

# Christian Doctrine

## Fulfillment of the Law and Prophets

Matthew 5:17-18

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Matthew 5:17-18 (NASB95)

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## Fulfillment of the Law and Prophets

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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 may 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. He carried out all of the prophecies concerning Him from the prophets as well as His own claims and promises that were to be accomplished after the arrival of the true Messiah during His lifetime. We looked at the impossible probability that a mere man could accomplish that 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.

Last week we looked at the **Purpose of the Law**. The purpose was to teach us that we are all sinners and were utterly incapable of living perfectly according to the Law. We **desperately** needed a Savior! Jesus came to this earth to accomplish that feat for us!

**All of this points to the inspiration of scripture. There is no way that mere man could have written this based upon our human experiences on earth!**

This morning, Lord willing, we will look at how Jesus was the reality of the Old Testament, the different laws that made up the Mosaic Law, and how Jesus released us from the curse of the Law.

### All Stand and Read Scripture

**Matthew 5:17-18 (NASB95)**

<sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did **not** come to abolish **but to fulfill**. <sup>18</sup> 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.

## Prayer

### BODY:

#### I. Jesus is the Reality of the Old Testament.

Jesus came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets but to fulfill them. In fact, the ceremonies, sacrifices, and other elements of the Old Covenant were “only a shadow of the good things that were to come—not the realities themselves”. Here is how the writer of Hebrews tells it.

#### **Hebrews 10:1 (NASB95)**

10 For the Law, since it has *only* a **shadow** of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

In His fulfillment of the Law and Prophets, Jesus obtained **OUR eternal** salvation. No more were priests required to offer sacrifices and enter the holy place. Jesus has done that for us, once and for all. By grace through faith, we are made right with God.

There are some who argue that, although Jesus “abolished” the Law, then the Law is still in effect—and still binding on New Testament Christians. But Paul is clear that the believer in Christ is no longer under the Law.

#### **Galatians 3:23-25 (NASB95)**

<sup>23</sup> But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us to* Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

If the Law, as a legal system, is still binding on us today, then Jesus was wrong in claiming to fulfill it and His sacrifice on the cross was insufficient to save.

It is not that everything passes away. **Some** things pass away. The forms and the types and the rituals all pass away, because the reality has come. But the principles of morality, and God’s attitude towards sin, remains the same. Hebrews speaks of the temporary nature of the old covenant in the sense of its forms. For example...

#### **Hebrews 8:13 (NASB95)**

<sup>13</sup> When He said, “A new *covenant*,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

Now, that does not mean that everything God said in the Old Testament goes by the wayside; that now you can covet, and now you can murder, and now you can do whatever you want, because all the morality of the Old Testament is gone away. No, it means the forms, and the rituals, and the types, and the pictures, and the symbols of the Old Testament, all of the sacrificial ritual in the symbolic arena, goes by the wayside, because the reality has arrived. The Messianic prophecies have been fulfilled. That is the point.

#### **Hebrews 10:1 (NASB95)**

10 For the Law, since it has *only* a shadow of the good things to come *and* not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.

The repetition of all of the Old Testament sacrifices could not make a man perfect. They were only pictures of Christ, Who **alone** could bring perfection.

### **Hebrews 10:9-10 (NASB95)**

<sup>9</sup> then He said, “Behold, **I have come to do Your will.**” He takes away the first in order to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> By this will we have been sanctified (making us righteous by taking our sins away) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

I want you to understand that the tendency in these Jewish readers was to receive Christ, and then hang on to the ritual; hang on to the Judaistic symbolism. That is why the apostles had to meet in Jerusalem to decide if Christians still had to be circumcised, as many new Jewish Christians were advocating. The writer is saying that now that you have the new, you must let go of the old. You cannot mix the two.

In other words, there was no perfection provided in the old covenant. There was only a **picture** of perfection, which came in the better thing, the new covenant. Throughout Hebrews, the writer identifies those things that have been fulfilled by Christ:

### **The priesthood has changed.**

#### **Hebrews 7:12 (NASB95)**

<sup>12</sup> For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.

The Aaronic priesthood needed to be changed because it was an inadequate priesthood. Not only that, even the rituals of Israel needed to be changed. The Old Testament priests, plural, were only a shadow of the heavenly priest, **priest**, singular. **Jesus Christ!**

### **The sacrifices were all abolished.**

#### **Hebrews 9:12-15 (NASB95)**

<sup>12</sup> and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

<sup>15</sup> For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions (the payment in full for our sins) that were *committed* under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the inheritance.

This inheritance in the New Covenant is **eternal**. The old covenant was merely a **temporal** shadow of things to come. When we open up the New Testament scriptures, we meet the new covenant. It is not a shadow any longer. **Now, everything is eternal!**

In order to understand how Christ fulfilled the Law, we have to understand the different types of law that is contained into Law of Moses.

## II. What were the Different Kinds of Law in the Old Testament?

The law of God given to Moses is a comprehensive set of guidelines to ensure that the Israelites' behavior reflected their status as God's chosen people. It encompasses moral behavior, their position as a godly example to other nations, and systematic procedures for acknowledging God's holiness and mankind's sinfulness. In an attempt to better understand the purpose of these laws, Jews and Christians categorize them. This has led to the distinction between moral law, ceremonial law, and judicial law.

### **Moral Law**

The moral laws, relate to justice and judgment and are often translated as "ordinances." based on God's holy nature. As such, the ordinances are holy, just, and unchanging. Their purpose is to promote the well-being of those who obey. The value of the laws is considered obvious by reason and common sense. The moral law encompasses regulations on justice, respect, and sexual conduct, as well as the Ten Commandments. It also includes penalties for failure to obey the ordinances. Moral law does not point people to Christ; it merely illuminates the fallen state of all mankind.

This is what Jesus was referring to in our text this morning.

#### **Matthew 5:17 (NASB95)**

*17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.*

We understand that Jesus fulfilled the requirement of the Law to live it perfectly and placed us under the "new" law of Christ.

#### **John 13:34-35 (NASB95)**

*34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

To love God and others is not a new law, but Jesus reinstated the old commandment and referred to it as the law of Christ. It encompasses all of the laws.

#### **Galatians 6:2 (NASB95)**

*2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*

Although many of the moral laws in the Old Testament give excellent examples as to how to love God and love others, **and** have freedom from the law, it is still not a license to sin.

### **Ceremonial Law**

The ceremonial laws are often translated as "statutes." These laws focus on how God's people can retain their attention on God. They include instructions on regaining right standing with God (such as: sacrifices and other ceremonies regarding "uncleanness"), remembrances of God's work in Israel through feasts and festivals, specific regulations meant to distinguish Israelites from their pagan neighbors such as dietary and clothing

restrictions, and signs that point to the coming Messiah such as the Sabbath, circumcision, Passover, and the redemption of the firstborn.

Christians are not bound by ceremonial law. Since the church is no longer just the nation of Israel, memorial festivals, such as the Feast of Weeks and Passover, do not apply. Christians are not required to sacrifice animals or be circumcised. We will cover the Sabbath in the upcoming future.

### **Judicial/Civil Law**

Then there is the category of judicial or civil law. These laws were specifically given for the culture and place of the Israelites and encompass all of the moral law except the Ten Commandments. This includes everything from murder to restitution for a man gored by an ox and the responsibility of the man who dug a pit to rescue his neighbor's trapped donkey, etcetera.

The division of the Jewish law into different categories is a human construct designed to better understand the nature of God and define which laws church-age Christians still need to attempt to follow despite the fact that Jesus has already fulfilled them.

The scriptures **do** tell us that **all** of the law is useful for instruction and nothing in the Bible indicates that God intended a distinction of categories.

### **2 Timothy 3:16 (NASB95)**

<sup>16</sup> All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

However the scriptures are also perfectly clear that Christians are no longer under the law.

### **Romans 10:4 (NASB95)**

<sup>4</sup> For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Jesus fulfilled the law, thus abolishing the difference between Jew and Gentile.

### **Ephesians 2:14-16 (NASB95)**

<sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus establishing peace*, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

## **III. How did Jesus Redeem Us from the Curse of the Law?**

Finally, I would like to look briefly at how Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the Law. Listen to how Paul describes it.

### **Galatians 3:13-14 (NASB95)**

<sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"— <sup>14</sup> in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

When Paul mentions “the law,” he is referring to the Mosaic Law found in the first five books of the Bible, which instructed the Israelites how to properly worship and honor God through various commands and requirements.

The Greek word for “redeem” in the Bible was a financial term that referred to the process of purchasing a slave’s freedom. When a slave was “redeemed,” he or she was no longer bound to the rules and expectations of a slave’s life. So, to be "redeemed" from the curse of the law means to be set free from its rules and regulations. In other words, those who are redeemed from the curse of the law are no longer required to observe the law’s commands as the Israelites were.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. That is, His sacrificial work on the cross purchased our freedom from the law. Jesus fulfilled the original intention and purpose of the Mosaic Law on our behalf.

What we could not do in perfectly obeying God’s will laid out in the law, Christ did for us. In that way, He fulfilled the law and accomplished what God intended.

This does not mean we completely ignore everything in the Mosaic Law. There are many commands in the law that all people from all time should always obey. For example, one of the commands says, “You shall not murder.” Even though Christ fulfilled the law, God’s people should still observe the command not to take another human’s life. Though we are redeemed from the curse of the law and set free from its rules and regulations, it is still important to observe the moral and ethical commands found within the law.

## **CONCLUSION:**

To be redeemed from the curse of the law means that we no longer have to face the judgment of God. The law was perfect, and, as sinful beings, the Israelites could not perfectly observe the law. They were considered “cursed” whenever they disobeyed the law or failed to live up to its expectations. God’s judgment rested on all of those who did not live according to His ways.

God has placed the moral requirements of the law on **all** human hearts (not just the Israelites’), therefore we are all under a curse and deserving of God’s judgment. That is because "the wages of sin is death".

### **Romans 2:14-15 (NASB95)**

**<sup>14</sup> For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, <sup>15</sup> in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,**

So, when Paul says that we have been redeemed from the curse of the law, he means that we no longer will receive the judgment of God because of our failure to follow the Law perfectly. Jesus Christ is our Redeemer! He became a curse for us and purchased us from the slavery of sin through His death on the cross.

**Go Tell It on the Mountain.**