

The BEACON

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Back to Basics - Christ and the Law

By Frank Jamerson

When brethren are confused about whether Christ came to fulfill the law and prophets or to perpetuate them, it is time to get back to basics! One brother said, "Continuity of law is evident in **Matthew 5:17**, in that there is nothing about following Jesus that would be obnoxious to Moses." He further said that Jesus did not "dismantle the law and give a new one," He only took away the ceremonial aspects of the law. My affirmation is that Jesus fulfilled the promises, the prophecies and the law, and all of it passed away. We can please God only by following the New Covenant revealed through Christ and ratified by His blood.

The Law and The Prophets

"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. 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" (**Matt. 5:17-19**).

Most of the material in this article is taken from a book written by James D. Bales in 1973, entitled: "Christ: The Fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets." (It is out of print now. All quotations will be from this source.)

First, when Jesus said He came "to fulfill the Law," was He talking about the "moral law," the "ceremonial law," or all the Law? Those who contend that He came just to fulfill the "ceremonial law" have a problem with the context, for the next verses talk about murder, anger, lust, adultery, divorce, telling the truth, resisting evil and loving your enemies (**Matt. 5:21-48**). Jesus also said that He came to "fulfill the Prophets." Was He referring to just some of the Prophets, or all of them?

John said, "For the law was given through Moses" (**Jn. 1:17**), and Paul said that the law given "four hundred and thirty years" after the promise was intended to last "till the seed should come" (**Gal. 3:17,19**). Did God mean to say that just the ceremonial law was given "till the seed should come"? Jesus said, "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (**Matt. 7:12**). Does this sum up the whole Old Testament revelation on man's duty to his fellow man, or must we determine which part Jesus had in mind? Later, Jesus gave the two greatest commandments and said, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (**Matt. 22:40**). Did He mean to say "some of the Law and a few of the Prophets"? Whatever Jesus affirmed about the Law, He also affirmed about the Prophets in **Matthew 5**. If He meant that He would perpetuate the Law, it must also mean that He would perpetuate the Prophets. What does that do to the Hebrew writer's statement that God "spoke in time past to the fathers by the

prophets" but "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son"? (**Heb. 1:1,2**).

Fulfill, Not Destroy

What is the difference between destroying and fulfilling? God told Moses He would "raise up for them a Prophet like you" (**Dt. 18:18**). When Jesus came, did He destroy that prophecy or fulfill it (**Acts 3:22,23**)? Zechariah said that Jesus would rule both as a priest and a king on His throne (**Zech. 6:13**). When Jesus came, did He fulfill that prophecy, or destroy it? When the prophecies were fulfilled, what happened to them? "When one says that we are no longer under the law and the prophets, he is not saying that Jesus destroyed them by perpetuating them, but rather that He brought them to an end by fulfilling them" (p. 20). "Christ did not come to annul the purpose of the law and the prophets. He did not bring them to naught by failing to fulfill them. He did not abolish them in the sense that one abolishes a promise by refusing to fulfill it. But He did bring the law and the prophets to an end by fulfilling them....If Christ perpetuated one part of the law, he perpetuated all of the law, since none was to pass until all was fulfilled" (pg. 23,24). But, what about the prohibition against "breaking one of the least commandments"? (**Matt. 5:19**). First, would one of "the least" be moral, or ceremonial? Jesus had just said that "one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (**v. 18**). Second, was Jesus saying that even the least commandments would continue after the law was fulfilled? No, he was saying that those who have the disposition, under either law, to ignore "the least commandments" do not have the right attitude toward God's word. Paul said, "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets" (**Rom. 3:21**). Just as surely as righteousness is through faith in Christ, the law and the prophets accomplished their purpose, and

though they have historical value, they "passed away."

Moral and Ceremonial Law?

It is certainly true that some of God's laws deal with moral conduct and others with ceremonial actions, but does the Bible teach that the ceremonial law passed away but the moral remained? Let's take a journey through Romans and ask which "law" is under discussion? "For as many as have sinned without law, will also perish without law" (**Rom. 2:12**). Does this mean moral, ceremonial, or both? "For the Gentiles, who do not have the law..." (**v. 14**; is this moral or ceremonial?). The Jews "rested in the law" and had the advantage over Gentiles "because to them were committed the oracles of God" (**2:17; 3:1,2**). Was it only the ceremonial law that gave the Jews advantage? Those who had received the law became "dead to the law through the body of Christ" (**7:4**). Now, "we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by..." (**v. 6**). Again, was this just the ceremonial law which had held them and to which they died? If so, why did Paul say, "I would have not known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, You shall not covet" (**v. 7; cf. Ex. 20:17**).

Let's take a brief look at the book of **Galatians**. "Man is not justified by the works of the law...for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (**2:16**; which law? Was flesh justified by the moral law but not the ceremonial?). "For I through the law died to the law..." (**v. 19**; Which law - Moral or ceremonial?). "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (**3:2**). Did they receive the Spirit by the moral law, but not the ceremonial? "For as many are of the works of the law are under the curse (**v. 10**)...But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for The just shall live by faith" (**v. 11**).

Again, did they live by the moral law given through Moses? Is that the "faith"? "For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise (v.18; was the inheritance by the moral, but not ceremonial law?)...What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator" (v. 19). Was it just the ceremonial law that was given through angels by the hand of a mediator? "Before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law (v. 23, which law? cp. **Rom. 7:6**)... Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ...but after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor" (v. 24,25). Unless the law is "the faith," we are not under it! "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (4:4). Was Jesus born under the moral law or the ceremonial? "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law..."(v. 21). He identifies the law as the covenant given at Mt. Sinai; was that moral or ceremonial? "And I testify to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law" (v. 3). Did Paul mean to say "the whole ceremonial law"?

We could do the same with the book of Hebrews, but one verse will suffice. "Anyone who rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses" (**Heb. 10:28**). Did this apply to violations of the moral law? (See **Dt. 13:6-17; Lev. 24:10-16** etc.) Moses' law is contrasted, in this context, to "trampling the Son of God underfoot, and counting the blood of the covenant" by which we are sanctified a common thing (**Heb. 10:29**). No, we are not under the law of Moses, either the moral or ceremonial part!

James Bales concluded: "Where is the moral law found revealed in its fullness? It is found in Christ, in the New Covenant. We do not have the authority to go to the Old Testament, select

something which we would like to be an eternal principle, and bind it on God's people today. We cannot know that it is an eternal principle unless it is also found in the New Testament" (p. 69). This harmonizes with the Hebrew writer's contrast between the things "spoken through angels" (cp. **Gal. 3:19**) and the things that "first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him" (**Heb. 2:2,3**).

Those who deny that the whole law passed away have the impossible task of determining which of the Old Testament laws to bring over. Is the prohibition against eating blood (**Lev. 17:10,11**), moral or ceremonial? (Some who believe the moral laws of Moses are binding are teaching that prohibition against eating blood was removed, so it must be "ceremonial"! Is giving your wife a certificate of divorce and sending her away (**Dt. 24:1-4**), moral or ceremonial? (Some advocates of an unchanging moral law contend that this is still God's law; others say it is not so!) God gave David his "master's wives" (**2 Sam. 12:8**). Is polygamy moral or ceremonial? (One advocate of this theory says he does not know.) What about concubines (**2 Sam. 5:13**)? What about a brother taking his deceased brother's wife (**Dt. 25:5**)? Is this part of the moral or ceremonial law? Was it moral for Ezra to tell God's people to put away their wives that they did not have a right to marry (**Ezra 10:3,4**), or is this part of the ceremonial law that has been taken away? Must we examine every law in the Old Testament and agree on whether it is moral or ceremonial before we know what we should do under the law of Christ? Such is unscriptural and impossible!

Conclusion

The blood of Christ did not ratify the promise to Abraham. It was in effect for two thousand years before it was fulfilled. The blood of Christ did not ratify the First Covenant. It was ratified by the

blood of animals (**Ex. 24:7,8; Heb. 9:19**), was fulfilled and passed away. Every time we observe the Lord's supper, we are reminded, "this cup is the new covenant in My blood" (**1 Cor. 11:25**). "The fact that there are similar principles in both Covenants, does not mean that we obey these because they are in the law of Moses...Moses was inspired of God to reveal the Old Covenant to Israel, but God speaks to us today through His Son (**Heb. 1:1,2**). We obey these principles not because they are in the law of Moses, but because God has placed them in the NEW Covenant" (p. 74).

Back to Basics - The Kingdom

Some who are teaching that there is no distinction between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant are teaching an absolute distinction between the kingdom and the church. When those who profess to be teachers of God's word say "the kingdom of God is not the ekklesia, the church," it is time to get your concordance and look at the Bible uses of these words!

Uses of Kingdom

The word "kingdom" is used several different ways in the Scripture. First, it may refer to God's rule. The Psalmist said, "For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He rules over the nations" (**Ps. 22:28**). Three times Daniel reminded Nebuchadnezzar that "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses" (**Dan. 4:25,26,32**). God's rule includes all nations, therefore, in this sense, all are in His kingdom. Second, it may refer to the rule of Satan. Jesus said, "if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?" (**Matt. 12:26**). Satan offered to give Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world" if He would bow down and worship him (**Matt. 4:8,9**). Third, it may refer to heathen nations, or people over whom men rule. Moses wrote about "the beginning of his (Nimrod's) kingdom" (**Gen. 10:9,10**). He gave to Gad, Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh "the kingdom of

Sihon king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan..." (**Num. 32:33**). Isaiah called Babylon "the glory of kingdoms" (**Isa. 13:19**). Many other passages could be quoted to show that the word "kingdom" often refers to the nations ruled by men. Fourth, it may refer to God's special people under the Old Covenant, the nation of Israel. Three months after Israel came out of Egypt, God said that if they would keep His covenant, "then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation..." (**Ex. 19:1-6**). This was a temporary relationship, for Jesus said, "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (**Matt. 21:43**). Christ's death abolished "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" that was given to the nation of Israel, and made Jews and Gentiles one in Christ (**Eph. 2:13-22**). Fifth, it refers to the Messiah's rule over the saved, the church. Daniel said when "One like the Son of Man...came to the Ancient of Days" He would "be given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him..." (**Dan. 7:13,14**). Paul said when God "raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places...He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (**Eph. 1:20,22**). Note that He was made king when he ascended to the Ancient of Days and he was made head when He was seated at God's right hand! This is a different kingdom from the kingdom of Israel. Jesus said, "among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (**Lk. 7:28**). John was in God's Old Covenant kingdom, but he was not in this kingdom. He preached "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (**Matt. 3:2**). Jesus said we must be "born again" in order to see, or enter this kingdom (**Jn. 3:3-5**). Paul said those who are in Christ are new creatures (**2 Cor. 5:17**) and that we are baptized into Christ

(**Rom. 6:3,4**). "Repentance and remission of sins" was "preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (**Lk. 24:47**). It was on the day of Pentecost (**Acts 2**) that people were baptized into Christ, thus becoming "new creatures" and added to the kingdom of Christ. When those people were forgiven of their sins (**Acts 2:38**), they were delivered "from the power of darkness (Satan's kingdom) and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (**Col. 1:13**).

Uses of Church

The word "church" (ekklesia) is used in at least three senses in the New Testament. First, Stephen referred to those who had been called out of Egypt as "the congregation (church) in the wilderness" (**Acts 7:38**). This was not the kingdom that was to be established in the "last days" (**Dan. 2:44**). Second, it may refer to a mob or a judicial court. When Paul was in Ephesus there was a great tumult over his teaching. "Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly (church) was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together" (**Acts 19:32**). The city clerk quieted the mob and said, "if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly (church)...And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly (church)" (**vv. 39,41**). Obviously, this was not the Jewish nation, which had been called out of Egypt, nor was it the church of the Lord, who had been called out of the kingdom of Satan. Third, it may refer to the saved, the kingdom of Christ. Paul said, "Just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (**Eph. 5:25,26**). Those who are washed, baptized into Christ, are in the kingdom of Christ (**Col. 1:13**). He is the head of the church (**Eph. 1:22,23**) or the king of the kingdom (**Dan. 7:14; Acts 17:7**). Both refer to those over whom Christ reigns. No

Bible believer should think of the kingdom as an earthly organization, nor of the church as a political institution. The church, or kingdom, is simply those who are saved and who submit to their head or king!

No, the word "church" does not always mean the same as "kingdom." In fact, church does not always refer to "the church," nor does kingdom always refer to "the kingdom"! Jesus told the apostles He would not "eat...or drink until the kingdom of God comes...And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (**Lk. 22:16-18,29,30**). In **Acts 2:42** we read that the believers in Jerusalem "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." If the kingdom was not established on Pentecost, why were they "breaking bread"? Later, we read about disciples in Troas meeting on the first day of the week to break bread (**Acts 20:7**), and the church in Corinth observing the Lord's supper (**1 Cor. 11**). Obviously, the church and the kingdom refers to the same people in these passages.

Those who are purchased by the blood of Christ are His church (**Acts 20:28**), or His kingdom (**Rev. 5:9,10**), and look forward to being presented "into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," when "He delivers the kingdom to God the Father" (**2 Pet. 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:24**).

Back To Basics - Covenants

When brethren make such statements as: "Jesus did not come to establish a covenant which was different from any previous arrangements," and "Jesus is the covenant victim, not a covenant maker or law-maker," it indicates a dire need to get back to basics. When men are confused about the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, and affirm that God has only one covenant, it is time to get out the Bible dictionary

and concordance and study God's word instead of listening to men.

Though a dictionary definition is not to be accepted as inspired of God, it often helps to understand a subject. Thayer defines "diatheke" (covenant) as: "a disposition, arrangement, of any sort, which one wishes to be valid...a testament or will...a compact, covenant...we find in the N.T. two distinct covenants spoken of (**Gal. 4:24**), viz. the Mosaic and the Christian...This new covenant Christ set up and ratified by undergoing death...by metonymy...diatheke is used in **2 Cor. 3:14**, of the sacred books of the O.T. because in them the conditions and principles of the older covenant were recorded" (pg. 136,137). He defined "nomos" (law) as "anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, usage, law...a law or rule producing a state approved by God" (p. 427). When we examine the uses of these words in the Bible, we can see that Thayer has basically described what we read in God's word.

The first time the word "covenant" appears (though not necessarily the first covenant) is God's promise to Noah, "But I will establish My covenant with you..." (**Gen. 6:18**). Later, God said, "Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth," and the "sign of the covenant" was the rainbow (**Gen. 9:12,13**). The next covenant is the threefold promise to Abraham (**Gen. 12:1-3**). The Land promise is specifically called "a covenant" (**Gen. 15:18**), and an "everlasting possession" (**Gen. 17:8**). God kept His covenant with Israel (**Josh. 21:43-45**). The Nation promise also is called an everlasting covenant. "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you" (**Gen. 17:7**). They became a "nation, great, mighty, and populous" while they

were in Egypt (**Deut.26:5**). As a "sign of the covenant" God commanded that descendants of Abraham be circumcised (**Gen. 17:10,11**). Later, circumcision (**Lev. 12:3**) and the sabbath (**Ex. 31:16,17**) were given as a sign of the special relationship between God and Israel. In one sense both these things were covenants and in another they were signs of a special covenant with Israel. The Seed promise is called a covenant in **Galatians 3:16,17**. This covenant was fulfilled in Christ and includes all nations (**Gen. 22:18**). That was not true of the nation and land covenants with Abraham.

The Old Covenant

There are many other "covenants" mentioned in the Old Testament, in fact there are half a dozen that are called "everlasting" (**Gen. 9:16; 17:8,19; 48:4; Ex. 40:15; Lev. 16:34; Num. 25:13; 2 Sam. 23:5; 1 Chron. 16:17**). These, and more, are included in what is called the Old Covenant which God gave to the nation of Israel. The covenant given on Mt. Sinai was ratified by the blood of animals. Moses "took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, 'All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient.' And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, 'Behold, the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words'" (**Ex. 24:7,8**). This is also called the Law of Moses, the Law of God, or simply the Law (**Neh. 8:1,8,13**). When Hilkiah found "the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord," (**2 Kgs. 22:8**), Josiah learned about it and "read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the Lord" (**2 Kgs. 23:2**). Obviously, not every "covenant" is a law (in the sense of being a rule to be followed by men). The covenant God made with Noah (**Gen. 9:12,13**) did not demand any action on the part of man, but the covenant of circumcision (**Gen. 17:13,14**) was a law (**Gal. 5:2,3**), and to deny that the "Book of the Covenant" was also the "Book of the Law" is to deny plain Bible

statements in order to maintain a false theory.

The New Covenant

The Messianic prophet said that "in the latter days" the law would go forth from Zion (**Isa. 2:2,3**). In the forty-second chapter, God said: "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles...He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlines (Gentiles) shall wait for His law" (**vs. 1,4**). The law that went forth from Zion was the law of "My Servant, My Elect One"! (To deny that Jesus was a law-maker is to argue with Isaiah!) It is called a better covenant, which was established on better promises (**Heb. 8:6**), the second covenant (**v. 7**), a new covenant (of which Jesus is the Mediator, **12:24**) and the everlasting covenant (**13:20**). It is also called "the faith" which was revealed after the law had accomplished its purpose (**Gal. 3:23-25**). It is "the new covenant...the ministry of the Spirit...the ministry of righteousness" and those who do not see a difference between this and "the Old Testament (or Covenant)" have "minds that are hardened" (**2 Cor. 3:6-14**). It is "the law of liberty" by which we are blessed, and by which we will be judged (**Jas. 1:25; 2:12**). It was ratified by the "blood of the new covenant" (**Matt. 26:28**). The fruit of the vine was "the new covenant in My blood" (not the old covenant, **Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25**). The Old Covenant was ratified by the blood of animals, but "the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (**Heb. 9:19-23**). In His sacrifice, Christ took away "the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (**Heb. 10:9,10**). (Those who say the only thing taken away at the cross was sin must be saying that He took away the first sin to establish the second sin! Those who say He took away the first priesthood to establish the second, have not helped their cause, because the change of

priesthood demands a change also in the law, **Heb. 7:12**.) When this covenant went into effect, sins were genuinely forgiven (in contrast to the first covenant, **Heb. 10:3,4**), and "there is no longer any offering for sin" (**Heb. 10:16-18**).

The fact that there are many similarities between the two covenants does not prove that we live under the old covenant. (There are many similarities between my right hand and my left, but they are two different hands!) Have we forgotten: "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds"? (**Heb. 1:1,2**). If it is not in the New Covenant, we cannot do it and please God.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT!

It is not God who sends anyone to Hell - those who go there do it voluntarily.

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR



With this edition of the Beacon, comes a new look and a new approach to the spreading of God's Word. I have experimented with various different approaches and have yet to find the one that benefits the readers the most.

The beacon is one of many various tools that the Newton church of Christ uses to preach and to teach God's Word - **Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16**. The cost of printing and mailing the bulletin are covered by the collection of the saints in Newton (**1 Cor. 16:1-3**) on the first day of the week and funds are not solicited from any other source. Yet, when we look at the effectiveness of how the Beacon changes the lives of the readers we are unable to gauge that. Hence, the constant re-evaluation of approaches and the changing of the formats

DOES GOD EXIST?

A Barber and a customer began to have a good conversation. They talked about various subjects. When they eventually touched on the subject of God, the barber said: "I don't believe that God exists." "Why do you say that?" Asked the customer. "Well, you just have to go out in The street to realize that God Doesn't exist.

Tell me, if God exists, Would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed, there would be neither Suffering nor pain. I can't imagine loving a God who would allow all of these things." The customer thought for a moment, But didn't respond because he didn't want to start an argument. The barber finished his job and the customer left the shop. Just after he left the barbershop, He saw a man in the street with long, stringy, dirty hair and an untrimmed beard. He looked dirty and un-kept.

The customer turned back and entered the barber shop again and he said to the barber: "You know what? Barbers do not exist." "How can you say that?" Asked the surprised barber. "I am here, and I am a barber. And I just worked on you!" "No!" the customer exclaimed. "Barbers don't exist because if they did, there would be no people with dirty long hair and untrimmed beards, Like that man outside."

"Ah, but barbers DO exist! What happens is, people Do not come to me." "Exactly!"- Affirmed the customer.

"That's the point! God, too, DOES exist! What happens, is, people Don't go to Him And do not look for Him. That's why there's so much pain And suffering in the world."