



Exploring the Kingdom of God in Matthew:

How Did Jesus Feel about the Law?

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Text: Matthew 5:17-18

Friends, these wonderful verses are subject to much misunderstanding in our day. There are many good Christians who have taken these verses to mean that Christians are to attempt to keep every aspect of Old Testament Law. Many others affirm the absolute authority and inerrancy of the Law, but interpret the Church's responsibility towards the Law through a more New Testament, apostolic, Gospel-centric grid.

CRCC falls in the latter group. Let's dig in by asking a question:

How did Jesus feel about the Law?

1. Jesus upheld the Law and Prophets as the Word of God. (v17)
2. Jesus was born under the law that He might redeem those under the law! (Gal 4:4-5)
3. Jesus consistently affirmed the Law. (Luke 16:16-17)
4. Indeed, the Greatest Commandment comes from the Law! (Matt 22:36-40)

So what does Christ's "fulfillment" mean?

1. If Jesus says He came to fulfill the Law, that means He did in fact fulfill it! He did not fail at His mission in any way! Jesus is the ultimate "**antitype**" of all types and shadows.
2. "Fulfill" here is *plēroō* in Greek. It means, "To render full; to complete; to carry through to completion"
3. MacArthur writes: "This speaks of fulfillment in the same sense that prophecy is fulfilled. Christ was indicating that he is the fulfillment of the law in all its aspects. He fulfilled the moral law by keeping it perfectly. He fulfilled the ceremonial law by being the embodiment of everything the law's types and symbols pointed to. And he fulfilled the judicial (or civil) law by personifying God's perfect justice."
4. As we've said time and again, Christ "kept the law **perfectly**" on our behalf because we simply could not do it!

MacDonald on the Law

The law is that system of legislation given by God through Moses to the nation of Israel. The entire body of the law is found in Exodus 20-31, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, though its essence is embodied in the Ten Commandments.

The law was not given as a means of **salvation** (Act 13:39; Rom 3:20 a; Gal 2:16, Gal 2:21; Gal 3:11; it was designed to show people their sinfulness (Rom 3:20; Rom 5:20; Rom 7:7; 1Co 15:56; Gal 3:19) and then drive them to God for His gracious salvation.

The law had attached to it the penalty of **death** (Gal 3:10); and to break one command was to be guilty of all (Jas 2:10).

Therefore, the person who trusts in Jesus is no longer under the law; he is under **grace** (Rom 6:14).

Yet, while the Christian is not under the law, that doesn't mean he is **lawless**. **He is bound by a stronger chain than law because he is under the law of Christ** (1Co 9:21). His behavior is molded, not by fear of punishment, but

by a **loving desire** to please his Savior. Christ has become his rule of life ([Joh 13:15](#); [Joh 15:12](#); [Eph 5:1-2](#); [1Jn 2:6](#); [1Jn 3:16](#)).

The ministry of the law to **unsaved** people has not ended: “But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully” ([1Ti 1:8](#)).

The righteousness demanded by the law is fulfilled in those “who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” ([Rom 8:4](#)).

Implications:

1. Understand that of the several aspects of God’s Old Testament Law (Ceremonial, Civil or Judicial, and Moral), only the Moral Law is binding today.
2. The *Ceremonial portion of Old Testament Law* (Temple worship and sacrifices, priesthood rituals, feasts and various offerings) have been totally fulfilled in Christ.
3. The *Civil portion of Old Testament Law* remains our greatest *model* for interacting with one another, ordering societies, and regulating man’s sin. However, one must view the punitive portions of this part of the Law through the lens of the Gospel.
4. The *Moral codes of Old Testament Law* remains in effect, much of it repeated and even magnified in the New Testament! Adultery is still wrong, as is lying, idolatry, and taking the Lord’s name in vain. Indeed, as we’ll see, our Lord teaches the *Moral Law* in Matthew 5!
5. The Christian **must not** attempt to keep the law to be saved. He is not “under the law, but under grace.” ([Rom 6:14](#)) Let us be mindful of the constant temptation to add to the finished work of Christ or be deceived into going backwards. This temptation has been common since the birth of the Church...

Gal 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Gal 3:10-13 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. 12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. 13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Col 2:16-19 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. 17 These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, 19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

Gal 5:1-5 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. 2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. 3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. 4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Amen!