



God's Law In the New Covenant

Key idea:

In the new covenant, the ceremonial law has been fulfilled by Jesus and is no longer in effect, but the moral law, which is a reflection of God's unchanging character, continues to define sin and righteousness for all humans.

Key text:

Mark 7:14-23

Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'" ¹⁷ After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ¹⁸ "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? ¹⁹ For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.") ²⁰ He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' ²¹ For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²² greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"

Key points:

1. There are three major aspects to God's Law:
 - a. the moral law (laws that define moral vs. immoral behavior such as murder, sexual immorality, stealing, lying, etc.)
 - b. the ceremonial law (laws that governed religious and cultic rituals such as food laws, circumcision, and the sacrificial system)
 - c. the civil law (laws that applied both the moral and ceremonial aspects of the law to the nation of Israel in the Promised Land)
2. Jesus and the writers of the New Testament state clearly that the ceremonial law is fulfilled and no longer in effect under the new covenant. This includes specific statements about the food laws, circumcision, and the sacrificial system

3. Jesus and the writers of the New Testament state clearly that the moral law, which is based on God's character and thus does not change, still defines sin and righteousness and is still fully in effect under the new covenant.
4. NOTE: The civil law was not covered in this teaching, but was covered in After Hours. Because the civil law applied to Israel in the promised land and was related to both the moral and ceremonial law, it no longer directly applies under the new covenant.

Questions for discussion/application:

1. What part of Sunday's teaching stood out most to you? Why?
2. Why is it important to consider how radical it was for Jesus to declare all foods clean? How do I think I would have reacted if I was in the crowd hearing him say this?
3. Why is it important to understand the three different aspects of the Old Testament law? What danger lurks if we do not keep this in mind when considering the place of God's law for us today?
4. How do 1 Samuel 15:22-23, Hosea 6:6, and similar Old Testament passages reveal a distinction between the ceremonial and moral law?
5. How would I respond to someone who says that Jesus never spoke regarding homosexuality (or adultery, pre-marital sex, or other sexual sins), and that the laws concerning such sexual sins no longer apply?
5. The early church had to struggle a lot with the Judaizers - a sect that wanted to make Gentiles embrace the Old Testament ceremonial law practices such as circumcision. Do I see any similar trends in the modern church or surrounding culture? Do I struggle with this in my own walk with Christ?
6. The early church had to struggle a lot with the Gnostics - a sect that wanted to say that walking with God centered on secret knowledge and rituals, but that what one did with the body did not matter. Do I see any similar trends in the modern church or surrounding culture? Do I struggle with this in my own walk with Christ?
6. How does God's moral law help me understand the ways the Spirit is working to make me more like Jesus? If the law shows me righteousness and sin, why do I need the Spirit to become more Christlike?
7. In what ways am I still under God's law? In what ways am I no longer under the law?

8. Who can I reach out to this week to share the Gospel or strengthen their faith?

For further study:

[Christ and the Sacrificial Aspect of the Law](#) (May 16, 2004)

[Christ and the Ceremonial Aspect of the Law](#) (May 9, 2004)

[Christ and the Moral Aspect of the Law](#) (April 18, 2004)

[The Proper Use of God's Law](#) (July 24, 2011)

[The Law and the Spirit In Sanctification](#) (August 7, 2011)

[BRCC Catechism](#) - Questions 9 - 13; 52 - 68