

THE STORY OF THE BIBLE

SESSION #8

THE LAW:

The Love of God

I. Introduction

Quite frequently someone will state, "I'm glad the Law is gone" or "I'm glad I don't have to keep the Law". Yet the Old Testament Psalmists 'loved' the Law. They looked forward to studying it, meditating on it, and were in sorrow when they were not reading its contents.

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! **But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.**

Psalm 1:1-2

²⁰ My soul is crushed with longing after Your ordinances at all times.

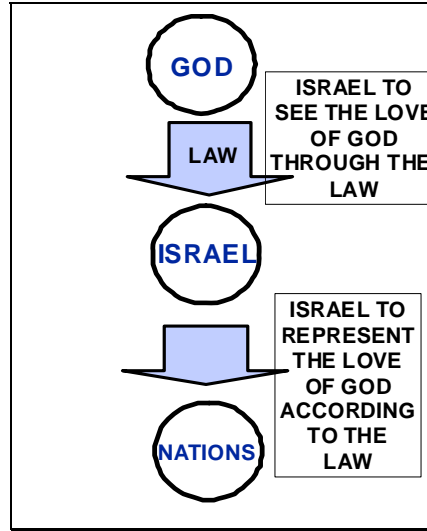
Psalm 119:20

In the New Testament, Paul states the same thing.

So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

Romans 7:12

By contrast, the Pharisee thought God's Law made God a hard master; requiring penance and works. But the Law was the LOVE of God. It was the means by which God revealed the great mercy wherewith He had blessed Israel. By knowing and experiencing that mercy Israel could represent Him by exercising that mercy to their brothers as well as the Gentiles.

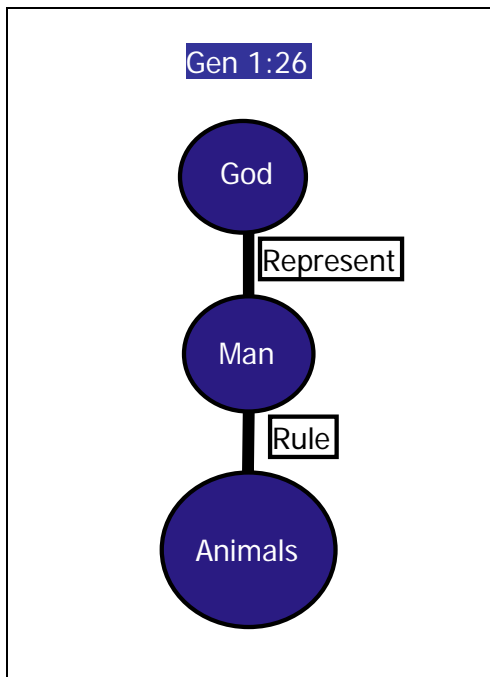


II. The Law: Representation (Image) of God’s Character

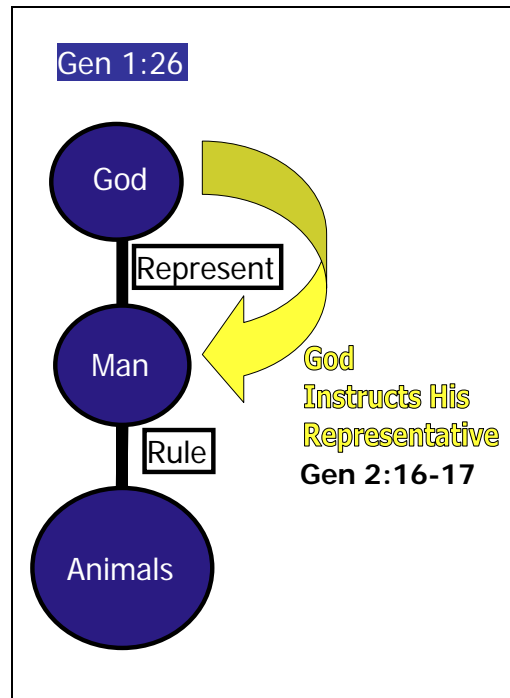
The Law was the revelation of God’s love to Israel. Israel was thus to act to give out the love of God (mercy) that had been displayed toward them. The Law told how Israel and each individual were to act to represent God.

A. The National Representation in the Law was parallel to the Individual Representation of Genesis 1:26

Genesis 1:26, 28 showed that man was to represent God’s desires as the “Image” (representative) of God.

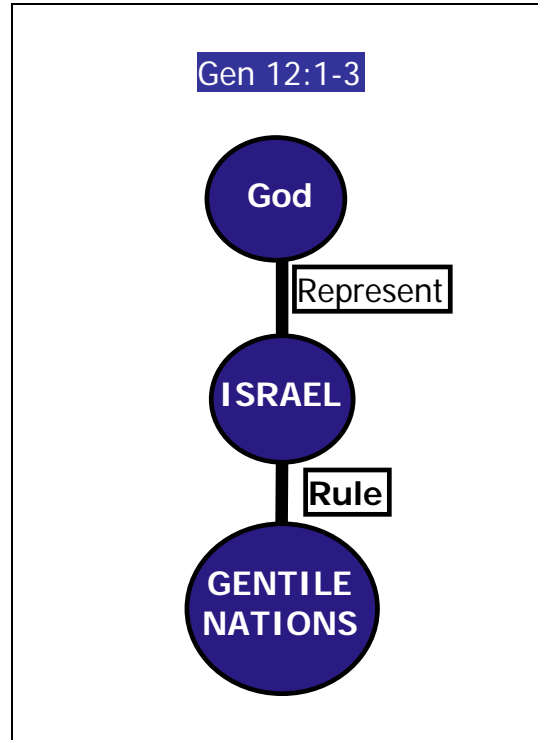


The specifics of “how” Adam was to represent God (parallel to the Law) were found in Genesis 2:16-17. There God said not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and evil. This was specifically ‘how’ Adam was to represent God. It was conditional. Should he eat, he would die. Should he obey, he would live.



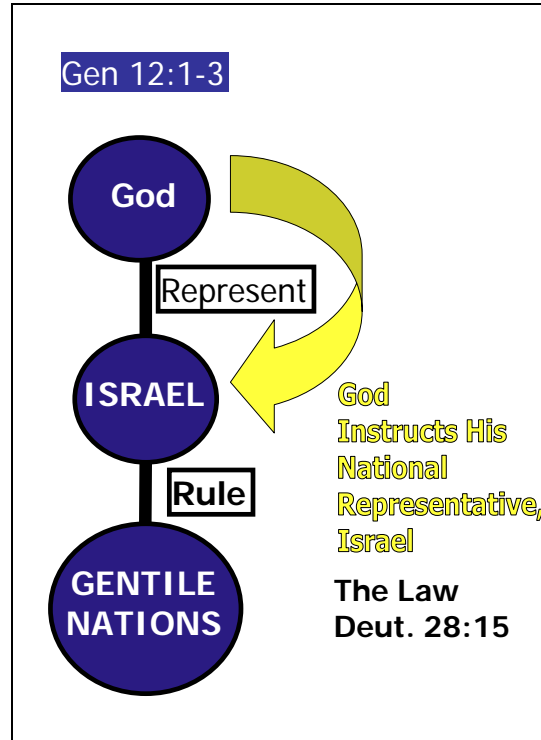
B. The National Representation of Israel through the Law

In the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) Israel was made to be the national representative (“image”) of God, representing His character to the Gentile nations.



Following the Abrahamic Covenant, Israel was given the Law of Moses so that they would know “how” to represent God’s character to the Gentile nations. Thus, the Law contained the specifics of God’s character (sacrificial mercy) and how Israel was to represent it exactly to their brothers and the Gentiles. Like Adam with the command in the garden, if they followed the Law they would live and if they did not they would die.

¹⁹ "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, (Deuteronomy 30:19).



III. Blessing for Obedience (Deuteronomy 28:1-14) or Cursing for Disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68)

Following the specific commands of how Israel was to act (Deuteronomy 1—27), God outlined what would happen if they did or did not represent Him. In Deuteronomy 28 God listed the blessing and the cursing that would result from obedience or disobedience. Deuteronomy 28:1-14 listed the things that would happen to them (blessings) if they were obedient, while the rest of the chapter lists the curses that would follow them should they not represent God's character.

¹ Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God: (Deuteronomy 28:1-2)

¹⁵ "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: (Deuteronomy 28:15).

IV. The Law revealed the character of God (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)

Deuteronomy 10:17-19 expressed the character of Israel's God very clearly.

¹⁷ "For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe.

¹⁸ "He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the

alien by giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ "So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)

A. The holiness of God. The awesome character of God who loves to give to the hopeless.

The first and most important issue of the Law was the holiness of God. Man was always to understand how holy (separate) God was, as well as the awesome power that He had, yet how merciful He was to His created beings, and in particular the Nation Israel; His representative.

This God was above and beyond anything man could comprehend. He was more powerful, mightier, and more awesome than the human brain could conceive. He was to be regarded with exceptional, fearful, awe.

In today's culture (and even in today's church) God's Name is used in very common situations (e.g., "Oh my ----"). Make no mistake, any usage of God's Name; such as "God", "Lord", "Jesus", or "Christ" in a casual, joking, or less than an ultimately reverent sense, is "taking the Name of the Lord in vain." Using it in Israel was a death sentence it was so severe. It is no less serious today than it was in the Old Testament, yet the culture has influenced the church so that God's Name is disregarded as awesome and holy. As believers we should never utter His Name or any reference to God unless it is done with great Biblical reverence.

Yet God's heart was full of sacrificial mercy; He cared for the widow, the orphan, and the alien. These are people who have nothing. The widow has no husband/provider. The orphan has no father or mother/provider. And the alien is in a foreign land, not having anyone who is a natural provider. Thus, the point is that these hopeless are those who cannot return the favor. They cannot give him anything since they have nothing. This is the focus of God's character. He looks for those who are needy; to whom He can give of His character benefits. He does not give to the arrogant who do not need Him. He gives to the humble who ask and who cannot give back. Such is the nature of His character; sacrificial mercy. Jesus speaks of this love in the Law in Luke 14:12-14.

¹² And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and *that* will be your repayment. ¹³ "But when you give a reception, invite *the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,* ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the b means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:12-14)

B. The Love of God demonstrated toward one's brother and the alien.

Then the rest of the specifics of the Law were clear as well. As God had delivered Israel mercifully, so also they were to transfer that mercy to their brothers and the message of that mercy to the Gentiles. That was the character of God.

¹⁹ "So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:19)

“. . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself¹; I am the LORD. (Lev 19:18)

V. The summary of the God of the Law revealed to Israel

- An awesome, unbelievably great and mighty God who needs nothing.
- He cares for the widow, orphan and alien; those who cannot help themselves and cannot return the gracious act.
- He does not take a bribe or show partiality² which means that God does not seek people who have money or influence (as we naturally do), but is totally giving and gives only to the humble.
- He gives sacrificially; mercifully, at His cost. This is the character of God.
- Israel was thus to represent the character of God (sacrificial mercy).

A. God demonstrated this character toward Israel. Thus Israel was a recipient of God's mercy.

1. Israel had received mercy in the Exodus as aliens.

God had sent Israel into Egypt and the Pharaoh had turned against them. Thus, they became slaves and were hopeless aliens in a land not their own. But God acted toward them mercifully for they did nothing to earn their escape Egypt, in fact they rejected God all through the Exodus. God destroyed all the eldest sons in Egypt as well as Pharaoh's army without Israel raising even a finger to defend themselves.

2. Thus Israel was to also take care of aliens because God had equipped them to repeat what God had done for them.

¹ A note must be made here regarding a mistaken contemporary interpretation that advocates a doctrine of "loving oneself" from this passage (e.g., "you can't love someone else until you love yourself" and thus they errantly focus on self-love). The point is not that one needs to love oneself more. One already loves oneself (cf., Ephesians 5:29). That was assumed. The point was that one was to extend love to another to the degree that he loved himself (which he already did, and had, from birth).

² See James 2:9 where partiality is condemned because it is not God's character and should not be the character of the believer.

But Israel had to experience that mercy so that they could tell the Gentiles about this merciful God. That was their duty as they moved to the Land of Canaan.

3. The Passover Lamb: God accepted a substitutionary (merciful) death which paid for their deliverance.

After Egypt, Israel was well aware of the character of this God. He had delivered them mercifully through the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb. That Lamb's death was a substitute for their sin and allowed God to deliver a forgiven people. Of course, lambs don't actually pay for sin and thus it was a symbol that looked forward to the ultimate human Lamb of God, Jesus (John 1:29), who really would die and take away all the sin so that man could be delivered into the kingdom.

But the point should not be missed. It was not Israel who paid for their deliverance; but an innocent lamb, symbolizing the Genesis 3:15 Ruler who would die for their sins. Again it was totally merciful based on a substitute which God accepted.

4. Israel was to pass on the mercy given to them through the Passover Lamb and the sacrifices.

Now it should be also noted that while Israel would never be able to keep the Law, this God had provided a way for them to be forgiven so they could walk with Him. That way was the sacrificial system. These sacrifices demonstrated substitution. They anticipated the day when Jesus would arrive in the world and substitute for their sins. They were to recognize that everything that they had received was from God's merciful hand; through the Passover Lamb and the sacrifices which pointed to Christ.

B. The requirement of Israel's Law was to Love YHWH their God with all their heart and soul and mind (Deuteronomy 6:4-8).

⁴ "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

1. The God of Israel was the Only God and was the focus of their admiration. (6:4)

⁴ "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

The focus of the Law was the LORD (YHWH), our God, who is One! This character of God that He had revealed was to be

adored by Israel. They had received the revelation and should appreciate it so much that they want to admire this God and His character revealed in the Law. It is like a son who receives love from his father's hand and wants to be just like him as he gives out what the father had given him.

2. Thus, the character of God must become the character of man. Their desires must be the same (6:5-6)

Thus, to be the perfect representative of God, one must desire with all their heart to act like God. Deuteronomy 6:6 stated that the laws were not to be kept reluctantly as if under some obligation that they did not like, but they were to be kept because they loved God, loved His character, and thus loved acting on His behalf.

⁵ "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁶ "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. (Deuteronomy 6:6).

Ultimately man would show that he could not do it and God would have to give them His heart through imputation (Romans 4:4-5).

⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

3. Once having this character in oneself, then one is to passionately pass it on to one's sons in teaching (Deuteronomy 6:7)

Now that one has it in their heart or character (belief in the revelation of God's mercy in the Christ), then one can pass it on to their sons verbally in teaching in all forms, confession, in all the words of his mouth; blessing, cursing, testimony, witness, praise, etc., continually as one walks in this world.

⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. (Deuteronomy 6:7)

4. In fact, every aspect of one's life should be emitting their love of God's character in the Law (Deuteronomy 6:8)

Deuteronomy 6:8 basically in a figure of speech explained that the Law (love of God) was to be constantly in front of them so that they pursued it at all times.

⁸ "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹ "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:8-9)

C. Illustration of the character of God in the character of man: Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)

When Jesus spoke, explaining the Law on that day in Galilee, He pointed this very thing out.

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; ²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for (lit.: covet) her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Mat 5:27-28)

Jesus was dealing with the Pharisees' interpretation of the Law that sin was external to the man (e.g., the sin of adultery was an external act). Thus, they claimed if they restricted themselves from external acts they would be sinless. Yet Jesus pointed out that the Law stated that the act of adultery was not simply the physical act, but an act of the character; the heart. The sin began when the man first conceived of coveting (lusting) her for his own. Since God had not given this woman to him, but to another man as his wife (or future wife), for the man to take anything, even a coveting feeling, was to commit the act of adultery. This was exactly what the Law said in Deuteronomy 6:4-6.

1. Deut. 6:6: commands were to be obeyed from the heart

Of course, this is what was just covered. "These commands which I am commanding you today shall be on your heart." (Deuteronomy 6:6). In other words, the command to "not commit adultery" was not simply an external physical command. It was one that was to be kept in a positive manner from one's heart or desires. Thus one was to actually look out for the benefit of this woman with respect to God and her husband or future husband. He was not to take from her in any way for his own benefit.

2. Exodus 20:17: One was not to covet their neighbors wife.

In fact, Jesus was virtually quoting from the Old Testament when in Exodus 20:17 it stated that coveting alone was breaking the Law of adultery since the heart had conceived evil. Notice that Exodus 20:17 does not require a physical act but only a heart's desire to be wrong.

" . . . you shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20:17)

3. God character is sacrificial love. One was to look out for their neighbor's wife and her husband's good and thus to act on God's behalf. To covet was a selfish act, taking away from someone who belongs to someone else.

The commandment was to sacrifice for your brother as God had sacrificed for the Israelite. Thus, one was to look out for his brother's benefit at his own cost. That included his wife. He was to look out for her good, for her husband's good at one's own cost. That was what God did. That is what the believer should do.

Continuing on with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says that man is to love his enemy as God does. In other words if man is to represent the character of God then he should be as God is; One who pursues His enemy to reconcile with Him, even sacrificially.

⁴⁴ "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. ⁴⁶ "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:44-48)

Thus, instead of coveting another one's wife, one is supposed to look out for her (and her husband's) good in Christ even sacrificially. Instead of coveting what is not his, he is to pursue his or her benefit in Christ at his own cost.

VI. Warning against self-righteousness through the Law. Deut. 9:4-6

Frequently one will hear someone, mistakenly claim that some man's success is due to his obedience. God is totally gracious and giving. Man is undeserving. But man is naturally self-righteous and self-glorifying. So God warned man not to assume that their righteousness had gotten them anything, since they were rebellious and undeserving of anything good. This was spoken of the Israelites in Deuteronomy 9.

⁴ "Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is dispossessing them before you. ⁵ "It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ⁶ "Know, then, *it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people.*

The criteria for representing God's character is that one be 100% righteous with no glitches. And that 100% must be continuous; ALL the time. Thus any failure on man's part ever means he is not the character of God. This is why God ultimately must impute all righteousness to man in Jesus Christ, because otherwise he would get no blessing.

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

A. Matthew 5:17: Jesus completely fulfills the Law 100%

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared that He alone would fulfill the Law completely.

¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

B. Matthew 5:19: Unless one has 100% of God's character he will not enter the kingdom.

Less than 100% will not match God's character and thus earns hell. (By comparison it can be seen that only Jesus "keeps the Law" which is keeping of it 100% all the time).

¹⁹ "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven³; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

C. Matthew 5:20: The Pharisees claimed that partial righteousness was good enough, but Jesus proclaims that partial righteousness was not enough.

If one has even the smallest sin they will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, meaning that they have to have 100% righteousness all the time. The Scribes and Pharisees, who claimed to be righteous, did not have enough (having missed at least one of the commandments) and would thus not enter the kingdom.

²⁰ "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

D. Romans 3:20 – no man can be justified through the Law.

³ Note that "least in the kingdom" is a figure of speech for not in the kingdom at all. Verse 20 is an illustration of "least in the Kingdom" ("for") the Pharisees have annulled at least one of the commandments.

In Romans, Paul makes it clear that the keeping the Law would justify no one. Since no one could keep its requirements (i.e., no one was the character of God), then it served to condemn man and to reveal his true character.

²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

James makes the same point.

¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. (James 2:10)

VII. Old Testament anticipated the ultimate Righteous One; Jesus would alone be righteous and would impute that righteousness to believers.

In the Old Testament the Law condemned man. Thus he would turn to the sacrifices for forgiveness. But the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin and thus men were to believe in them as symbolic and anticipatory of the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ, the One to come. Sacrifices anticipated Jesus whose righteousness (character) would be imputed to man.

Romans 8:3-4: The flesh could not keep the Law, so Christ came to complete the Law on our behalf. So we “keep the Law (100%)” by the fact that Christ kept the Law and imputed (credited or accounted) it to believers.

³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ **so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us**, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:8-10: Grace saves believers so that we may produce good works. God gives us a new character, the character seen in Jesus, so that we can then produce good works from our heart; not out of a requirement, but because pleasing God is what we want to do.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

VIII. The Test of Jesus as Messiah was the Law

A. The Old Testament: Looking for the Messiah to fulfill the Law

The Old Testament was the story of how God put forth men who attempted to be the Messiah from Genesis 3:15. Yet one by one they failed to keep the Law or did not fulfill the expectation of Genesis 3:15, demonstrating that they were not able to represent God fully.

1. **Noah:** Administered the judgment of God in the flood, but got drunk and failed to represent God.
2. **Moses:** Represented God by leading Israel in the Exodus, but struck the rock twice in disobedience to God.
3. **David:** Struck Goliath and became King, but committed adultery and murder in the case of Bathsheba.
4. **Solomon:** United the Kingdom, built the temple, but worshipped other gods and intermarried with the women of other nations.
5. **The Kings:** Failed to rule for God by worshipping idols, intermarrying, etc.

B. The New Testament required that Jesus fulfill the Law. Only He fulfilled it since He was exactly the character of God (Matthew 5:17-18).

1. He perfectly fulfilled the Law.

The reason and the validation that Jesus was the Christ is that He fulfilled the whole Old Testament expectation of the Christ, including the Law. Sometimes people will mistakenly say Jesus did not have to keep the Law since He was God. That is a contradiction (circular reasoning). Since the character of God was in the Law, Jesus had to fully keep the Law to prove He was God's Christ..

¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. (Matthew 5:17)

2. His resurrection declared Him to be the perfect Son of God of Psalm 2:7; that is, He was the perfect character of God; the Keeper of the Law.

Because He was the perfect sacrifice and it was acceptable to God; Jesus was bodily resurrected so that He would return and rule the Kingdom. His character, being perfect, was then imputed to us so that we could walk in His righteousness in this chaotic, sin-filled age.

³¹ because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)

IX. Israel will one day turn to hope in Christ and the imputed righteousness.

Deuteronomy 30:1-9 spoke of the repentance of Israel and their return to God and His giving them the Kingdom.

A. Israel would be placed under the curses of Deuteronomy 28 due to their disobedience (Deuteronomy 30:1a).

Israel would attempt to keep the Law but would fail due to their rebellious heart. Israel would be exiled and under the dominion of Gentile governments.

"So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, (Deuteronomy 30:1)

³⁵ 'Vengeance is Mine, and retribution, In due time their foot will slip; For the day of their calamity is near, And the impending things are hastening upon them.' (Deuteronomy 32:35)

B. They would return to the compassion of God (Deuteronomy 30:1b-2)

It would be from that exile that Israel would realize their failure and would repent (turn to God's for compassion).

and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, ² and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, (Deuteronomy 30:1-2)

C. God would forgive them and circumcise their hearts; give them imputed righteousness and a new character (Deuteronomy 30:3-6)

³ then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴ "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. ⁵ "The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. ⁶ "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. (Deuteronomy 30:3-6)

D. God would then give them the Kingdom when they got a new heart and rejoice over them once again. (Deuteronomy 30:9).

⁹ "Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; (Deuteronomy 30:9)

X. Imputed Righteousness and the Character of God in this Age

Following the crucifixion and the resurrection, the imputed righteousness of Christ has been placed in the believer. It is now the Law written in the heart (Jeremiah 31:33). So now the desire of this character in the believer is to act on

behalf of God with mercy, not self-centered practices. Thus the believer's job is to give away all of God's mercy that he/she can.

It is often, mistakenly, said that one is blessed because they are obedient. Yet, no one is fully obedient to the Law except Jesus.

¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." ¹¹ Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident . . .

³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE "-- ¹⁴ in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:10-14)

Jesus, having been obedient, receives the blessing. The whole world, being disobedient, receives the curse. Yet Jesus takes the curse and then imputes the blessing to those who believe. Thus, as believers, we already have all the spiritual blessings in Christ.

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, (Ephesians 1:3)

A. The way that mercy works in the believer today

It is clear that the heart of Jesus has been placed in the believer through the Holy Spirit today. The real question is how is that to affect him or her?

1. The death of one's self-righteous identity.

The answer is that they are to read the Scripture to understand what the character of God and His Son Jesus Christ looks like. Then they find that the character of God has acted through His Son in great sacrificial mercy. The person's sins have been forgiven and his old identity removed. What this means is that no longer are self-attempts at righteousness worth anything since the believer's ability to prove himself righteous has been sacrificed with Christ at the cross.

²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Galatians 2:20)

2. The New Identity is now Christ's character imputed.

Now the believer does not live to show himself a righteous person by doing righteous deeds that glorify himself or show how good he

is. He admits constantly that he is righteous only because of Jesus and the good deeds that he does are because God has enabled him, through Christ, to give out the mercy given to him. Thus there is no pride, except in Christ. There is only Christ-esteem.

Thus the believer has lost his own identity, his own selfishness, his own status, and in fact anything that to which he thinks he has a "right" because of his own person. All his "rights" died and were sacrificed to Christ at his death.

Now the only thing the believer has is his "Christ-identity" which is the mercy of Jesus which the believer has received from God. Thus when this believer is persecuted, because of Christ, he responds (like Christ) with mercy and considers it joy because he gets to demonstrate the character of God given to him (1 Peter 2:19-23).

3. The believer acts as God has enabled him without expecting a reward or results other than suffering and endurance.

God's promise for this age is suffering for the Christ with the bodily resurrection to follow later for the kingdom.

²⁹ For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, (Philippians 1:29)

¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11)

Thus, a believer acts mercifully toward his poor brother, the widow, the orphan, the enemy of God, his/her wife/husband, etc. He does not do it because he will get good results, but because he wants to demonstrate the one-way merciful love that God has given him.

Assignment #8

Reading

Deuteronomy 6:4-6, 9:4-6, 10:12-22

Deuteronomy 28—30

Matthew 5:17-20

Romans 3:19-31: 12:1-3

Philippians 3:7-11

Study Questions: Give answers from the Notes

1. What is the relationship of the Law to the Abrahamic Covenant?

2. What two specific attributes does the Law reveal about God's character (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)?

3. In what event did God show His sacrificial merciful love for Israel when they were aliens and hopeless? How did He show it?

4. In Deuteronomy 6:4-8 there is a sequence of four steps which describe the relationship of a man to the Law; to the sacrificial love of God. List them here in your own words (e.g., so you can understand how you are to administer this in your own life.)

1. (Deut. 6:4a):

2. (Deut. 6:4b-6):

3. (Deut. 6:7):

4. (Deut. 6:8):

5. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7) Jesus talks about adultery. Explain from the Law what Jesus meant when He said that to "lust" (literally: covet) a woman was to commit sin from the heart. In other words, in terms of God's character to be represented in man, revealed in the Law; what was man to be doing with respect to a woman not his own.

6. In of God's character revealed in the Law; what was man to be doing with respect to a woman instead of coveting her?

6. Can one's righteous deeds ever bring about blessing? Explain from Deuteronomy 9 and Romans 3:20.

7. How much of the Law is one required to keep so as to enter the kingdom? (Matthew 5:19)

8. Who alone qualifies for entry into the Kingdom (Matthew 5:17)?

9. How do we get blessed if it is not through our righteous deeds? (Hint.: How does the coming of Jesus to fulfill the Law give us blessing; Romans 8:4?)

10. How does Christ's life, death and resurrection and imputed character relate to us and our identity? (This is a very important question here as one must see the full loss of their old selfish identity and the gaining of their new unselfish, merciful, identity in Christ. Understanding this is the basis for walking in the new life.)
