

*Christiformity* is God's goal for His human creature; His eternal design is that men should become true image-sons in the Man who is His true image and likeness (ref. John 1:14-18; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:1-3). Jesus is *True Man*, and in His resurrection, He is *Consummate Man*: man as the fullness of what God created him to be – body, mind and spirit. In the resurrected Messiah we see the truth and destiny of the human creature; in Him we have the answer to the age-old question, "What is it to be human?" (cf. Psalm 8 with Hebrews 2:5-13).

This understanding is fundamental to the concept of *righteousness* and God's demand that human beings be characterized by it. From the Scripture's perspective, righteousness is more than moral perfection; it speaks to integrity and authenticity. Righteousness is uncompromised conformity to one's true identity and function; it is a thing being what it is. So God Himself is righteous, not just because He's free of sin and imperfection, but because, in every respect and in all things, He is true to Himself, His purposes, His words and His works. God always conforms to who and what He reveals Himself to be – hence His covenant name: *I am that which I am* (Exodus 3:13-14). So His "righteousness" is fully manifest in Jesus; He is the perfect embodiment of God's person, will, words and works (John 1:1-18, 14:1-11; Colossians 2:9).

These ideas, again, are inherent in the concept of Jesus fulfilling the law. Law is Torah – God's disclosure to His creation – and Jesus fulfilled all Torah by embodying in Himself and His life the truth of *God*, the truth of *man*, the truth of the *divine purpose* centered in *Israel* (with all that entails and implies), and the truth of the *divine-human relationship* (i.e., the concept of covenant). Torah as God's revealed truth came in various forms in a progressive way, culminating with the *incarnate Word* (Hebrews 1:1-3) which gave ultimate expression to God's Torah in all of its dimensions. So Jesus' righteousness has to do with His perfect conformity to the truth of Torah – to the truth of His own identity and calling as "*the Word made flesh.*"

These principles apply, regardless of whether one is considering Torah in the broadest sense or in the narrow sense of particular laws and commandments. Specific directives are Torah just as much as the Mosaic Law, the Pentateuch and scriptural canon are. In this regard, it's meaningless (and even misleading) to distinguish between "moral," "judicial" and "ceremonial" laws or between laws for Israel and laws for the Church. *All* are equally Torah, *all* prophesied of the Messiah and find their fulfillment in Him and *all* have their ultimate meaning in relation to Him.

This understanding also answers the question of *abrogation* – whether any laws were done away in Jesus. No law or commandment was abrogated by Him or in Him, but all were fulfilled and transformed in Him. This is precisely the point Jesus was making by His preface to His instruction in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-20). He knew His hearers were going to interpret His words as Him setting Himself against Torah – i.e., seeking to set aside Moses and/or the Prophets. He wanted them to understand that nothing could be further from the truth. Indeed, He couldn't alter or set aside Torah even if He wanted to; the word of Yahweh stands forever. Jesus was committed to upholding Torah, but by fulfilling it in every "jot and tittle." *And yet, He recognized that His fellow Jews were going to perceive this fulfillment as abrogation because of how they understood Torah and its fulfillment in relation to Messiah.* So, for instance, when Jesus tacitly declared all foods clean (Mark 7:1-19), the Jews viewed that as Him contradicting Moses and Israel's God. His words reflected the fact that the dietary laws, as all of Torah, find their destiny and meaning in Him; the Jews heard only blasphemy and lawlessness.

4. Jesus fulfilled God's Torah (whether as revelation, instruction, prescription or prophecy) by being in His person and work that which Torah was concerned with. In all of its dimensions and particulars, Torah conveyed truth to its original recipients, but as always looking ahead to the Messiah in whom it would become "yes and amen." This is what Jesus meant when He insisted that the Scriptures testify of Him.
- a. So, for instance, Israel's dietary laws *did* inform and prescribe the nation's conduct under the covenant. God gave those laws fully intending that Israel would comply with them and failing to do so constituted covenant violation. But as part of Israel's Torah, they made their own contribution to the nation's self-understanding, integrity and faithfulness as the Abrahamic people. Again, the Law of Moses as Yahweh's Torah to Abraham's descendents informed and prescribed their identity and calling as *son, servant, disciple* and *witness* on behalf of the world. The Law addressed Israel's life in the present, but with an eye toward their ordained destiny and so the destiny of the whole creation.

In Jesus' words, the Law "*prophesied until John*" – that is, until the fullness of the times and the arrival of the Messiah in whom Torah, and Israel itself, would attain their fulfillment (cf. Matthew 11:1-15 with 3:1-4:17 and Luke 3:1-4:21; also Galatians 3:15-4:31). This was true of Torah as a whole *and* its individual components. Thus the dietary laws (as one example) spoke to Israel's future destiny – the destiny that was wrapped up in the Messiah.

Specifically, these laws were part of Israel's *cleanliness code* which highlighted and gave definition to the nation's *consecrated* status as God's elect people. Israel was "holy to the Lord" and the dietary laws (as the rest of the cleanliness code) reminded them that the one true God had chosen them out of the world to be His unique possession. They belonged solely to Him and so needed to live as those who are untouched – undefiled – by the world that is alienated from Him. Torah taught Israel of its obligation to "*come out from among them, be separate and touch not the unclean thing.*" In that way they would be Yahweh's people and He would be their God in truth and thus they would meet the demand of "righteousness." This – not health concerns – was the reason for Daniel's refusal to eat the king's food. He recognized that the threat was *assimilation*, and so the betrayal of His God, not obesity, diabetes or coronary problems. Daniel was concerned with a different sort of heart disease (ref. Daniel 1:1-16, cf. 6:1-13).

Israel's dietary laws were central to the nation's unique distinction as an elect and consecrated people. But what was true in principle wasn't in *practice*; Israel stood together with the nations in being estranged from God (Mark 7:1-8; cf. Isaiah 1:1-15) and wouldn't become "holy to the Lord" until it found its destiny in the Messiah. He was Israel *in truth* as consecrated son and thus fulfilled the meaning and purpose of the dietary laws. Consecration and cleanliness were now bound up in Him. And so, by declaring all foods clean, Jesus wasn't contradicting Yahweh's law or abrogating it. Rather, He was *honoring* it by affirming that it had attained its destiny in Him and then, through Him, in Adam's race.

Israel's God still demanded that His people live out their consecration as those drawn out of the world, but the way to fulfill that obligation in truth was by sharing in the elect, consecrated Son who, in all things and all respects, is "holy to the Lord" (cf. Luke 3:21-22; John 8:23-29; Hebrews 7:26).

- b. The law of the *central sanctuary* provides another good example of fulfillment and transformation in Jesus that created the appearance of abrogation. This law had its origin in Yahweh's stated intent to dwell among His people whom He'd redeemed from Egypt. He directed Moses to have a sanctuary built for that purpose and then proceeded to give elaborate instructions for its features and furnishings (cf. Exodus 15:17, 25:1-27:21). So also He provided the prescription for the priestly system that was to mediate Israel's relationship with Him (Exodus 28:1-30:38). The next year at Mount Sinai was spent carrying out Yahweh's instructions. When all was complete, the Lord filled His new dwelling place in preparation for the nation's departure toward Canaan, the chosen sanctuary-land.

This dwelling (the *tabernacle*) was a mobile tent structure that was designed to go with the Israelites as they journeyed toward Canaan. But God revealed through Moses that He had a different plan for the future; when Israel entered the promised land, He was going to appoint a permanent place for His dwelling and the people were to meet with Him there (Deuteronomy 12). This was the "law of the central sanctuary" and it was fulfilled when Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem. From that time forward, Yahweh was encountered and worshipped on Mount Zion and all Israel (represented in the males) was required to make a pilgrimage there three times a year (ref. Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16:16).

The temple was eventually destroyed and Israel driven out, but this law was renewed when the returned exiles rebuilt the temple and it remained in force during Jesus' life. *He* observed the law (ref. John 2:13, 7:1-11), but also made it clear that a change was coming. When asked about this law and the Samaritans' practice of worshipping God on Mount Gerizim, Jesus responded that a whole new paradigm of worship was at hand. The messianic age – the promised kingdom of God – was being inaugurated in Him and henceforth worship no longer concerns a *place*, but a *person*. Worshippers were now going to encounter Yahweh in connection with the Messiah through His Spirit (John 4:19-26).

The temple and its system were going away – not as a matter of abrogation, but because of fulfillment and transformation. Jesus the Messiah fulfilled the law of the sanctuary by coming into the world as the true, everlasting dwelling of God (John 1:14). So also, He now mediated the relationship between God and men, thereby fulfilling Israel's priesthood and priestly ministration as the prophets had predicted (cf. Psalm 110; Zechariah 6:9-15; Hebrews 4:14-10:25). And in this new paradigm, He causes men to meet Yahweh in His sanctuary, not as entering a physical structure, but as becoming living stones in the everlasting sanctuary having Him as its cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-8). The Jews didn't discern this new reality, but before long God ended the delusion (Luke 19:28-44, 21:1-24).