

House of Wisdom

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Matthew 5:17-18 - the Law

Through the prophet Jeremiah, Israel was given a promise of a new covenant, not like the covenant in stone, which was given by Christ when they came out of Egypt (Jer 31:31-34; Dt 4:13; 5:1-4). **1 Peter 1:20:** *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.* The Bible is Divinely inspired by Jesus Christ, in its records of laws, prophecies, parables and stories (1 Pet 1:11). Jesus came to His people, Israel, as the promised Messiah to explain the new covenant. The disciples came to understand this, and Paul, the most educated in the law, taught it using historical records allegorically (Gal 4:22-31; 1 Cor 10:2-5). He learned to do this also by Divine inspiration (Gal 1:2). Before that time, he was a Pharisee keeping the letter of the law (Phil 3:4-10).

Mt 5:3-4: *3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* The poor in spirit are blessed because they recognize they are poor in spiritual understanding; the kingdom of heaven is inward, it is the mind of God (cf Lk 17:20-21). If you cannot discern your own pride, you will never recognize your spiritual nakedness. The beatitudes describe the character a person is to obtain, and the rest of chapters 5-7 tell you how to understand the spiritual principals of the law, which Christ will use to teach you about the inward changes that need to be made.

Mt 5:17: *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* The phrase “law and prophets” is a Jewish term describing the Old Testament writings as a whole. At times the Psalms were added (Lk 24:44). The word “law” is indicative of the first five books of the Bible, called “the book of the law” (Dt 30:10; 31:26). After Moses’ death, the book was more often referred to as “the law of Moses” (Jos 23:6; 1 Ki 2:3; Jn 7:23; 1 Cor 9:9), and includes ALL Jewish law, including the Ten written in stone by the finger of God (Ex 20: 1-17; Ex 31:18). **Mt 5:18:** *For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (literally = come to be).* So, Jesus is saying that he did not come to destroy, abolish or do away with any part of the law.

At the very least, Jesus is saying that the smallest part of all that Moses wrote (first 5 books of the Bible) will not pass from the law until everything comes to be. Does that mean the laws concerning sacrifices, the priesthood, feast days, etc. were not eliminated? That is true! Lets continue and see how to understand this idea.

I was taught that all the law was abolished except the words written in stone. Later, this was confusing to me, as tithing was strongly emphasized, which is a part of the law that was supposed to be abolished. We know from scripture that Jesus became the Lamb of God and fulfilled the literal Passover (1 Cor 5:7). If the ceremonial laws, feast days, etc. were not abolished, then how do they apply today? Should we have a temple and be making sacrifices? Lets start by taking a look at the way Jesus viewed the law. The sermon on the mount begins in Matthew 5 and continues through chapter 7. When Jesus gave examples of the law, he covered both the word written in stone and other parts of the law not written in the Ten. Here are some examples:

Ten Commandments: *Thou shalt not kill* (Mt 5:21-26; Ex 20:13): Jesus applied the command to an inward act - *whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.* John refers to the concept of Jesus: **1 Jn 3:15:** *Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer.* Not only are you a murderer if you

hate another person, but you condemn yourself when you condemn another (Mt 7:1-2; Lk 6:37).

Thou shalt not commit adultery (Mt 5:27-28, Ex 20:14): *But I say unto you, That whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* Jesus internalized two of the commandments as examples of how that all ten should be applied inwardly to the heart.

Another example is the first commandment - *Thou shalt have no other gods before me* (Ex 20:3): In ancient times people worshiped literal images of stone, wood and precious metals, but did not consider that idolatry starts in the heart. We have been guilty of something similar. Today, idols are more like the worship movie stars, singers or sports heroes. The most significant idol in the churches today is the Bible. The vast majority put reading the book above listening to the voice of the Spirit. Some even teach that the hearing of faith comes only by reading or hearing the Bible read by another.

Taking God's name in vain (Mt 5:33-37; Ex 20:7; Lev 19:12): Jesus said, *Swear not at all..., but let your communication be yea, yea, nay nay: for whatsoever is more than these comes of evil.* Even those applying the principle of keeping the letter of the law can see that Jesus did not mean that we were only to speak the words yes or no. Yet, they refuse to apply the spiritual principle to all commands, specifically the fourth commandment, both those who worship on the seventh day or the first day of the week. Then, each group condemns the other to hell because they attend church on the wrong day, when neither group are following the spiritual principles of the Ten Commandments.

Other laws: Jesus refers to divorce (Mt 5:31-32), which is not part of the Ten in stone. He explains in **Mt 19:7-9:** *7. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8. He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. 9. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is put away doth commit adultery.* It is true that the commandments can be applied to an outward physical act. However, the fact that Jesus was speaking of the inward spiritual is evident in the next verses: *10. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. 11. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. 12. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb (John the Baptist): and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men (Daniel, literal & spiritual): and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.* The spiritual can only be given to those with ears to hear (cf Mt 13:9-17).

Mt 5:38: *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: Look at the law to which Jesus refers: **Lev 24:19-20:** 19. And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; 20. Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again.* This is explained in verses 39-42, and also in Matthew 7:1-5. All the law was given to Moses to write down because of transgressions (Gal 3:19), and because the people could not, or would not look at the law through the eyes of the Spirit of Christ, i.e. the spiritual law. **Heb 8:8:** *For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: The fault was not, nor is it today, with the law. The fault was/is with the people's understanding. **Rom 8:2-4:** 2. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The Spirit of life is Christ's spiritual understanding of the law, also referred to as the law of liberty*

(Jam 1:25; Lk 4:18; 2 Cor 3:17); the law of sin and death is man's opinion of the law through his fleshly understanding; the righteousness of the law is the spiritual understanding that Jesus will give those who have ears to hear. Loving your enemies (Mt 5:43-48), prayer (Mt 6:5-15), fasting (Mt 16-18) and judging (Mt 7:1-12) are other topics of the law covered in Jesus' sermon on the mount. Not the smallest part of the law has been abolished. It is all still there for Jesus to give those who so desire, to teach them the spiritual understanding of the law.

Temple Rites: Every time Jerusalem was taken over by another nation, their records were always kept intact, except the last time, AFTER the cross. The lineage records are needed in order to establish who is qualified to be a priest, as a person had to prove that they were a descendant of Aaron, and of the tribe of Levi. The Jews cannot legitimately start up sacrifices today because all those records were destroyed when Rome destroyed the temple and Jerusalem in AD 70. God did not intend that Israel should reestablish the old temple, but the new temple in the heart of man (1 Cor 3:16).

While the outward, physical temple rites, including feast days, are not to be performed, the law is still there to teach us spiritual lessons. The temple service today is to be viewed allegorically. It is beyond the scope of this study to go into details of the tabernacle service, except to say that every detail of the structure and the service has spiritual meaning. And I confess, that today I do not understand every detail. However, it is all there to teach us how to become priests of God (Ex 19:5-6). **2 Cor 3:5-7:** *5. Not that we are sufficient (in ability) from ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is from the God (Divine One); 6. Who also made us sufficient (in ability) as ministers of a new covenant; not of a writing, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life. 7. But if the ministry of death, in writing, having been engraved in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: [Greek Interlinear] The words written in stone are the old covenant (Dt 4:13) and they minister death. Anyone trying to keep the letter is under the law and not under Christ (cf Gal 4:21; 3:23; 5:18; Rom 6:14-15) . They are being governed by man's interpretation. It is the spiritual understanding of them that ministers life. Paul wrote of the veil on Moses' face: *their minds (Israel) were blinded: for until this day remains the same veil, not removed, in the reading of the old covenant* (verse 14). That veil on the heart is the fleshly understanding (Rom 8:5-8), also represented by the rent veil when Jesus died (Mt 27:51). Jesus was raised to keep the letter of the law. However, during His ministry, He did not go church on the 7th day because He believed He was to keep the letter of the 4th commandment, He went to church on the 7th day because that is where the people were - He wanted to give them the correct understanding of the Sabbath (Gal 4:4-5). If you use that reasoning, then you have to accept that Jesus also kept the feast days and said nothing against the sacrifices. Paul did the same thing: **1 Cor 9:20-22:** *And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but [in the law of] Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.**

In Closing: **Jn 4:24:** *God is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Isa 55:7-9:* *7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. 9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Amen!*