

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 20 – FULFILLING THE LAW]

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***Last time we looked at what the Sabbath day pictured for the Israelites under the Mosaic Covenant.***

- ◆ We saw that it looked back to the perfect rest God enjoyed with his creation prior to the introduction of sin.
- ◆ But it also looked forward into the future when that perfect rest would be restored through the saving work of Jesus Christ, the Lord of “spiritual rest.”
- ◆ We concentrated on the three words, “rest,” “work” and “remember.”

***Today, we will be looking at a couple more aspects of the Mosaic Covenant that have implications for what follows***

- ◆ These revolve around the question of the laws given to the Israelites as part of the Mosaic Covenant and their relevance for Christians today.
- ◆ ***Matthew 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.***
- ◆ This verse is another one used by Sabbatarians to prove we are to obey the Sabbath command today.
- ◆ They use it in the sense that Jesus was confirming His support for the continuation of the Mosaic Law especially the Ten Commandments including the command to observe the seventh day Sabbath.
- ◆ We have already discussed how the Mosaic Covenant that included the Ten Commandments was cast aside because of the failure of the people (Hebrews 8:6-9).
- ◆ Any talk of dismissing the Ten Commandments immediately raises the question as to what happens to righteousness if one does away with their observance?
- ◆ Of course this is a legitimate question and one we need to address.
- ◆ In response to this question the first thing we need to do is reassure everyone God has not suddenly gone soft on developing holiness or righteousness in His people.
- ◆ But we need to understand that just because the Mosaic Covenant was cast aside, this in no way cancels God's higher *Law of Love* as this is based on God's very character and nature and this remains the same for all eternity.
- ◆ It's just as impossible to do away with God's higher law of love, as it is to do away with God.
- ◆ So we have to understand that some aspects of the Mosaic Law continued because they are the ones that have existed for all eternity because they define who God is.
- ◆ These are those principles that are consistent with God's nature of love and reveal His will for mankind.
- ◆ God is in the process of creating us in His image, so there has to be a process whereby He teaches us to think, act and love as He does.
- ◆ So the laws and commandments God reveals to His people at various times need to be evaluated in this context.
- ◆ But there is another consideration that has to be taken into account and that is the maturity of the recipients (Hebrews 5:12-6:1).
- ◆ When we look at the Ten Commandments within the context mentioned above, we need to concede they were a very rudimentary level of God's law of love.
- ◆ We know this because when Jesus came along he raised the bar even higher with his radical teachings, such as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-6), and His new command to “love as I have loved you” (John 13:34).
- ◆ ***Matthew 5:21-22 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment.***
- ◆ Jesus raises the bar of the sixth commandment to a whole new level, sin at the thought, attitude and heart level.
- ◆ The law, whether it is spelled out in its most basic form in the Ten Commandments or expounded and lived out by the teachings of Jesus are given for three reasons.
- ◆ **1) To reveal God's nature and will for mankind.**
- ◆ ***1 John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome***
- ◆ God gives us these commands so we can learn to imitate His nature and character.
- ◆ ***Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.***
- ◆ These works should not be confused as a means to salvation, as that is only possible through faith (Romans 3:28).

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 20 – FULFILLING THE LAW]

---

- ◆ 2) To show the vast difference between a holy God and sinful mankind so that mankind throws himself on the grace of God.
  - ◆ **Romans 5:20 The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase (Romans 3:20, Galatians 3:23-25).**
  - ◆ We will talk more about this later, but in reality, the Ten Commandments reveal more about humanity's fallen evil nature than they do about God's holy nature.
  - ◆ God knew the Israelites would not worship Him as they should and therefore introduced four laws to govern their worship of Him and six laws to combat the tendency to exploit their fellow human beings in various evil ways.
  - ◆ Jesus in raising the bar to the heart level was speaking to a generation who thought they were doing pretty well in the righteousness department and Jesus wanted to jolt them out of their complacency to recognise their need for a Saviour (Luke 18:9-14).
  - ◆ **3) To restrain evil.**
  - ◆ Although the external law cannot change the heart, the law along with the threat of punishment for criminal behaviour, can to a certain extent constrain lawlessness.
  - ◆ **Romans 13:3-4 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. <sup>4</sup> For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.**
  - ◆ So when someone says the Mosaic Covenant has been cast aside and replaced by the New Covenant, it doesn't mean God's standards are any lower.
  - ◆ In fact, as we read, the expectations of the New Covenant are even higher now.
  - ◆ But as we shall see God has provided the means by which His people can attain a higher level of righteousness.
  - ◆ God is a Holy God and He hasn't changed; however the means to impart holiness to His people has.
  - ◆ **Jeremiah 31:33 "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.**
  - ◆ The fact this was written while the Jews were still under the Mosaic Covenant demonstrates the limitations of the external law and the spiritual immaturity of the people.
  - ◆ God is committed to creating a holy people and will provide the means for it to happen.
  - ◆ But this is getting ahead of the story.
- However in reference to the Old Covenant, we need to understand what continued and what was discontinued.**
- ◆ Those aspects of the law regarding God's holy nature and character continue for all time as they reflect who God is.
  - ◆ However, those laws specifically pertaining to Israel, such as the laws governing the priesthood, the sacrifices, holy days, the Ten Commandments, holy places, and clean and unclean foods were abolished when the Mosaic Covenant was replaced with the New Covenant instituted at Jesus' death.
  - ◆ Now notice we used the word "replaced" as each one of these aspects of the Mosaic Covenant was replaced with a more effective means of achieving God's goal of creating a holy people for Himself.
  - ◆ And this is one of the main reasons for the replacement of the Old Covenant, as it failed to produce a godly righteousness coming from an obedient heart.
  - ◆ The best the Old could produce was a dutiful external obedience best typified by the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-36).
  - ◆ Jesus' intent in fulfilling the law was not to add more regulations to the law. The Pharisees were already doing a good job of that with their "Oral Torah" by constructing a protecting fence around the Torah.
  - ◆ It was already quite obvious man is incapable of fulfilling even the basic requirements of the law spelled out in the Ten Commandments let alone the heart intent teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5-6.
  - ◆ Jesus Himself makes the real intent of His statement "to fulfil" perfectly clear to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.
  - ◆ **Luke 24:25-27 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.**

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 20 – FULFILLING THE LAW]

---

- ◆ And for emphasis, Jesus basically repeats Himself later in the same chapter.
- ◆ **Luke 24:44** *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.*
- ◆ The focus was never intended to be on the law; it was merely the tutor that pointed to Jesus Christ, the one who fulfilled what the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms pointed to.
- ◆ **Galatians 3:23-25** *But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*
- ◆ The law did what it was designed to do, **to increase the trespasses** with the intent of bringing us to faith in Jesus Christ.
- ◆ Last time we saw how the Sabbath command pointed forward to Jesus Christ and He fulfilled it by providing us with “spiritual rest.”
- ◆ So we have to view everything about the Mosaic Covenant as pointing to Jesus Christ in the same way the “rest” of the Sabbath day pointed to the author of true spiritual rest.
- ◆ **Colossians 2:16-17** *Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.*

**As mentioned earlier, the Mosaic Covenant was the womb for the birth of the Messiah.**

- ◆ It's a simple exercise to demonstrate this process.
- ◆ What did the various sacrifices of the Old Covenant foreshadow? Christ's sacrifice.
- ◆ What did the Passover Lamb foreshadow? Christ, the Lamb of God (**John 1:29** *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!").*
- ◆ What did the tabernacle and temple foreshadow? Christ's Body (**John 2:19** *Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up).*
- ◆ What did the Levitical priesthood foreshadow? Christ, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek (**Heb 5:6** *"You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek").*
- ◆ Without this background, many of the concepts the New Testament uses to explain the Gospel would not be understood and this is why the Mosaic Covenant is described as the “Womb for the birth of the Messiah.”

**Similar analogies with Jesus can be drawn with the Mosaic Holy or High Days (Leviticus 23).**

- ◆ **Passover** – Lamb of God (John 1:29).
- ◆ **Unleavened Bread** – Bread of Life (John 6:35).
- ◆ **Pentecost** – Jesus comes and lives in us through the Spirit (John 14:15-18, 23).
- ◆ **Trumpets** - In the Mosaic Covenant, the blowing of trumpets was associated with judgment.
- ◆ For example, the walls of Jericho fell (Joshua 6:1-20); the Day of the Lord, a time of judgment, begins with the blowing of the trumpet (Revelation 8, 9).
- ◆ The Feast of Trumpets was closely associated with the Day of Atonement. The Israelites were to use the ten days, beginning with the Day of Trumpets leading up to the Day of Atonement to examine or judge themselves in preparation for this solemn assembly.
- ◆ Atonement pictured the forgiveness of sins for the Israelites. It's interesting to see on the one hand, Israel was judged and condemned, but then released from that judgment on the Day of Atonement.
- ◆ We see this same progression in Leviticus 25, where the beginning of the Year of Jubilee also began with the blowing of the trumpet on the Day of Atonement and we know the Year of Jubilee pictured the release of all debts and obligations (Leviticus 25:8-12).
- ◆ Jesus does the same thing. He comes as the righteous judge (John 5:22) but then sets us free from judgment by his atoning sacrifice.
- ◆ **Atonement** – Jesus our Atonement for sin (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17).
- ◆ **Tabernacles** – Jesus came and Tabernacled with us? Emmanuel, God with us (Hebrews 9:11-12).
- ◆ So Jesus' intent back in Matthew 5:17 was to show He was the embodiment or fulfilment of all that the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms pointed to.

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 20 – FULFILLING THE LAW]

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- ◆ The focus was never to be on the Law, but on Jesus Christ, the one who fulfilled all that the Law, the Prophets and Psalms pointed to.
- ◆ God, in the person of Jesus Christ came and gave substance to the shadows cast by the types.
- ◆ The temporary shadow arrangements were cancelled because their symbolic meaning had been replaced by the glory of the reality (John 1:14).
- ◆ **Heb 10:9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will. "He sets aside the first to establish the second. <sup>10</sup> And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**
- ◆ When we understand that various aspects of the Old Covenant are replaced with more glorious aspects of the New Covenant centred on Jesus Christ there is no need for fear, but rather relief.
- ◆ **2 Cor 3:7-10 Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, <sup>8</sup> will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? <sup>9</sup> If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! <sup>10</sup> For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. <sup>11</sup> And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!**
- ◆ It ought to be liberating for us to understand we have moved from **the ministry that brought condemnation to the ministry that brings righteousness!**
- ◆ The first ten chapters of the book of Hebrews is devoted to explaining why the New Covenant is much more glorious than the Old Covenant.
- ◆ It has better promises (Hebrews 8:6), better sacrifices (Hebrews 9:23), better High Priest (Hebrews 7:26-8:6), better country, a heavenly one (Hebrews 11:16)
- ◆ As we will see, the New accomplishes what the Old could not do, because Jesus does for us what we could not do for ourselves.

### **But there was another sense in which Jesus fulfilled the Law.**

- ◆ And that was, He kept the law perfectly, and not just the Mosaic Law, but also the higher law of love we spoke about earlier.
- ◆ **Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin**
- ◆ We have touched on this earlier but will come back to this subject in more detail when we get to the New Testament.
- ◆ So when Jesus said he came to fulfil the law, what he meant was, 1) He fulfilled the role of the one prophesied about in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms, and 2) He came and fulfilled the law by his perfect obedience to it.

### **So we can learn a couple of very important principles from our discussion today.**

- 1) When we read the Old Testament, we need to view everything through the prism of Jesus Christ, as He is the fulfilment of all the Old Covenant pointed to.
  - ◆ He was the one who came to fulfil all that the Law, Prophets and Psalms pointed to - the sacrifices, the priesthood, the temple – all pointed to Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:17).
  - ◆ He also fulfilled the law in that he obeyed it perfectly.
  - ◆ The focus was never intended to be on the law, but on Jesus Christ.
- 2) Even though some aspects of the Ten Commandments were set aside, they did not cancel the higher law of love which is a reflection of God's holy character and nature.
  - ◆ These exist throughout eternity.
- 3) The Mosaic Covenant although glorious had serious limitations in developing holiness in God's people, so it was replaced with a more glorious Covenant that addressed this shortcoming.
- 4) As we saw with the Sabbath rules, we need to be very careful focusing on the details doesn't side-track us and miss the higher spiritual intent.
  - ◆ This is the advice Jesus gave the Pharisees when he criticised them for their hypocrisy for tithing of their herbs and missing the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23)

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 20 – FULFILLING THE LAW]

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- ◆ It wasn't just with herbs where the Pharisees missed the point. They had endless regulations on what was lawful to do on the Sabbath while standing in front of them was the One offering them "spiritual rest."