

Before moving forward into the next section of Jesus' consideration of the ethic of His kingdom, it is worthwhile to summarize the primary observations thus far:

- 1) The first and most fundamental is that the ethic of the kingdom of heaven is grounded in the larger biblical principle of promise and fulfillment. Jesus highlighted this foundational truth in his introductory statements (5:17-20) and demonstrated and elaborated on it in His subsequent treatment (5:21-48). What that treatment showed specifically is that the ethic of His kingdom proceeds out of the fulfillment in Himself of the Law of Moses (as all the Scriptures).
- 2) Second, at the heart of this fulfillment is the salvation-historical realization of the core obligation of love which the Law demanded but could never secure. At bottom, the Law of Moses defined Israel's identity as elect *son of God* with its subsidiary roles of *servant*, *disciple*, and *witness*. The Law defined "Israel" and demanded that the covenant nation be "righteous" by authentically and faultlessly fulfilling its identity and calling; being God's son, servant, disciple and witness, Israel's righteousness under the Law consisted in living a life of love.
- 3) The Law demanded that Israel be *Israel*, and this truth is key to understanding its prophetic role. The Mosaic Law described and prescribed authentic human righteousness – that is, a life of perfect love – but it could not secure it. Yet this inability didn't reflect a flaw or failure, but divine design: God never intended that the Law would effect human righteousness; that would come through His own accomplishment in accordance with His promise to Abraham. God had pledged that men would secure righteousness through faith in Him (cf. Genesis 15:1-6; Isaiah 51:1-2; Habakkuk 2:4), and the Law didn't alter or annul that promise.
  - As Paul reminded the Galatians, the Law of Moses was introduced to *serve* the preceding Abrahamic promise by acting as a pedagogue and instructor on its behalf (Galatians 3:15-24).
  - The Law served as the custodian of the promise by promoting it and preparing God's people for its fulfillment. It did so by explicitly disclosing the nature and extent of true righteousness, thereby directing Israel to recognize its desperate condition and turn away from itself and its own capability to seek its righteousness in God's gracious provision.
  - The Law served the promise by highlighting its necessity as well as its excellence. *But the promise also honored the Law in that it pledged the realization of what the Law prescribed and demanded.* The promise didn't despise or negate the Law any more than the Law overturned the promise: So far from denying or nullifying the Law's demand, the promise pledged to see it fulfilled perfectly and exhaustively – not, however, by personal effort, but by divine provision. The righteous requirement of the Law was to be satisfied through faith in the One who Himself – in His person as much as His work – is the Law's fulfillment (cf. Romans 3:21-31, 8:1-4).

- 4) The Law “*prophesied until John*” (Matthew 11:13), and now that the promise of righteousness by faith has been fulfilled in Christ, the Law has witnessed the fulfillment of its own purpose in salvation history.
- The Mosaic Covenant (Law of Moses) stood upon the Abrahamic promise (cf. Genesis 15:1-13 with Exodus 2:23-3:17), and also pointed forward to the day when its requirement of human righteousness – namely, authentic, uncompromised human existence as the Creator’s image-son – would be satisfied in the Seed God pledged in His covenant with Abraham.
  - The Law was a pedagogue, instructing and disciplining men during the time of preparation in anticipation of the coming Seed who would fulfill all righteousness. Now that He has come and accomplished His Father’s preordained work of redemption and restoration, the *fulfilled* faith that rests directly upon Him has entered in with the result that mankind has “come of age” in Him. The era of pedagogical oversight has ended; the human race has attained to its salvation-historical “adulthood,” bringing the work of the guardian and tutor to a close (Galatians 3:23-4:5).
- 5) Thus the fulfillment of the Law that Jesus proclaimed (Matthew 5:17) isn’t a matter of reclamation and reaffirmation, but *christological transformation*. What this means is that the sons of the kingdom aren’t free from all ethical and moral constraint, but they stand in relation to the Law of Moses – including the so-called “moral law” – as having been fulfilled and transformed in Christ. In Paul’s words, they are not “without law with respect to God,” but are “*in-lawed to Christ*” (ref. 1 Corinthians 9:19-21). Paul regarded himself as being constrained by the definition of life and its corresponding ethic (the “law of Christ”) that have been revealed and inaugurated in Christ. The “law” of the kingdom of heaven is the law of the new creation – the law of love in Christ.
- 6) The christological transformation of the Mosaic Law falls within the fundamental biblical framework of promise/fulfillment. In every instance, issues of promise (whether people, things, circumstances, covenants, blessings, etc.) find their corresponding fulfillment in relation to Jesus Christ and His redemptive and restorative work, and the fulfillment of the Law of Moses is no exception. The Law is not so much fulfilled *by* Christ as *in* Christ; that is, He fulfilled the Law more by *being* the man – the image-son “Israel” – that the Law defined and prescribed than by *doing* a body of commandments. Fulfillment is what Jesus *is* more than what He *did*; His works served to testify to who He is and why He’d come into the world (cf. Matthew 11:2-6; John 5:31-36, 10:22-38, 15:18-25; etc.).
- 7) Moreover, the movement in the Scripture from promise to fulfillment is always upward from a physical/temporal *shadow* to the corresponding spiritual/eternal *substance*. This spiritual fulfillment transcends and excels the temporal promise, but without compromising or negating the very real and essential connection between them; by nature, promise and fulfillment are always mutually referential.

So it is with the Law of Moses: What it has become in terms of its fulfillment in Christ isn't identical to what it was in its preparatory and prophetic existence as Israel's covenant, and yet it hasn't been transformed into something altogether different; fulfillment doesn't mean abolition, but consummation.

So, for instance, the dietary laws of the Old Covenant are explicitly declared by the New Testament to have been done away in Christ (Mark 7:14-19; cf. Romans 14:14, 20; 1 Corinthians 8:1-8). In the time of preparation under the Law of Moses, God's people were obligated to abstain from certain foods and deviation from this prescription constituted punishable sin (Leviticus 11:1-47); *now, in the age of fulfillment, that demand of abstinence has become the issue of sinfulness for the sons of the kingdom and even an avenue of seduction toward apostasy from God* (1 Timothy 4:1-5; cf. Colossians 2:20-23).

At first glance this seems to be an obvious case in which the Law has been abolished rather than fulfilled. What can the elimination of all dietary restrictions be except the overthrow of God's commandment? But, again, the issue is christological transformation, and when this principle is applied to the dietary laws it becomes obvious why they have ceased in the fulfilled kingdom of heaven.

Like other types of laws under the Old Covenant, the dietary laws were concerned with the matter of **cleanness**. The sons of Israel could only eat foods specifically designated as "clean"; all other foods were to be avoided as "unclean." *Cleanness, not food type, determined what could be eaten*, evident in the fact that clean foods that had somehow become "unclean" were equally to be avoided (ref. again Leviticus 11:32-40; cf. also Deuteronomy 14:21).

God provided this prescription, not because He was concerned with Israel's nutrition and dietary well-being (if this were the case, the food restrictions would have continued), but because He wanted His covenant "son" to be perpetually conscious of the central kingdom obligation of *purity*. Israel was a consecrated nation – a people wholly set apart to their impeccable God, and this meant that their existence in His presence was to be free of all defilement – in their persons as well as their lifestyles and conduct. Thus not only diet, but numerous cultural and ceremonial features of the Law focused on the matter of cleanness. It is no accident that the most exhaustive treatment of cleanness under the Law of Moses immediately precedes God's instruction concerning Israel's approach to Him in connection with the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 12:1-15:33 and 16:1-34).

Israel was to be a "clean" people dwelling in the presence of their God, but their fundamental estrangement from Him left them defiled. (Death and disease were central concerns in the Mosaic criteria of cleanness, and Israel – though an elect "son" – existed in the state of spiritual death and corruption that fell upon the human race in Eden.) Approach to God and communion with Him demanded personal and national purity, but all the Law could do was prescribe means of outward cleansing – specified behaviors, ritual washings and rites of purification.

Through its prescriptions, the Law of Moses testified to the **necessity** of personal and national purity, but also to its **absence**. Lifestyle prescriptions, ceremonial rituals, and physical circumstances symbolized this cleanness but couldn't actually secure it. In this way, too, the Law prophesied of a future fulfillment: *The symbolic purity at the heart of the Israelite kingdom would find its true realization in the promised messianic kingdom; then the outward, symbolic forms would yield to their inward, authentic counterparts*. That time had now arrived, and the bona fide cleanness of God's people was soon to be effected through the sacrificial, purging work of His Son (Hebrews 9:11-14, 10:1-22; cf. Revelation 7:9-15).

The personal purity symbolized by the dietary obligations was now being realized in fact, and once the substance has come, the preparatory shadow passes away; all things are now clean to him who is clean (Colossians 2:16-17; cf. Romans 13:14; Titus 1:15). The dietary restrictions have ceased, not because they have been overthrown, but because they have been fulfilled. Like every other aspect of prophetic promise, they served their purpose in their season and have yielded to their foreordained fulfillment in Christ. Cleanness is no longer a matter of outward concerns including food, drink and ceremonial rituals; it is the result of the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Spirit, just as the priestly prophet had promised so long ago (cf. Ezekiel 36:16ff; Titus 3:1-7).

What is true of the dietary laws is true of the entire Law of Moses, and this is what Jesus was demonstrating in His treatment in 5:21-48. He was declaring that the Law, as all the Scripture, has attained to its ultimate, spiritual and living fulfillment in Him. Even as the Law of Moses finds its true *referent* in Jesus, so it finds its true *meaning* and *relevance* in Him.

What this implies is that the sons of the kingdom of heaven stand in relation to the Law of Moses only *in and through Christ*. The New Testament bears this out, for wherever it applies the Mosaic Law (in various particulars as well as in its totality) to Christians, it does so strictly from the vantage point of the Law having been fulfilled (christologically transformed) in Jesus (cf. Acts 13:14ff, 15:1-21, 24:1-16; Romans 7:1-8:4, 12:8-14; 1 Corinthians 9:1-11, 14:20-40; 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:3; Galatians 5:1-26; 1 Timothy 5:17-21; Hebrews 8:1-13, 9:19-10:29).

Thus the ethic of Jesus' kingdom doesn't in any way contradict or refute the Law of Moses; the example of the dietary laws shows that what may appear to be contradiction or abrogation is actually precise, preordained fulfillment. So Jesus' demand for deference doesn't abrogate the Mosaic obligation of exactness (5:38-42); it manifests and exalts the truth that, in Christ, God has satisfied the requirement of exacting justice in accordance with His own heart of deference to the unjust. Likewise Jesus' command to His followers to love their enemies: The Law demanded that God's hatred for His enemies be embraced and expressed in the attitude and actions of His covenant "son" Israel. In this sense, Israel was obligated to hate its enemies. But, in Christ, God has satiated His righteous hatred and overcome His enemies by means of the restoring efficacy of His love. *He* has loved His enemies unto their eternal good, and His sons are to do the same (5:43-48).