

Comparison of the Old and New Covenants

Part Two – What Laws are to be kept today by God’s people?

For some people there is still confusion about the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ.

Are they separate?

Do they overlap?

Is one the extension of the other?

The question I want to address is what was Christ’s attitude towards the Law of Moses?

First, what do we understand by the term the Old Covenant?

Were the Ten Commandments part of the Old Covenant?

Exodus 34:28 [NIV] *“Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.”*

Very clearly the Ten Commandments were part of the Old Covenant.

In fact, the very core of the Old Covenant.

Also stated in other parts of God’s Word.

Deuteronomy 4:13 [NIV] *“He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets.”*

So when the Law is talked about in the New Testament, it refers to the whole package of the Law.

Jesus had something that He wanted to explain to His followers.

Matthew 5:1 [King James] *“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him”*

Christ was teaching His disciples in a formal manner.

In Matthew chapter five and all through to the end of chapter seven, we have what is commonly known as main teachings of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let us go straight to some of the issues that people bring up in conjunction with the Old and New Covenant.

The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ.

Matthew 5:17 [NIV] *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.”*

Note the Law and prophets are linked.

What does the word “fulfil” mean?

Greek word “*plērōō*” [play-ro-o] – accomplish – complete – end – expire – fill up – perfect.

A wide use in the Greek language.

How does Matthew use this word in his writing?

Matthew 1:22-23 [NIV] “*All this took place to **fulfil** what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” — which means, “God with us.”*”

A prophecy in the Old Testament was completed “*fulfilled*” by the birth of Jesus Christ.

This prophecy had come to an end as a result of Christ’s birth, what it predicted was now reality.

Matthew 2:15 [NIV] “*where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was **fulfilled** what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”*”

Same use of this word about the prophecy of Christ’s flight to Egypt.

Consistently Matthew uses this word to indicate that Christ was bringing to reality what was prophesied about Him being the looked-for Messiah.

If Christ had not fulfilled these prophecies He would not be the Messiah.

This is what Matthew wants us to understand, that Jesus is the Messiah.

Luke 24:44 [NIV] “*He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything **must be fulfilled** that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”*”

Christ add the psalms to the Law and prophets.

Here Luke is using the same Greek word.

Everything said in Old Testament in prophecy about the Messiah must be fulfilled by Jesus for Him to be the Messiah.

Matthew 5:18 [King James] “*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**.*”

In this passage of scripture we are talking about a comparison between the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ.

If Christ did not fulfil the prophecies to the very letter then He would **not** be the Messiah, and we worship Him in vain.

Matthew 5:19 [King James] “*Whosoever therefore shall break **one of these least commandments**, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*”

What commandments is Jesus talking about?

Is it the commandments given through Moses?

We need to ask the question what did Jesus think about the commandments of Moses?

Matthew 5:20 [King James] “*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*”

What was the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees?

It was based on the keeping of the Law given through Moses.

How can our righteousness be greater than what the scribes and Pharisees attained through keeping of the Law of Moses?

What does Christ mean by this statement?

Jesus is making comparisons between the Old and New Covenants.

Note: The words of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 5:21 [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’”*

Did Jesus agree with what was said in Old Testament law?

Matthew 5:22 [NIV] *“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.”*

Is this just an expansion of the Old Testament law?

Rather Jesus is saying the old letter of the law was not sufficient.

Matthew 5:27 [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’”*

The Old Testament law.

Matthew 5:28 [NIV] *“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

Christ’s new law.

The old was not enough in Christ’s teaching, lusting after a woman in your mind was adultery.

Matthew 5:33 [NIV] *“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’”*

Old Testament Law.

Matthew 5:34-37 [NIV] *“But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’, and your ‘No’, ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”*

Christ commanded in contrast no oaths.

Was Jesus agreeing with the Old Testament laws?

I think we can see the answer is no.

Christ was saying the laws of Moses are irrelevant to my believers.

Matthew 5:38 [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’”*

Here was a fundamental law for the system of courts under the Old Covenant, to limit any reprisal or judgement.

Did Jesus agree with the system of justice?

Matthew 5:39-42 [NIV] *“But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”*

Complete rejection of such a form of justice by Jesus Christ.

Matthew 5:43 [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’”*

Nowhere in Old Testament can you find the words *“hate your enemies”*.

Jesus Christ is talking about the whole philosophy of the Old Testament.

What did Israel have to do to the Ammonites and Moabites among others who were against Israel?

Often destroy them right down to the last man, woman and child.

This is a philosophy of hatred and underlines the thinking of the Old Testament.

Jesus Christ totally disagrees with this philosophy.

Matthew 5:44-45 [King James] *“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”*

King David lived by this Old Testament philosophy of hating your enemies, and getting rid of them.

Jesus is challenging the fundamental foundation of religion at that time, which was the Law of Moses.

Everything in life was built on the Law of Moses.

How you acted from morning to evening.

How you worshipped.

How you interacted with other people and nations.

Everything was based on the Law of Moses.

One thing that Paul wanted the Romans to know was that the Law of Moses had finished.

Paul uses a metaphor to show this to them and us.

Romans 7:1-6 [NIV] *“Do you not know, brothers, for I am speaking to men who know the law, that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to*

God. For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”

Like a wife [the church] is released from the law of the old husband when he dies.

So we are released from the Law of Moses when we die with Christ.

Romans 6:3-8 [NIV] *“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.”*

In baptism we died with Christ to start a new life with Him, our old sinful nature crucified.

When we move from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant the definition of sin changes.

Sin is no longer defined by the laws of the Old Covenant.

Sin is defined by New Covenant terms.

What are these New Covenant terms for sin?

Matthew 5:48 [NIV] *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

How are we perfect [mature]?

As we become more like Christ in our attitudes and desires.

As we become more like Christ who is the perfect likeness of God the Father.

2 Peter 2:20-22 [NIV] *“If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: “A dog returns to its vomit,” and, “A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud.”*

If we turn away from the pathway to perfection [maturity] and return to the way of this world, we sin.

If we are without Christ in our lives we are living in sin.

If we are with Christ in our lives [by the active indwelling of Holy Spirit] we are **not** living in sin.

Matthew 17:1-5 [NIV] *“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “**This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!**”*

Moses representing the law, Elijah representing the prophets and Jesus the bringer of New Covenant.

At that time in Peter's mind Christ was on the same level as Moses and Elijah.

But the voice from God the Father told them to listen to Jesus.

Elijah and Moses led us to Jesus Christ as our Saviour from sin.

The words of Jesus Christ have the authority of commandments for us.

Matthew 7:24-29 [NIV] *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”* When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”

We listen to the Words of Jesus and build our lives on them if we want a strong foundation.

Hebrews 3:1-8 [NIV] *“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. **Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses**, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast. So, as the Holy Spirit says: **“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert,”***

Jesus Christ has greater honour than Moses.

We are to hear His words **not** harden our hearts like those we did in rebellion under the Old Covenant days.

2 Corinthians 3:7-11 [NIV] *“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, fading though it was, **will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?** If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! **For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory.** And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!”*

Moses presided over a ministry of death that couldn't bring salvation.

Jesus through the Holy Spirit brings a ministry that offers salvation and eternal life.

If we build our life on the Law of Moses we are building it on a ministry of death.

If we build our life on the words of Jesus Christ, the New Covenant that He brought from God, we build on a rock.

The teaching of Christ is amazing for He brought the hope of salvation through the New Covenant.

Summary

Genesis 1:26 [NIV] *“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’”*

God’s original plan to create children whom He could love, created in His image and His likeness.

1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 11 [NIV] *“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.’ We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did, and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come.”*

The living human examples of the Old Covenant prove to us that laws do not change our likeness.

Romans 7:7-10, 24 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet.’ But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.” ... “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”*

Laws breed rebellion and frustration.

The law showed us what sin was, the very opposite to the very likeness [character] of the Creator God, but did **not** help us to change our Adamic nature.

How do we then make this change?

Romans 7:24-25 [NIV] *“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”*

Through Jesus Christ.

John 14:7-10 [NIV] *“If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” Philip said, ‘Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.’ Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.’”*

Christ in His life, death and resurrection shows us God the Father whose children we are to become.

How do we become like Christ?

Matthew 16:24-27 [NIV] *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but*

whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done."

"Deny himself" and "take up our cross" to crucify our old sinful life.

Give up our will and seek the will of our Heavenly Father just as our Saviour Jesus Christ did.

Mark 14:34-36 [NIV] *"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch." Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. **Yet not what I will, but what you will.**"*

Totally submissive to the Father.

Christ sacrificed His life but is now a "living sacrifice" through a resurrection.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, **to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.**"*

We are also to become a "living sacrifice". This is how we find and fulfil the Father's Will.

Can we accomplish this by our own strength?

No.

How then is this accomplished?

John 3:3-7 [NIV] *"In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, **no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.**" "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, **no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'**"*

How does this new birth take place?

Look at the physical example of the birth of a new child.

The father impregnates the mother and the new child is conceived and has within them characteristics of the father, as well as the mother.

The mother [the church] then nurtures the new-born child to bring them to maturity.

The same happens on a spiritual level.

John 14:15-18 [NIV] *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the **Spirit of truth** [the Holy Spirit]. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. **But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.**"*

The Holy Spirit impregnates us and produces in us the fruits of Himself, the very characteristics of God.

Galatians 5:22-25 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”*

We become a living example of our Heavenly Father.

Born again children with our Father’s likeness.

New Covenant salvation is no soft option of the Old Covenant, it is a total sacrifice of our selfish Adamic ways.

Adam is dead, Christ is alive in us.

God has given us all the facts and He is now watching to see how we respond.