

Jesus told a group of Pharisees...

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.”
Matthew 23:23

DIDN'T JESUS BREAK THE LAW?

But didn't Jesus, on several occasions, break the law as an example for us?

Actually He didn't. The Pharisees were teaching an “oral law” that added to what the Father had prescribed. Jesus made it a point to do things that transgressed the oral law as an example that men were free from those requirements, but in every example He was actually upholding the original.

WHAT ABOUT THE GENTILES?

In Acts 15:19, weren't Gentile believers given just a few guidelines to follow?

It seems this was done with the assumption that they would be joining their fellow Jewish believers in Jesus in the synagogue on a regular basis and would be able to learn the rest of the commandments in time...

“For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.” Acts 15:20

I pray this will encourage you to dig into your own studies. If we seek Him with all our hearts, we will not be disappointed.

Something Important



Will you please take a moment to give this a brief read?

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU MAY THINK,

AND YOU MAY BE GLAD

YOU READ IT.

It's about your relationship with God, but...

...it's not intended to tell you about Jesus. I'm taking a leap and assuming you already know Jesus. You may be following Him to the best of your ability yet unaware of something important that you may have missed. I missed it for most of my life. When I was first confronted with this I thought, “Nah..., no way,” so I realize you may think that too. This will be a really quick handful of paragraphs, so I ask you please to hang in there with me. It's about the Law – about God's law.

For years I believed God's Law had been done away with -- “nailed to the cross” -- and I could tell you all the reasons from scripture that it was so. Then a few years ago I read in Psalm 19 that “the Law of the LORD is perfect... sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.”

I'd read that many times before and even sung songs about it, thinking the law had been changed to the *new* Law of love in Jesus. The old law was about rules; Jesus on the other hand was about love, right? But this time some things struck me...

First of all, when Jesus said the whole law was summed up in love, He was quoting from the book of Deuteronomy, one of the oldest books of “the old Law.” Could it be that the Law had been about love all along? Secondly, Psalm 19 was penned during the day of “the old law” and was obviously referring to it.

If the old law was perfect, why would a new one be needed? If it was sweeter than honey, wouldn't I want it?

Then my mind was drawn to Matthew 5:17 where Jesus said,

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.”

Of course, I “knew” what that meant: The Law was needful in its day, but Jesus brought it to an end by fulfilling its requirements. Still, though, my mind wouldn't let it go. The Law was *perfect,* and *sweeter than honey,* but Jesus brought it to an end? Then my eyes fell upon the next two verses, Matthew 5:18,19

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Wow – that's a key passage. I'd been taught from Matthew 5:17 that Jesus had brought the Law to a gracious end, yet here I saw that in His same breath He made it clear that the Law had not been done away with and in fact issued a strong rebuke to anyone who would portend to do away with the smallest part of it.

A FEW OBJECTIONS

Suddenly, I began to see many scripture passages in a new light. Some were particularly sobering, such as Matthew 7:22,23...

Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

"Could it be," I thought, "that as a Christian I've been doing many things in His name yet practicing lawlessness, thinking the whole time that the law has been done away with?"

That led me, and our whole family, into a big season of digging for answers. We had *lots* of objections and challenges that, amazingly, have one-by-one been turned into reasons we believe the Law is *still* sweeter than honey and still for us today.

I would expect you to have many objections as well, so this is not intended to convince you, only to spur your thinking. I encourage you to dig further. A couple of websites you may want to check out are eliyah.com and 119ministries.com. Those aren't my sites, and I don't necessarily agree with everything they have to say, but they are good places to start.

I'll share just a sampling of objections we had and how we came to see things differently...

THE LAW NAILED TO THE CROSS?

Didn't Paul say the law had been nailed to the cross?...

... "having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Colossians 3:14

Actually, what Paul is saying here is that the certificate of debt – which we accrued because of having *broken* the law – was taken away, Jesus having nailed *it* to the cross. If I break the speed limit I get a ticket – a certificate of debt consisting of a decree against me that is hostile to my bank account. If the judge decides to graciously write off that ticket and remove it from my record, he has made me free from the penalty of having broken the law. He may have thrown my ticket in the garbage can, but he has not thrown the law in there. The speed limit is still in effect – for my good, by the way, and I am expected to "go my way, and sin no more." Paul said as much himself...

"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin to that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" Romans 6:1

WHAT IS SIN?

...but what is sin? As Christians, we are saved from the penalty of sin and ushered into a new life wherein we are urged to turn from sin and walk in newness of life (Romans 6). I think most Christians would agree with that. What made me do some rethinking here, though, is the definition of sin. We all know what sin is, right? It's being mean to your neighbor, talking back to your mother, sneaking cookies from the cookie jar, right? Good examples, but could there be more? How does scripture define sin?

"Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." 1 John 3:4

Could it be that the new life Jesus came to usher us into is one off turning from *lawlessness* and embracing the original commands of our Father? If the law is sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb, I can't think of a more gracious exhortation.

ARE JESUS' COMMANDS DIFFERENT?

But, as Christians, aren't we under new commands, perhaps only one command, a commandment to love?

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love... This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you." John 15: 10a,12

"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." Galatians 5:14

I have to admit, the idea of having one word to go by – love – instead of needing to reference a list of instructions does seem appealing. Is that what Jesus and Paul meant, though, by those statements – that we could toss the list of details and just remember that one word? I couldn't support that stance when I considered Jesus' words on the Mount of Olives...

"...not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same shall be called least..." Matthew 5:18,19

It seems details still matter. As I looked more into the matter I found that there is a different way to look at this, one that is in harmony with what was taught from the beginning – that *"The law of YHWH is perfect,"* down to the last detail. It's the notion that all of those details add up to equal love.

In the days when Jesus walked the earth, the Pharisees were teaching the details of the law in a way that skewed their purpose, making much ado of some of the lesser matters to the neglect of more important ones. In so doing they were making the perfect law, the law of love, appear to men to be a law of bondage and burden. Jesus -- and His disciples -- corrected that by stressing that the law is all about love and should not be perverted into something loathsome. However, he upheld the details of the law, as the details, kept in proper perspective, are an important part of the fullness of the Father's ways.