

The Sermon on the Mount: A Reformed Exposition

Chapter 13: Jesus' Fulfillment of the Old Testament

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Having carefully examined the important words and phrases in our text, we are ready to consider *how* our Lord fulfills the Old Testament. The best way to proceed is to separate predictive prophecy from the ceremonial and moral law. Jesus fulfills each, but they are not fulfilled in the same way.

The Fulfillment of Prophecy

There is so much to know about Christ in the area of predictive prophecy, that we only have time to scratch the surface. Regarding the prophetic element we should note the following. First, the Redeemer is the central sum of the whole Old Testament and, moreover, of the whole Bible. In fact, the key to biblical prophecy is the Messiah. If this fact is not foremost in our minds as we interpret the Scriptures, then we will not understand or profit from God's Word. The Savior is the scarlet thread that runs throughout the whole Bible. Christ was the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). At the beginning of man's history, after the fall, God prophesied of a coming day when a descendant of Eve would completely reverse Satan's temporary coup. In various prophecies to Abraham (see Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-16; 15:4-21; 17:4-16; cf. 22:15-18), we learn of a seed to come who will be a great blessing to all nations. Jesus was the prophet to come who was greater than Moses (see Dt. 18:15-19), who would supersede all prophets (Heb. 1:1-2). His sacrificial death was the anti-type of all the Old Testament sacrifices. He was the fulfillment of the Davidic kingship and the anti-type of all the judges and deliverers of Israel. Our Lord was the true Lamb, the true high priest, the true temple, the true scapegoat, the true sacrifice who would bless the world. He was Israel's suffering servant whose death would redeem Israel (53:5, 8). He was Daniel's Messiah the Prince, who would be cut off for the people (9:26) and bring an end to the Old Testament sacrifices (9:27). "He was Jeremiah's 'Branch of Righteousness, executing justice and righteousness in the land.' He was Ezekiel's 'Plant of renown,' giving shade and giving fragrance. He was Daniel's stone cut without hands, smiting the image, becoming a mountain and filling the whole earth."¹

The apostle Paul refers to Jesus as the great consummate "yes" and "amen" to all of God's promises. "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." (2 Cor. 1:20). "He is the horn of salvation raised up for us by God, 'as He spake by the mouth of the holy prophets which have been since the world began' (Lk. 1:69f.). In Him all things 'which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms' achieve their fulfillment (Lk. 24:44). The covenant promises addressed to Abraham and his seed are realized in His single person (Gal. 3:16). To the believer, therefore, Christ is all, not merely as fulfilling a word of the past, but as Himself being the very living Word of God, faithful and

¹ G. Campbell Morgan, *The God Who Cares* (Old Tappan, NJ: Flemington-Revell, [1931] 1987), 407.

eternal.”² Therefore, if the Savior is not the central focus of our hearts when we come to Scripture, then the Bible will be a dark and difficult book. Thus, we see why modern Judaism and Islam are built on blindness and error; because they suppress the central core of all sacred truth—Jesus Christ.

Second, our Lord’s perfect fulfillment of predictive prophecy is an amazing proof of His person and claims. Given the exact fulfillment of so many prophecies by Jesus, it is astounding that the Jews who possessed the Old Testament Scriptures stumbled at Him. Almost every important detail of His life was foretold by the prophets: His miraculous birth of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 1:22-23) of the seed of David (2 Sam.7:16; Rom. 1-3) in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; Mt. 2:6); His journey out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1; Mt. 2:15); the killing of the infants by Herod (Jer. 31:15; Mt. 2:17); the fact that the Messiah was raised in Nazareth (Isa. 11:1; Mt. 2:23); His ministry in the region of Galilee of the Gentiles (Isa. 42:6-7; Mt. 4:14); the Savior’s amazing healing ministry (Isa. 53:4; Mt. 8:17); the Jews’ rejection of Christ and the gospel going to the Gentiles (Isa. 42:1-4; Mt. 12:17); the Messiah’s speaking in parables to obscure certain truths to the Jews (Isa. 6:9-10; cf. Ps. 78:2; Mt. 13:14, 35); the Mediator’s ride into Jerusalem on a colt (Zech. 9:9; Mt. 21:4); His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12-13; Jer. 18:1-4; 19:1-3; Ps. 4:19); the fact that wicked false witnesses would be used at His trial (Ps. 35:11; Mt. 27:59-62); the Savior’s silence at His trial (Isa. 53:7; Mt. 26:63); the flogging, beating and spitting upon Jesus (Isa. 50:6; 53:5; Mt. 26:67-68; 27:26-30); the offer of vinegar and gall to drink at the site of execution (Ps. 69:21; Mt. 27:34); the method of Christ’s death—crucifixion (Isa. 53:8; Ps. 22:14-17; Mt. 27:35); the dividing of the Redeemer’s garments (Ps. 22:18; Mt. 27:35); the presence of Gentiles at the crucifixion (Ps. 22:20; Mt. 27:54); the mocking and derision heaped on the Messiah during His suffering on the cross (Ps. 22:7-8; Mt. 27:39-42); the exact words of mockery that came from the scribes and elders (Ps. 22:8; Mt. 27:43); the exact words of Jesus uttered to God from the cross (Ps. 22:1; Mt. 27:46); the suffering Servant’s burial in a rich man’s sepulcher (Isa. 53:9; Mt. 27:53-60); Christ’s glorious resurrection from the dead (Ps. 16:9-11; 118:24; Mt. 28:6); His received authority as King over heaven and earth (Ps. 2:7-12; 110:1; Mt. 28:18); His ascension into heaven (Ps. 24:7-10; 47:5; 68:18; Mk. 16:19; Lk. 24:51; Ac. 1:9-11); His outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church (Joel 2:28-32; Ac. 2:1-4); and even the second bodily coming and universal judgment which has not yet occurred (Ps. 50:3-4; 98:6-9; Mt. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:11-15).

The prophetic proof that Jesus is exactly who He claimed to be (the Messianic King, Savior, Son of God and Judge of all Mankind) is totally unique among all the world’s religions. The leaders and founders of all the world’s various religions (e.g., Krishna, Buddha, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Charles Taze Russell) have absolutely no objective proof or way to verify their claims. They expect us to accept their word and authority based only on their own witness. But Jesus has this amazing testimony of literally fulfilling over two hundred distinct prophecies. If one or two prophecies are considered separately, then people could claim that perhaps our Lord’s fulfillments are an interesting coincidence or maybe were deliberate attempts by Christ to fulfill certain messianic predictions. But when all the dozens and dozens of prophecies are taken together and we consider the fact that, humanly speaking, Jesus and the apostles had absolutely no way to control or manipulate them, we must stand in awe of this irrefutable proof.

The fulfillment of prophecy is a great apologetical tool for presenting the gospel to unbelievers because the numbers and the amazing accuracy cannot honestly or rationally be

² Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 36-37.

dismissed. If you do not find the Redeemer in prophecy, believe in Him and bow the knee to Him as King, then you are spiritually blind and are still in your sins. Our Lord's statement regarding His fulfillment of the prophets should have sent the Jews to the Scriptures to find the fulfillments. Sadly, however, most Jews at that time were not interested in the truth. If you do believe in Christ then don't be a fool and do so this very moment. "Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10).

The Fulfillment of the Law

When we discuss the fulfillment of the law we need to distinguish between laws that are ceremonial and laws that are moral. They are obviously not fulfilled in the exact same manner. Thus, each will be treated separately.

(1) The ceremonial laws are fulfilled in their own way because they foreshadow Christ typologically. Thus, in a sense these laws are more related to prophecy than the moral law. The Tabernacle and the Temple prefigured the special presence of Christ in and among His people. The priesthood looks ultimately to Jesus' priestly function. The whole complex system of sacrifices points to our Lord's sacrificial death on the cross. The types teach us about the imputation of sin (Lev. 1:4; 3:2; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33), expiation, redemption, reconciliation and propitiation. Therefore, the attitude which says that the Old Testament is unimportant or can be ignored is unbiblical.

The ceremonial laws were directed to Israel and were a schoolmaster intended to bring the covenant people to Christ. Like prophecy, they were anticipatory, for they looked ahead to the perfect, final redemption wrought by the Messiah. They were always designed to be temporary, for as types and shadows they could not really remove the guilt of sin and bring perfection. God always intended to supersede the whole ceremonial system by the Savior's fulfilling of it. "Their whole purpose and design were evidently discharged as soon as His real work of satisfaction was accomplished; and therefore it is not only a truth taught in Scripture (Heb. x.1-14; Col. ii.14-17; Eph. ii.15, 16), but an undeniable historical fact, that the priestly work of Christ immediately and definitely superseded the work of the Levitical priest. The instant of Christ's death, the veil separating the throne of God from the approach of men 'was rent in twain from the top to the bottom' (Matt. xxvii.50, 51), thus throwing the way open to all, and dispensing with priests and their ceremonies forever."³

A discussion of the ceremonial law in regard to Jesus fulfilling the whole Old Testament usually raises a few pertinent questions. If our Lord did not come to destroy the law (Mt. 5:17) and the ceremonial ordinances are indeed set out of gear or annulled by the Redeemer's work, then how does the Savior's work not abrogate at least some of God's law? How could our Lord say, "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled"? Calvin gives an excellent answer to this question: "With respect to ceremonies, there is some appearance of a change having taken place; but it was only the use of them that was abolished, for their meaning was more fully confirmed. The coming of Christ has taken nothing away even from ceremonies, but, on the contrary confirms them by exhibiting the truth of shadows."⁴ "[H]e did not make *void*, but made *good*, the ceremonial law, and manifested

³ A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith: A Handbook of Christian Doctrine Expounding the Westminster Confession of Faith* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1992), 255-256.

⁴ John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, 1:277-278.

himself to be the Substance of all those shadows.”⁵ Jesus does not destroy or invalidate the meaning or essence of the types, but makes them real, concrete, and complete. Antiochus Epiphanes tried to destroy the Jewish ordinances, while Christ fulfilled them. The gospel and the New Covenant do not destroy the Old Covenant, but rather supersede them by accomplishing what they anticipate and foreshadow.

(2) As we turn our attention to the Savior’s fulfillment of the moral law it is important to note that the moral law is fulfilled in a completely different manner than the types and prophecies. Predictions of what is going to happen in the future are fulfilled when those events occur. Types are fulfilled when the anti-type comes and replaces the “shadows” (Heb. 10:1; 8:4-5) or “weak and beggarly elements” with the reality. The moral law of God can only be fulfilled when the penalty or curse of the law has been endured and the requirement of a perfect obedience to all its demands has taken place. In other words, the law needs fulfillment as to precept and penalty. Let us examine each of these aspects in turn.

First, Jesus fulfills the law by paying the penalty that it requires for sin in full. The *penalty* for disobedience to the law is death (Gen. 2:17; 3:3; Ez. 18:4; Rom. 6:23); the curse of the law (Gal. 3:10; Dt. 27:26); separation from God (Gen. 3:23; Rev. 6:15); and God’s displeasure and wrath (Rom. 1:18; 2:8). Before anyone could go to heaven Christ had to remove the guilt, penalty or curse of the law by taking on Himself the wrath of God that we deserved and that the moral law required.

Paul often emphasized this aspect of our Lord’s fulfillment of the law. He writes, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the law, to do them.... Christ has 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’)” (Gal. 3:10, 13). Paul says that any violation of the law brings a curse upon the offender. Thus, to fulfill the law, Jesus had to become accursed of God. The fulfillment of this aspect of the law is seen in the fact that Christ was sacrificed upon a tree. By His slow, painful and shameful death on the cross, Jesus literally became a curse in our place.

The moral law also required separation from God. After Adam sinned he was cast out of the garden of Eden and re-entrance was barred by cherubim with flaming swords (Gen. 3:24). “Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you” (Isa. 59:2). The eternal separation from God that we merited by our sin was endured by the Savior as He hung on the cross—the three hours of darkness where Jesus experienced the full eclipse of the Father’s fellowship, friendship and love. When God imputed the sins of the elect upon the Savior on the cross, Jesus was separated from the Father and entered into the outer darkness of hell. God thrust His only begotten Son into the darkness because only this intense agony, indescribable woe and terrible isolation could fulfill the law’s requirements of spiritual death and separation from God for sin. This real separation from God was so painful to Christ that He cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34). Jesus was abandoned by God on the cross because the only way that God could remain perfectly just; truly honor His moral law; and justify or declare righteous those who believe in the Redeemer was to punish the Savior *fully* for their sins (cf. Rom. 3:21-28).

The moral law also required death as a penalty for sin. Therefore Jesus “became obedient to the point of death” (Phil. 2:8). Paul says, “We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:10). Because the law required death as a penalty for sin, Christ had to die to satisfy

⁵ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 5:56.

divine justice and fulfill the moral law. The law condemns sin and requires death so the Savior had to suffer and die to carry out the law.

The Redeemer's suffering and sacrificial death on the cross to satisfy the requirement of the moral law as to penalty is totally unique among the world's religions. With Islam and Judaism, the penalty that sin deserves is not dealt with at all. People are taught that God is satisfied with repentance or that one's good works can outweigh one's wicked deeds on the day of judgment. Both of these options, however, do not really deal with the guilt of sin. God's moral law, which is a reflection of God's nature and character, requires death, separation from God and the sufferings of hell for sin. If God simply overlooked the guilt of sin when people said they were sorry or turned over a new leaf, then God would contradict His holy nature and violate His own law. Who God is and what He requires cannot simply be ignored; if God did that He would not be just. So God sent His only Son, who was holy, spotless and totally without sin, and punished Him in the place of His people. "Christ is fulfilling the law on the cross, and unless you interpret the cross, and Christ's death upon it, in strict terms of the fulfilling of the law you have not the scriptural view of the death upon the cross."⁶

Second, our Lord fulfilled the law by rendering a perfect obedience to it in our place. The moral law requires not only that sin be punished, but also that all its requirements be perfectly obeyed in thought, word and deed, from the moment we are born until the time we die. The cross of Christ removes the guilt and penalty of sin by fulfilling the law's curse against sin. The Lord's sacrifice delivers the believer from hell. But if we are to have the reward of heaven which the law promises for perfect obedience, we need the perfect law-keeping or righteousness of another. In other words, all sinners are under a double obligation to the law: the penalty must be endured and a perfect obedience rendered. By His active and passive obedience (i.e. His perfect law-keeping and sacrificial death) Jesus satisfies both requirements for His people. Many evangelicals do not understand that if God simply eliminated the penalty without fulfilling the positive obligation, then He would be setting aside a crucial aspect of the moral law.

Paul says, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4-5). When the apostle speaks of Jesus being "born under the law" this does not mean that our Lord was only born to deal with the curse of the law. It rather refers to the fact that as a Man—the second Adam, our Lord had a personal obligation to *obey* the law. Did Christ need to obey God's law on His own behalf? Although Jesus had to be a Lamb without blemish to be a perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice, the fact that He was born without original sin and was hypostatically united with God the Son and thus immediately fit for heaven means that His whole life of obedience was *vicarious*. He came to provide a perfect, positive righteousness for His people. He obeyed as a Surety, a substitute. Therefore, when the Bible refers to "the righteousness of God" (Rom. 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22; 10:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9), "the righteousness of One" (Rom. 5:18), "the righteousness of Christ" (cf. Rom. 10:4), "the righteousness of faith" (Rom. 4:11; 9:30; 10:6; cf. Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:9), "the obedience of One" (Rom. 5:19) and the righteousness God imputes apart from works (Rom. 4:6), we must include all of Christ's righteousness: both His atoning death and His perfect sinless life. Both of these provide the all-sufficient salvation we need to enter God's presence.

Paul assumed that a perfect obedience to the law is necessary for salvation when he says that "the doers of the law will be justified" (Rom. 2:12). This cannot mean that we can personally achieve justification by our own keeping of the law because in the very next chapter

⁶ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 192-193.

the apostle says “no one is righteous, no not one” (Rom. 3:11); and “a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28). Thus, we must seek the righteousness of another—Jesus Christ.

When the Savior submitted to the baptism of John He said, “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Mt. 3:15). When, as the second Adam, our Lord entered into temptation in the wilderness, He rendered the perfect obedience which Adam had failed to render (cf. Mk. 1:12-13; Mt. 4:1-11; Lk. 4:1-13). Paul says that “by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Rom. 5:19 KJV). Righteousness is based on the fact that the whole law has been fulfilled. Jesus fulfilled the covenant of works given to Adam in the garden and fulfilled the moral law in exhaustive detail and this righteousness is imputed to the believing sinner. It is reckoned to his account. Because of Christ’s imputed righteousness, the believing sinner judicially is just as righteous as Jesus in God’s sight. The Redeemer washes away all our sins and filthiness by His precious blood and then He clothes us with His own perfect righteousness. “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD’” (1 Cor. 1:30).

Third, by way of application our Lord fulfills the law by causing it to be honored and obeyed by the Jews and even the Gentiles. The Savior does this in a number of ways.

First, He not only set the perfect example by yielding obedience to the law in all respects, but also taught others to obey the law. The Mediator, in His teachings, very strongly condemned any and all human additions to the law because they nullified it. We see this clearly in the Redeemer’s condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees: “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother; and, He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God’—then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition” (Mt. 15:3-6). Jesus is the champion of what the Reformers called *sola Scriptura*. Christ understood better than anyone else that human traditions annul or destroy God’s law. Ironically, it was the scribes and Pharisees who were annulling God’s law, not Christ.

There is a great lesson here for every Christian that adding our own rules and regulations to what God has said annuls the law by displacing it with human inventions. The Roman Catholic Church has added so much of what is purely human to God’s Word that it has more in common with a cult than true Christianity. If we are to imitate Christ and fulfill the law, we must be on guard against adding any human traditions to Scripture. A human tradition may seem small or insignificant, but these additions pile up over time and become more important to people than the truth itself. History very strongly attests to this fact.

Second, Jesus’ redemptive work is what enables people from every nation to learn and obey God’s law. Paul writes, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:2-4). The apostle teaches that the law, by itself, had no ability to cause us to obey it because of our enslavement to sin. But because the sacrificial death of Christ conquered sin, both as to guilt and as to pollution in those who believe, believers can fulfill the righteous requirements of the law. Here we have conclusive

proof not only that a believer's holiness consists in obedience to God's moral law revealed in the Old Testament as well as the New, but also that Jesus' death causes His own followers to fulfill the law. God justifies us through Christ, who on the basis of His redemptive work sanctifies us through His Spirit. The Redeemer did not come to relax the law's moral requirement, but to send us His Spirit to enable us to obey God's moral standard. "The end God had in view when sending His Son was not our justification only, through freedom from the condemnation of the law, but also our holiness, through obedience to the commandments of the law."⁷

Thus, there is a direct correlation between our Lord's fulfillment of the law and our fulfillment of the law in sanctification. We receive the Holy Spirit only because Jesus fulfilled the law as to precept and penalty and ascended on high. The Spirit's work in us enlightens our mind to the meaning and importance of God's law; causes us to delight in God's law and convicts us when we violate the law. Without the work of the Holy Spirit in us through regeneration and sanctification, the law would remain a dead letter. As Paul says, "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God nor indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7).

That the redemptive work of Christ would cause the moral law to be obeyed throughout all nations was foretold by the prophets. "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up the mountain of the LORD.... He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law..." (Isa. 2:1-3; cf. Micah 4:1-2). Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah will establish "justice in the earth; and the coastlands shall wait for His law" (42:4). The coming Savior "will exalt the law and make it honorable" (42:21). "The word law should not be restricted to the Sinaitic legislation, but should include as well the teaching that God has given through the prophets. Israel, in its sinful and rebellious condition, had despised the law, but it is God's intention to carry out His purposes. He will magnify and make honorable His law, that the entire world may see the honor and majesty of His truth and authority. The magnifying of the law would also and primarily consist in it being carried out and obeyed."⁸ "Listen to Me, My people.... For law will proceed from Me and I will make My justice rest as a light of the peoples. My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, and My arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands will wait upon Me, and on My arm they will trust" (Isa. 51:4-5). After Jesus ascends and the Holy Spirit is given, the Gentiles even in the far off isles will receive the gospel and receive the justice and judgment from God's holy Law.

When Jeremiah distinguishes between the Old and New Covenant, the superiority of the New is set forth in a far greater ability to keep God's Law because there will be a far greater effusion of the Holy Spirit who will penetrate and reform all our inward faculties. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jer. 31:33). Without the help of God's grace, which flows from Christ, we would have no ability to fulfill God's law. The gospel in this sense is not contrary to the law, but rather establishes it.

Third, the Redeemer also fulfills the judicial law. The judicial law was given by God to govern Israel as a special theocratic nation. Therefore, this law contained much that was peculiar to Israel alone. In the judicial law we find ceremonial, moral (e.g., laws condemning adultery, bestiality, incest, homosexuality, robbery, etc.) and civil or national statutes (e.g., type of

⁷ John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News for the World* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994), 221-222.

⁸ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:134-135.

government, form of tax collection, location of the capital, boundaries of the borders, etc.). Christ also lived in perfect conformity to the judicial requirements. The laws that related uniquely to Israel as a covenant nation do not continue into the New Covenant era because Israel as a special covenant nation has forever ceased to exist. Jesus prophesied that Israel's special status as the covenant nation, or the only expression of the visible church, would come to an end. "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Mt. 21:43). God has judged apostate Israel and created a new nation, which is the multinational New Covenant church. The fact that the judicial laws have expired with the nation of Israel does not mean that the Savior came to destroy them, but rather that a new situation in redemptive history has arisen where they are no longer applicable.

The moral laws that are contained within the judicial laws are applications of the Ten Commandments to specific offenses that occur in any society and are still binding because: a) they are rooted in God's nature and character and thus are ethical absolutes and b) the principles they teach have always applied to all mankind even before the law of Moses existed. Before these laws were written down and enscripturated they existed in the laws of nature; that is, "the work of the law written in their hearts" (Rom. 2:15). "Thus the moral law, as interpreted by the New Testament, stands now as much as it has ever done, and will do so until the end of time and until we are perfected. In 1 John iii the apostle is very careful to remind his readers that sin in Christian people is still 'a transgression of the law'.... The law is still there, and when I sin I am breaking that law, though I am a Christian and though I have never been a Jew, and am a Gentile. So the moral law still applies to us."⁹

Some Applications

We have seen that Jesus fulfills the law in every possible way. This doctrine tells us a number of important things.

First, the whole Old Testament, every single part of it is inspired and important for teaching us about Christ and the gospel. We need the Old Testament to understand the New and we need the New Testament to understand the Old. The law of God reveals the gospel and the gospel in turn helps us understand the law. The attitude often found among evangelicals that the Old Testament is not important or relevant for Christians is dangerous. The practice of publishing New Testaments without the Old Testament is unscriptural and unwise. The more we understand the law, the more we will understand the person and work of Christ. In fact, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is virtually incomprehensible without an understanding of biblical righteousness or justice. Because of an ignorance of the Old Testament, many professing Christians have rejected or simply ignored Paul's doctrine of justification for mysticism and existentialism. The gospel is no longer defined in terms of Christ fulfilling the law in our place as to penalty and precept, but rather is discussed in terms of the subjective experience of asking Jesus to come and live in one's heart. This is an unwitting abandonment of the Protestant Reformation and an implicit shift toward Rome.

Second, the fact that Jesus did not annul or abrogate any of the moral laws found in the Old Testament teaches us that the *whole* Bible is our textbook for personal sanctification. The dispensational idea that believers are limited to a New Testament ethic or the Pentecostal teaching that sanctification comes through personal revelations or mystical leadings of the Spirit

⁹ D. Martyn-Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 1:195.

has led directly to worldliness, ungodliness and lukewarmness among many professing Christians. The New Testament ethic is rooted in and presupposes the moral law of God revealed throughout the Old Testament. (e.g., the New Testament repeatedly condemns fornication or sexual immorality. However, it is the Old Testament that carefully defines this general term. Further, not every Old Testament moral requirement is restated in the New Testament; there are no passages in the New Testament that explicitly condemn bestiality. Further, the detailed laws regarding consanguinity, or proper relations between relatives, are only found in the Old Testament. Obviously, “the law is good if one uses it lawfully” [1 Tim. 1:8]). To limit our teaching on morality and godliness to only the New Testament is to leave at least half of our armor and weaponry for holiness unused. If we do not diligently study and memorize the moral precepts in the Old Testament (and the prophetic teachings against those who disregarded these laws), then we do not have Christ’s doctrine toward God’s holy law.

Third, knowing the suffering and humiliation that our Savior went through to save us and enable us to obey the law ought to make us far more diligent and serious regarding our walk with Christ. Are we keeping the law because our Lord fulfilled the law for us? Are we following the Captain of our salvation in our quest for a sanctified life? We must always view the law through our Lord Jesus Christ. And we must strive to obey the moral law, knowing that it demonstrates our love toward Him. May God enable us to walk in His statutes to the glory of our dear Savior.

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