

“The Law, Jesus, and Us”

Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-19)

1. Discuss the concept of law:
 - a. Why do countries have laws? Is this a good thing?

 - b. What is your attitude toward our civil laws?

 - c. What have you thought about God’s law? What has been your attitude toward God’s Law?

2. Read Matthew 5:17.
 - a. What did Jesus have in mind when He said, “the Law or the Prophets” (cf. Luke 24:27)?

 - b. What accusations from the religious leaders was Jesus refuting in this verse? (cf. Matthew 12:2; 15:2)?

3. Read verse 18.
 - a. What does this statement say about how Jesus viewed the accuracy and authority of the Old Testament?

 - b. If this was Jesus’ view, how should we think about the Old Testament?

 - c. What does this verse say about Jesus’ confidence in the future fulfillment of all Scripture? How should this affect your confidence in future things?

4. Read verse 19.
 - a. Jesus contrasts two different attitudes toward the Law. What are they? What actions reveal these attitudes?
 - b. What will be the outcomes for these two groups?
 - c. In what ways are we tempted to set aside or minimize God's laws in our current culture?
 - d. In what ways are you tempted to minimize God's laws in your life?
 - e. How does this verse serve as a warning to us?

There are three kinds of laws in the Old Testament: moral laws, civil laws, and ritual laws. Work through the following:

5. Read Exodus 20:1-17

Moral laws explain what righteousness looks like in a person's life.

- a. Which of these commandments explain how we are to relate to God?
- b. Which of these commandments explain how we are to relate to one another?
- c. Can you connect these two differing focuses with Matthew 22:37-40?
- d. Righteousness is a prominent theme of Jesus' teaching in this sermon (cf. 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, etc.). Ultimately, our righteousness is a reflection of God's character in us. How does God's moral law help you understand what this looks like?

- e. If God's moral law explains how to live righteously, what should your attitude be toward it now?

6. Read Exodus 21:35-36.

The civil laws applied the moral law to God's people as a nation.

- a. Can you connect these laws to the Ten Commandments?
- b. How do these laws encourage love toward one another?
- c. How would these laws serve to maintain order in their society?
- d. How do our civil laws do the same?
- e. Why do you think God commands us to obey our civil laws (cf. Romans 13:1-5)?

7. Read Leviticus 1:2-4

Ritual laws served as illustrations of what it would take to restore righteousness to God's people.

- a. What was the penalty for sin in Genesis 2:17?
- b. What was necessary for forgiveness in this passage?

c. How are these things connected?

d. How does this passage illustrate what Jesus would do for us?

8. Discuss the following ways that Jesus fulfilled/fulfills the Law:

a. He personally kept all of the requirements of all of the law--moral, civil, and ritual (cf. John 8:29).

b. He is working in us now so that we will increasingly keep God's law of righteousness (cf. Romans 8:3-4).

c. He fulfilled all that the Law illustrated about sacrifice and redemption (cf. Hebrews 10:11-14).

d. He did all of this on our behalf.

- What does this say about your need to keep the Law now in order to achieve acceptance from God?
- What does this say about how you should think about God's law of righteousness now?
- What should be your motivation to live in obedience to God now (cf. John 14:15; Matthew 5:16)?