



Lesson 4 - Christ and the Law in the Sermon on the Mount

SABBATH

“ ‘Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot, or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled’ ” (Matthew 5:17, 18, NKJV).

What is Jesus telling us in this passage?? He’s telling us that God’s Law is Natural, NOT imposed. See Matt. 22: 34-40.

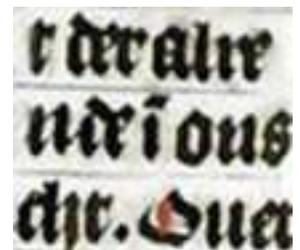
34 But when the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”

37 Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

SUNDAY -- “ONE JOT OR TITTLE”

FYI: A *jot* is the name of the least letter of an alphabet or the smallest part of a piece of writing. It is the Anglicized version of the Greek *iota* - the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet, which corresponds to the Roman 'i'. This, in turn, was derived from the Hebrew word *jod*, or *yodr*, which is the smallest letter of the square Hebrew alphabet. Apart from its specialist typographical meaning, we still use the word *jot* more generally to mean 'a tiny amount'. Hence, when we have a brief note to make, we 'jot it down'.

A *tittle*, rather appropriately for a word which sounds like a combination of *tiny* and *little*, is smaller still. It refers to a small stroke or point in writing or printing. In classical Latin this applied to any accent over a letter, but is now most commonly used as the name for the dot over the letter 'i'. It is also the name of the dots on dice. In medieval calligraphy the tittle was written as quite large relative to the stem of the 'i'. Since fixed typeface printing was introduced in the 15th century the tittle has been rendered smaller. www.phrases.org.uk.



“...one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

Does this mean that when “all is fulfilled” God’s Law will change? Could we say “not one breath will pass from the law of respiration till breathing is no longer necessary for life”?



The lesson makes a nice point that the word used for “fulfill” is *plero* which means, literally, to “fill up” or “complete”. Jesus is the completion of God’s Law of Love. He lived it in its entirety, and because that Law is the Law of Life, he was able to “take up His life again” at the resurrection. I used to think that Christ’s resurrection was a result of God’s anger being appeased from the shedding of His Son’s blood, however, a better understanding of God’s Law, and character reveal something very different. Earth is the only place in the universe where death [sleep] is the norm. Christ showed us, clearly, that Life is the norm in God’s Kingdom, by living out God’s Law of Love.

19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

What is the “least of the commandments”? What was the “righteousness of the Pharisees”? What was our Savior trying to tell us??

MONDAY -- MURDER.

Jesus takes up the commandments separately, and explains the depth and breadth of their requirement. Instead of removing one jot of their force, He shows how far-reaching their principles are, and exposes the fatal mistake of the Jews in their outward show of obedience. He declares that by the evil thought or the lustful look the law of God is transgressed. One who becomes a party to the least injustice is breaking the law and degrading his own moral nature. Murder first exists in the mind. He who gives hatred a place in his heart is setting his feet in the path of the murderer, and his offerings are abhorrent to God. DA. 310.

1 John 3: 15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

John 17: 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

The lesson asks us, “What is the real issue here that Jesus is pointing to and what does this tell us about the real reach of God’s law?” Thoughts??

In the bottom section, the lesson asks, “What does such a high standard tell you about the need to be covered by Christ’s righteousness at all times?” More thoughts?? Which law lens is implied, Imposed or Natural??



TUESDAY– ADULTERY

The source of the adultery issue is the SAME as the source of the murder issue – a heart of stone, an unregenerate character, a heart at enmity with God [the metaphors are numerous].

Jesus was not only revealing that adultery/murder/theft/idolatry/etc were heart issues, he later revealed what our position should be in response to seeing them in others, AND more importantly what God's position is. [see John 8: 3-11 below] When we have an imposed law viewpoint, we want to punish those who "break" the law, however, when we adopt a natural law position, we can understand that we are ALL sick & in need of healing, though we manifest different symptoms of the same illness.

3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" 6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. 7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." 8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

The lesson, correctly points out that "The solution is not to follow through with the sin but to have a conversion of the heart."

"The surrender of the will is represented as plucking out the eye or cutting off the hand. Often it seems to us that to surrender the will to God is to consent to go through life maimed or crippled. But it is better, says Christ, for self to be maimed, wounded, crippled, if thus you may enter into life. That which you look upon as disaster is the door to highest benefit."—Ellen G. White, Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 61.

In reality, is surrendering our will to God like being maimed or crippled? Aren't we actually truly free, when we do this?? We are "free" to violate the laws of health, but is this really freedom? Is the obese, diabetic, smoker free?? Is the heroin addict free? We are free to violate the Law of Love, but is this really freedom? Is the child molester free? Is the manipulative spouse free? We are free to violate the Law of Worship, but is this really freedom? Is the rat worshipping Hindu free? Is the Satanist free? Is the Christian who worships an angry God that would kill his own Son free?



WEDNESDAY – PROMISES, PROMISES ...

We are invited to read Lev. 19: 11-13. I would suggest reading the entire chapter. Note the one prevailing theme throughout “I am the Lord [your God]”. Above & beyond the list of rules God is giving, what is He trying to teach the Israelites, and us?

I referenced this quote a few weeks ago, but it’s worth repeating:

“If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God’s law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. {PP 364.2}”

God’s mission, since Adam & Eve “fell” has been to reveal Himself to humanity, and win us back to trust, so He could heal us.

Everything He has done, from putting “enmity” between us & Satan, to the flood, to having the Earth swallow Korah, Dathan, & Abiram, to putting 185,000 Assyrians to sleep, to has been for the benefit of mankind. Even when mankind has “handcuffed” Him [by demanding meat, instead of manna, or by demanding to go to war, instead of letting God use the hornet to drive out the Canaanites], He has lovingly given us over to “what we want” that we may see the error of our ways, and repent and return to Him for healing.

Regarding divorce:

31 “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

Any thoughts on this passage? I think this passage has been more misunderstood than any other in all of Scripture [with the possible exception of the prophecies in Dan / Rev].

What is God’s *ideal* for marriage?? Why the exception for “sexual immorality” above?? Might God actually want adultery to be forgiven / reconciled as well?? Might He understand the human spirit so well, since He designed it, that He knows that a breach of trust of that magnitude cannot be reconciled by some?? Have you known anyone who has been able to reconcile a relationship after an affair??

Regarding making oaths:



Have you ever known anyone whose “yes” meant maybe and their “no” meant maybe? Any gender patterns you’ve noticed? Any gender that gives long, evasive answers to simple yes or no questions?? Those questions were rhetorical. Were these people tolerable to be around for long??

THURSDAY – LEX TALIONIS.

“An eye for an eye, and soon the whole world will be blind.” generally attributed to Gandhi.

Who gave the “Mosaic Law” at the foot of Mt Sinai?? Was Christ contradicting Himself in His Sermon on the Mount?? How do we explain the apparent “change of tune”? Read Ex. 23: 4, 5 & Rom. 12: 20.

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’
44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Matt. 5: 43-45.

What does this passage say about our Designer??