

Jesus and the Mosaic Law

Jesus did many things that shocked people. He associated with outcasts, he loved unconditionally, he cast out demons and healed people. He spoke with authority and claimed to be God, “Amen, amen I say to you, before Abraham came to be I AM (John 8:58).” Jesus not only fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, but added to Old Testament laws, that by following the laws, the Israelites could have a better relationship with God. Other times he completely disregarded the law because it was not merciful.

One of the most talked about passages regarding the Old Law is the beatitudes and the teachings that follow. Jesus begins his teachings about the law by first stating, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17).” He then goes on to explain a part of the law and expand on it, adding to it in a way that if lived out would enhance your relationship with God the Father. For example in teaching about anger, he first quotes the law, “You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘You shall not kill; kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment (Matthew 5:21).” He adds to this law by explaining that whoever is angry with his brother will be liable for judgment and should reconcile with his brother (Cf. Matthew 5:22-24). When we have pure relationships with family and others, instead of relationships filled with anger then we can have a better relationship with God.

The next topic he teaches on is adultery. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:27-28).” Jesus expands on this law to include *thought* and action. He goes even further to encourage you to get rid of whatever causes you to sin. In the book of John we read about the woman who committed adultery and how Jesus responds to her. Here again, the law of Moses is referenced. They said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do you say?” They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her (John 8:4-7).” The scribes and Pharisees end up walking away and Jesus forgives her sins and tells her to sin no more. He did not uphold the law of Moses here. It would have gone against everything he stood for which is love and mercy.

The Pharisees and Sadducees are constantly trying to trick Jesus because they don't always understand or agree with his claims and teachings. They test him by asking what is the greatest commandment, but Jesus replies, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the

greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39). This is an addition to the commandments given to Moses. If you love God and neighbor completely, you will naturally follow the original Ten Commandments. Another planned test by the Pharisees was regarding taxes. They asked Jesus about paying taxes to Caesar, to which Jesus replied, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." When they heard this they were amazed, and leaving him they went away (Matthew 22: 21-22). This does not go against Moses law, but simply points out that they should respect both the government and God and give what is due to each.

Jesus fulfilled many prophecies and enhanced the Mosaic law to help people understand it in a way that was more than literal and would help them have a better relationship with others and with God. Following God is more than adhering to a strict set of rules; it is a way of life. The things that Jesus expanded on or enhanced in the Mosaic Law, account for compassion and communion with others. If Israel is to be "a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6)," they need to be more than over six hundred rules, they need to provide a way of life; a path, and that is exactly what Jesus laid out for us.

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