

Christ and the Law

By Keith Greer

"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." {Matthew 5:17,18} When Christ came to earth, He did not want men to wonder whether He conflicted with the Law of Moses and the prophets of old. Many seek, from these verses, to find solace that the Old Testament is still in effect. Such understanding undermines Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus came to fulfill, not to destroy. What was the Law's main purpose? It was part of God's plan for bringing His Son to the world. In carrying out that plan, God prepared the great nation Israel from which the Savior would come. He gave them a land (the Promised Land, Canaan) and a set of regulations (the Law of Moses) to guide them. Through men like Moses and Joshua, God worked with the children of Israel to prepare them for the coming Messiah. Hopefully, in good time, they would be ready to receive His Son. This proved not to be the case, not because God's instructions were unclear, but because Israel did not accept Christ.

The Law played a pivotal role in the process. "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." {Galatians 3:24,25} That law contained many antitypes of the true type, which came in with Christ. The Law made man aware of his lost-in-sin condition. He needed a remedy for his sin. Christ was that remedy. The Law led men to His arrival. The Law and all the prophets set out a plain course for Christ to follow. Sadly, Israel did not learn the lessons very well.

When Christ said He did not come to destroy the Law, he did not mean the Law of Moses would be forever binding on men? The Scriptures show that His death brought this law to a close. "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." {Colossians 2:14} This law also served as a barrier between the Jews and Gentiles. By His work and death, He removed that barrier. "For He Himself is our peace, who has

made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity...create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross..." {Ephesians 2:14-16}

When Christ finished His work, the Law had served the purpose for which God gave it. Until that time, man was duty-bound to obey it. "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. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

{Matthew 5:19,20} It is important to understand verse 20. It takes a higher degree of righteousness to enter Christ's kingdom. Not the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, but obedience to His Law, and not just obedience-- but obedience with a different attitude. Christ does not tolerate disobedience in His kingdom. To be faithful subjects in His kingdom, we must maintain obedient spirits. What kind of spirit do you have toward the Law of Christ? Does your RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEED the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? ***