

LESSON EIGHT

THE LAW

A. JESUS TAUGHT THAT HE HAD COME TO FULFIL THE LAW:

Scriptural References:

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17).

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

Jesus stated very clearly that He had not come to abolish the law but that the law would be fulfilled in His life and ministry.

The Apostle Paul states this great truth when he wrote, *"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4)*. In His Deity Jesus Christ was the Author of the law, but in His humanity He came subordinate to the law. This is one of the great wonders of the incarnation. It is certainly common sense to conclude that Jesus in His humanity would never destroy the law that He Himself had given.

To understand this properly we should know that the law was divided into three parts:

1. **MORAL:** This embodied the Ten Commandments and was an expression of the righteousness of God. Until Jesus came no man was able to keep this moral law. The main purpose of it in the Old Testament was to bring to man the knowledge of sin and to cause man to know his need of a Savior. *"...that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God... for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:19-20).*
2. **CEREMONIAL:** This had to do with their manner of worshipping God. This was mainly made up of types and shadows, which pointed forward to Jesus Christ. With the coming of Jesus there was no longer any need for the shadows. *"Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:17).*
3. **CIVIL:** This related to the administration of justice. The laws governing the civil life of the nation were called "judgments" (Exodus 21:1). These were noble in character but have little direct applications to us today.

Jesus completely fulfilled the righteousness of the law. In fact He was the first and only man to be able to do so. His enemies watched His life carefully trying their best to find some place where they could accuse Him. Jesus obeyed the law to the minutest detail. There was not one jot or tittle in which He had broken the law or had not fulfilled it.

B. JESUS TAUGHT THAT THE MINISTRY OF THE LAW ENDED WITH JOHN:

Scriptural Reference:

"The law and the prophets were until John" (Luke 16:16).

Scriptural Reference:

The message that John the Baptist preached was: *"Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matthew 3:2). Here John announced the beginning of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus stated that from the time of John the kingdom of God is preached. In other words John's ministry ended the preaching of the law and the prophets, and with the ministry of Jesus a new message was being proclaimed.

If we remember the purpose of the law we shall have no difficulty in understanding this truth. The moral law was an expression of God's righteousness, which was now fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and the ceremonial law was made up of types and shadows pointing forward to Jesus. The purpose for which the law had been given was not fulfilled in Christ and therefore would no longer need to be preached.

This does not mean to say that the moral law is no longer in effect. The Christian does not keep the Ten Commandments from a legal sense, but he keeps the Ten Commandments because he is a Christian and Jesus Christ dwells within his heart. In other words he does not do righteously in order to make himself righteous, but rather he lives righteously because he already had been made righteous.

C. JESUS CONDEMNED THE TRADITIONS OF THE PHARISEES:

Scriptural References:

"But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (Matthew 15:3).

"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

"Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law?" (John 7:19).

Jesus condemned the Jews as being guilty of these three things:

1. Not keeping the law;
2. Breaking the commandments by their traditions;
3. Teaching the commandments of men as doctrines.

Over the years the Jews had accumulated many oral traditions. These traditions were decisions made by the judges and elders from time to time. Traditional rites and restrictions stood higher in esteem of the Jews than their Scriptures.

These traditions had become a great burden to the Jews. Among these traditions was the ordinance of hand washing before and after meals, and of taking a bath after coming from the market place because of the contact with Gentiles.

Jesus paid no attention to these traditions and taught that what proceeded from the heart defiled a man (Matthew 15:18). He taught that our righteousness had to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20).

D. JESUS TAUGHT THAT THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN:

"And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:2 7-2 8).

There was no institution among the Jews regarded with more veneration than that of the Sabbath. It was a divinely ordained and beneficent part of the law designed for the rest of man and his worship of God. It began with sunset on Friday and ended with sunset on Saturday and was announced by three trumpet blasts from the Temple and synagogue. The law stated that all food must be prepared, all vessels washed, all lights kindled, and all tools laid aside. However, the Rabbis had elaborated on these until they had a system of thirty-nine works which when not done rendered the offender subject to death by stoning. This excessive strictness made the observance of the Sabbath wholly impossible and brought burden upon them.

The Sabbath was given to man for man's benefit, in order to give him rest. It actually was a shadow pointing forward to Jesus Christ who would become our rest. Jesus said, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11 :28)*. The very purpose of the Sabbath was fulfilled in Christ. Jesus taught that the Sabbath was not given to be a burden to man, but rather to be a blessing to man. He also taught that He was Lord of the Sabbath day and that there was no sin in doing good and ministering to the needs of mankind on the Sabbath.

Jesus asked the Pharisees, *"Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days?" (Mark 3:4)*. The Pharisees were unable to answer this question for they knew that it was lawful to do so. However, they still condemned Him for healing on the Sabbath days.

E. JESUS TAUGHT THAT FORNICATION WAS THE ONLY REASON FOR DIVORCE:

Scriptural References:

"But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matthew 5:32).

"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another committeth adultery" (Matthew 19:9).

The Pharisees were constantly trying to trick Jesus into saying something, which would be contrary to the law and by which they could accuse Him. They may also have desired to bring Jesus into open conflict with Herod who was living in open adultery with the wicked Herodias. John had denounced their sin and had lost his head. They may have thought that they could get rid of Jesus the same way. At any rate they asked the question, *"Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"*

Jesus referred them to the beginning of the race when God made one woman for one man, and that the two would be one flesh. Jesus placed His sanction upon the marriage relation and the family institution.

Jesus taught that fornication (which is the general term for illicit sexual relationship and is inclusive of adultery) was the only act, which could break the union between a man and his wife. In this case it would be the same as if the unfaithful one had died. By implication Jesus allows the innocent

Scriptural Reference:

party of a union thus disrupted the privilege of remarriage, but not the guilty party.

LESSON EIGHT

SELF HELP TEST

A. Explain clearly the meaning of the following terms:

1. THE MORAL LAW:
2. THE CEREMONIAL LAW:
3. THE CIVIL LAW:

B. "Jesus completely fulfilled the righteousness of the law." Write a brief paragraph showing the truth of this statement.

C. What did Jesus teach concerning the Sabbath?

D. What is the meaning of this Scripture: "The law and the prophets were until John?"