

## *Part Eight*

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### OLD AND NEW COVENANTS

45

#### THE OLD TESTAMENT ATTESTED BY CHRIST AND THE APOSTLES

##### I. The Testimony of the New Testament to the Genuineness (Authorship) of the Books of the Old Testament

###### A. *Jesus' Statements:*

Matthew 13:14: "And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which saith 'By hearing he shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive.'"

Matthew 15:7: "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying . . ."

Matthew 22:43: "How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying . . ."

Matthew 24:15: "When therefore ye see the abomination and desolation which was spoken of by David the prophet, standing in the holy place . . ."

Mark 12:26: "Have ye not read in the book of Moses, in the place concerning the bush how God spake unto him, saying . . ."

Mark 12:36: "David himself said in the Holy Spirit, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.'"

Luke 24:44: "These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me."

John 5:46: "For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me: for he wrote of me."

###### B. *Statements By Others In The New Testament:*

Matthew 2:17: "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 'A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her

children; and she would not be comforted, because they are not.' " (From Jer. 31:15).

Matthew 3:3: "This is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying . . ." (Isa. 7:14).

Matthew 4:14: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying . . ." (Isa. 40:3).

Matthew 22:24: The Sadducees quote Deuteronomy 25:5, saying that Moses wrote it.

Luke 2:22-24: Luke quotes from Leviticus and Exodus in telling of the presentation of Jesus in the temple, and says that it was according to the law of Moses.

John 1:17: "For the law was given through Moses" says John.

John 1:45: "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote," said Nathanel.

Acts 8:28, 32: "and was reading the prophet Isaiah . . . now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this, 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away [justice was denied Him]. His generation who shall declare? For his life is taken from the earth.'" (Quoted from Isa. 53:7, 8.)

I Corinthians 9:9: "For it is written in the law of Moses . . ." (The apostle quotes Deut. 25:4.)

## II. The Testimony of The New Testament To The Authenticity (Truthfulness) of the Old Testament Accounts

### A. *Jesus' Statements:*

Matthew 6:29: "yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Matthew 12:3: Jesus cites as true what is written in I Samuel 21:6.

Matthew 12:40: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Matthew 12:42: "The queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here."

Matthew 15:3-5: Jesus quotes from the Law of Moses,

calling it the "commandment of God."

Matthew 22:32: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Ex. 3:6).

Matthew 23:35: "that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom you slew between the sanctuary and the altar."

Luke 4:25-27: Jesus cites as true the accounts of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, and of Elisha and Naaman.

Luke 17:26-29: Jesus cites as true the accounts of Noah and the flood, and of Lot and the destruction of Sodom.

Luke 24:44: "Then he said to them, 'These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms concerning me.'"

John 3:14: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."

John 5:39: "Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me."

John 6:32, 49: Jesus refers to the wandering of the Israelites and the giving of manna as true incidents.

**B. *Statements By Others In The New Testament:***

Luke 3 and Matthew 1: These genealogies verify those of the Old Testament.

Acts 7: Stephen's speech verifies many statements of the Old Testament.

Acts 8:28, 32: "Now the passage of the scripture . . ." (From Isa. 53.)

Acts 13:16-22: Paul refers to events which took place in the Old Testament.

Romans 1:16, 17: Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4: "But the righteous shall live by faith."

I Corinthians 10:1-13: Paul refers to specific incidents that happened to the Israelites as being authentic.

Galatians 3:16: Paul bases his argument on the singular form (rather than the plural form) being used in the promise recorded in Genesis 13:15 and 17:8.

Hebrews 2:1, 2: "For if the word spoken through angels

(the Old Testament) proved steadfast . . ."

Hebrews 10:30: The passage quotes Deuteronomy 32:35, 36.

Hebrews 10:37: The passage quotes Habakkuk 2:3, 4.

Hebrews 11: The entire chapter cites as true the Old Testament accounts of Cain and Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and many others.

Hebrews 12:5: The passage quotes from Proverbs 3:11ff.

Hebrews 12:16: Reference to the incident of Esau's selling his birthright.

Hebrews 12:18-21: Reference to Exodus 19:12-22.

James, 2:8-11: James quotes from Leviticus 19:18 and Exodus 20:13, 14.

I Peter 3:20: "that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" confirms parts of Genesis.

### III. The Testimony Of The New Testament To The Inspiration (Authority and Infallibility) Of The Old Testament

#### A. *Jesus' Statements:*

Matthew 4:4: "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'" (Quoted from Deut. 8:3.) In verses 7 and 10 Jesus again quotes from Deuteronomy in His answers to Satan's temptations as stating rules from God which bound His own conscience and conduct.

Matthew 5:17, 18: Jesus' statements that He came not to destroy the law but to fulfill, and that the law would remain in effect until all was fulfilled, declare the truth of the Old Testament prophecies and the authority of the law.

Matthew 5:21, 27; 15:4; 19:18, 19: Jesus quotes five of the ten commandments on at least three different occasions: in the Sermon on the Mount, in argument with the Pharisees, and to the rich young ruler.

Matthew 19:4: "Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh?" Jesus affirms of Moses' statement in Genesis 2:24 that God said this.

Matthew 21:42: Jesus quotes Psalms 118:22, 23, referring

to it as "scripture."

Matthew 22:31: "But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying," and He quotes Exodus 3:6.

Mark 7:8-13: Jesus refers to the commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother" as being the commandment of God. He concludes in verse 9: "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God that ye may keep your traditions."

Mark 12:36: "David himself said in the Holy Spirit," and Jesus quotes Psalms 110:1.

Luke 16:17: "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall."

Luke 18:31: "And he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of Man.' "

Luke 22:37: "For I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, 'And he was reckoned with transgressors' for that which concerneth me hath fulfillment." Jesus quotes Isaiah 53:12.

Luke 24:25, 26: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?"

Luke 24:44: "All things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me."

John 10:35: Jesus says, "The scripture cannot be broken" referring to Psalms 82:6.

John 13:18: "that the scripture may be fulfilled, 'He that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me.' " Jesus quotes Psalms 41:9.

*True prophecies, those which never fail to come to pass, are from God. Jesus' insistence that the Old Testament prophecies are sure to be fulfilled amounts to testimony that they are from God.*

#### B. Statements By Others In The New Testament

Matthew 1:22: "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet . . ." quoted from Isaiah 7:14. The same terminology—"that which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet"—is used

in Matthew 2:15 in quoting from Hosea 11:1.

Matthew 21:5: Matthew says Jesus fulfilled Zechariah 9:9, that "which was spoken through the prophet . . ."

Luke 1:55: "As he (God) spake unto our fathers," indirect quote by Mary alluding to Genesis 17:19.

Luke 1:67, 70: "Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying . . . As he (God) spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old."

John 19:36, 37: "For these things came to pass that the scripture might be fulfilled . . ." John quotes Psalms 34:20 and Zechariah 12:10.

Acts 1:16: "Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas."

Acts 3:21: "Whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been of old."

Acts 3:22: "Moses indeed said, 'A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you.'"

Acts 3:24: "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days."

Acts 4:24, 25, 31: The apostles and Christians prayed, saying, "O Lord, thou . . . who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say," quoting Psalms 2:1, 2.

Acts 13:34: "He (God) hath spoken on this wise, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'" (Quotation from Isaiah 55:3.)

Acts 28:25: "Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers, saying," quoting Isaiah 6:9, 10.

Romans 1:2: "Which (the gospel) he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures."

Romans 3:2: "First of all, that they (the Jews) were intrusted with the oracles of God."

Romans 9:25: "As he (God) saith also in Hosea," quoting Hosea 2:23.

Galatians 3:16: "He saith not, 'And to seeds,' as of many; but as of one, 'And to thy seed,' which is Christ." (Quotation from Gen. 13:15; 17:8.)

Galatians 3:18: "God hath granted it to Abraham by promise," referring to Genesis 22:17, 18.

II Timothy 3:15, 16: "And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for . . ."

Hebrews 1:1: "God having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners." (All the first chapter bears witness to the inspiration of the Old Testament.)

Hebrews 2:2: "For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast,"

Hebrews 3:7: "Wherefore even as the Holy Spirit saith," quoting the words of Psalms 95:7ff.

Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:15-17: These passages affirm the divine source of Jeremiah 31:31ff.

Hebrews 12:26: "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying 'Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven.'" (Quotation from Haggai 2:6.)

Hebrews 13:5: This passage affirms the inspiration of Deuteronomy 31:6 and Joshua 1:5.

I Peter 1:10, 11: "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them."

I Peter 3:19: This affirms the inspiration of the preachers in the days of Noah: "But made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison that aforetime were disobedient when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah."

II Peter 1:21: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."

II Peter 3:2: "That ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets."

## OLD AND NEW COVENANTS

### For Further Study:

France, R. T. *Jesus and the Old Testament*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1971. Extensive study on Jesus' use of the Old Testament.

Pinnock, Clark. "The Inspiration of Scripture and the Authority of Jesus Christ," *God's Inerrant Word*, ed. by J. W. Montgomery. Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1973. Jesus teaches a trustworthy and inerrant scripture.

Tasker, R. V. G. *The Old Testament in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1946. Pp. 19-38. Jesus' use of the Old Testament.

Wenham, John. *Christ and the Bible*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1972. Pp. 11-37. Jesus accepted the Old Testament as historically true, inspired by God and divinely authoritative.



## LAW OR GRACE

“The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

The New Testament plainly teaches what every Christian needs to know, that the religion which is by faith in Jesus Christ is separate and distinct from the Old Testament. It is not only a new covenant in place of the old one; but it is also one of a different kind. Even the Old Testament plainly declared that it would be so. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34 and the comments on it in Hebrews 8:1-13.

*Christ Fulfilled the Law*

Jesus came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17); and *He did fulfill it!*

He fulfilled it as a promise or note is fulfilled when it is paid in full. He brought, or did, or was, what the Old Testament promised and predicted.

He fulfilled it as a set of blueprints is fulfilled when the house is completed. He established what the Old Testament outlined and fore-patterned in type and shadow.

He fulfilled it as the apple fulfills the apple blossom. The Old Testament was as necessary in preparing for Christ and the gospel as the blossom is in preparing for the apple. But, as the apple blossom disappears when the apple comes on, not being destroyed or made void, but being fulfilled and validated by the apple which displaces it, so also the law is not destroyed but is made valid by the Christ who furnishes, and is, what it prepared for.

He manifested in His life the righteousness which the law described.

He bore in His death the punishment which the law inflicted. He fulfilled the sentence which it pronounced against sinners. Thus He upheld the validity of its demands and established its divine authority; but at the same time, He satisfied its claims and dismissed its charge against us. He nailed it to the cross (Col. 2:14).

*A New Covenant*

After the death of Jesus, a new will (or testament) was proclaimed from heaven; and by it the former will is made obsolete and no longer binding.

In the book of Acts we see the new covenant in effect. We also

see some men trying to perpetuate the old covenant even in the church. They tried to mingle together the rule of Christ and the rule of the law. But God revealed that they do not mix.

First, the benefits of the gospel were proclaimed to all in Judea without regard to how well they had kept the law. Then God expressly directed that it was to be preached to Gentiles without the law (Acts 10:1 to 11:18). Still later, when some tried to lay upon the Gentile Christians an obligation to the law, the will of the Lord was revealed that it was not to be so (Acts 15:1-31).

Still in many places and often the problem arose, for the advocates of the law were not easily convinced, and human nature is inclined to legalism. So the truth and grace of Christ versus the bondage and failure of the law, as a way of life and righteousness, was often discussed in Paul's epistles: especially in Romans, Galatians, Colossians, and Hebrews, but also in others.

Note some of the many ways in which the Spirit of God says that the law came to an end and was displaced by the gospel of Christ— "Ye are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18; 3:23-25). "Ye are not under the law, but under 'grace'" (Rom. 6:14). "Ye also were made dead to the law . . . that ye might be joined to another" (Rom. 7:4). "I died unto the law, that I might live unto God" (Gal. 2:19-21). "Ye have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein ye were held" (Rom. 7:6). "It is done away in Christ" (II Cor. 3:14). He "abolished . . . the law" (Eph. 2:14, 15). He "blotted out" the law, "and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). He "made of necessity a change of the law" (Heb. 7:12). "There is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment, because of its weakness and unprofitableness" (Heb. 7:18, 19). "He taketh away the first (covenant) that he may establish the second" (Heb. 10:9, 10).

There can be no doubt that some law was abrogated; but there is often disagreement as to what it was. In II Corinthians 3:1-14 the old covenant which was done away is expressly stated to be that which was written on tables of stone when Moses' face was shining (i.e., the ten commandments). According to the letter of the apostles and elders in Acts 15:22-29, the Gentile Christians were not expected to observe anything of the Jewish law or customs except to abstain from blood, idols, and fornication. In Galatians 2:3; 5:2, 3, 6 and I Corinthians 7:18, 19 circumcision is especially mentioned as a key element of that which was no more binding upon men and circumcision was given to Abraham long before Moses' time. Paul says that

if anyone accepts circumcision, as a religious obligation, he becomes obligated to do the whole law (Gal. 5:3); thus he makes it all a unit. Although we may regard part of the law as ceremonial and other parts as moral law, such a distinction is never made or even assumed in scripture.

Several passages, such as Romans 6:14, 15; 10:4; Galatians 2:16, 19, 21; 5:18, 23 use no article, "the," with the word "law" in the original language; thus they say that we are not under law any more, speaking of law in general as a principle or method by which God deals with men. They probably refer to the Mosaic law as the outstanding example of law, but they speak broadly of the nature of any legal system.

*The Christian is simply not under anything but Christ.* Read Colossians 2:8 to 3:17. Christ is the end of law (no article) for righteousness to everyone that believeth (Rom. 10:4). Compare Philippians 3:3-12.

#### *A New Kind of Covenant*

The gospel of Christ is not simply another law or a better law; it is something different from law. The gospel did not introduce a new system of right and wrong, but a new way of dealing with it. The rule of Christ is not a reign of law, but the manifestation of a new creature, the product of a new spirit, the working of Christ in us through faith and love (Gal. 5:6, 13-18, 22-25; 6:15, 16; Rom. 14:17).

The written record of the law is still valuable. It is useful to reveal sin in its deadly sinfulness, and to show man's need for salvation under some system other than law. It helps to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24; II Tim. 3:15). It bears a powerful testimony to the divine origin of the gospel which it predicts and prefigures in so many ways.

But the law, as a covenant under which we have our standing before God, cannot continue in force over those who are in Christ. If Christians were to try to be justified by the law, then they would be fallen away from grace, and Christ would become of none effect to them (Gal. 5:1-6). In the very process of coming into Christ men are made dead to the law. By grace men are brought into *a new and different relationship with God, a new condition of heart, and a new kind of control in Christ.*

#### *A New Relationship With God*

Under law man stands in a legal relationship with God; the law

stands between man and God. One's acceptance or condemnation before God is determined rigidly by how he has kept the law. He stands as one who merits all that he receives, boasting before God (a sad distortion of goodness!). Or rather, actually, through lack of merit, he is unable to stand at all. The standards of God's law are perfect, and they allow for no deviation at all. Cursed is everyone who does not do all the law all the time (Gal. 3:10; James 2:10). By works of law no man can be justified before God (Rom. 3:19, 20; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; Acts 13:39). Under law anyone who feels justified can do so only by blinding himself to the meaning of the law and the condition of his own heart and life. The law can be nothing else than a "ministration of death" and "condemnation" (II Cor. 3:7, 9); for it can only declare the guilt and pronounce the doom of sinners. It cannot make alive. The law makes a just and righteous demand upon men; but it does not enable them to do and be what is demanded.

Under grace our relationship with God is quite different, not on the basis of how we have kept the law, but on the fact that we have become united with Christ and are living in Him. It is an entirely personal relationship, by which we accept His offer of loving favor by personal trust in Jesus and by accepting His death, His life, and His leadership for our redemption from sin, our way of life, and our reason to be. By His death on our behalf He fulfilled the sentence of the law against us. We acknowledge the guilt of our sin, accept His death as our death, count ourselves as crucified with Christ, and henceforth live no longer unto ourselves, but unto Him, in Him, and for Him. He is our righteousness before the judgment of God and He is our way of life here upon the earth. In Him we stand; without Him we perish! The best law keeper in the world is just as lost as the worst sinner in hell; but any man who will can have eternal life and the fruits of righteousness in Christ. Under law no one is worthy even to continue in this earthly life. But through yielding in faith and love unto Christ, we are being prepared to share with Him His own infinite and eternal inheritance. This is the power and the glory of God's grace!

*New Creatures In Christ*

"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (Read II Cor. 5:14-19). "For the law [principle] of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law [dominion] of sin and of death . . . that the

ordinance [or requirement] of the law [God's will] might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit . . . They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you . . . If by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:1-14).

Coming to Christ for salvation, we surrender our defiled and condemned selves to death, we are buried with Him through baptism into His death, and rise to newness of life, in which it is not we that live, but Christ that lives in us (Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 2:20).

In Christ we exercise and express the righteousness accounted to us by grace and the Spirit planted in us as a gift. The righteous will of God is not lowered; it makes no less demands upon us because we are in Christ; but through Christ we are enabled to meet the demands. Grace does not excuse us from doing the will of God, but it is part of God's way of enabling us to do His will.

We claim no merit for ourselves. He is our righteousness and our life. We live by His word to show our faith in Him, not to show our sufficiency as keepers of the law. Any good fruit produced in our lives is not for us to boast of or to receive credit for; but it is the product of Christ's working in us. Any deeds which we do in obedience to Jesus (whether moral or ceremonial) are not done as our deeds worthy of reward, but as His works in us. They are done in love for Him to the glory of His name, not ours. They are the result of regeneration, not the ground or condition thereof. We give thanks to Him for them.

When we have done all that we know of His will, we are still unprofitable servants and need to ask in faith for the mercies of His grace (Luke 17:10). But under grace we need not despair at our inability to know and do all of His will, because we are made to stand in His sufficiency (See Heb. 7:25; I John 1:8-10; 2:1, 2; Rom. 8:31-39; 14:4). Yet we cannot be self-satisfied or indifferent to the highest standards of His perfect pattern of goodness. Our works are never sufficient to be acceptable. We must live by faith. And faith working through love, seeking not to live our own lives but to let Him live in us, always impels us to do all things to His glory. We look not at ourselves either to excuse or defend ourselves, but we look at Him in admiration and loving imitation. The farther we advance in our efforts to be like Him the more we realize that we cannot attain such a goal in this life; yet we believe it is His purpose to give us this high character if we reach for it, believing in Him.

If we do not accept His control and let Him work in us, we do

not accept His grace. No one is under grace until he has died to sin and self, and has become alive unto God in Jesus Christ.

For Further Study:

- Campbell, Alexander. "The Sermon on the Law" in *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union*, ed. by C. A. Young. Rosemead, Calif: Old Paths Book Club, 1955. Pp. 217-288. Argues that what the law could not do Christ did. The complete law of Moses was nullified and superseded by the gospel of Christ.
- Stevens, G. B. *The Theology of the New Testament*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899. Pp. 17-26, 362-374. Discussion of what Jesus and Paul taught about the law and the gospel.
- Davis, John J. *Moses and the Gods of Egypt*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1971. Pp. 196-210. Studies the Ten Commandments in the context in which they were given and gives New Testament teaching on their meaning in the age of grace.
- Dungan, D. R. *Hermeneutics*. Delight, Ark.: Gospel Light Publishing Co., n.d. Pp. 106-155. Discusses the necessity and principles for distinguishing between the covenants.
- Fields, Wilbur. *Exploring Exodus*. Joplin: College Press, 1976. Pp. 413-421. A study of the Ten Commandments and their significance to Christians, who "are not under the law."
- Ford, Harold W. "On the Law and the Gospel," *Christian Standard* (July 16, 1955), Pp. 686. Helpful essay on the relationship between the law and gospel.
- Johnson, Ashley S. *The Two Covenants*. Delight, Ark.: Gospel Light Publishing Co., reprint of 1899 ed. Thirteen sermons on the relationship between the two covenants.

## JESUS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LAW

Jesus' teaching and practice reveal His attitude toward the law. In Christ was abrogated the entire Old Testament law, including the Ten Commandments, as a covenant or legal code. Jesus taught that the abiding moral principles revealed in the covenant God made with Israel are still binding on us today.

We certainly need more respectful knowledge of God's moral laws in this generation. Study of God's laws reveals sin and brings people to repentance. Probably our preaching of pardon would be more effective if people were made to see clearly the commandments of God they have broken. Certainly the church needs to learn to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded, in order to adorn the doctrine (Titus 2:1-10), to bear fruit to His glory, and to make our calling and election sure (II Pet. 1:5-11).

Jesus warned the disciples, "Beware of the leaven of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:5-12). In studying about the law, we must not fall into the popular error of deciding by reason or by custom or personal taste how far these commandments are binding upon us, but we must view them as decrees of God and determine their force and perpetuity by the study of His Word in which they are revealed. We must not consider Jesus as a rabbi explaining, or even purifying, the law; but we must distinguish clearly between the old covenant which has passed away and the new covenant which is God's will for us, of which Jesus is the supreme lawgiver. We must avoid thinking of the words of Christ quoted in the four Gospels as the full expression of Jesus' will and teaching for us. All the New Testament is the word of Christ, made known through the Holy Spirit. The apostles taught and wrote what they received; their teaching is not theirs, but Christ's (John 16:12-15).

*The Law of God Through Moses*

Read Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 and 6 concerning the giving of the Ten Commandments. God gave to Israel not only this basic law or constitution, but also all her national system, institutions, and officers, memorial feasts, and all the forms of worship in detail; because all these things were preparation and patterns for the Christian covenant. They were not enforced as the will of Moses, or the will of the people, but the will of God. All love and respect for God

was measured by the keeping of the law. All infraction and neglect of the law was sin against God and was punished by Him.

Israel was strictly charged to lay up in their hearts all the words and laws of God, and to teach them diligently to their children, talking of them morning, noon, and night, at rest and at work, and keeping them before their eyes in writing (Deut. 6:4-9). But through indifference and preoccupation with other things, the homes failed in this all-important task, just as they do today. The law was neglected. The customs of pagan neighbors were adopted, and great calamities were brought upon the disobedient people. By Jesus' day, synagogue services were held every Sabbath, in which the law and the prophets were read. But the people were taught chiefly by Pharisees, who perverted their practice by hypocrisy and vain formalities, and their teaching by the great place given to opinions and the traditions of the elders.

*Not to Destroy but to Fulfill*

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount declared: "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished" (Matt. 5:17, 18). Jesus upheld and promoted the keeping of the law, but not with the same emphasis that the Pharisees had, and with total rejection of their traditions. Hence He was often regarded as a lawbreaker. He was also promulgating the principles of spiritual righteousness and freedom belonging to the new covenant, and His teaching went beyond the law. He spoke with authority of His own greater than that of the law. He was aware that these things might create the impression that He would destroy the law; that is, set it aside as of no force or value. The conflict between Him and the Pharisees, the chief exponents of the law, would suggest that He was opposed to the law itself. Therefore Jesus denied that He would destroy the law; and, more than that, He affirmed in the strongest manner His conviction that the entire Old Testament was from God and could not pass away unfulfilled. Not the smallest part of it could be regarded as fruitless (Matt. 5:17-19).

McGarvey explains:

The term destroy is here used in antithesis, not with perpetuate, but with fulfill. To destroy the law would be more than to abrogate it, for it was both a system of statutes designed for the



## JESUS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LAW

ends of government, and a system of types foreshadowing the kingdom of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus was bringing new teaching and preparing a new covenant, but it did not destroy the law, for it was the very thing the law and the prophets were designed to prepare for. The law was a set of blueprints and patterns of the permanent house that Christ would build. The prophets were a stack of promissory notes which Christ would retire by paying them in full. If the fulfillment had not come, they would have been proved void, would have been destroyed. When the fulfillment came, the promises and patterns were no more in effect; they passed away, but they were not broken. When the fruit and seed are formed the bud and flower have passed away, but they have not been destroyed; they have been fulfilled.

Jesus also fulfilled the law in regard to its legal requirements, in its judicial demands upon the sinner. His death accomplished that which the continual sacrifices under the law could not do (Heb. 10:1-18). He accomplished the moral purpose of the law—His teaching, which took its place, is productive of righteousness superior to that of the law. He did not set aside the law and bring in anarchy, but He brought a better rule, filling up what was lacking in the law to govern the lives and spirits of men, and filling up what was lacking in it to express all God's holiness and His perfect will for man (e.g., the law of divorce, etc.). Righteousness apart from the law is witnessed in the law, and justification by faith apart from the works of the law does not make void the law but establishes it. (Study Rom. 3:21-31 and 8:4).

It is plainly affirmed in both Testaments that the old law and covenant would end in fulfillment and give way to a new and better system. A new lawgiver (Deut. 18:15-18), a new priesthood (Ps. 110:4), a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34), a new sacrifice (Isa. 53), a universal kingdom including the Gentiles (Isa 2:2-4) are all predicted in these and many other passages. Christians are "not under the law" (Rom. 6:14), "were made dead to the law through the body of Christ," are "discharged from the law" (Rom. 7:1-6), are under a new covenant and the old covenant, which was written on stones when Moses' face shone, "is done away in Christ" (II Cor. 3:1-14). The law has fulfilled its purpose in bringing us to Christ; we are no

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<sup>1</sup> J. W. McGarvey, *Matthew and Mark* (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1875). P. 52.

longer under it (Gal. 3:17-29). Christ abolished the law (Eph. 2:13-22). Return to the weak and beggarly rudiments of the law and observance of days and seasons commanded therein is a very dangerous error (Gal. 4:1-11; 5:1-18).

*Righteousness and the Law*

Surely Jesus did not mean to declare that in His kingdom men would be perpetually obligated to do and teach every least commandment of the Old Testament law. Rather He meant that the relative greatness of persons in the kingdom would be in proportion to their respect for and conscientious observance of the commandments of God which are intended for them. Inasmuch as He was then speaking to men who still lived under the old covenant, their characters were then judged by the laws of that covenant.

The man who would break what he considered the small commandments of God under one dispensation, would be portionately disobedient under a better dispensation . . . To the great commandments, as men classify them, even very small Christians may be obedient; but it requires the most tender conscience to be always scrupulous about the commandments.<sup>2</sup>

The righteousness of Christians must "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. 5:20). The scribes were the most advanced scholars of the law, and the Pharisees were the most zealous in its observance. Their "righteousness" was characterized by self-righteous pride in observance of minute regulations while they omitted the great and weighty matters (see Matt. 23:1-28). Their hearts were corrupted by their confidence in formal and ritual acts of righteousness as a substitute for being righteous in heart. Their satisfaction with their appearances made them not hunger and thirst after a pure heart and the will of God. We must continually hunger and thirst after the true righteousness of God, or we will not be filled.

"If righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought" (Gal. 2:21). If we are to stand blameless before God, it must be by the death of Christ and His merit imputed to us through our faith in Him. Commandments of God give the instruction by which an obedient spirit must live, but they will not produce that spirit of perfect submission. Only the heart that is won through true faith

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 53.

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and grateful appreciation to whole-hearted love for God and His righteousness will have the spirit of real righteousness and will use the law to glorify God rather than self.

For Further Study:

Fowler, Harold. *The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol. I. Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1968. Pp. 242-259.

See books listed on page 246.

GOD'S LAW IS FOR OUR GOOD ALWAYS

When Moses was about to end his career as the leader of Israel, and Israel was preparing to enter the promised land, he spoke to his people a series of addresses reviewing the laws God had given them. He said, "The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes . . . for our good always, that he might preserve us alive" (Deut. 6:24).

Moses repeated the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5), and in verse 29 we read God's fervent wish: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!"

We, as did ancient Israel, need to be convinced that God's government is most desirable. Men set up governments in order to provide wise leadership, strength for security and peace, and stability of society among other things. God's rule is the wisest, surest, and best obtainable. He has more personal, loving concern for all of us than any human government could have.

The laws that God has given are expressions of His love and His wisdom for our good. The idea that God's laws are killjoys that take all the fun out of life is a notion of unbelief and misunderstanding. In the long run obedience to God gives us more joy and peace than the transient pleasures of sin.

God knows how we are made and He gives His laws to fit our needs. We are made free and responsible to choose our actions. His laws give guidance to the choices we must make. Weakened and corrupted by sin, we choose inconsistently, first one way and then another. We need to feel and accept His authority expressed in His laws.

The ultimate purpose of God's will for us is to help us to be like Him, and to live according to His wisdom and goodness. His laws indicate His will in a concrete way. They illustrate the basic principles of His character and make known to us the divine nature that He wants us to share (see II Pet. 1:3, 4).

God's goodness makes His laws good. His love makes His decrees beneficent. Anyone who wants to be wise and good treasures the commandments and statutes of the Lord (see Ps. 19:7-14; 119:97-105).

*Perverse Legalism*

Some of the Pharisees in Jesus' day thought they loved God's law. In reality they loved the self-satisfaction, power, and prestige that stemmed from their pretending to do God's will. They were ensnared in legalism and hypocrisy, not because they had respect for the law but because they desired to excuse themselves from duties and yet defend and exalt themselves as obedient to the law. Their desire to judge and command others rather than examine and control themselves led them further into legalism. They emphasized the outward appearance and sought the approval and praise of men more than the approbation of God.

Such legalism overemphasizes certain chosen symbolic actions. Whenever we forget that the righteousness of God's commandments is primarily a righteousness of inner character, when we lose sight of the fact that character produces conduct, when we ignore the character and the motive behind the conduct and value the form of the deed above the heart out of which it is performed, then we are caught in the trap of legalism.

The first chapter of Isaiah shows that God was not pleased with outward performance of commanded duties when the heart was not in the state that the commanded actions were meant to express.

*The Greatest Benefit of the Law*

The great purpose of the law is that it shows up the sinfulness of sinful deeds and announces the punishment they bring. This helps to guide and to fortify the will of those who wish to do right. It eventually works to eliminate those who do not wish to do right. It restrains and tempers the madness of many. But best of all, it shuts up all men to judgment and shows that the only way of escape from condemnation is by faith in Jesus Christ. The law prepared for Christ by showing all men's absolute need for Him.

The law requires righteousness and shows the sinner the depths of his sin, not to lead him in despair, but rather to lead him humbled and penitent to Christ, that God may receive him through faith. Paul's philosophy of the law is most succinctly set forth in Galatians 2:19: 'For I through the law died unto the law, that I might live unto God.' The apostle died to the law ethically; he broke off all relations to the law as a supposed means of salvation. Compare Romans 7:4, where death to the law is illustrated

by the dissolution of the marriage-bond by the death of one of the parties. But how did he die to the law by means of the law? The answer is found in full in Romans 7:7ff. The law had shown him his sin and his guilt. It had put him to death ethically. It had slain his self-righteousness. This was a severe, but in its ultimate result, a saving process. The law had prepared him to receive Christ. It had taught him the inadequacy of all his 'works,' and had led him to accept a gracious salvation. He thus broke off all relations to the law and fled to Christ for salvation, and it was the law itself which, when he clearly saw its requirements, proved a powerful incentive urging him to do this. Thus the law, by showing him his sinfulness and helplessness, was a means of driving him to Christ. Hence, through the law, he became as a dead man to the law—ceased to regard it as a saving institute—and was pointed to the spiritual life graciously offered in Christ, in whose fellowship he found joy and peace. The law had slain him, but it was only that Christ might make him alive. He forsook the law forever, but only that he might become 'under the law to Christ' (I Cor. 9:21).<sup>1</sup>

What the law could not do because it was weak through the flesh, or rather, because human flesh was too weak to keep the law, God has done for us through the grace of Christ and the conversion of our hearts. Under the law alone we cannot have righteousness that will stand approved in God's judgment. Only the righteousness of Christ, accounted to us through faith, can make us acceptable to God. But the law certainly works for our good if it bring us to Christ.

#### *Christ Fulfilled the Law*

Jesus showed great respect for the written law in the Old Testament. He quoted from it frequently as the word of God, and taught men to obey it. When His teaching went beyond it or corrected the inadequate concepts of righteousness that men derived from it, He said, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished" (Matt. 5:17, 18).

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<sup>1</sup> George B. Stevens, *The Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), p. 372.

Jesus' life and teaching, His redemptive ministry, and the way of salvation that He brought to men did fulfill the ideals, purposes, promises, patterns, and prophecies of the old covenant. His life was the perfect embodiment of the righteousness that the law described.

When Jesus suffered for sinners the death that the law decreed, He upheld the validity of its demands and established its divine authority (Rom. 3:31); but at the same time He satisfied its claims and dismissed its charges against us. He nailed it to the cross (Col. 2:14).

Many particulars of the law of Moses were by nature only temporary, imposed until a time of fuller revelation and a time of men's new relationship with God through Christ. Some of it was given so that it would have to be changed when the priesthood of Christ was revealed and ratified (Heb. 7:12).

Many passages of the New Testament state plainly that the old covenant, which was based upon the law, has been superseded by a new and better covenant based upon a better sacrifice and better promises. In Hebrews 7:11-22 we read of "a change also of the law" (v. 12), "a disannulling of a foregoing commandment" (v. 18) and the bringing in "of a better covenant" (v. 22, American Standard Version). In Hebrews 9:8-15 the old and new covenants are compared and contrasted. Hebrews 10:9 says, "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

Second Corinthians 3:1-14 tells of the "ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit" and affirms that "the old covenant . . . is done away in Christ" (American Standard Version). This old one is identified as written on stones and coming with glory when Moses' face was shining. The reference is clearly to the Ten Commandments.

Even the Old Testament prophesied that God would make a new covenant, not like the one He made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt, but He would put His law in their inward parts and write it in their heart (Jer. 31:31-34).

The whole Old Testament, in all its parts, was fulfilled by Christ; and all its elements that are of permanent value and validity have been made a part of the teaching of Christ and the New Testament. The law for Christians, then, is not the Old Testament legislation; not the Ten Commandments, but the New Testament teaching of the will of Christ.

*Conclusion*

The law made a just and righteous demand upon men; but it did not enable them to do and be what it demanded. Under grace we still have commandments. But the moral demands of Jesus presuppose a changed nature in man; they imply a previous conversion. The obedience that He expects is the result of a religious transformation. We obey Him not by the force of penalties and rewards of law, but by the motives of a heart united with Him in an experience of death and new birth, a heart filled with trust and love and with a genuine purpose to glorify Him.

We do His commands not to prove ourselves so worthy that we do not need His righteousness imputed to us or His Spirit implanted in us; but we obey Him because we accept Him as Lord as well as Saviour, and we love Him because He first loved us.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3). The demands of Christ are greater and more constantly upon us than those of the law. But He gives us His Holy Spirit to bear the fruit that is not against any law and to give us power over the flesh (Gal. 5:13-25; Rom. 8:1-15). By keeping in fellowship with Christ we realize more than ever that His commands are not grievous, but are for our good always.

For Further Study:

Fowler, Harold. "The Law of Christ," mimeographed essay available from Ozark Bible College Bookstore, Joplin, Mo. 10 pages. A critique of the view which perverts the New Testament pattern into legalism and a plea for the control of the Spirit in which the commands of Christ and the apostles are honored yet freedom is given in areas of opinion.

Ketcherside, W. Carl. "Analysis of Legalism," *Mission Messenger* (August, 1960) Pp. 1-10. Bound in the volume entitled *Covenants of God (Mission Messenger, 1959-1960)*. Critique of legalism.

Mansur, A. V. *Let My People Go!* Galt, CA: author, 1967. Pp. 1-14. A chapter entitled, "Law or Liberty; Not Both!"

See books listed on page 246.



## JESUS TEACHES THE RIGHT USE OF THE SABBATH

Jesus and all His generation until Pentecost after His resurrection lived under the law and covenant which was given through Moses at Mount Sinai. Without question they were obligated to keep the Sabbath—the seventh day of the week—by ceasing from labor.

Jesus' teaching about how to keep the Sabbath all arose out of His own practices and the violent objections to them raised by the Pharisees. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, were given to rigid observance of external ceremonies, such as purifications and Sabbath regulations, at the expense of the true spiritual principles and significance of God's laws (See Matt. 23:3-5, 23-28; Mark 7:1-23). It seems that Jesus purposely violated such traditions in order to teach against them and to set forth the right attitude toward God's laws. He deliberately sought to work miracles of healing on the Sabbath; and ate without washing His hands. In the controversies which followed, He commonly asserted His own supremacy over the Old Testament and its institutions (cf. "greater than the temple"; "Lord even of the Sabbath"; and John 5:16-18).

Jesus did teach that the Pharisees were perverting the Sabbath and using their traditions to defame and resist the righteousness of God in Christ. He did teach the true and just interpretation of the Sabbath law. But remember: He taught the right use of the Sabbath for Jews who were obligated to keep the Sabbath, not for Christians who have no part in keeping the Mosaic law.

*Christians Not Under the Law, But Under Christ*

Read and study the meaning of the following passages of the New Testament which were written to Christians concerning the covenants and regulations binding upon Christians. (1) "Ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:11-18). (2) "Ye were made dead to the law through the body of Christ . . . We have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held" (Rom. 7:1-6). (3) "And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law" (I Cor. 9:20). (4) "A new covenant"—the old one, written on stones "is done away in Christ" (II Cor. 3:14). (5) Paul and Peter, who were once Jews under the law, when Christians, lived as Gentiles free from the law

(Gal. 2:14-21). "now that faith is come we are no longer under" the law (Gal. 3:7-14, 17-29). (7) Observance of days and seasons indicates confidence in fleshly works of the Old Testament law, and makes the apostle afraid that his labor of preaching Christ to them was lost or wasted (Gal. 4:1-11). (8) "Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law . . . If ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Gal. 5:1-18). (9) "Christ abolished the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Eph. 2:13-22). (10) "having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (By all means, read Col. 2:6-23 in full until you understand it). (11) "a change also of the law," "a disannulling of the foregoing commandment . . . and bringing in of a better covenant" (Heb. 7:11-22). (12) The Old Testament itself predicts the displacement of the covenant made with Israel when they were brought out of Egypt. It promises a new and better covenant, of a different kind, putting the laws of God into the hearts of men (Heb. 8:6-13). (13) The old and new covenants contrasted. "He taketh away the first that he may establish the second" (Heb. 9:8-15; 10:9, 10).

The Ten Commandments were an inseparable part of this law which was "abrogated," "done away," "disannulled," "abolished," "taken away," and "nailed to the cross." They are no more binding on any one today, as a legal code, than any other part of the Old Testament. They were not given as a whole to any nation other than Israel but were a covenant made expressly with Israel alone (Deut. 5:2-5; Exod. 31:12-17, etc.). The Decalogue, or any part of it, is never in any way distinguished from the Mosaic covenant which was abrogated. Specifically, II Corinthians 3:1-14 describes the old covenant which was done away as that which was written and engraved on stones, which was given when Moses' face shone and was veiled (see Exodus 34:29-35). The Ten Commandments were the basis of the covenant which God made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. They were placed in the "ark of the covenant." Both Old and New Testaments declare that it was that very covenant which was superseded by Christ and taken away that He might establish another (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:7-10).

Some things commanded in the old law are now commanded in Christ, but we are to do them because God commanded them, not because they were in the old law. Once Kansas was a territory, governed by territorial law. Some of the same things were forbidden by territorial law that are now forbidden by state law. But present

residents of Kansas can not be held accountable to territorial law. They are not under it. We who are under the rule of Christ as Christians are no more under the law which God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai than we are under the law of the old Roman Empire. We are not to obey the Ten Commandments, but to obey Christ. And do not let any one lead you to anything apart from Christ (Col. 2:8—3:17).

The Sabbath is one of the shadows of things to come (see Col. 2:16, 17; Heb. 9:8-10; Heb. 10:1-9). Its typical significance is explained in Hebrews 4:4-11, where it is treated as a predictive ceremony and not as an eternal reality in itself. It is not a type of the Lord's Day, but of the rest of eternity in heaven.

It is urged that the Sabbath was commanded to be kept "for ever" (Exod. 31:16, 17). But many, many laws which all admit to be abrogated in Christ were said to be an ordinance forever (see Exod. 12:14, 17, 24; 27:21; 28:43; 30:21; 29:28; Lev. 6:18; 7:34; 10:15; 16:29; 23:31; 17:7; 23:14, 21, 41; 25:46; Num. 19:10; Deut. 15:17; 23:3; etc.).

#### *Christ Did Not Perpetuate the Sabbath*

If Christ in the New Testament commanded the observance of the Sabbath or set an approved precedent for the church, we would be obligated as Christians to observe the Sabbath, but not otherwise (Matt. 28:18-20). But in all the record of His words and of the teaching of the apostles, who spoke for Him by the inspiration of His Spirit, there is no indication that Christians are expected to keep the Sabbath. Some New Testament passages have been misinterpreted and forced into service by Sabbatarians to appear to indicate indirectly that the Sabbath was to continue forever, but one needs only to read all of them in their own context and without preconceived notions and he will see that they do not do so.

(1) "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28). It is claimed that this means that the Sabbath is Christ's commandment and is perpetuated under His rule in the new dispensation. Rather, He is saying to the Jews that He had authority equal with God, including authority over the law of the Sabbath, under which law they were trying to convict Him of sin. He showed that He claimed to be Lord of the temple also; but that does not make the temple in Jerusalem a perpetual part of the New Testament order.

(2) Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). This was under the law. There was where the people were. He went there

to teach just as He went to the temple or the marketplace to teach. Jesus lived and died as a Jew under the law, although much of His teaching was advance promulgation of the principles of the new covenant.

(3) "Pray that your flight be not on the Sabbath" (Matt. 24:20). It is claimed that this indicates that the Lord would always prohibit Sabbath travel, and therefore when He warned Christians to flee He told them to pray that it might not be on the Sabbath Day, so that they would not be prohibited from carrying out His orders. Without displaying the inconsistencies and difficulties of this whole idea, I would point out that Jesus had reference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies under Titus, in 70 A.D. (This is evident from a comparison of Matt. 24:15-20 with Luke 21:20-24). History (particularly Josephus in *Wars of the Jews*, Book vi) records the fulfillment of this prediction and the fact that the believers remembered the prophecy and fled from the city, saving themselves from the terrible siege that followed. The Sabbath would have hindered their escape because the Jews would still be enforcing the Sabbath (plus their traditions) and persecuting Christians who broke it (or their idea of it) just as they persecuted Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. Early in His ministry they sought to kill Him for that one thing (John 5:10, 16, 18; Mark 2:23—3:6).

If the Sabbath is to be kept today because it is commanded in the Old Testament law, then it should be kept according to the instruction of the law. But the law, including the Decalog, was done away. We are not under law but under Christ.

If the Sabbath is to be kept today as a matter of obedience to Christ, then it should not be kept at all, because Christ did not command Christians to keep it, but rather indicated its removal.

#### *The Early Church Did Not Perpetuate the Sabbath*

These facts stand quite clear: (1) The Gentile churches were not instructed to keep the Sabbath, but were taught to meet, worship, and make offerings on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2). (2) The letter of Acts 15:22-29 omits the Sabbath from the "necessary things" for Gentiles out of the Old Testament law. No precept about any particular "day of rest" is to be found among all the varied moral directions given in the whole New Testament. (3) Quite on the contrary, this observance of a given day as a matter of divine obligation is denounced by Paul as a forsaking of Christ (Gal. 4:10), and requiring sabbath-keeping is even forbidden (Colossians

2:16). (4) The esteeming of any day above another is a matter of liberty, not of necessity (Rom. 14:5, 6). (5) The early Christian writers, just after the days of the apostles, record the general practice of the church carrying out the apostolic teaching. They show that Sunday, as the day of Christ's resurrection, was kept as a Christian day of worship and commemoration, and was called "the Lord's Day." The following four brief quotations will serve to underline this point:

Ignatius (before A.D. 125 at the latest) in his epistle to the Magnesians says: "No longer keeping the Sabbath, but living according to the Lord's Day, in which our Light arose."<sup>1</sup>

The Epistle of Barnabas (not likely to be a genuine work of the New Testament Barnabas, but certainly written between A.D. 90 and 120) says: "We keep the eighth day with gladness, the day on which Jesus rose again." This epistle goes on to distinguish that observance of Sunday from Sabbath-keeping, which it considers an error in Christians.<sup>2</sup>

Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-166) wrote and published a formal defense of Christianity about A.D. 140. In it he says: "And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place." Then he describes the reading of the Scriptures, preaching, praying and partaking of the Lord's supper.<sup>3</sup>

The Gospel according to Peter (falsely so-called, but widely circulated before A.D. 200) says: "The Lord's Day began to dawn" (in telling Matt. 28:1) and "early on the Lord's Day" (in retelling Luke 24:1).

### *The Lord's Day Different From the Sabbath Day*

Sunday was sharply distinguished from the Sabbath. One was the day on which worship was offered in a specifically Christian form; the other was a day of ritual rest to be observed by all who were subject to the law of Moses. Nothing is said anywhere in the Bible about Sunday being a day of rest; it is distinguished only as a day of worship. People who criticize others for working on Sunday and themselves do not attend worship have things just backwards and are in danger of setting aside the Lord's revealed will by their traditions. How much better it would be for Christians to spend the day in service to Him and others than in the ways so common to many.

<sup>1</sup> Ignatius, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians*, ix.

<sup>2</sup> *The Epistle of Barnabas*, xv.

<sup>3</sup> Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin*, lxvii.

Let us hold to the liberty and simplicity that is in Christ, and fulfill the law in love to God and in taking thought for things honorable in the sight of all men.

For Further Study:

Robinson, F. E. "Sabbath" in *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, Vol. II, ed. by James Hastings. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1908. Pp. 540-542. Deals with incidents involving sabbath and teaching about it in the Gospels and in the early church.

Waterman, G. Henry. "Sabbath" in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975. Vol. I, Pp. 181-189. Comprehensive examination of Biblical and historical data concerning the Sabbath.

Wilson, Seth. "Should Christians Keep the Sabbath?" Mimeographed paper, Ozark Bible College Bookstore. More complete study on the Sabbath.

## JESUS DEMANDS LOYALTY TO GOD

The first law of all in the basic commandments of the covenant between God and the Hebrews was the law about every individual's relation and attitude toward God. In all times and in every land the first of all fundamentals in the lives of men is always this: their acknowledgment of God as supreme and their constant and complete faithfulness to that profession. See Proverbs 9:10.

To the Christian the first Commandment takes the form which our Lord gave it—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment' (Matt. 22:37, 38). Not merely abstract belief, not merely humble acknowledgment of one God is necessary, but heart-felt devotion to the one object worthy of our devotion, the one being in all the universe on whom we may rest and stay ourselves without fear of His failing us. He is the Lord our God—not an Epicurean deity, infinitely remote from man, who has created the world and left it to its own devices—not a Pantheistic essence spread through all nature, omnipresent, but intangible, impersonal, deaf to our cries, and indifferent to our actions—not an inscrutable 'something external to us making for righteousness,' in the words of the religious Agnostic—but a being very near us, 'in whom we live, and move, and have our being,' who is 'about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways,' a being whom we may know, and love, and trust, and feel to be with us, warning us, and pleading with us, and ready to receive us, and most willing to pardon us—a being who is never absent from us, who continually sustains our life, upholds our faculties, gives us all we enjoy and our power to enjoy it, and who is therefore the natural object of our warmest, tenderest, truest, and most constant love.<sup>1</sup>

*The Sin of Godlessness*

Too many Americans consider their freedom of worship as if it were both political and moral freedom from all worship. Every man

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<sup>1</sup> George Rawlinson, *Pulpit Commentary: Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1961), p. 136.

has a moral right to obey God rather than men in matters of religion, and our constitution guarantees him the political right to do so within broad limits, but he does not have an equal right to disobey God and live in spiritual anarchy. Only God has the authority to tell men where, when, and how they shall worship Him. God has not delegated authority to the political government to enforce worship. Very few, if any, of us would wish to authorize even elected public officials to enforce their ideas of right worship upon all men. But that does not mean that men "have a perfect right" to ignore God.

God must be reckoned with. We can not do justice without recognizing Him. We can neither find the truth apart from Him, nor have power to resist and overcome sin. He holds the power of life, the light of man's spirit, the eternal truth, the sources of liberty and joy. "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matt. 4:4).

The best efforts at moral order (whether individually or socially) which disobey or ignore God are fundamentally anarchy and rebellion, rather than control and submission. The individual who abuses his religious liberty and lives a godless life becomes a danger and a poison to his community and really commits a crime against society.

### *The Sin of Having Rival Gods*

Vast multitudes say: "We do not ignore God. We believe in Him and worship Him—some. Other things take so much time and attention—they are necessary, practical, important things."

Sometimes I wonder how God looks upon our whole generation and our national customs. Does He find any of us who really puts Him first and alone upon the throne, and who lets none of the things of the world, of physical affairs, of personal ambitions or comforts—or "necessities"—command our lives and time and energies and take first place in our attention? What things command our energies, compel our attention, and make other things wait?

It is said that Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale," was once invited by the king of the country to sing in the royal palace at a festival, but it was to be held on the Lord's Day. She refused to come. The king came in person and pleaded with her, and her only response was, "There is a higher King, your Majesty. I owe my first allegiance to Him."

Oddly enough, the Bible never uses any form of the word "loyalty,"



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yet it inculcates and demands the highest loyalty. It uses the word "love," "faithfulness," "obedience." Anyway, it makes it quite plain that any one who would be a servant of the true and living God must have no other gods, must serve no other master, must obey God only, and must love Him supremely. "We must obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29). We must obey God rather than self. We must obey God! He is a jealous God. The lukewarm (Rev. 3:15-17) the limping and vacillating (I Kings 18:21) can not serve Him. "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve Jehovah; for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgression nor your sins. If ye forsake Jehovah, and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you evil, and consume you, after that he hath done you good" (Josh. 24:19, 20).

This matter of doing right is not an impersonal matter of roles or principles about which we can meditate abstractly and have different opinions. It is a personal matter of personal love and submission to God or else personal affront, rebellion and enmity toward the maker of us and of all good things.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3). "No other gods before me" really means in the Hebrew "besides me" or "in addition to me." Having a secondary god is disobedience to God. A second master is disqualification for true and acceptable service to the first Master. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other" (Matt. 6:24). This shouts condemnation against the idea that various gods of various religions can be all good and acceptable to some degree, at least. If Jehovah is to be the God of any people, all other gods must be renounced and opposed (Josh. 24:23).

When the Israelites worshiped Jehovah and also frequented the high places of Baalism, even while they considered Jehovah supreme and called on Him for relief from national distress, and while they had a different and lower conception of Baal, still they flagrantly violated God's command, all truth, and their own best interests.

No worthy husband wants his wife to consider him her lover, and also at the same time to have other lovers besides him. Our relation to God is even that personal, if it is right. If it is not marked by such personal, single devotion, then we suffer affliction within and loss without—internal conflict, confusion, and barrenness of spirit, the insecurity and want of the sinful woman who is without home and husband and the natural ties that bring peace and joy.

It was said in utter condemnation of the Samaritans that they feared Jehovah and served other gods (see II Kings 17:28-41). But how many church members are like them? Only God is competent to judge all others, but each of us can examine himself concerning whom we really serve.

“Now there went with him great multitudes: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:25-27). Notice how Jesus put Himself on exactly the same plane as God, demanding the same absolute devotion to Himself that belongs to God. Yet in His own life He set a perfect example of denial of self and of serving God alone in all things. He was to God a lowly servant—He is to us the King of kings with supreme authority. He was to God a perfect man—He is to us an absolute God.

He offers more of love and deserves more of respect than parents do. To Him we owe more than to all the generations of our ancestors. He is, or can be and should be, nearer and dearer than husband or wife. He sets before us more of hope, of challenge, and of call for loving service than our children do. He gives a more profound brotherhood than brothers or sisters can. He is more than all of physical life and earthly opportunity put together. In His service there is more of majesty and importance, more of fruitfulness, helpfulness, and goodness, than in all other things that occupy the mind, the body and the heart. Look again, my brother, and see—there is no such thing as a valid excuse for refusing, neglecting, or forsaking the service of Christ.

#### *The Sin of Revising God*

The second Commandment was that they should not make any image to represent God. “Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me” (Exod. 20:4, 5). They must not devise and express in this way their own ideas of God. Any material representation would be false; they must strive to apprehend the true and spiritual

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representation that He makes of Himself.

Israel at Sinai, with Aaron as their leader, shortly after hearing this law, violated it by making a golden calf and worshiping it as Jehovah who brought them out of Egypt. They did not take to themselves a new God, but they sinned against God by disobeying His command and by falsely representing Him. Again, four or five hundred years later, Jeroboam led the northern tribes of Israel in worship, as he said, of Jehovah, but they worshiped an image falsely named and by ceremonies of his own devising contrary to the law of God.

Today those who refuse to recognize Christ as the full and accurate revelation of God, but make for themselves theoretical "images" of the "supreme Being," are idolaters of the same sort. Jesus said: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:7-9; Cf. John 10:30; Matt. 11:27). When we say, "This is Jesus," by the same token we are saying, "This is our God." And any one who makes God to be different from Jesus and all the revelation of God's will which Jesus approved is guilty of making his own idol and falsely labeling it as the living God.

### For Further Study:

- Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1960. Pp. 163-192. Perceptive comments on loving God.
- Lockyer, Herbert. *Everything Jesus Taught*, Vol. I. New York: Harper and Row, 1976. Pp. 43-80. Sets forth Jesus' teaching about God: nature, love, holiness, sovereignty, and fatherhood.
- Moser, K. C. *Attributes of God*. Austin, Texas: Sweet Publishing Co., 1964. Thirteen well-outlined lessons showing the Bible's teaching on the characteristics of God.
- Tozer, A. W. *The Knowledge of the Holy*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961. A study of the attributes of God and their meaning in the Christian's life.
- Torrey, R. A. *What the Bible Teaches*. London: James Nisbet and Co., Ltd., n.d. Pp. 13-67. Directs the reader to scripture which teaches about God.

## JESUS AND THE LAW OF LOVE

The greatest of the fundamental laws of the Old Testament is the principle of love, which Jesus said was the basis of all the law. Concerning the commands to love God and to love our neighbor Jesus said: "On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40).

The apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, said that love is the most excellent gift and fruit of the Spirit of God in those who are born anew through the word of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:31—13:13; Gal. 5:22), that "love is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10), and "is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14). James says that the law of love is the "royal law" (James 2:8). Peter says that it is to be practiced "above all things . . . for love covereth a multitude of sins" (I Pet. 4:8). John bears witness that "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (I John 4:8). There can be no question about this—the Bible teaches that love is both basic and supreme in the realm of righteousness; it is the foundation and the pinnacle. Love is what the law requires; and with perfect love the law is quite satisfied.

*The Love of God's Law*

Psalms 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, is a hymn of meditation and prayer in praise and devotion to the law of the Lord. It is a great acrostic poem, full of passionate love and longing for mastery of the ways of life and attainment of the ways of God's eternal righteousness. Any one who can read it and enter sincerely into its expressed yearnings and prayers is blessed; for "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). The psalmist realizes that the character and attainment that he seeks is to be found in God, and that God ministers unto us through His word of truth and commandment. In God's testimonies, precepts, statutes, commandments, and ordinances are to be found perfect wisdom and purity and power to attain unto lasting life, peace, security, tranquillity, joy, and satisfaction of soul. "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold" (v. 127). Compare with this long and variegated meditation of this psalm the clear and concise parallel in Psalms 19:7-14; then let the spirit and feeling of it leaven the heart until its words haunt the

memory. How can we appreciate the righteousness of love until we know the love of righteousness? Do our prayers express a yearning for God's will to envelop ours, His governing control to be over all our affairs, and His laws to fill our minds?

God's government is most desirable! All the reasons that cause men to set up human governments, seek teachers, and honor parents should cause them to seek the instruction and control of God. His wisdom is infinite. His justice is incomparable, perfect. His stability, dependability, and power to defend His own are vastly superior to all the empires of men. His laws are for our good always. His love and mercy are more tender and enduring than those of a mother for her afflicted child. Even His chastening is with the hand of love and "yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that are exercised thereby, the fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:7-11). There is every reason to trust Him. Our lives are dependent upon Him. Apart from Him we grope and blunder and stumble; we accomplish nothing and end in corruption. But in Him is light and life, wholeness and health, peace and eternal victory. Surely we ought to love His law of righteousness—not resisting, but inviting its restraints; not avoiding, but pursuing its sacrifices of self in service to others. It is the way of God, and God crowns it with glory.

The life of Jesus is a very helpful example for us in many ways, but most of all in this respect—the way He loved and sought the will of God. He treasured God's word and used it to overcome temptation. He lived by it rather than by bread (Matt. 4:4); for His food was to do the will of His Father (John 4:32-34). He taught men to pray "Thy will be done" (Matt. 6:10); and by that prayer He gained the victory in His hour of severest trial—"nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

#### *God's Law of Love*

Even in the Old Testament, God definitely commanded "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" (Deut. 6:5), and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor" (Lev. 19:18). Jesus said to the Twelve, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). All through the New Testament, love is considered a commandment and an obligation to be consciously assumed (Luke 6:35; Rom. 12:9, 10; Eph. 5:2; Col. 3:15; I Thess. 4:9; I Tim. 1:5; I Pet. 1:22; 3:8; 4:8; II Pet. 1:7; I John 3:11, 23; II John 5). Now, it is often discussed and argued whether love can be commanded, or whether it is an involuntary effect. But the fact remains that God

commands it and expects us to obey.

What then is love? The word "love," like the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, has fallen among thieves who have battered and bruised it and stripped it of its meaning. It is used to name feelings and motives which range all the way from the real thing (giving of self for the good of others) to the very opposite, including some of the worst forms of selfishness and abuse of others. Louis Evans said it well:

Love, whether used of God or man, is an earnest and anxious desire for, and an active interest in the well-being of the one loved. Different degrees and manifestations of this affection are recognized in the Scriptures according to the circumstances and relations of life, e.g., the expression of love as between husband and wife, parent and child, brethren . . . friend and enemy.

Love is not an abstraction to be had without doing anything. It is not a distant, impersonal, general tolerance of everybody, like indifference. It is eager and active concern for the good of those loved. Such a thing is not accidental or hereditary, but voluntary—a matter of character. It is not a matter merely of likes and dislikes, tastes and preferences. The Lord expects us to love people who are not pleasing, not likable, and offensive to our tastes, who do not love us and do not want us to love them. That is the main point of Matthew 5:43-48. Our love ought to come from the character of our hearts, not from the nature of the persons with whom we have to do. God shows the same character toward all men, good and bad. If we love only those who love us, we do no more than the worst of men. Christian love as such appears only when we begin to love those whom we would not love if we were not following Christ. We prove our Christianity not in those good things we do which are equaled by the non-Christians, but in those things which surpass all non-Christians. While God does good to all, He does not show in all things the same favor to all men unconditionally, and He does not expect us to treat all exactly alike. For love is not universal indulgence or a spineless sentiment of approval for everything. A parent who admonishes or punishes his child may love him not less but more than one who does not. The strict teaching and admonishment which Paul gave to the church at Corinth was out of much love and a heart "enlarged" toward them (II Cor. 2:4; 6:11; 7:3).

How is love manifested? It is active and manifests itself in actions that seek the good of others; it just does not exist in passivity. The

Christian should love God first and supremely (Matt. 22:37), and show it in keeping His commandments (I John 5:3; John 14:15), in hating evil and the things of the world (Ps. 97:10; I John 2:15, 16; James 4:4), and by loving our brethren (I John 4:19-21).

We are to love our brethren "without hypocrisy" (Rom. 12:9), "unfeignedly" (II Cor. 6:6; I Pet. 1:22), and "fervently" (I Pet. 1:22; 4:8)—showing it by "serving" (Gal. 5:13; John 13:1-5; Phil. 2:4-7); seeking not our own but our neighbor's good (I Cor. 10:24); pleasing not ourselves (Rom. 15:1-3); bearing one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2); avoiding all occasions of stumbling and seeking things that edify and make peace (Rom. 14:15-21; I Cor. 8:1-13); preferring others in honor above ourselves (Rom. 12:10); giving of our means to help them in their need (II Cor. 8:8, 24; I John 3:17); rebuking them that sin in order to save them (Lev. 19:17; Prov. 27:5, 6; Eph. 5:11; Matt. 18:15-17; Tit. 1:12, 13; Heb. 3:13); forgiving the penitent, restoring gently the fallen, encouraging the fainthearted (II Cor. 2:7, 8; Gal. 6:1; I Thess. 5:14; Eph. 4:2, 32); praying for them (James 5:16; Eph. 6:18); and in laying down our lives for others (I John 3:16; John 15:13).

The ingredients of love are stated by Paul in I Corinthians 13, and are analyzed by Drummond as follows: "Patience—'love suffereth long.' Kindness—'and is kind.' Generosity—'love envieth not.' Humility—'love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.' Courtesy—love 'doth not behave itself unseemly.' Unselfishness—love 'seeketh not her own.' Good temper—love 'is not easily provoked.' Guilelessness—'thinketh no evil.' Sincerity—'rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.' " These are things that can be practiced continually by all of us, and by them the great gift of love is made up.

Love is indeed the "Greatest Thing in the World" and the greatest thing in the Christian life. It is the delightful fruit for which the seeds of doctrine are planted and the plant of faith is cultivated. It is the supreme test of our abiding in God and God in us (I John 4:12, 16), the crowning grace of godlikeness.

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God" (I John 4:7).

For Further Study:

Barclay, William. *New Testament Wordbook*. London: SCM Press

<sup>1</sup> Henry Drummond, *The Greatest Thing In The World* (Philadelphia: H. Altemus, 1898), P. 24.

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- Ltd., 1964. Pp. 17-29. Explanation of the meaning of *agape* (love).
- Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1960. Pp. 163-192. Perceptive comments on loving God and our neighbor.
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