

“Why We Believe the Ten Commandments Continue”
(Matthew 5:17-20)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Our passage this evening
 - a. Comes from the Sermon on the Mount.
 - b. Jesus is speaking here to His disciples,
 - c. But also to all the Jews in general
 - d. Who had gathered to listen.
2. What He's addressing here
 - a. Is one of the main questions
 - b. The Jews would have had of the Messiah's ministry.
 - (i) What did He come to do
 - (ii) Especially with regard to the Law and Prophets –
 - (iii) That revelation God had given His people
 - (iv) To that point – the OT Scriptures?
 - (v) Has He come to do away with it,
 - (vi) To abolish it?
 - (vii) Was He coming to change the standard of righteousness
 - (viii) And put something new in its place?

B. Preview.

1. Interestingly, and contrary to what many believe
 - a. Jesus' answer is no.
 - (i) He didn't come to abolish it,
 - (ii) But to fulfill it.
 - b. Everything written will stand,
 - (i) Until heaven and earth pass away.
 - (ii) Not the smallest letter or stroke
 - (iii) Shall pass away from it
 - (iv) Until all is accomplished –
 - (v) Until everything has come to pass.
 - c. He goes on to say therefore
 - (i) That those who keep and teach them in His kingdom –
 - (a) The kingdom He was then bringing,
 - (b) The kingdom we're now a part of through faith in Jesus Christ –
 - (c) Shall be called great.
 - (ii) But those who don't keep them –
 - (a) Even the least of them –

- (b) And teach others to do the same
- (c) Will be called least.

- (iii) He will go on after this
 - (a) To lift the Law back to its original purity
 - (b) By dealing with the misinterpretations
 - (c) Of the teachers of Israel.

- d. He then concludes with this rather sobering statement:
 - (i) If your life doesn't demonstrate any more of a commitment
 - (ii) To the Lord and to His holiness
 - (iii) Than that of the scribes and Pharisees,
 - (iv) You will not enter the kingdom of heaven at all.

- 2. From this, I want us to consider three things:
 - a. First, why many churches today believe the Ten Commandments are no longer the standard for the believer.
 - b. Second, why we believe the Bible teaches they still are the standard.
 - c. And finally, what difference it makes.

II. Sermon.

- A. First, let's consider why many churches today believe the Ten Commandments are no longer the standard for the believer.

- 1. There are many arguments used against the commandments. Some are very broad and sweeping such as that used by Dispensationalism.

- a. They believe the present age
- b. Is nothing more than plan B –
 - (i) A sort of mystery in the OT,
 - (ii) Something not mentioned or explained;
 - (iii) That the Jews would reject their Messiah,
 - (iv) That the Lord would put His plan for them on hold,
 - (v) And that He would turn to the Gentiles,
 - (vi) Bringing in the present Church Age.

- c. Once He's done with the church,
 - (i) He'll rapture it out of the world
 - (ii) Then turn back to the Jews
 - (iii) To bring on them Daniel's 70th Week –
 - (iv) The seven year Tribulation –
 - (v) After which will come the Second Coming
 - (vi) And the Millennium.
 - (vii) We've already looked at why
 - (viii) We don't agree with that scenario.

- d. They believe His putting His plan for the Jews on hold
 - (i) And introducing an entirely new program

- (a) That involves Jews, but primarily Gentiles,
- (b) He has also introduced a new standard –
- (c) Somewhat like the Ten Commandments,
- (d) But not exactly.

- (ii) Many of them, when all is said and done
 - (a) End up with a standard that includes nine of the ten,
 - (b) But leaves the fourth commandment out.

- (iii) They would say, however,
 - (a) As one of my teachers in college said on more than one occasion,
 - (b) We're not under the Mosaic Law
 - (c) Because we're not under the Old Covenant.
 - (d) It's like being in Mexico.
 - (1) In Mexico we're no longer under United States law,
 - (2) But Mexican law.
 - (3) In the New Covenant,
 - (4) We're no longer under Old Covenant Law,
 - (5) But New Covenant.

- e. Now you might say,
 - (i) It doesn't look like they're going too far wrong.
 - (ii) But sadly, there are many within these circles
 - (iii) Who, though they would hold to 9/10's of the Law,
 - (iv) Also don't believe you need to keep them
 - (v) In order finally to enter heaven.
 - (a) To do so would be legalism –
 - (b) The destruction of the Gospel.
 - (vi) These believe you can live anyway you want
 - (a) And still be saved.
 - (b) They couldn't be farther from the truth:
 - (c) You must keep them to enter it,
 - (d) As we'll see in a few moments.

2. There are also more particular arguments to “prove” the Law is no longer relevant:

- a. Some point to Galatians 3:10, “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.’”
 - (i) There you go!
 - (ii) If you keep the Law, you're under a curse.
 - (iii) If you want to keep them,
 - (iv) You'll have to keep them all perfectly,
 - (v) Or you will be cursed!

- b. Some even point to our passage
 - (i) And believe Jesus couldn't have said it more clearly:
 - (ii) The Law only stood until it was fulfilled by Christ.
 - (iii) Once it had, it passed away with the Old Covenant.
 - (iv) Again, the net result is: the commandments don't apply.
- B. Now over against this, why do we believe the Ten Commandments remain our standard today?
 - 1. First, because we don't believe the Church Age is God's plan B, but the fulfillment of all His previous covenants.
 - a. When the Jews rejected and crucified Jesus
 - (i) They didn't put God's plan for them on hold,
 - (ii) They actually fulfilled it!
 - (iii) Peter, speaking to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, said, "This *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death" (Acts 2:23).
 - (a) They did what God planned they would do –
 - (b) What He knew they would do,
 - (c) To bring about the salvation of all His people.
 - (iv) He didn't force them to do this –
 - (a) They did this of their own free will,
 - (b) Which is why He also held them responsible,
 - (c) And why Peter concluded his sermon
 - (d) With the exhortation: Repent! (vv. 37-38).
 - b. The New Covenant is the fulfillment of all of God's previous covenants.
 - (i) It's not plan B!
 - (a) That's what Paul believed
 - (b) And what those Jews received who actually trusted Jesus.
 - (c) Paul writes in the book of Romans, "What then? What Israel is *seeking*, it has not obtained, but *those who were chosen obtained it*" (Rom. 11:7).
 - (1) What was Israel seeking,
 - (2) And what did these chosen obtain?
 - (3) The blessings of the New Covenant
 - (4) That Jesus brought in
 - (5) Through His life and death.
 - (ii) Now to be accurate
 - (a) Dispensationalists don't believe
 - (b) The New Covenant is plan B.
 - (c) But they do believe the Church Age is.
 - (1) In their view, the New Covenant

- (2) And the Church Age are not the same.
- (3) They believe the covenants are for Israel only –
- (4) And so the New Covenant is still future;
- (5) They will receive it after they repent
- (6) And turn back to the Lord following the Tribulation.
- (7) The present Church Age
- (8) Is where the Lord gives some of these blessings
- (9) To the Gentiles because they're trusting
- (10) In the mediator of the New Covenant: Jesus Christ.

(iii) But my point is this:

- (a) The Church Age is the New Covenant.
- (b) It isn't a plan B.
 - (1) The Lord didn't set aside the Law
 - (2) Because He was beginning something new –
- (c) This is fulfillment.
 - (1) Jesus says as much in our passage:
 - (2) He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets.

2. What about what Paul says

- a. In Galatians 3:10: If you are of the works of the Law
- b. You are under the curse?
- c. He's not talking here about Evangelical obedience –
 - (i) About those who obey the Law
 - (ii) To show their love and thankfulness
 - (iii) Because they've been redeemed by the Lord –
- d. He's talking about those
 - (i) Who are trying to *justify themselves*
 - (ii) By keeping the Law.
 - (a) If you try to make yourself acceptable to God
 - (b) By keeping the commandments,
 - (c) You are still under the broken Covenant of Works
 - (d) And will end up being cursed.

3. What about what Jesus says in our passage:

- a. Hasn't He fulfilled the Law?
- b. And so hasn't it passed away?
- c. Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms that it hasn't.
 - (i) He says He didn't come to abolish it.
 - (ii) Everything in it must be accomplished.
 - (iii) Until heaven and earth pass away nothing will pass from it.
 - (iv) If you think even the least commandments has,
 - (a) If you live as though it has
 - (b) And teach others to do the same,

- (c) Jesus says you'll be called least in the Kingdom.
 - (d) But if you keep and teach them all,
 - (e) You will be called great!
- d. It doesn't sound to me
- (i) As though Jesus was teaching the end of the commandments,
 - (ii) But rather their continuance.
- e. Notice, He's not speaking *only* of the Ten Commandments,
- (i) But of every commandment –
 - (a) Everything – in the Law and Prophets –
 - (b) Even the least of them He says continues.
 - (ii) Could this be why the apostles
 - (a) Quoted so freely and frequently
 - (b) From the Law and the Prophets
 - (c) As their source of absolute authority?
 - (d) Could this be why Paul tells us
 - (e) That all Scripture is inspired by God
 - (f) And profitable for teaching, reproof,
 - (g) Correction, for training in righteousness? (2 Tim. 3:16).
 - (iii) Now I don't think Jesus is saying that nothing has changed from the Old Covenant.
 - (a) You don't need to bring an animal sacrifice
 - (1) When you come to worship.
 - (2) But you do need to bring a sacrifice –
 - (3) The sacrifice that fulfills all those sacrifices:
 - (4) The sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
 - (5) The ceremonial system has been fulfilled and removed.
 - (b) You also don't need to keep the civil laws
 - (1) God gave to the Jews to regulate their society
 - (2) Because they only applied to their specific situation.
 - (3) But you do need to keep the just principles behind those laws –
 - (4) What the Westminster called the general equity of the law (WCF 19.4).
 - (c) I believe what Jesus means here
 - (1) Is that the morals, the ethics, the justice,
 - (2) Contained in the Law and Prophets hasn't changed –
 - (3) They can't!
 - (4) They are the very definition of righteousness.
 - (d) That's why Jesus came to fulfill them.
 - (1) The righteousness of the Law had to be satisfied

- (2) Before God could give you His grace.
- (3) Jesus fulfilled it for you –
- (4) If you're trusting Him.

- (e) But don't forget that in His doing so
 - (1) He also became the perfect example
 - (2) The Father wants you to follow.

(iv) Have the Ten Commandments been set aside as the standard for your life?

4. Let's not forget what the author to the Hebrews points out
 - a. As what appears to be the only difference
 - b. Between the Old Covenant and the New (Heb. 8:8-12).
 - (i) In the Old, the commandments were written on tablets of stone,
 - (ii) But in the New, on the fleshly tablets of the heart.
 - c. While they were only on stone
 - (i) They weren't able to make
 - (ii) Those who knew them able to do them.
 - (iii) That's why the Lord says,
 - (iv) "For they did not continue in My covenant,
 - (v) And I did not care for them" (v. 9).
 - d. But He fixed this problem in the New Covenant:
 - (i) He wrote the Law on our hearts by His Spirit,
 - (ii) So that we would keep them from the heart.
 - e. What Law did He write on our hearts?
 - (i) The same Law written on the stone tablets –
 - (ii) The Ten Commandments –
 - (a) Which are a summary
 - (b) Of all the moral principles taught
 - (c) In the Law and Prophets –
 - (d) In the entire OT.
 - f. Far from abolishing the Law in the New Covenant
 - (i) God actually gives you the power to keep it
 - (ii) Because that is the whole point of redemption:
 - (iii) To turn us from darkness to light,
 - (iv) From unrighteousness to righteousness.

C. Finally, let's consider what difference all this makes.

1. It actually makes a very big difference.
 - a. To annul even the least commandment

- (i) And to teach others to do the same
- (ii) Reduces your status to the least in the Kingdom –
- (iii) Assuming that you're doing so ignorantly.
 - (a) If you disregard any commandment,
 - (b) Knowing it continues,
 - (c) Then you're sinning.
 - (d) If you continue to do so
 - (e) Without repenting, without fighting against that sin,
 - (f) Then you're practicing sin
 - (g) Which means you're unconverted.
 - (h) John writes, "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9).

- (iv) Even breaking any commandment ignorantly
- (v) Can have heavy consequences.

- b. If you try to keep them in order to save yourself
 - (i) As the scribes and Pharisees were doing.
 - (ii) You won't enter the kingdom at all!
 - (iii) Jesus says your righteousness must be greater
 - (iv) Than the efforts of an unconverted person can produce.

- c. Now is Jesus saying
 - (i) That you have to keep the Law to be saved?
 - (ii) Yes and no.
 - (iii) He is not saying you must keep them
 - (a) To earn a righteousness of your own –
 - (b) That is legalism and a destruction of the Gospel.
 - (iv) But He is saying the evidence of a godly life
 - (a) Of submission and obedience to the Law must be there
 - (b) If you are a true believer.
 - (1) The Spirit writes the Law on your heart
 - (2) So that you will obey God.
 - (3) If you're not obeying Him,
 - (4) He hasn't written the Law on your heart.
 - (5) You must be growing into the likeness of Jesus Christ –
 - (6) Something the scribes and Pharisees knew nothing about –
 - (7) If you are to enter into the Kingdom of heaven at last.

2. And so in closing, examine your life!

- a. Is that evidence in your life?
 - (i) Are you trusting Jesus Christ alone?
 - (ii) Are you repenting from your sins?
 - (iii) Are you obeying the Lord?

- (iv) And are you doing this
 - (a) Because you want to,
 - (b) And not because pressures around you
 - (c) Are forcing you to?

- b. If it is,
 - (i) The kingdom of heaven belongs to you.
 - (ii) You are an heir of heaven.

- c. If it isn't,
 - (i) Then you still need to repent and believe,
 - (ii) Or you will perish!

- d. If that's the case with you,
 - (i) May the Lord show you,
 - (ii) And give you His Spirit
 - (iii) So that you can trust, obey and live. Amen.

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