

TEACHING GOAL

To study the abiding validity of the law.

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS

- Q. What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?
- A. The rule that God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.

- Q. Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?
- A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

S.C. 40-41, L.C. 91-95, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 72-73

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Study Passage: Matthew 5:17-20

Support Passages: Psalms 1, 19, 25:8-15, 119; Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:18-32, 30:11-20

BIBLE STORY

Mark 10:17-31: Jesus reaffirms the validity of the law to the rich young ruler.

.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."
(Matthew 5:17-18, ESV)

APPLICATION

The law of God abides forever as do the other scriptures. It is our tutor to bring us to Christ and our standard for righteous living. Let us love the Law of God and obey it.

SUMMARY

The issue before us is this; does the older testament law have validity in our day? This issue is particularly critical in view of the fact that the evangelical community largely rejects the assertion that the Law of God is still valid. We all agree that the ceremonial law, that is, the laws regarding sacrifices, have now been abrogated by Christ. What is debated is the validity of the moral law and the judicial law. The widely held "dispensationalism" popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible relegates God's moral law to an era now past. Liberal theology rejects these laws in favor of modern "situation ethics" so the question remains, are these laws still valid today. As to the judicial law, being that body of civil laws and regulations pertinent to the theocracy of ancient Israel, only the general equity remains binding upon us today.¹ General equity is understood to be a general condition characterized by justice, fairness, and impartiality.

According to Matthew 5:17 and 18, Christ did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, rather He came to fill them out,² to expand upon them, to give them meaning, to confirm or ratify them. He did not come to fulfill them in the sense of bringing them to an end, for He continues to say that not one of the smallest details of the law shall pass away until all is accomplished. Literally, the Lord says, not one "yodh" or "horn" shall pass from the law until all is accomplished. The yodh י is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet and the horn or serif is a tiny projection on certain letters. For example, the dalet ד and the resh ר are distinguished by a very small projection at the upper right of the letter. A similar distinction exists between the beth ב and the kaph כ at the lower right of the letter. (The Hebrew alphabet is reproduced below³ but many Bibles detail the Hebrew alphabet in connection with Psalm 119)

The Lord tells us that the Law and the Prophets (where much case-law is detailed) will abide until all is accomplished. The Greek word translated all in verse 18 actually means *all things*.⁴ Therefore we conclude that the Law and the Prophets are valid until the end of the world! The ethical stipulations of the covenant are part of that word of YAHWEH which endures forever. Furthermore, it is abundantly apparent that God's Law is perfect. Not perfect in the older testament alone but forever perfect!

¹ Westminster Confession of Faith XIX:4

² The Greek word used here is *pleroo* which has as a first meaning, *make full, fill*. It can mean bring to completion but the context forbids this understanding.

³ אבגדהוזחטיכלמנסעפצקרשת

⁴ *All things* translates *panta* which is neuter plural, hence the translation *all things*.

Psalm 19 teaches this truth directly. The soul is restored by the Law, the simple are made wise, the heart is rejoiced and the eyes are enlightened. This is still true for all of God's ethical principles. The Apostle Paul writes, "the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ."⁵ He obviously refers to the Old Testament Law because the New Testament canon was not completed yet and was not in general circulation. In addition, Paul argues that the Law is not contrary to the promises of God.⁶ It isn't that the Law is faulty but that people either will not or cannot keep it perfectly. Therefore, the Law, though perfect itself, does not impute righteousness. It is only the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, that renders ungodly people pure. The Law teaches our need for Christ and establishes the norm for our behavior. We therefore assert that Christ did not bring an end to Old Testament Law (save for its ceremonial aspects) nor did He replace it with new laws nor did He add to it. Christ rather expounded the Law and elucidated it! He rebuked pharisaical abuse of it for it was the Pharisees who added to it and invented new laws.

The double acrostic Psalm 119 is perhaps the greatest passage in all the scripture concerning the value of the Law. We shall have more to say about this Psalm in future lessons, however, consider this passage:

Psalm 119:1-2 (ESV)

Aleph

119 Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the Lord!

² Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,
who seek him with their whole heart,

Can it be that these blessings no longer exist for us who love the Lord? That is absurd! It would render meaningless many great texts of scripture to believe that Old Testament Law is no longer valid. May we ever be zealous for all of God's Law, for therein is righteousness comprehended.

⁵ Galatians 3:24

⁶ Galatians 3:21