

## The Law of God in 1 Corinthians 15:56: Its Meaning and Implications on the Eschatological Church

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The study identifies the law of God (Ten Commandments) in 1 Cor 15:56 and its implications on the eschatological church. The term “law” appears in isolation in the resurrection text causing some to consider it an interpolation; however, its presence here not only heightens the continuity of God’s law in the eschatological church, but also its significance in the work of redemption and ultimate victory over sin and death, a development that will usher in eschatological rest in God’s entire universe.

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**Key words:** Interpolation, Law, sin, death, eschatology, end-time church

Towards the end of the great resurrection passage, the apostle Paul introduces the law in connection with sin and death. “The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law” (ASV). The text continues to intrigue scholarship because it is not always clear how the Apostle uses *nomos*. Sometimes he employs the term in reference to the Mosaic Law or to the Torah; however, his starting point is always the traditional use of the word in reference to a specific Old Testament law.<sup>2</sup> How we understand *nomos* in the resurrection passage is of great theological significance regarding its continuing relevance as part of the end-time message and mission of the eschatological church. The study aims to show that the eschatological chapter of First Corinthians, like the book of Revelation, identifies God’s end time people as a commandment-keeping church who, by their obedience to the law, overcome sin and death through faith in Jesus. The Psalmist declares God’s law as perfect, “converting” (NAS) or “reviving” (ESV) “the soul” (Psa 19:7). God’s law condemns sin and invites sinners to repentance, at the same time challenges Christians to righteous living.<sup>3</sup> However, in a post modern era in which most Christians and non Christians alike, increasingly see little or no connection between the Law and the Gospel,<sup>4</sup> considering it only as “a relic” or “vague set of rules” good for head knowledge only rather than for obedience in practical life, it is well for the end-time church to reassert the relevance of the law of God.

For easy understanding of the study, I have divided it into four sections. The first section tackles the interpolation claim about 15:56; the second identifies *nomos* and its role in the eschatological church, the third presents verbal parallels between the eschatological church in 1 Corinthians and Revelation; the last section deals with the nature and purpose of the *nomos* in the final eschatology.

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<sup>2</sup>Much of the usage of *nomos* in rabbinic literature is with reference to the Decalogue and to some extent, the Law in a specific sense (Rom 13:8ff; 2:20ff; 7:7); however, Paul makes no basic distinction in usage “between the Decalogue and the rest of the legal material in the OT,” Gutbrod, “νομος” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 4:1069.

<sup>3</sup>Rodel D. Lasco and Haydee D. Lasco, *The Ten Commandments for the 21st Century Christian* (San Pablo City, Philippines, Trinity Bible Church, 2012), 7.

<sup>4</sup>The author argues that Christendom has historically cast the law in a sense that contradicts the Gospel; however, in recent years, many Western Christians have returned to the law as a means for lifting up the dropping morals of society,” Stephen Bauer, “The Ten Commandments and Kenosis,” in *The Global Ethics Crisis: An Adventist Response*, ed. Shawna Vyhmeister (Nairobi, Kenya: Adventist University of Africa Press, 2015), 23.

## 1 Corinthians 15:56 as an Interpolation

The claim for interpolation aims at minimizing the force of Paul's argument for the law in the resurrection considering it misleading and a late addition.<sup>5</sup> Time and space do not permit a protracted thesis on the matter, as such, I am in agreement with the good work of Jerome Murphy-O'Connor who successfully overthrew all such interpolation claims.<sup>6</sup> For our purpose, a few arguments for the unity and integrity of the book will suffice.

First the author introduces himself as "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ" (NAS). Second a characteristic phrase *peri de* "now concerning" (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12), recurs frequently as a partition marker indicating that Paul responds to a letter from Corinth,<sup>7</sup> even though some scholars object to the formula.<sup>8</sup> The theory maintains that Paul responds to an oral report given to him from Chloe's household in chapters 1-6 and to a letter from Corinth in chapters 7-16.<sup>9</sup> After discussing various issues, Paul presented his key theological motif—the resurrection of the dead in which the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Its position at the end of the letter does not suggest triviality, but strategically so placed as the goal of the entire discourse; with double effect, the resurrection as a message for spiritual transformation of the Corinthian believers, and also as a message for the physical resurrection of the body at the *Parousia*.<sup>10</sup>

Third the United Bible Societies divides chapter 15 into three sections (1-11; 12-34; and 35-58), and Nestle Aland<sup>27</sup> into two sections (1-34; and 35-58), and in both versions, the word *egeiro* in its various forms occurs twenty times (vv. 15:4, 12, 13, 14, 15\*3, 16\*2, 17, 20, 29, 32, 35, 42, 43\*2, 44 and 52) making the resurrection a common theme in all the sections of the chapter. Fourth the introduction of the current section in vv. 35 and 36 deals with death and resurrection just as in the first section of the chapter (vv. 1-12), and in both sections the name of *Christos* is mentioned as the one which grants victory over sin and death (vv. 3, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23\*2, 31, 57).

Fifth the word *hamartia* which is mentioned in connection with *nomos* occurs in the two (NE) or three (USB) sections of the chapter (vv. 3, 17, 34, 56). *Hamartia* purposely appears in v. 56 to show a link with *nomos*. Paul himself brought in the subject of *nomos* at the end as a climax of his argument which until now, seems to have featured in the background.<sup>11</sup> The law being the power of sin makes it a deadly force, for it works out wrath (Rom 4:15) (more on this point later).

<sup>5</sup>Scholars explain the presence of the text in various ways: It is an interpolation either by Paul himself or a redactor, or a Greek or Jewish idea known to Paul and perhaps to the readers, or an important theological idea he could not skip, or a connecting link between the verse and the epistle itself or an incomprehensible idea to the Corinthians (Chris Alex Vlachos, "Law, Sin, and Death: An Edenic Triad? An Examination with Reference to 1 Corinthians 15:56," *Journal for the Evangelical Theology* 47/2 (2004), 277-298.

<sup>6</sup>Consensus has not been reached on the date of Corinth and it is not the focus of this study. Interpolation claims were overturned by Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Interpolations in 1 Corinthians," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1986): 81-94, accessed September 1, 2013, ATLA Religion Database With ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

<sup>7</sup>The argument hinges on the frequency of *περὶ δὲ* (six times in the last ten chapters and twice in other Pauline works (e.g. 1 Thess 4:9; and 5:1; and as *περὶ γὰρ*, "For as touching" in 2 Cor 9:1). Hurd, *Origin of 1 Corinthians*, 63; see also Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, "The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians: A Biblical/Jewish Approach," *New Testament Studies* 52, no. 2 (2006): 206, accessed September 1, 2013, ATLA Religion Database With ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

<sup>8</sup>See Margaret M. Mitchell, for example, who sees no structural link to *peri de* in 1 Corinthians; Margaret M. Mitchell, "Concerning *περὶ δε* in 1 Corinthians," *Novum Testamentum* 31, no. 3 (1989): 256, accessed September 1, 2013, ATLA Religion Database With ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

<sup>9</sup>Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, "The Structure and Argument of 1 Corinthians: A Biblical/Jewish Approach," *New Testament Studies* 52, no. 2 (2006): 206, accessed September 1, 2013, ATLA Religion Database With ATLASerials, EBSCOhost.

<sup>10</sup>Karl Barth consents that Paul's crowning issue in 1 Corinthians comes in chapter 15. The resurrection is for him the main issue from which Paul "proceeds and hacks back." Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans. H. J. Stenning (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1933), 113. He goes on to say the resurrection is eschatological not in the sense of an afterthought discussed after important issues, rather it refers to the teaching of the last things—at the same time it is the "beginning of the last things which are, at the same time, the first"; furthermore, he argues that the reality of death and the dead in chapter 15, contrasts with chapter 14 which discusses the various opportunities of life for the Corinthian believer. *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>Raymond F. Collins, "First Corinthians," *Sacra Pagina*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical, 1999), 582; Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 352.

Finally, aware of the theoretical complications in determining the structure,<sup>12</sup> I take a middle path that builds around a specific theme which reverberates throughout the book, yet respecting *peri de* as a partition marker. Even though the book constitutes a wide range of topics seemingly unrelated, there is no doubt that all the Corinthian issues stem out of a common problem—lack of spirituality.<sup>13</sup> As such, only a spiritual resurrection<sup>14</sup> would awaken them from spiritual demise. When the resurrection is seen as the organizing theme, the entire Epistle may be described as a conflict-packed letter whose fundamental purpose is spiritual resurrection or transformation of the believer.<sup>15</sup> Transformation would inevitably lead to unity and healing of the community of faith (1:10) through the message of the cross as the antidote to divisions and other ethical problems which were plaguing the church (1:18).

### The Identity and significance of *Nomos* in the Text

Having resolved the question on the unity and integrity of the text, the study now turns to the second *question*. Which law does Paul refer to in v. 56, which, when it is violated brings about sin and death as its judgment or sting? The answer to this question is debatable, probably because *nomos* occurs in Chapter 15 only here (v. 56), in contrast with *hamartia* and *thanatos* with multiple occurrences. For example *hamartia* is mentioned several times in the chapter in connection with the death of Christ on the cross (v. 3), with the resurrection of Christ (v. 17), with living righteous lives (v. 34), and lastly with reference to the final resurrection of the just (v. 56). *Thanatos* appears with reference to man as its bringer (v. 21), as God's last enemy to be destroyed (v. 26), as a defeated foe when saints wear resurrection bodies (v. 54), and as having lost its venom (v. 55) with which it stings its victims (v. 56).<sup>16</sup> To the contrary, *nomos* is *lexagomenon* in the chapter for this reason careful exegesis is necessary to determine its correct identity and meaning. Does the word refer to the Mosaic code<sup>17</sup> or to the Torah in general?

First it must be noted that of the eight (8) occurrences of *nomos* in the entire book of First Corinthians (9:8, 9, 20\*4; 14:34, and 15:56), Paul uses it only here in v. 56 in connection with sin. For this reason I dispute the view that *nomos* in this context refers to the Mosaic system of laws or the Torah.<sup>18</sup> While there is a sense in which *nomos* in the book is used in reference to the Mosaic code (e.g. 9:20), and to the torah (e.g. 9:8, 9; 14:34), yet in v. 56 it is not. Following are the reasons why it is not: (a) Paul despises certain parts of the Mosaic law that were specifically Jewish. This category touches ceremonial laws relating to circumcision, festivals, new moons, foods, and special sabbaths (1 Cor 7:19; Gal 2:11-14; Col 2:14-16),<sup>19</sup> hence the law in v. 56 cannot be the entire Mosaic code; (b) while condemning certain parts of the Mosaic code as irrelevant, the apostle respects the "keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Cor 7:19), which he identifies as "the law of God" or "the law of Christ" (9:21). The word *entoles* for commandments (7:19) identifies specific commandments of the Decalogue (moral law) rather than the entire Mosaic code because the Ten Commandments serve as a standard of judgment.<sup>20</sup> Also, (c) Paul uses *hamartia* elsewhere in the book in connection with judgment, and relates it to the violation of specific commandments. For example, he urges believers to shun fornication for it is a sin against one's body (6:19). The covetous person, the idolater, the adulterer, and the robber (vv. 9,10; cf. 5:10, 11; 15:34) are included on the list of sinners who will be excluded from the kingdom of God. He calls all such violaters, the *adikos* (the unrighteous, 1Cor 6:9), a term which has the OT view of sin as a "violation of the divine law" (cf. Mt. 5:45; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 6:1, 9; 2 Pet. 2:9).

<sup>12</sup>For the discussion of other partition theories, see Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 36-39.

<sup>13</sup>The contrast between the "natural man" and the "spiritual man" (1 Cor 2:14, 15) suggests that there were two groups of believers in the church. The former relied on the wisdom of the world to understand the things of God, but the latter on the Holy Spirit (vv. 5, 12). However, Paul describes the entire congregation as "carnal" suggesting a more acute spiritual problem (3:1-3). Hence, he cannot teach them hard doctrinal lessons, but lighter topics which relate well to the image of milk given to babes. Their carnal condition fueled conflicts and divisions (v. 4). A spiritual resurrection was the only remedy for them.

<sup>14</sup>Barth, *The Resurrection*, 113.

<sup>15</sup>In support of 1 Corinthians as a "problem-oriented letter" rather than "a progress-oriented letter," Ben Witherington III pictures Paul as one attempting to calm "conflict in the Corinthian Christian community" from whom he parted for some time, but the situation worsened (according to 2 Corinthians) after receiving 1 Corinthians. Witherington, *1 and 2 Corinthians*, 73.

<sup>16</sup>1 Cor 9:8, 9, 20; 14:21, 34; 15:56 (Moulton and Geden, *Greek Concordance*, s.v. "νομος.")

<sup>17</sup>I use Mosaic code in reference to both the ceremonial laws and the Ten Commandments.

<sup>18</sup>9:8, 9, 20; 14:21, and 34; so Vlachos, "Law, Sin, and Death: An Edenic Triad? An Examination with Reference to 1 Corinthians 15:56," *Journal for the Evangelical Theology* 47/2 (2004), 277-298.

<sup>19</sup>ESV notes on 1 Cor 9:20, 21.

<sup>20</sup>In Rom 7:8-13, 13:9, Eph 2:15, and 6:2, *ἐντολη* is used in reference to the expression "You shall love your neighbor as your-self" which summarizes the six items of the second tablet (Meinrad Limbeck, "ἐντολη, ης, ἡ," *EDNT*, 1:460).

This is what some of the Corinthians were before they were washed, sanctified and justified in Christ (6:11). In a sense, they had been guilty of the second, the sixth, the seventh, the ninth, and the tenth commandments.

The apostle James, in the wider context of Scriptures, would consider them guilty of breaking the whole law, having violated only a few (James 2:11). Paul's statements that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor 15:3), that you are still "in your sins" if Christ is not risen (15:17), and his invitation to them to "awake to righteousness, and sin not" (15:34), suggest that Corinthians were guilty of violating the Ten Commandments, the standard of God's judgment.

*Second the mosaic code perspective contradicts what Paul says in 2 Cor 3:6, a related text in which "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (NAS). The letter that kills refers to the law which was written on tables of stone (3:3, 7), namely the Decalogue, or the old covenant (v. 6-9). Paul makes no case against the Ten Commandments for it is holy (Rom 7:12), and it identifies sin (7:7). His contention is that so long as the law remained written on stones but not internalized in their lives, it was useless for it could not save them.<sup>21</sup> The law intensifies sin to the point of rebellion against God and holds the sinner to his sin, yet it has no power to give life, but condemnation and death through sin (Rom 7:9f; 1 Cor 15:56; Rom 8:1).<sup>22</sup> However, even though the law's task seems negative in convicting the sinner of sin, yet its purpose is positive in that it points the sinner to no one else for victory over sin, not even to own works, but alone to Jesus Christ, the gift of God (15:57). When the law is silhouetted against Christ's death, not only do we see an unbreakable link between the law and the Gospel, but also that the cross confirms the law.<sup>23</sup> Thus Paul can say to the Corinthians that the letter kills but the spirit makes alive.*

*Corinthians violated the Ten Commandments through divisions, hero worship, lawsuits, sexual immorality, incest, idolatry, disorderliness in church etc. Their rebellion intensified the power of sin on them, resulting in death reigning over their mortal bodies; yet by accepting Paul's message of the resurrection from their spiritual death, they received pardon and transformation; death whose sting is sin, could no longer touch them.<sup>24</sup> Instead they could sing a victorious rejoinder over the grave (v. 55), because of Jesus Christ (v. 57).*

*Figure 1 is a schema summarizing the relationship of the law, sin and death. The schema simply means that, in the present age, violating the law of God produces sin, the sting of death. The word *kentron* or "sting" appears 4 times in the NT (Acts 26:14; 1 Cor 15:55, 56; Rev 9:10) as an image of something hurtful, poisonous or violent.<sup>25</sup> Paul uses this figure to indicate the awful reality of the reign of death. He compares sin to a sting or poison injected into the victim by a stinging insect or serpent to cause death.<sup>26</sup> However, the victorious taunt suggests that despite the deadly power of sin which causes death, it can be reversed by the power of Christ.<sup>27</sup> His death and resurrection broke the grip of sin and death on behalf of those who believe in Him as their Savior (15:3, 4).*

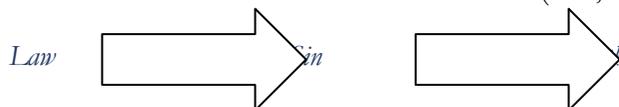


Figure 1. The relationship of the law, sin and death.

*Third, Paul uses a similar construction of "sin and law" in Rom 7:7-11. Here, *nomos* and *entolés* are synonymous with covetousness, one of the Ten Commandments. Paul describes his own struggle with sin using the word *epithumia* (covet) which, in this context means "a desire for something forbidden or simply inordinate craving or lust."<sup>28</sup>*

<sup>21</sup>Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians: The English Text with Instruction, Exposition and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F.F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 100; also "Tables of Stone," [2 Cor 3:3], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC), rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1980), 6:844.

<sup>22</sup>Gutbrod, *TDNT*, "νομος," 4:1074.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 1076.

<sup>24</sup>David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, ed., *Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 9, *The First Epistle of Paul The Apostle to the Corinthians*, trans. John W. Fraser, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 347.

<sup>25</sup>Horst Balz, "κέντρον," *EDNT*, 2:282.

<sup>26</sup>Lothar Schmid, "κέντρον," *TDNT*, 3:667; or that "Death does not prod one along but penetrates its victim with fatal venom." Chris Alex Vlachos, "Law, Sin, and Death: An Edenic Triad? An Examination with Reference to 1 Corinthians 15:56," *Journal for the Evangelical Theology* 47/2 (2004), 277-298; also Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 1300.

<sup>27</sup> Thiselton, *1 Corinthians*, 1300.

<sup>28</sup>Bauer, *BDAG*, s.v. "ἐπιθυμία."

Since the Roman audience was Jewish, it is difficult to know why Paul cited the tenth commandment rather than the one on idolatry or Sabbath observance, commandments that were popular in Jewish theology. Probably he saw in the tenth commandment not only a summary of the Decalogue, but also the root of sin, for it curbs the desire to sin before it matures into the actions prohibited by the nine commandments.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the OT and Judaism viewed *epithumia* as “the main sin” which resides in man; it is “anxious self-seeking” and reveals man “as he really is.”<sup>30</sup> Such knowledge would have influenced him to use it as a model sin that hinders commitment to the highest being.<sup>31</sup>

*This interpretation of sin and the Law in Romans throws light on the identity of the law in 1 Cor 15:56. Rather than the Mosaic code or the Torah, it seems to me that Paul has in mind covetousness (Decalogue) as the “strength of sin”<sup>32</sup> that leads to death, for he says: “For sin, taking occasion of the commandment (covetousness) [emphasis mine], deceived me, and by it slew me” (Rom 7:11). Paul uses *epithumia* and *entolēs* interchangeably to refer to covetousness. In 1 Cor 5:10, 11; cf. 6:10, he employs *pleonektēs* (covetousness) to refer to some specific sins. While *epithumia* covers all types of sins in Romans, *pleonektēs* is limited to greedy for power and wealth in 1 Corinthians, but it is juxtaposed with fornication and other sins that lead to destruction.<sup>33</sup> This suggests that the law in v. 56 is the Ten Commandments.*

### Parallels Between 1 Corinthians and Revelation

I have categorized the parallels into two groups: verbal and thematic parallels. The first category (verbal) of parallels is built on words that occur in the two books (1 Corinthians & Revelation). The second category of parallels is based on broad themes that are embedded in the two books.

#### (a) Verbal parallels

When the resurrection is taken as the organizing theme of 1 Corinthians, the entire book may be seen as an eschatological book cast in the context of conflict between Christ and Satan much like the book of Revelation. The assertion for conflict is supported by the war language *salpigx* (trumpet) and *nikos* (victory) arising from the resurrection passage and indeed in the wider context of the book itself. Of the eleven occurrences of the word *salpigx* in the NT, three are in First Corinthians (1 Cor 14:8; 15:52\*2) and six in Revelation (Rev 1:10; 4:1; 8:2, 6, 13; 9:14). In antiquity the trumpet signaled the army to prepare for battle and to attack. Not only did the trumpet sound strengthen the battle cry, it also terrified enemies throwing them into confusion, or signaled a retreat to end the battle, to regroup and march back to camp.<sup>34</sup> Paul gives an eschatological significance to the trumpet in 1 Cor 15:52. It is the *eskate salpiggi* (last trump) for it serves as a marker of transformation of the living and rising of the dead. Although it is not clear who blows the eschatological trumpet (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16), yet its sound signals the end of the age [conflict] as in the case of the armies of antiquity when it was sounded to end the battle, gather the scattered troops and march back to base.<sup>35</sup> The word *nikos* (victory) suggests that the victory that is given to the saints at the sound of the last trumpet “is victory over death, or, in terms of the Apocalypse, over the fourth horseman (6:8).”<sup>36</sup> The wide spread death of “over a fourth of the earth” (Rev 6:8), is now reversed back to life. Of the four occurrences of *nikos* in the NT, three are in the resurrection passage to emphasize the ultimate victory of the saints over death (1 Cor 15: 54, 55, 57). Paul’s description of the resurrection in 1 Cor 15:52-58, parallels the first resurrection of Rev 20:4-6. Here the redeemed of all ages, as well as those who were beheaded during the fourth seal, come back to life at the sound of the last trumpet, and together with the living saints are taken to heaven (1 Thess 4:16-17) to be with the Lord for a thousand years. The second occurrence of *salpigx* is in 1 Cor 14:8 where it is used as a metaphor from military language to show that proclamation in the congregation must be clear if edification is to take place.

<sup>29</sup>Covetousness is here exemplified by the Ten Commandments for they are “the precepts through which, preeminently, comes the knowledge of sin” (Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 249); also James R. Edwards, *Romans*, New International Biblical Commentary (NIBC) 6 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 187; Judaism considers fasting, control of meat eating, and scrupulous adherence to the Sabbath observance as important; the term *epithymia*, which means desire, is often seen as the main sin, in that it hinders genuine commitment to God. Friedrich Büchsel, “θυμός, ἐπιθυμία, ἐπιθυμέω. . .” TDNT, 3:17.

<sup>30</sup>Friedrich Büchsel, “θυμός, ἐπιθυμία, ἐπιθυμέω. . .” TDNT, 3:171.

<sup>31</sup>Büchsel, “θυμός, ἐπιθυμία, ἐπιθυμέω. . .” TDNT, 3:171.

<sup>32</sup>The law is the power of sin for it brings God’s judgment upon mankind (so Torrance and Torrance, *Calvin’s Commentaries*, 347).

<sup>33</sup>Gerhard Delling, πλεονέκτης, πλεονεκτέω, πλεονεξία,” TDNT, 6:272.

<sup>34</sup>Friedrich Ba umgrtel, Elangen, σαλπιγξ, TDNT, 7:74.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>36</sup>O. Bauernfeind, νικῶ, νικῆ, νικος, ὑπερνικῶ, TDNT, 4:945.

Speaking in tongue without interpretation does not edify the congregation any more than a distorted trumpet sound cannot give a clear signal to the soldiers to prepare for battle.<sup>37</sup> *Salpigx* is used together with *polemos* (battle, strife, or war) to emphasize the spiritual warfare which was raging in Corinth. Of the eighteen occurrences of the word *polemos* in the NT, First Corinthians (14:8) has one probably not because the spiritual battle in Corinth was less intense than in Revelation where it occurs nine times (9:7, 9; 11:7; 12:7<sup>17</sup>; 13:7; 16:14; 19:19; 20:8), but because Paul uses another word not found in Revelation to describe the conflict in that church. For example the word *erides* (strife, discord, contention) occurs three times (1 Cor 1:11; 3:3; 2 Cor 12:20) in reference to the quarrels or factions that divided the church militant in Corinthian. Although *salpigx* and *polemos* in the Apocalypse do not occur together in one verse as in 1 Cor 14:8, yet we can see a parallel idea with Paul's usage of the two words as military terms. *Polemos* is mentioned in the fifth trumpet (9:7) in relation to the locusts which looked like horses prepared for battle, and *salpigx* is also mentioned in the sixth trumpet with reference to the four angels who "killed a third of mankind" when they were released from great River Euphrates (9:14-15). As in 1 Cor 14:8 where the battle is spiritual for it concerns the proper use of spiritual gifts in proclamation, so are the battles in the fifth and sixth trumpets. They indicate God's judgments and invite sinners to repentance.<sup>38</sup>

(b) *Thematic Parallels*

The first parallel identifies God's end-time people. First and Second Corinthians picture Paul and the Corinthian believers, who as the bride of Christ (2 Cor 11:2), as engaged into a spiritual warfare against the serpent and the evil angels who are represented by false teaches (2 cor 3, 4). Their situation compares with the great controversy in the book of Revelation in which God's end time people are represented by the pure woman of Revelation 12, who together with her child, engage into battle against the apostate woman riding on the scarlet beast of Revelation 17.<sup>39</sup>

The second parallel is the similarity in sequencing of events. In the resurrection passage, sin and death are followed by a resurrection (1 Cor 15:56). Likewise, the souls of the beheaded saints in the fourth seal (Rev 20:4, 5) together with the dead of all ages are followed by the first resurrection in eschatology and they reign with Christ a thousand years.

The third parallel is loyalty to God's law. The loyalty of the Corinthian believers to the law of God, even unto death, and their subsequent victory (15:55-56), resonates with the experience of the eschatological church in Revelation, which endures persecution because of obedience to the commandments of God (12:17); however, their fidelity like that of the Corinthians, pays off in that they vanquish the beast through the blood of the Lamb (7:14). The fourth characteristic parallel of God's people in Corinth is their faith in Christ (15:57). Their victory over sin and death and evil forces is made possible by their relationship with Christ (15:45b, 57) much like God's end-time people in Revelation who keep the faith of Christ, an expression that refers to their relationship with Christ (14:12)

Possession of the testimony of Jesus in the Corinthian church, which is the Spirit of Prophecy (Rev 19:10), is the fifth parallel. This phenomenon was made manifest in Corinth through the ministry of Paul (15:1-11), for he says to them, "Behold, I tell you a mystery" (15:51). Similarly, the Spirit of prophecy moved John the Apostle to speak of the "revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show His servants what must soon take place" (Rev 1:1). Since Rev 12 begins the eschatological section of the book, that is "the final events of this world's history,"<sup>40</sup> it seems reasonable to conclude that "the testimony of Jesus" (12:17)—which is identified as the "spirit of prophecy" (19:10), that is, the revelation of Jesus through the ministry of His inspired prophets—continues after John among God's end-time people.<sup>41</sup>

A sixth parallel between First Corinthian and Revelation touches the worship of the end-time people in the two books. In that polytheistic society, it is clear from the text that the apostle and the believers worshipped the Creator of heaven and earth.

<sup>37</sup>Friedrich, *σαλπιγξ*, *TDNT*, 7:85.

<sup>38</sup>Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus*, 284.

<sup>39</sup>The true church is sometimes compared to a pure woman (Isa 54:5, 6; Jer 6:2; Eph 5:25-32), but a corrupt woman represents an apostate church (Jer 3:20; Eze 23:2, 4; Rev 17:1-3), "Woman" [Rev 12:1], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary* (SDABC), rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 7:807.

<sup>40</sup>Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus*, 373.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 401.

Illustrations from terrestrial and celestial spheres suggest that his audience may have believed in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth (1 Cor 15:38-41; cf. Gen 1 and 2). Idolatry was condemned as a false form of worship (8:4-6; 10:20, 21). This truth parallels the teaching of God's end-time people who worship the Creator of heaven, earth, the sea, and the springs of water (Rev 14:7).

They call the world to fear God, glorify Him, and worship Him because He is the Creator of all things—visible and invisible. Like their Corinthian counterparts, they condemn false worship in Babylon (14:8) because it ignores the Creator and violates His law. Although the apostle makes no direct mention of the man of sin who opposes and exalts himself “above all that is called God or that is worshipped” (2 Thess 2:3, 4), yet in 2 Corinthians, a letter written approximately four-five years after 2 Thessalonians,<sup>42</sup> within few months of the first, he warns of a spiritual warfare against “strongholds” and “every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God” (10:4, 5). In Revelation, God's end-time people warn the world against receiving the mark of the beast (14:9-11).

**Table 1. Parallels Between the Corinthian Believers and the Apocalyptic Church**

<u>1 Corinthians 15 and others</u>	<u>Revelation 12:17 and 14:6-12</u>
<u>Eschatological controversy (15:24, 30, 32)</u>	<u>Great controversy between God and Satan (12:1-17)</u>
<u>Keep God's law (15:56)</u>	<u>Keep the commandments of God (12:17; 14:12)</u>
<u>Keep the faith of Christ (15:57)</u>	<u>Keep the faith of Christ (14:12)</u>
<u>Endure hardships (15:30, 31; cf. 2 Cor 4:8-12; 6:4-10)</u>	<u>Endure persecution (14:12)</u>
<u>Have the testimony of Jesus (1 Cor 15:51)</u>	<u>Have the testimony of Jesus Christ (12:17)</u>
<u>Worship the Creator (15:22, 45, 38-41; cf. 8:4-6)</u>	<u>Worship the Creator (14:6, 7)</u>
<u>Denounces idolatry (8:4-6)</u>	<u>Denounces false worship (14:8-11)</u>
<u>The bride of Christ (15:49; cf. 2 Cor 11:1)</u>	<u>A pure woman (12:1)</u>

Table 1 summarizes the parallels between the eschatological church of Corinth and God's end-time people in the apocalyptic book of John.

### Nomos in Final Eschatological

Another truth arising from the study of *nomos* in the resurrection passage is its nature in the final eschatology. In the coming age, the nature of the law cannot be determined with certainty.<sup>43</sup> The apostle gives no such details on the matter. What is clear from the context is that Christ's death and his resurrection did not abrogate the Ten Commandments; rather the two events established the Decalogue as an integral eschatological truth in the work of man's redemption. The law makes sin alive and points the sinner to Christ for victory over sin (v. 56). In the wider context, the apocalyptic book of John teaches that keepers of the commandments are given the right to the tree of life (Rev 22:14)—their obedience is rewarded in eternity. Such strong statements about the role of God's commandments in the salvation of sinners and the subsequent reward for obedience in eschatology, affirm Matthews words written some years after the resurrection that Christ came to establish the law rather than to abolish it (Matt 5:17, 18).

It can also be adduced from creation language that Paul anticipates life in the restoration to be as it was in the beginning before sin entered. Harmony characterized the entire creation (1 Cor 15:28; cf. Gen 1:31; 2:2-3), sin will not rise the second time (Nah 1:9). Eschatological order in God's kingdom will be realized when God's enemies are subjected *hipotagē* (15:24-28). Paul draws this idea from Psa 8: 6, 7 (LXX). The word *hupotasoo* occurs 4 times in the resurrection passage (vv. 27, 28), and 16 times in the LXX.<sup>44</sup> Except for the two usages in Daniel (6:13; 11:39), and one in Hagai 2:18, the word is commonly used for a king's triumph over his enemies through the Lord's help—it indicates the submission of the people of Israel to the king.

<sup>42</sup>Probably Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians from Corinth between 50-51 A.D. during his first missionary journey and 2 Corinthians in Macedonia between 56-57 A.D. in his third missionary journey.

<sup>43</sup>One extensive study in this area is that of W.D. Davies who admits that information in the sources examined respecting the role of the torah both in the Messianic and the new age is lacking, but that “Christ Himself” is the new torah exemplified in the commandment of *agapē* in the NT; this conclusion is in place, but seems to ignore the Decalogue as the very summary expressed in the *agapē* commandment as given by Christ Himself (Luke 10:27; cf. John 14:15; 15:14).

<sup>44</sup>George Morrish, comp., *A Concordance of the Septuagint*, s.v. “ὑποτάσσω.”

In Psa 8:6, 7, the Psalmist celebrates man's dignified status and dominion which God gave him over His creation--the sheep, oxen, cattle, birds and fishes are subjected to him.<sup>45</sup> In 3 Kings 10:15 all the subjects of King Solomon bring tribute to him. Merchants, kings and princes are subjected to him.

In 1 Chron 22:18, *hipotasoo* and *katapauoo* (to rest) are used together in reference to King Solomon's rest when all the inhabitants were subject to him and the land subdued before the Lord. When Solomon sat on his throne, all Israel—princes, the mighty men, and sons of King David were subject to him (1 Chron 29:23, 24), and all his subjects brought gold and silver to him (2 Chron 9:14). God subdued nations for King David (Psa 17:48); also, the Psalmist pictures God's people at rest in the Lord as they wait for His salvation, but their enemies are restless (36:7). God subdues nations under the feet of His people (47:3), such as the Philistines (Psa 59:10); this subjection is linked with salvation (Psa 61:2, 6). Hence David can say the Lord God is my refuge, for He subdues my enemies (143:2).

The subjection of creation to sin is a consequence of Adam's fall; creation was subjected to "corruption" (1 Cor 15:42) and "futility" (Rom 8:20); as such, creation "groans and travails in pain in hope of redemption" (Rom 15:20, 22). Death, suffering, rebellion and disorder characterize the present order of life on earth. Christ's death and resurrection introduced a new order in which all evil powers will one day be subjected God (1 Cor 15: 28). The subjunctive aorist *hipotagē* (v. 28), suggests that the submission of all things to Christ will precede his own subjection to the Father, that God may be sovereign over all things.<sup>46</sup> The certainty of the subjection of evil powers in the *eschaton* is stressed by the four occurrences of *hipotasoo* in connection with order in the church of Corinth. <sup>47</sup> Believers with the gift of tongues are counseled to take turns to avoid confusion in church (14:32); women are urged to be silent in Church according to the law so that order prevails (14:34); and believers are urged to submit to the authority of church leaders in appreciation of their labor (16:16). At God's appointed time in future, He will bring to an end the kingdom of Satan, an action that will mark a reversal of the present order of things—sin, death and rebellion will be replaced by righteousness, life and obedience. *Nomos* in this context can therefore be seen as a theology of the Sabbath for it prepares believers of all ages to eschatological rest from works of sin and rebellion against the Creator. The weekly Sabbath and Joshua's rest (Heb 4:4-11) are a foretaste of that great eschatological rest of God (15: 28).<sup>48</sup>

### Summary and Conclusion

This study has argued for an intimate relationship between God's law and the eschatological church. In so far as the law of God continues to play a key role in convicting the sinner of his/her sin and pointing them to the cross of Jesus for pardon, it remains an integral part of the mission and message of the eschatological church, for God's law endures forever as the foundation of God's government. This understanding brings uniqueness and freshness to the study of First Corinthians (especially Chapter 15) as an eschatological book that informs the end-time church of its mission and message to a dying world. It also challenges the eschatological church to a fresh understanding of the resurrection both as a symbol of spiritual transformation of God's people from their works of sin, through the last Adam as a life-giving spirit (15:3, 4, 17, 34, 22, 45, 57), and also as a future realization of the spiritual body at the Parousia (15:44). Since obedience is the goal of God's law, God's end-time people are challenged to order their lives in existentialism in harmony with the divine principles as they anticipate final eschatological rest in the kingdom of God, when God will "be all in all" (v. 28).

<sup>45</sup>Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 1, 1-50*, Anchor Bible (AB) 16 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 49.

<sup>46</sup>Wallace, *Beyond the Basics*, 473, 479.

<sup>47</sup>Moulton and Geden, *Greek Concordance*, s.v. "ὑποτάσσω."

<sup>48</sup>Otto Bauernfeind, "καταπαύω, καταπαύσις," *TDNT*, 3:627.