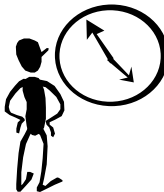


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

Back to Basics: Christ and the Law

By Frank Jamerson

When brethren are confused about whether Christ came to fulfill the law and prophets or to perpetuate them, it is time to get back to basics! One brother said, "Continuity of law is evident in [Matthew 5:17](#), in that there is nothing about following Jesus that would be obnoxious to Moses." He further said that Jesus did not "dismantle the law and give a new one," He only took away the ceremonial aspects of the law. My affirmation is that Jesus fulfilled the promises, the prophecies and the law, and all of it passed away. We can please God only by following the New Covenant revealed through Christ and ratified by His blood.

THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" ([Matthew 5:17-19](#)).

Most of the material in this article is taken from a book written by James D. Bales in 1973, entitled: "Christ: The Fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets." (It is out of print now. All quotations will be from this source.)

First, when Jesus said He came "to fulfill the Law," was He talking about the "moral law," the "ceremonial law," or all the Law? Those who contend that He came just to fulfill the "ceremonial law" have a problem with the context, for the next verses talk about murder, anger, lust, adultery, divorce, telling the truth, resisting evil and loving your enemies

([Matthew 5:21-48](#)). Jesus also said that He came to "fulfill the Prophets." Was He referring to just some of the Prophets, or all of them?

John said, "*For the law was given through Moses*" ([John 1:17](#)), and Paul said that the law given "*four hundred and thirty years*" after the promise was intended to last "*till the seed should come*" ([Galatians 3:17,19](#)). Did God mean to say that just the ceremonial law was given "*till the seed should come*?" Jesus said, "*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets*" ([Matthew 7:12](#)). Does this sum up the whole Old Testament revelation on man's duty to his fellow man, or must we determine which part Jesus had in mind? Later, Jesus gave the two greatest commandments and said, "*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*" ([Matthew 22:40](#)). Did He mean to say "some of the Law and a few of the Prophets?" Whatever Jesus affirmed about the Law, He also affirmed about the Prophets in Matthew 5. If He meant that He would perpetuate the Law, it must also mean that He would perpetuate the Prophets. What does that do to the Hebrew writer's statement that God "*spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets*" but "*has in these last days spoken to us by His Son*"? ([Hebrews 1:1-2](#)).

FULFILL, NOT DESTROY

What is the difference between destroying and fulfilling? God told Moses He would "*raise up for them a Prophet like you*" ([Deuteronomy 18:18](#)). When Jesus came, did He destroy that prophecy or fulfill it ([Acts 3:22,23](#))? Zechariah said that Jesus would rule both as a priest and a king on His throne ([Zechariah 6:13](#)). When Jesus came, did He fulfill that prophecy, or destroy it? When the prophecies were fulfilled, what happened to them?

"When one says that we are no longer under the law and the prophets, he is not saying that Jesus destroyed them by perpetuating them, but rather that He brought them to an end by fulfilling them" (p. 20).

"Christ did not come to annul the purpose of the law and the prophets. He did not bring them to naught by failing to fulfill them. He did not abolish them in the sense that one abolishes a promise by refusing to fulfill it. But He did bring the law and the prophets to an end by fulfilling them...If Christ perpetuated one part of the law, he perpetuated all of the law, since none was to pass until all was fulfilled" (pg. 23, 24).

But, what about the prohibition against "*breaking one of the least commandments*"? ([Matthew 5:19](#)). First, would one of "the least" be moral, or ceremonial? Jesus had just said that "*one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled*" ([Matthew 5:18](#)). Second, was Jesus saying that even the least commandments would continue after the law was fulfilled? No, he was saying that those who have the disposition, under either law, to ignore "the least commandments" do not have the right

attitude toward God's word. Paul said, "*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets*" ([Romans 3:21](#)). Just as surely as righteousness is through faith in Christ, the law and the prophets accomplished their purpose, and though they have historical value, they "passed away."

MORAL AND CEREMONIAL LAW?

It is certainly true that some of God's laws deal with moral conduct and others with ceremonial actions, but does the Bible teach that the ceremonial law passed away but the moral remained? Let's take a journey through Romans and ask which "law" is under discussion? "*For as many as have sinned without law, will also perish without law*" ([Romans 2:12](#)). Does this mean moral, ceremonial, or both? "*For the Gentiles, who do not have the law...*" ([Romans 2:14](#); is this moral or ceremonial?). The Jews "rested in the law" and had the advantage over Gentiles "*because to them were committed the oracles of God*" ([Romans 2:17](#); [3:1-2](#)). Was it only the ceremonial law that gave the Jews advantage? Those who had received the law became "dead to the law through the body of Christ" ([Romans 7:4](#)). Now, "*we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by...*" ([Romans 7:6](#)). Again, was this just the ceremonial law which had held them and to which they died? If so, why did Paul say, "*I would have not known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, You shall not covet*" ([Romans 7:7](#); cf. [Ex. 20:17](#)).

Let's take a brief look at the book of Galatians. "*Man is not justified by the works of the law...for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*" ([Galatians 2:16](#); which law? Was flesh justified by the moral law but not the ceremonial?) "*For I through the law died to the law...*" ([Galatians 2:19](#); Which law - Moral or ceremonial?) "*Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith*" ([Galatians 3:2](#))? Did they receive the Spirit by the moral law, but not the ceremonial? "*For as many are of the works of the law are under the curse*" ([Galatians 3:10](#)) "*But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the just shall live by faith*" ([Galatians 3:11](#)). Again, did they live by the moral law given through Moses? Is that the "faith?" "*For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise.*" ([Galatians 3:18](#); was the inheritance by the moral, but not ceremonial law?) "*What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator*" ([Galatians 3:19](#)). Was it just the ceremonial law that was given through angels by the hand of a mediator? "*Before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law.*" ([Galatians 3:23](#), which law? cp. [Romans 7:6](#)) "*Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ...but after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor*" ([Galatians 3:24-25](#)). Unless the law is "the faith," we are not under it! "*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law*" ([Galatians 4:4](#)). Was Jesus born

under the moral law or the ceremonial? "*Tell me, you who desire to be under the law ...*" ([Galatians 4:21](#)). He identifies the law as the covenant given at Mt. Sinai; was that moral or ceremonial? "*And I testify to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law*" ([Galatians 5:3](#)). Did Paul mean to say "the whole ceremonial law?"

We could do the same with the book of Hebrews, but one verse will suffice. "*Anyone who rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses*" ([Hebrews 10:28](#)). Did this apply to violations of the moral law? (See [Deuteronomy 13:6-17](#); [Leviticus 24:10-16](#) etc.) Moses' law is contrasted, in this context, to "trampling the Son of God underfoot, and counting the blood of the covenant" by which we are sanctified a common thing ([Hebrews 10:29](#)). No, we are not under the law of Moses, either the moral or ceremonial part!

James Bales concluded: "Where is the moral law found revealed in its fullness? It is found in Christ, in the New Covenant. We do not have the authority to go to the Old Testament, select something which we would like to be an eternal principle, and bind it on God's people today. We cannot know that it is an eternal principle unless it is also found in the New Testament" (p. 69). This harmonizes with the Hebrew writer's contrast between the things "*spoken through angels*" (cp. [Galatians 3:19](#)) and the things that "*first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him*" ([Hebrews 2:2-3](#)).

Those who deny that the whole law passed away have the impossible task of determining which of the Old Testament laws to bring over. Is the prohibition against eating blood ([Leviticus 17:10-11](#)), moral or ceremonial? (Some who believe the moral laws of Moses are binding are teaching that prohibition against eating blood was removed, so it must be "ceremonial"!) Is giving your wife a certificate of divorce and sending her away ([Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#)), moral or ceremonial? (Some advocates of an unchanging moral law contend that this is still God's law; others say it is not so!) God gave David his "master's wives" ([II Samuel 12:8](#)). Is polygamy moral or ceremonial? (One advocate of this theory says he does not know.) What about concubines ([II Samuel 5:13](#))? What about a brother taking his deceased brother's wife ([Deuteronomy 25:5](#))? Is this part of the moral or ceremonial law? Was it moral for Ezra to tell God's people to put away their wives that they did not have a right to marry ([Ezra 10:3-4](#)), or is this part of the ceremonial law that has been taken away? Must we examine every law in the Old Testament and agree on whether it is moral or ceremonial before we know what we should do under the law of Christ? Such is unscriptural and impossible!

CONCLUSION

The blood of Christ did not ratify the promise to Abraham. It was in effect for two thousand years before it was fulfilled. The blood of Christ did not ratify the First Covenant. It was ratified by the blood of animals ([Exodus 24:7,8](#); [Hebrews 9:19](#)), was

fulfilled and passed away. Every time we observe the Lord's supper, we are reminded, "this cup is the new covenant in My blood" ([I Corinthians 11:25](#)). "The fact that there are similar principles in both Covenants, does not mean that we obey these because they are in the law of Moses...Moses was inspired of God to reveal the Old Covenant to Israel, but God speaks to us today through His Son ([Hebrews 1:1-2](#)). We obey these principles not because they are in the law of Moses, but because God has placed them in the **new** Covenant" (p. 74).

The Truth Sometimes Hurts

By Jonathan Perz

How much do you appreciate the truth? The truth is easy to hear when it is flattering, encouraging and uplifting. However, the truth can sometimes hurt. Do you always desire the truth from those around you, regardless of whether it is favorable or not? Do you always demand the truth from those who preach and teach the gospel of Christ?

The truth pleased the rich young ruler until Jesus told him the one thing he lacked (Mark 10:17-22). Some would call such a declaration of truth unloving, but the Spirit called it love (note verse 21). How do we feel when someone courageously and honestly points out our shortcomings (Proverbs 27:6)?

Some of the Jews who heard Peter on Pentecost appreciated the truth, though it indicted them. They chose repentance and baptism (Acts 2:36-40). Whereas, those Jews who heard Stephen speak that same truth hated what was spoken. They responded by stoning Stephen to death (Acts 7:54-60). How do we respond to the truth?

The Galatians loved the apostle Paul—so much that at one point they were willing to pluck out their own eyes and give them to Paul. However, in the very next verse, Paul was compelled to ask if he had become their enemy because he told them the truth (Gal. 4:14-16). Do we despise those who tell us what we need to hear?

Simply stated, unless we have a love of the truth, we will never appreciate the truths that hurt (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Unless we are willing to accept painful truths, we cannot know the sanctifying power of truth (John 17:17). Unless we obey the truth, we will be condemned (Romans 2:8).

How much do you appreciate truth? The answer is painfully obvious when we are confronted with agonizing truths that require change in our lives. Change hurts, but the truth saves. How will you respond the next time you are confronted with the truth?

