him, 'No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit' And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' And they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' " **Acts 19:1-4**

Then Jesus came to be baptized by John but not for the purpose of repentance but **“to fulfill all righteousness”**. John said, **“I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.”** Because John did not initially recognize Him, God who sent him to baptize in water told him **“whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.”** John also said, **“I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.”** The next day John saw Jesus and said, **“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”**

“Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, **“I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me? But Jesus answering said to him, ‘Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’** Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, **‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’**” (Matthew 3:13-17)

“John answered them saying, ‘I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.’ These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, **‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!** This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ **‘I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.’** John testified saying, ‘I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. **‘I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ ‘I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.’ ”** John 1:26-34

On the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter gave the first gospel message to those who were in Jerusalem observing the feasts. He gave the gospel message of Jesus who died for our sins, was buried, and was raised from the dead.

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.”

Acts 2:22-24

“This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. ‘Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.’ ”

Acts 2:32-33

Peter concluded his message by telling all the house of Israel that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ – “this Jesus whom you crucified”. **They responded by being pierced in the heart and asked Peter what they should do. Peter then answered their question.**

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” Peter said to them, **“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

Acts 2:36-39

When Peter said, “God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified”, it convicted those who now just realized this Jesus whom they rejected and crucified was their Messiah. They immediately asked, “What shall we do”. (This question is hard to explain because it could be ambiguous) Before this day, most of them needed salvation because they were lost and condemned, but they also needed forgiveness specifically for crucifying Jesus. Peter commanded them to repent of their sin of crucifying Jesus but also to repent (change their mind) for rejecting Him as their Messiah. He also commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

We must understand that people in the crowd this day were at different stages of understanding (some already saved, some not yet saved, some who still were rejecting the message, etc.)

This is where so much confusion has occurred. So many today will say that this makes water baptism a requirement for salvation. This message was given to the Jewish nation on the first day of the Church Age which was also the beginning of the transition period. **So, the command to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ was unique to the people who lived during that transition period.** God has always used rituals like water baptism to teach spiritual principles. **Paul, later in his epistles, never included water baptism as being required for salvation when he gave them the gospel.** Paul and Silas when in prison commanded the jailer to “believe in the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved”.

“When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!” And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and after he brought them out, he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They said, **“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Acts 16:27-31**

So why was the command given to those on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 to be baptized in water?

The **baptism in water in the name of Jesus Christ** was given to the nation of Israel so they could be “**identified**” with Jesus Christ. When Israelites identified with Jesus Christ in this water baptism, **it was a public declaration of their turning away from Judaism under the Law of Moses which included the animal sacrifices, circumcision, feasts, and other ceremonial laws and rituals.** It was also an **identification with the body of believers** who received Jesus as their Messiah being the Son of God who died for their sins and was raised from the dead.

“And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” So then, **those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.** They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. **And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Acts 2:40-47**

When the apostle Paul gave the gospel to the Gentiles, he commanded them to receive Jesus as their Savior by grace through faith in Christ for their salvation. **Paul never made the ritual of water baptism a requirement for salvation.** He also never forced circumcision, animal sacrifices, or the rest of the Law of Moses on them. As stated earlier, he said justification was never by any works of the law but by faith alone in Christ Jesus. He spoke about the real baptism in the following verses.

“Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into [identified with] Christ Jesus have been baptized into [identified with] His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

Romans 6:3-4

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into [identified with] one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 12:13

[identified with] – the context of these verses **implies a real baptism by the Holy Spirit placing the believer into Christ, His death and resurrection and into union with the body of Christ** in contrast to the ritual of water baptism

In the previous verses Paul taught about the **one spiritual baptism of being baptized by the Holy Spirit which places believers into Christ, His death and resurrection and into union with the body of Christ**. This baptism occurs when a hearer of the gospel believes the message and is saved by grace through faith in Christ. Paul's letter to the Ephesians was written between AD 60-64 while imprisoned in Rome which emphasized salvation by grace through faith in Christ and not as a result of works. **It also reveals “the mystery” about uniting Jews and Gentiles into the one body of Christ, the church.**

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” **Ephesians 2:8-9**

“For He Himself is our peace, **who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall**, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He **might make the two into one new man**, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.”

Ephesians 2:14-16

“By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into **the mystery of Christ**, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has **now been revealed** to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the **Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,**” **Ephesians 3:4-6**

When Paul found some disciples who were only baptized into John's baptism, he asked them if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. Since they had not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit, he explained to them that John baptized with a baptism of repentance and told the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus. They had not yet understood about the saving work of Jesus on the cross, the resurrection or the receiving of the Holy Spirit. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, so that they would be identified with Jesus and His body, the church. When Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. The tongues and prophesying were a public confirmation that they had received the Holy Spirit.

It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' And they said to him, 'No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' And they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying."

Acts 19:1-6

Legalism (Being Under the Law)

After the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles, they returned to Antioch. **In Acts 15 some Judaizers came from Judea claiming that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be saved and were trying to force circumcision and the Law of Moses upon them.** This caused Paul and Barnabas to go to Jerusalem to settle this issue.

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” **Galatians 5:6**

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” **Galatians 5:1-4**

As we saw in **Acts 15:1-5** some Judaizers came from Judea to Antioch claiming that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised to be saved. Paul taught that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything in regard to salvation or sanctification. He also taught if believers received physical circumcision, Christ would be of no benefit to them. He meant that it would not benefit their spiritual life or growth in Christ. If they were circumcised to seek to be justified by law, they would fall from grace. He did not say they would lose their salvation but would fall from their spiritual walk (experiential sanctification) which is by grace and not accomplished by circumcision or any works of the law.

Then in the following verses he taught that the circumcision of Christ is a spiritual circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, made without hands.

“And in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” **Colossians 2:11-12**

“For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.” **Romans 2:28-29**

“Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, **“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”** And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. **But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed** stood up, saying, **“It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.”**

Acts 15:1-5

After much debate in Jerusalem with the apostles and elders, Peter concluded by **exhorting them to not burden these new Gentile believers with the “yoke” of the Mosaic Law.**

“Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ‘But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.’ ” Acts 15:10-11

James concluded that it was **good to lay no greater burden upon these new Gentile believers than for them to abstain from practices that were associated with pagan worship.**

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to **lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:** that you **abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication;** if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.”

Acts 15:28-29

The apostles and leaders in Jerusalem never directed the Gentile believers to be circumcised or to observe the Law of Moses.

To bind this form of legalism upon believers of the Church Age was also strongly condemned by Paul in several of his epistles.

So, why should we bind any law of works such as the Mosaic Law Covenant on Church Age believers when we are under a new covenant and a new law?

Romans 6:14 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are **not under law but under grace.**

Romans 8:1-4 Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.** 3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Value of the Word of God

Paul's last letter, 2 Timothy, was written around A.D. 67-68 shortly before his death and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. In this letter he encouraged Timothy to be diligent in studying the Word of God, declared the value of Scripture, and charged him to preach the Word for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.” **2 Timothy 2:15**

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.” **2 Timothy 4:1-4**

Peter taught very emphatically that the true knowledge of God contained in the Bible is completely sufficient for life and godliness and gave a strong encouragement to grow in grace and knowledge which keeps us from being led astray by false teachings.

“seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.” **2 Peter 1:3-4**

“You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen” **2 Peter 3:17-18**

Even though all scripture is valuable for spiritual principles and spiritual growth, the doctrines found after the transition period of the early church are necessary for believers of the Church Age to learn the Christian spiritual way of life to:

- Utilize the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit
- Worship God in Spirit and truth
- Be victorious over the world, flesh, and devil
- Execute God's plan for their life
- Renew the mind with divine viewpoint
- Bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit
- Produce divine good works
- Grow to spiritual maturity
- Give maximum glory to God