

THE LAW OF GOD AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

- A.** A few years ago I was accused of being an Antinomian.
- 1.** Antinomianism (def.): literally, 'against law'.
    - a.** It is a term that emerged as a result of the teaching of Johann Agricola, a follower of Martin Luther.
    - b.** Agricola claimed that the Law of God had no relevance in the life of the believer.
      - (1)** Some believe he was the best exponent of Luther's teaching.
      - (2)** Others believe he went too far and he is, at any rate, seen as the father of Antinomianism.
      - (3)** Luther himself apparently coined the term and disavowed Agricola's teaching.
  - 2.** Antinomianism became synonymous with the teaching that, if we are saved, the Law has no relevance for Christian living; therefore it does not matter how we live.
    - a.** My book *Once Saved, Always Saved* led some to charge me with being Antinomian.
    - b.** It is an unfair charge, although I do believe we are eternally saved – apart from works.
  - 3.** Many Puritans believed that our assurance of salvation is grounded in the works of the Law.
    - a.** They do not believe we are saved by works.
    - b.** They do believe we are *assured* by works.
      - (1)** I disagree; our assurance of salvation is not to be based on works but only as a secondary basis.
      - (2)** The primary basis of our assurance of salvation is Christ alone.
- B.** In this lesson we will examine the Law of God and how Jesus fulfilled the Law.
- 1.** The Law of God was given to Moses at Mount Sinai in approximately 1300 BC.

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- a. The Law was 'put into effect through angels by a mediator.' Gal. 3:19.
    - (1) This probably means that angels were the instruments of the 'finger of God'. Cf. Deut. 9:10.
    - (2) The mediator in this case was Moses.
  - b. The Law is generally thought to be in three parts:
    - (1) The Moral Law – the Ten Commandments.
    - (2) The Civil Law – how the people of God would govern themselves.
    - (3) The Ceremonial Law – how the people of God should worship.
2. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.' Matthew 5:17.
- a. Jesus knew some might think that he had indeed come to do away with the Law.
    - (1) Gr. *katalusai*: to abrogate, to nullify.
    - (2) That would have rendered the Law useless and irrelevant.
  - b. Some no doubt hoped Jesus would nullify the Law.
    - (1) There were revolutionary type people who thought Messiah would do away with the Law, and start all over.
    - (2) Some people love any overturning of tradition of any kind.
  - c. If there were those present who hoped that Jesus would nullify the Law, their hopes were dashed.
    - (1) Jesus certainly had the authority to do this sort of thing had he wanted to.
    - (2) But no; 'I have not come to abolish' the Law.
3. He added: 'I have come. . . to fulfil' the Law.
- a. By saying this he was announcing a new era.
  - b. Jesus sent a signal to all who hoped he would abolish the Law.

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- (1)** Far from there being any discord between his teaching and the Law, there was continuity between his teaching and the Law.
        - (2)** This sent an ominous signal to anybody who did not want the Law abolished; whatever did it mean that he would 'fulfil' the Law?
          - c.** Dr Lloyd-Jones reckons it was the most stupendous claim that Jesus ever made.
      - 4.** The purpose of this lesson is to examine that claim.
    - C.** Why is this lesson important?
      - 1.** It is fundamental to the whole teaching of the Bible.
        - a.** The Law and the Gospel is a way of summarising the Bible.
        - b.** 'For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.' John 1:17.
      - 2.** It is to examine two great events:
        - a.** The giving of the Law.
        - b.** The coming of Christ.
      - 3.** It is to understand the meaning and purpose of these two events.
        - a.** The meaning of the Law – and why it came.
        - b.** What Jesus meant by fulfilling the Law.
      - 4.** It is to make us good theologians!
        - a.** Martin Luther said:
          - (1)** 'Whoever knows how to skilfully distinguish between the Law and the Gospel, by the grace of God he also knows how to be a theologian.'
          - (2)** 'Anybody who wishes to be a theologian. . . must distinguish between the Law and the Gospel'
          - (3)** 'There's no man living on earth who knows how to distinguish between the Law and the Gospel.'

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- b.** This lets us know we will have to do a lot of thinking!
- 5.** We approach Good Friday and Easter; what better time to look at these profound issues?

**I THE LAW: A PARENTHESIS (BRACKETS) BETWEEN ITS ORIGIN AND FULFILMENT**

- A.** When Jesus said he would 'fulfil' the Law it meant:
  - 1.** The end of an era, namely, that of the Law's rule.
    - a.** A sentence with a parenthesis (brackets) can be read without quoting the contents of the brackets.
    - b.** The brackets however make the meaning of the sentence clearer.
  - 2.** The beginning of an era, namely, all that was entailed in the meaning of the Law being fulfilled.
    - a.** Gr. *plerosai*, to fulfil – the opposite of destroy.
      - (1)** It does not mean to supplement or enlarge.
      - (2)** It does not mean to keep going or continue.
      - (3)** It does not mean to obey.
    - b.** This means to bring about the event to which the Law was pointing.
      - (1)** The Law pointed beyond itself.
      - (2)** The Law had not been fulfilled.
    - c.** No one had even really kept the Law. 'Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?' Acts 15:10.
    - d.** The very content of the Law showed it was incomplete.
  - 2.** The fulfilment of the Law meant that some person and event were the object toward which it pointed.
    - a.** In Matthew 5:17 Jesus is actually saying:
      - (1)** 'I am that person.'
      - (2)** 'My coming is that event.'

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- b.** It was therefore a prophetic statement.
  - (1)** It had not been done yet; he had perhaps another two or three years to live and to do it.
  - (2)** But it was a promise that he would do what no other person had ever done.
  
- B.** Why did the Law emerge in the first place? ‘What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator.’ Galatians 3:19.
  - 1.** Why does Paul say ‘added’?
    - a.** Note: ‘The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.’ Romans 5:20.
    - b.** This shows that Paul’s comment in Galatians 3:19 was no unguarded comment; it was carefully worded and thought through.
  
  - 2.** Answer: it was never meant to replace the Gospel.
    - a.** The Gospel was first preached to Abraham some four hundred years before, circa 1700 BC. ‘Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.’ Galatians 3:7-9.
      - (1)** The Gospel did not begin with Moses but Abraham.
      - (2)** This is why Jesus said, ‘Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.’ John 8:56.
  
    - b.** The Law was ‘added’, that is, it came alongside.
      - (1)** It was extra.
      - (2)** It paralleled the Gospel that had emerged four hundred years before.
  
    - b.** The Law was never permanent in the first place.
      - (1)** It had not come to replace the promise to Abraham.

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- (2) It only came alongside until it be fulfilled: ‘Until the Seed [that is, Jesus Christ] to whom the promise [to Abraham] referred had come.’ Gal. 3:19.
  - 3. Had it not been for the transgression of the Children of Israel the implication is: the Law need never had come at all.
    - a. But the people needed a restraint.
      - (1) They began complaining.
      - (2) They were prone to idolatry.
    - b. God stepped in – and gave the Law.
      - (1) It restrained the people from further sin by fear of punishment.
      - (2) It did not produce the righteousness the Law required.
- C. In a word: the Law was temporary from the beginning.
  - 1. It pointed beyond itself by its very content.
  - 2. All it waited for: fulfilment.
  - 3. Jesus went on to say, ‘I tell you the truth, 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.’ Matthew 5:18.
    - a. This was a way of saying that he knew his work was truly cut out for him!
    - b. It shows what would have to be done.
      - (1) Not merely keeping the Ten Commandments.
      - (2) Also: over 2,000 verses of legislation to be found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
- D. The content of the Law, which shows the work cut out for Jesus to fulfil.
  - 1. The statutes of the Law – all of its rules and regulations.
    - a. This meant all the Law: Moral, Civil, Ceremonial.
    - b. This meant the minutiae of the Law: 2,000 verses of legislation in addition to the Ten Commandments.

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2. The Law in all its strictures had to be kept.
  - a. It required the highest possible level of pure living – in thought, word, deed.
  - b. It demanded total obedience without the slightest deviation.
    - (1) Circumcision on the eighth day after birth.
    - (2) Keeping the Sabbath (Saturday).
    - (3) All the feasts and holy days.
      - (a) The ‘new moons’.
      - (b) The ‘seventh year’.
      - (c) Passover.
      - (d) Feast of Unleavened Bread.
      - (e) Feast of Tabernacles.
      - (f) Feast of Trumpets.
      - (g) Day of Atonement.
    - (4) Dietary restrictions, not cooking ‘a young goat in its mother’s milk.’ Ex. 23:19.
    - (5) Dress codes, not to wear ‘clothing woven of two kinds of material.’ Lev. 19:19.
    - (6) Agricultural restrictions. ‘Do not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed.’ Lev. 19:19.
  - c. Sacrifices of the Law, various animals being slaughtered for the shedding of blood.

**II THE MISSION OF JESUS: TO CLOSE THE PARENTHESIS AND FULFIL THE LAW**

**A.** What was expected of one who would fulfil the Law and the Prophets?

1. He would be born of a virgin. Is. 7:14.

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2. He would be a prophet like Moses. Deut. 18:15.
3. He would keep the details of the Law (above).
4. He would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Psalm 110:4.
5. He would be of the tribe of Judah and lineage of David. Acts 2:30.
6. He would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2.
7. He would dwell in Galilee. Is. 9:1ff.

**B.** What did Jesus actually do?

1. He upheld the standard of the Law.
  - a. Some hoped he would abolish it.
  - b. He upheld it and by doing so maintained the moral standard of righteousness.
2. He was born under the Law and submitted to it. 'But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.' Galatians 4:4.
  - a. He did not put himself above the Law.
  - b. He took not on himself the nature of angels but the seed of Abraham, being bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Heb. 2:14-17.
  - c. His parents kept the Law for him, including seeing that he was circumcised the eighth day. Luke 2:21. 'And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.' Luke 2:39.
3. He lived without sin. 'For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.' Hebrews 4:15. Cf. I Pet. 2:22.
  - a. He kept the Ten Commandments.
    - (1) He worshipped only the Father. John 5:19,31.
    - (2) He never abused his Father's name.
    - (3) He kept the Sabbath.



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**(4)** He never stole or lied.

**(5)** He never coveted.

**b.** In a word: he practised what he preached.

**(1)** He never retaliated when they mocked him.

**(2)** He never complained or murmured.

**C.** How did Jesus fulfil the Law?

**1.** By being our substitute.

**a.** All he ever did was doing what was required of us.

**b.** He took our place, ensuring that whatever was required of us he had already done for us.

**(1)** His baptism was our baptism. Matt. 3:15.

**(2)** His keeping the Law was our keeping the Law. 1 Cor. 1:30.

**(3)** His obedience was our obedience. Rom. 5:15,19.

**2.** By suffering for us.

**a.** The penalty of the Law was the death sentence in fulfilment against capital crimes.

**(1)** Our murdering became his.

**(2)** Our adultery became his.

**b.** He suffered death for us.

**(1)** 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.' 2 Cor. 5:21.

**(2)** 'We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.' Isaiah 53:6.

**c.** This literally happened when, on Good Friday, 'About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"' Matthew 27:46.

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**(1)** No man suffered as Jesus did.

**(2)** We may never know how much.

‘We may not know, we cannot tell  
What pains he had to bear;  
But we believe it was for us  
He hung and suffered there.’

**3.** He fulfilled the requirements of the sacrificial system.

**a.** He was the seed of the woman. Gen. 3:15.

**b.** He became our Passover lamb. 1 Cor. 5:7.

**(1)** All the Old Testament sacrifices were ‘shadows’. ‘The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming - not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.’ Hebrews 10:1.

**(2)** He was the fulfilment of all the animals – bulls, goats, lambs, pigeons.

**c.** Those sacrifices had to be repeated daily and annually.

**(1)** Note: that alone ought to have been sufficient hint to ancient Israel that they were not doing the job very well!

**(2)** It shows that there must be more; that someone must put an end to all the sacrifices.

**d.** But on Good Friday, after living a sinless life for 33 years – and 3 years of public ministry:

**(1)** Jesus became God’s Lamb. John 1:29.

**(2)** He was the ultimate fulfilment of everything both the Law and the Prophets anticipated.

**e.** Once he uttered the words, ‘It is finished,’ (John 19:30):

**(1)** The veil in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

**(2)** Bodies of the saints rose and walked around Jerusalem.

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4. The Divine Justice was totally satisfied.
  - a. Jesus met – therefore fulfilled – the requirements of the Law.
    - (1) Enoch walking with God did not do it.
    - (2) Noah walking with God did not do it.
    - (3) Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not fulfil the Law.
    - (4) Moses was faithful but did not fulfil the Law.
    - (5) David loved the Law but didn't keep it.
    - (6) The prophets did not do it.
  - b. The blood of Jesus did it.
    - (1) He lived a perfect life.
    - (2) His death sealed all he had done.
  - c. In a word: Mission Accomplished!

**III THE ONGOING FULFILMENT OF THE LAW BY US**

Jesus died 'in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.' Romans 8:4.

- A. Having said what he would do, Jesus made another astonishing statement: 'For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.' Matthew 5:20.
  1. No one had ever heard such an utterance.
  2. No one believed that ordinary people in Galilee even came up to the standard set by the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees.
    - a. Surely they had a 'corner on the market'!
    - b. Surely they were head and shoulders above everybody when it came to righteousness.
  3. But their righteousness was in fact superficial.
    - a. They did everything outwardly.

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- b.** They did everything to be seen of men.
- B.** Jesus gave an interpretation of various commandments that showed how one might indeed 'surpass' the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

  - 1.** Murder was a matter of the heart. 'You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment." But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.' Matthew 5:21-22.

    - a.** The Pharisees thought they were sinless because they had not committed outward murder.
    - b.** Jesus showed that if we hate or hold grudges we have violated the sixth commandment.
    - c.** He went on to say, 'But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.' Matthew 5:44.

      - (1)** This is a real possibility.
      - (2)** Doing this fulfils the Law, for Paul said that love is the fulfilment of the Law. Rom. 13:10.
  - 2.** Adultery is a matter of the heart. 'You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery." But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.' Matthew 5:27-28.

    - a.** The Pharisees thought they were sinless because they had not committed the physical act of adultery.
    - b.** Jesus showed that lust violates the seventh commandment.
    - c.** The Greek is intentionally ambiguous, meaning:

      - (1)** Lusting so as to be obsessed in the thoughts.
      - (2)** Causing another to lust.
  - 3.** Misusing God's name was not merely swearing by his name. 'Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord." But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

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Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.' Matthew 5:33-37.

- a. The Pharisees thought they could be without sin as long as they kept their vows.
  - b. Jesus said that we must not swear by a greater authority every time we open our mouths but must tell the truth all the time!
- C. Note: the above examples are but the beginning of how the Law is continued to be fulfilled by walking in the Spirit. Gal. 5:16.

### **CONCLUSION**

- A. The parenthesis of the Law is closed and completed.
  - 1. We are not under the Law. Gal. 5:18.
  - 2. We are saved by righteousness of course, namely, that of Jesus Christ.
- B. At the same time we outclass the Law.
  - 1. Jesus outclassed the Law by his life.
  - 2. We outclass the Law by walking in the Spirit.