

Radio Broadcast for September 3, 2017

The Law Honored, Fulfilled and Replaced

Matthew 5.17-18

Our Lord ratified or put in place a New Covenant when He shed His blood on Calvary's tree. Ever since then, there has been a debate among the churches over what authority the Law of Sinai has over the conscience of a believer. In the days of the apostles, some professed believers went so far as to say that no person could be saved apart from being circumcised. This issue was fully denounced by Paul in the book of Galatians and to such a fierce degree that Paul counted such an error to be another gospel altogether and that those who preached it were accursed.

But, that is not the issue we want to address in this message. There are honest believers on both sides of another issue regarding the law: Is the law expressed in the Ten Commandments the authoritative and sufficient rule and guide for Christian living? Seeing that solid believers in the gospel of Christ are to be found on both sides of this issue, we must look for an answer to it outside the writings of mere men. We cannot trust the answer to creeds and such, but must look for an unassailable authority on the matter.

We have such an authority - the Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke simply and clearly and in a way that settles the debate and moves us on to something much more glorious than either side of a mere theological debate could ever lead us. I suppose that if you are listening to this broadcast, you claim to be a follower of the Lord Jesus. If you are His disciple, then, no doubt, you to know what Christ said on the matter and submit to whatever He has to say. If you are not willing to hear and believe what Christ says, then you are not His follower no matter how much church you attend or how

actively religious you are. But, if Christ is your Lord, then you want to know what He has to say; you take delight in all His words and His word on any matter settles the matter for you.

So, what did our Lord say about the Law of Sinai? We find it in Matthew 5, verse 17 and 18:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”

The first thing to note about our Lord's attitude toward the Law is that He honored it. And why shouldn't He? It was He who gave the Law in the first place! When Christ honored the Law He was simply honoring that which He, Himself, had written with His own finger 1500 years previous to His words in Matthew 5. So far as I can determine, on all but 2 or 3 occasions, whenever God has spoken to this world, He has done in the Person of the Son. When God walked with Adam in the Garden of Eden, it was our Lord Jesus making an appearance. The One who identified Himself to Moses as, "I AM that I Am," was our Lord Jesus before He was born as a man. Whenever God spoke to the prophets, it was the voice of God the Son. That is one reason that John's Gospel begins with, "In the beginning was the Word." The Word is none other than the Eternal Son of God, and God has seen fit to do all of His revealing in that Person. The only other occasions of God speaking, it has been when God spoke TO the Son or ABOUT the Son. So, we know that the Lord Jesus honored the Law of Sinai for it was He who gave it.

In Matthew, He also honors the Law by correcting the charge that He had come to abolish the Law. When they heard His word,

some assumed that He was simply setting aside the Law. This was especially true of the religious leaders of the day. Often, the way they asked Him their questions revealed that they thought He was disputing Moses. So the Lord says clearly, "Do not take what I am saying as an overthrow of the Law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy them."

But we must be certain we understand what He meant by these words, in particular the word that is translated "destroy" or "abolish". The Lord Jesus likely spoke in Aramaic, so we do not have the exact word the Lord used in the New Testament for the New Testament was written in Greek. But Greek word the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to use in order to give the meaning of what our Lord said in Aramaic is a combination of the Greek words, for "down" and "loose." A noun version of this word was used where it is written that, when Joseph and Mary came into Bethlehem, there was no room for them in the inn. The word behind "inn" pictures where a person would come at the end of a day's travel and would loose the burden of his animal and set it down on the ground. But it was most often used to describe destroying something. The closest phrase in English would be, "Tear down." This is the same word that Christ's accusers used at His trial when they claimed He said that He would destroy the Temple. The word indicates a destruction by force, a sort of act of violence. The Lord Jesus did not come to perform any violence against the Law.

Christ further honored the Law by demonstrating that not the least part of it would pass away unless one of two conditions was met: heaven and earth passing away or everything in the Law being fulfilled. Not the smallest letter or the least part of a letter - like the dot over the "i" or the crossing of a "t" would be lost. Christ could not have expressed His honor for the Law of Sinai any more powerfully than He did.

Now, the very fact that you are listening to this broadcast is proof positive that heaven and earth have not passed away. The universe exists so we certainly cannot appeal for a removal of the Law on that basis.

But there is one other condition given for the passing of the Law - if it is fulfilled. Under no circumstances will the Law be destroyed, abolished, or torn down. And we cannot say the Law has passed because the universe come to an end. But here is what we are taught in the gospel: the Law has been fulfilled! Indeed, the Law AND the prophets have been fulfilled.

At this point, it would be good to make sure we understand what our Lord meant by "The Law". Recall that He did not say, "The Law"; He said "The Law and the Prophets." In saying "The Law and the Prophets" He encompassed the entirety of what we call The Old Testament." But, given what He said in the following verses and chapters, we know that He specifically meant the commandments and regulations given in the Old Testament, even referring twice to commandments taken from the Ten Commandments.

The Lord Jesus fulfilled and brought to pass everything in The Law and The Prophets. He fulfilled the demand of the Law for righteous living. He fully performed every commandment in thought, desire, and action. There is not a single moral or ethical command of the Law of Sinai that did not find perfect fulfillment in the life of the Lord Jesus. We never keep ANY of it; Christ kept ALL of it!

Furthermore, Christ fulfilled the demand of the Law for the punishment of sin. The Law says, "Cursed is everyone that does not continue in every point of the Law to do it." Paul says that Christ became a curse for us, as it is written, cursed is everyone

who is hung on a tree. In His suffering, Christ became all that it means to be cursed by God. He bore the sins of His people, He was hung upon a tree to signify that He had been cursed by God for those sins, and in the six hours He hung there, God poured out the entirety of His wrath against the sins that Christ bore such that there was no more that a just and holy God could demand in payment for sin. Christ fulfilled the curse of the Law.

Christ furthermore fulfilled all the types and prophecies of the Old Testament. He is our Ark of safety in the flood of God's wrath. He is the Lamb that Abraham said God would provide - the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is our Passover Lamb. He is the Temple of God where men meet God. He is our Great High Priest who offered Himself without spot to God. He is the Son of David whose reign shall never cease, the Altogether Lovely One of the Song of Solomon. He is Isaiah's child born and son given, the Branch that arose from Jesse's stump, the suffering servant of Jehovah, He is our Hosea who loves us even in our unfaithfulness and buys us back from our own foolishness. He is Micah's Breaker who broke the gates of death and the grave that those gates cannot prevail against the church's escape. "Till all be fulfilled" said the Lord. The word carries the sense of "to be made real." Christ took all the demands, commands, requirements, illustrations and prophecies of the Old Testament and He made them real!

Therefore, under the authority of the Law fulfilled, Christ replaced it with something much better. Read through this entire passage and note how often Christ says, "But I say unto you..." Many would have us think that Christ was only correcting the Rabbinical abuse of the law. But twice, He quotes directly from the law then says, "But I say unto you." On Mount Calvary, Christ wrote a much better law than He did on Mount Sinai!

But even more importantly than this, Christ replaced the righteousness of the Law with a much better righteousness. In verse 20 of Matthew 5, the Lord says that if our righteousness does not exceed that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law, we will by no means enter the Kingdom of heaven. Can you do that? Is your conduct more in keeping with the Law than the conduct of the Pharisees? What did our Lord mean by this righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees?

Paul explains in Romans 3.21, "But now, a righteousness from God, apart from the Law, has been made known - a righteousness to which the Law and prophets testify." This is nothing more or less than the righteousness which the Law and prophets could only talk about but which Christ made real by His life and death. This righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law in several ways:

- 1) It is a righteousness performed by Jesus Christ and has neither hole nor spot in it. It is a perfect righteousness.
- 2) It is a real righteousness, not a hypocritical, paste-on righteousness like that of the Scribes and Pharisees, and we might add, many of the religious folk of our day.
- 3) It is a righteousness we receive FROM God, not a righteousness we render TO God. Here is one way you may know whether you have this righteousness: is your righteousness something you have received from God or something you are trying to produce in order to render it to God. In Romans 10, Paul wrote that, because the Jews were ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, they tried to establish their own righteousness. But the righteousness we receive from God far surpasses and righteousness we render to God.

4) This righteousness is given to all believers without regard to where they came from or what their lives were like. The Jews always thought they were on a higher rung of the spiritual ladder than anyone else. Some Jews who claimed to believe Jesus still thought that something more than faith was called for from the Gentiles: they must first become like Jews, and then they can believe unto salvation. But, in verse 22 of Romans three, Paul says that this righteousness from God comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and is to all and upon all who believe, for there is no difference between Jew or Gentile.

Our Lord Jesus honored, fulfilled and replaced the Law He gave to Israel through Moses. And it is our privilege to live in the time of the fulfillment of the realization of all that the Law and the Prophets testified.

The question for you is simply this: Which righteousness are you pursuing? That of your own doing by obedience to the law or that which comes from God and is received by faith alone? The difference between those two righteousnesses is the difference between life and death, justification and condemnation, heaven and hell.

May God add His blessing to this word!