

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY (09/05/19, 16/05/19)
Watchman Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement

Topical Study: **CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT (Part 9):**
THE CHRISTIAN AND THE LAW

Text: **MATTHEW 5:17-20**

INTRODUCTION: Christ, knowing the various dispositions of the Jews to whom His message primarily related, did not hesitate early in His introductory teaching, to clear possible misconceptions of His stand on the Mosaic law. He needed to let the pious (religious) Jews who had strong affection for the law not to think that He came to destroy the law or the prophets (Matt. 5:17). He was minded to clear them of prejudices against Him and His doctrines. On the other hand, He wanted to make the profane (carnal) Jews who had disaffection to the law not to feel that He had come to confirm their despite for the law (Matt. 5:17-20). What then is Christ's, and by extension the Christian's stand on the law and the prophets?

Christ And The Law (Matt. 5:17-20). The whole of the Old Testament often referred to as the law and the prophets, is known as the dispensation of law, being based on Mosaic laws (cp. Lk. 24:44; Jn. 1:45). Now, Christ in clearing possible misconceptions about His ministry said that He did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17). Here, He was referring to the law of Moses, the prophets' messages and commentaries on the law, and other inspired writings.

To fully appreciate what He means by coming to fulfill the law, we will first take a look at the break-down of the law of the Old Testament. We have Ceremonial, Civil and Moral laws.

Ceremonial laws are those laws that relate to Israel's mode of worship including the associated sacrifices (Lev. 1:2-10; 2:1-3). Sometimes, the group of laws pertaining to sacrifices are classed as sacrificed laws, distinct from ceremonial laws. **Civil laws** are laws that apply to their daily living and relationship one with another (cons. Ex. 21:1-11,33,34; Deut. 24:10,11; 25:1-10).

Moral laws are those laws which relate to the principles of good and evil both in relation to man and God, and man and fellow men (cons. Ex. 20:1-7,12-17).

Christ, The Fulfilment Of The Law (Matt 5:17). Christ did not come to repeal the law but to fulfill it, meaning that He came to satisfy the demands of the ceremonial laws and the guidelines for civil life which were particularly meant for that dispensation, being shadows pointing to the reality which is Christ (Matt. 5:17). So when Christ whom they were foreshadowing manifested, they became obsolete and unnecessary (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:24,25). It also means that He came to complete and strengthen the moral law (Matt. 5:17). Christ has also fulfilled the various punishments prescribed in the ordinances (Heb. 2:9; 1Pt. 2:21-24).

The Christian And The Law: Christ has fulfilled the ceremonial and civil laws loosing us from their bondage (Rom. 8:1,2). So in the New Testament, a believer is not subject to these abrogated ceremonial laws of eat not and taste not, the various sacrificial laws, including the laws of Sabbath specifically meant for the nation of Israel (cp. Rom. 14:4,5; Gal. 5:16-18; Col. 2:16-23).

But that does not give anybody, more so the believer, the licence to sin (Rom. 6:1, 2). While we are set free from the law of sin and death, we are subject to the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus (cp. Rom. 8:1,2; Matt 5:18,21,22, 44-48). We are not meant to follow the letter of the law and ordinances, but the principles, and the spirit behind them are to guide our conduct (cp. 2Cor.3:6; Gal. 5:14-18). This is the reason He warned that anyone who breaks even the least of the commandments and teaches men so by precept and/or practice shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven (cp. Matt. 5:19; Jas. 2:10).

He emphasizes this fact by saying that the believer's righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20). The Scribes and Pharisees were the noted teachers and celebrated professors of the law of Moses; they were noted for their strict observance of the law. But now Jesus says that believers must do better than them in order to be qualified to enter heaven (Matt. 5:20).

This means that while the Pharisees/Scribes laid stress upon the ceremonial and outward part of the law, we must be entire about it; giving God our hearts, being mindful of both outward and inward godliness. Whereas they aimed at praise and applause of men, we must aim at acceptance with God (cp. Matt. 23:23-27); whereas they were proud for what they did in religion, and trusted in their righteousness, we should deny self, considering ourselves unprofitable servants, and trust only in the righteousness of Christ (cp. Matt. 6:2-6; 23:3-7; Lk. 17:10).

Conclusion: we are saved by grace through faith and that grace enables us to live in righteousness above the Scribes and Pharisees (Titus 2:11-14). We are not saved to be law-breakers and sinners (cp. Rom. 6:1,2).

Rise and let us pray.

HSCF 42; 47

