

Christian Doctrine

The Purpose of the Mosaic Law

Galatians 3:19-26

BODY:

I. What Was the Purpose of the Mosaic Law?.

Exodus 7:3-5 (NASB95)

Romans 9:17 (NASB95)

Exodus 19:5-6 (NASB95)

Galatians 3:19 (NASB95)

Romans 3:19-20 (NASB95)

Acts 13:38-39 (NASB95)

II. Jesus is the Theme of the Old Testament

John 5:39 (NASB95)

Hebrews 10:7 (NASB95)

2 Corinthians 3:14 (NASB95)

III. Jesus was the Fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Matthew 5:17-19 (NASB95)

Isaiah 55:10-11 (NASB95)

Luke 24:25-27 (NASB95)

Luke 24:44 (NASB95)

CONCLUSION:

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INTRODUCTION:

We are in a new topical series that I have entitled "Christian Doctrine". The goal for this series is to cover the basic doctrines of Christianity that are revealed to us through the scriptures. One of the first hurdles that we have to cross is to reveal the inspiration and inerrancy of the scriptures. If the scriptures are not from God, then they cannot be trusted. We just as well eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die! In the last few weeks we have looked at the importance of understanding that the Bible is inspired by God. It was written by men who wrote using their own personalities and styles yet were led by the Holy Spirit to make a consistent, harmonious, and inerrant message to mankind. The scriptures, themselves, are their own validation that mankind could not possibly have been written by the minds of men only. The theme of the Old Testament was to reveal the Messiah that was to come. The New Testament is the reality of the foreshadowing of the Messiah to come. During His stay on earth, He fulfilled the law and prophets. A feat that **we** could not do and desperately needed someone to do for us. He carried out all of the prophesy concerning Him from the prophets as well as His own claims and promises that were to be accomplished during His lifetime on earth as the true Messiah. We looked at the **impossible probability** that a mere man could accomplish this feat. The New Testament scriptures were written within seventy years after Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. If the message was not accurate, the people in the first century would have exposed the falsehood and Christianity would have immediately died. Also we know that the disciples would not have been willing to sacrifice their lives for the cause if they knew it was a lie.

But not only did Jesus carry out the **prophesies** during His time on earth, but He also fulfilled the **law**. Another impossible task for a mere man. This is going to be the focus on the next group of sermons. We will reveal how Jesus actually fulfilled the **Mosaic Law** and answer questions like:

- **What was the purpose of the Mosaic Law?**
- **What is the difference between the ceremonial law, the moral law, and the judicial law in the Old Testament?**
- **What does it mean that Christians are not under the law?**
- **Do Christians have to obey the Old Testament law?**
- **We will put heavy emphasis on how Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath and how it carries over to us today in the New Covenant.**
- **What is the law of Christ?**
- **What is the "spirit of the law" as contrasted to the "letter of the law."**
- **How can we experience true freedom in Christ?**

Just to understand this portion of scripture points directly and conclusively to the inspiration of scripture.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Galatians 3:19-26 (NASB95)

¹⁹ Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made. ²⁰ Now a mediator is not for one *party only*; whereas God is *only* one. ²¹ Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law. ²² But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us to* Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Prayer

BODY:

I. What Was the Purpose of the Mosaic Law?

The Mosaic Law was given specifically to the nation of Israel that God referred to as His "chosen people". It was made up of three parts: the Ten Commandments, the ordinances (or rules to live by), and the worship system, which included the priesthood, the tabernacle, the offerings, and the festivals. The purpose of the Mosaic Law was to accomplish the following:

(1) To reveal the holy character of the eternal God to the nation of Israel. That He was the one and only true God. He did this in many ways. One of which was when He allowed Moses to perform the ten plagues in front of Pharaoh to prove that He was the true God.

Exodus 7:3-5 (NASB95)

³ But I will harden Pharaoh's heart that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. ⁴ When Pharaoh does not listen to you, then I will lay My hand on Egypt and bring out My hosts, My people the sons of Israel, from the land of Egypt by great judgments. ⁵ The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

Then He led them out of Egypt and parted the waters of the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to cross the sea on dry land and drown the entire army of Pharaoh. It was during this time in the wilderness that God presented the Law to Moses.

Romans 9:17 (NASB95)

¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth."

A second purpose was...

(2) To set apart the nation of Israel as distinct from all the other nations by delivering them into the promised land as promised.

Exodus 19:5-6 (NASB95)

⁵ Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

(3) To provide temporary forgiveness through the sacrifices and offerings for the people under the Old Covenant who had faith in the Lord in the nation of Israel.

(4) To provide a way of worship for the community of faith through the yearly feasts.

(5) To provide God's direction for the physical and spiritual health of the nation.

(6) To reveal to humanity that no one can keep the Law but everyone falls short of God's standard of holiness.

Galatians 3:19 (NASB95)

¹⁹ Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

Although the Law was good and holy, it did not provide salvation for the nation of Israel.

Romans 3:19-20 (NASB95)

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

It is by the Law that we all know we are sinners. None of us can live according to the Law perfectly. Thus **no one** will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law.

Acts 13:38-39 (NASB95)

³⁸ Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

Thank goodness that Jesus came and fulfilled the Law for us and died for our sins as the perfect sacrifice for us! It is only by believing in what Christ has done for us that we can be freed from the Law of Moses. That realization causes us to rely on God's mercy and grace. When Christ came, He fulfilled the Law and with His death paid the penalty for **our** breaking it. By faith in Him, the believer has the very righteousness of Christ imputed to him. This is the "gift of the Holy Spirit" that is promised all who accept Him as Savior.

II. Jesus is the Theme of the Old Testament

In order to understand the Old Testament one must understand that Jesus, the promised Messiah, is the theme of the Old Testament, as well as the New Testament.

There is no way that anybody, be he Jew or Gentile, will ever understand the Old Testament until he understands it in terms of Jesus Christ. In John, for example, Jesus makes the clear-cut statement that the theme of the Old Testament is Himself.

John 5:39 (NASB95)

³⁹ You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;

He is certainly referring to the Old Testament because the New Testament has not even been written by this time. Jesus says, "The Old Testament testifies of Me."

Hebrews 10:7 (NASB95)

⁷ "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (**In the scroll of the book it is written of Me**) To do Your will, O God.'"

The Old Testament has as its theme the person of Jesus Christ. He is the theme, the fulfillment of the Law and the revelation of the shadows therein. The Old Testament speaks of a Messiah who is to come and prophesies as to what He will do when He arrives so we can identify Him. The details of His life, that are laid out in the New Testament, testify that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah.

So, both the Old Testament and the New Testament have as their theme the person of Jesus Christ. Consequently, it is no wonder that those Jewish people who adhere to the old text, and not the new, have trouble interpreting it. They cannot understand it apart from Jesus Christ. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed concerning Christ. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed concerning Christ.

What the Old Testament presented of Christ in shadow, the New Testament presents in substance. What the Old Testament presented of Christ in ritual, the New Testament presents in reality. The New Testament presentation of Jesus Christ, then, closes the purpose of the Old Testament.

2 Corinthians 3:14 (NASB95)

¹⁴ But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.

Do you understand? There is no way that a man will ever understand the Old Testament apart from understanding and knowing Jesus Christ, and the veil is on until they turn to Christ. That is why it is so intensely difficult for the unbelieving Jew to understand the Old Testament.

Now, let us look at Jesus statement that He did not abolish the Law, but fulfilled it.

III. Jesus was the Fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Matthew 5:17-19 (NASB95)

¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did **not** come to abolish **but to fulfill**. ¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the **Law** until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be

called **least** in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called **great** in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus' declaration that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, not to abolish them, obviously contains two statements in one. There is something Jesus **DID do** and something He **did NOT do**. At the same time, Jesus emphasized the eternal nature of the Word of God.

Jesus goes out of His way to promote the authority of the Law of God. He did not come to abolish the Law, regardless of what the Pharisees accused Him of. In fact, Jesus continues His statement with a praise for those who teach the Law accurately and hold it in reverence.

Consider what Jesus **did NOT do** in His ministry. In verse 17, Jesus says that He did **not** come to abolish the Law and the Prophets. In other words, Jesus' purpose was not to render the Law and Prophets (the Old Testament) invalid or useless. The Law will continue to accomplish the purpose for which it was given.

Isaiah 55:10-11 (NASB95)

¹⁰ "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; ¹¹ So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.

Next, consider what Jesus **DID do**. Jesus says that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. In other words, Jesus' purpose was to establish the Word and to fully accomplish all that was written. The predictions of the Prophets concerning the Messiah would be realized in Jesus; the holy standard of the Law would be perfectly upheld by Christ, the strict requirements personally obeyed, and the ceremonial observances finally and fully satisfied.

Jesus Christ fulfilled the Prophets in that, in His first coming alone, He fulfilled **the** hundreds of prophecies concerning Himself. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law in at least two ways: as a teacher and as a doer. He taught people to obey the Law and He obeyed the Law Himself. By living a **perfect** life, Jesus fulfilled the **moral** laws. In His sacrificial death, Jesus fulfilled the **ceremonial** laws. Christ came not to destroy the old religious system but to build upon it. He came to finish the Old Covenant and establish the New.

He was the fulfillment of Old Testament truth. Let me share with you, **one more time**, one of the ways that Jesus taught that He was the Messiah.

Luke records for us how Jesus appeared to Cleopas and another disciple on the road to Emmaus. They were very sad and explained to Jesus, not knowing who He was, of the things that happened in Jerusalem that day. Jesus had been crucified. The women had arrived at the tomb and He was not there. Then listen to what Jesus told them.

Luke 24:25-27 (NASB95)

²⁵ And He said to them, "O foolish men and **slow of heart** to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

The two men invited Jesus to join them for the evening. When Jesus broke bread with them they recognized Him and Jesus vanished from their sight. They immediately went to the disciples, who were gathered together in one room, to tell them what had happened. Later that evening Jesus appeared among the disciples.

Luke 24:44 (NASB95)

⁴⁴ Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Talk about a "light bulb" coming on above your head! Can you imagine what it would be like to finally put all of Christ's teaching in perspective? Don't you wish that you could have been there to hear Jesus explain all the things concerning Himself in all the scriptures?

CONCLUSION:

The apostles did not regard Scripture as erroneous or self-contradictory. They accepted Christ's teachings, miracles, and fulfillment of the law and prophets as fact. They regarded the scriptures to be inspired by God. They believed that the events, as recorded in the Bible, were real history. **We can do no less!**

These are solid reasons why you can trust the Bible. You must read with a willingness to follow Christ. When you do, you will find that Jesus **IS** Who He claimed to be, God in human flesh, Who gave His life as the penalty for our sins.

If you are a Christian struggling with doubts, you can trust the Bible over and above all modern claims to truth. It speaks accurately and authoritatively to the problems we all grapple with. The Bible is a life-changing book.

The purpose of the Mosaic Law raises these questions: “Are you trusting in yourself to keep the Law, including the Ten Commandments, (which you cannot do)?”

OR, “Have you made the choice to accept Jesus as your Savior, realizing that He has fulfilled all the commandments once and for all time for you, even paying your penalty for breaking them?” Why would we ever decide to forsake God's grace and mercy and seek to live under the Law? The choice is yours.

I invite you to commit yourself afresh to read God's Word. Study it and apply its teaching to your life. **You can count your life on it!**

Go Tell It on the Mountain.