

Theme: In the new covenant, the ceremonial law has been fulfilled by Jesus and is no longer in effect, but the moral law, which is a reflection of God's unchanging character, continues to define sin and righteousness for all humans.

I. Models of the Universe

- A. Ptolemaic model - generally worked, convoluted
- B. Copernicus - early 1500's - sun is at the center
- C. Suddenly everything fell into place; much cleaner
- D. Understanding God's law in the new covenant is like this - when we understand it correctly, everything falls into place!

II. A Few Words, A Massive Change!

- A. Jesus' words about real impurity
 - “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.”) Mark 7:18-19
 - 1. Outside sources (food, contact with Gentiles) do not make a person 'unclean'
 - 2. Impurity is in the heart, not the skin!
 - 3. This seemed revolutionary!
- B. Mark's comment on the radical change
 - 1. The end of v19 is a comment by Mark
 - 2. This is why the NIV has it in parenthesis
 - 3. Mark is drawing out the implications for his readers of what Jesus was saying

- 4. This means all food is 'clean'!
- 5. But the Old Covenant had many foods that were unclean, so how can this be?
 - And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. ⁸ You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you. Leviticus 11:7-8
 - a. This was God's Word, His Law, for His people
 - b. They could not eat pork - no bacon!!
 - c. How can Jesus simply say all foods are clean?
 - d. Does this mean that the moral law has also changed?

III. God's Law In the New Covenant

- A. Three major aspects of God's Law
 - 1. God's moral law - governs moral behavior such as no murder, no sexual sin, no stealing, no lying, etc.
 - 2. The ceremonial law - religious and cultic rituals, ceremonies, practices - keep Israel distinct from the nations
 - a. Food laws - dietary separation from other nations
 - b. Circumcision - bodily separation from other nations
 - c. Sacrificial system - to cover sins of breaking God's law
 - 3. The civil law - the application of both the moral and ceremonial law to Israel's specific time and place
 - 4. Note: I will deal with civil law in After Hours

B. The ceremonial law is fulfilled and no longer in effect

1. The food laws are no longer in effect

(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”)
Mark 7:19

So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one... ⁷ But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. ⁸ But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. 1 Corinthians 8:4, 7-8

- a. Jesus declared all food clean - no more food laws!
- b. Paul said even meat sacrificed to an idol does not make us unclean if we eat it (but do not hurt others by your actions - the moral law!)
- c. External things do not make us unclean - so bring on the bacon!

2. Circumcision is no longer in effect

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Gal. 6:15

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts. 1 Corinthians 7:19

- a. Circumcision no longer matters - inconsequential!
- b. It is the new creation (new covenant) and keeping god’s commands (His moral law) that counts!
- c. In the Old Covenant any uncircumcised male was cut off - in the new covenant it means NOTHING!

3. The sacrificial system is no longer in effect

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Hebrews 10:11-12

“This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” ¹⁷ Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” ¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. Hebrews 10:16-18

- a. Jesus has fulfilled the sacrificial system with one great sacrifice
 - b. In the new covenant, the sacrifices are done - no more sacrifice for sin!
- ### 4. The New Testament is clear - Jesus has fulfilled the Old Covenant ceremonial law so it is no longer in effect in the new covenant!

C. The moral law is still in effect - and always will be!

1. Jesus specifically refers to the moral law for purity

(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”)
²⁰He 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.’” Mark 7:19-23

- a. Jesus declared the ceremonial law to be no longer in effect - and then immediately declared the moral law to still be in effect!
- b. Jesus says sin is about breaking the moral law - which never changes and is still fully in effect!

- c. Those who say Jesus never spoke about sexual sins such as homosexuality or fornication are wrong - He is here saying the moral law of the Old Testament is still fully in effect.
2. The New Testament teaches that the moral law is still in effect for all of us
- “Everything is permissible for me” — but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me” — but I will not be mastered by anything.
¹³“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food” — but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 1 Corinthians 6:12-13

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts. 1 Corinthians 7:19

- a. The Corinthians thought because the ceremonial law was abrogated that the moral law no longer applied - but Paul says they were wrong.
- b. They thought that because they could eat pork they could break the Old Testament laws on sexual behavior - but they were wrong!
- c. They thought that because circumcision no longer mattered, neither did God’s moral commands - but they were wrong!
- d. This same pattern of the ceremonial law being abrogated but the moral law being in effect is seen in many places in the New Testament (the whole book of Galatians!)

IV. Applying the Word

A. Why this matters for believers today

1. It recognizes that Jesus is the center of Scripture
 - a. The whole Old Covenant/Testament looks forward to and finds its fulfillment in Jesus!
 - b. This means all of Scripture must be viewed through the lens of Jesus - His Person and work affect how we understand and properly apply Scripture.
2. It helps us understand the Bible consistently and clearly
 - a. If we do not distinguish between the various aspects of the law, understanding and applying the Scripture becomes arbitrary.
 - b. It is important that we understand the progressive nature of God’s covenants, and the place of the law within them - or else we can easily become guilty of simply applying what we like.
3. It recognizes both the continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Covenants
 - a. The Old Covenant was full of types and shadows that pointed forward to Jesus - and once He fulfilled them they no longer apply in the new covenant
 - b. But there are also parts of the Old Covenant that were not types and shadows but are part of God’s unchanging revelation for humans - and these continue in the New Covenant.
4. It recognizes that the moral law does not change across time or cultures and still applies today
 - a. The ceremonial law was given to teach Israel - but it was not based on God’s unchanging character.

- b. The moral law is based on God's character and thus never changes.

5. The moral law shows us how to be like Jesus and experience an abundant overflowing life

- a. God's moral law is a reflection of God's character and thus the way we were created to live as His image bearers.
- b. To violate God's character is to run against the grain of the whole universe - and that will only create confusion, disorientation, pain, and problems, for individuals, families, and the culture at large.
- c. To embrace God's character is to run with the grain of the whole universe - and that will create peace, order, blessings, and life, for individuals, families, and the culture at large.

6. It helps us as we reach out to others in evangelism and apologetics

- a. If we are arbitrary in understanding and applying Scripture then our message should be rejected!
- b. But this is how the church has understood these things from the time of the New Testament and down through history - this is not new!
- c. This allows us to share a coherent and compelling vision of truth, beauty, and goodness - and the alternatives can not do this!

B. Our New Covenant Table

- 1. This Table looks back to Christ's sacrifice as the fulfillment of the Old Testament ceremonial law
- 2. Here we are reminded we have broken the moral law of God - but Christ has paid for us!
- 3. Here the Spirit works to empower us to resist sin and become more like Christ

God's Law In the New Covenant

Mark 7:14-23

August 27, 2023

Communion

Galatians 3:26-29

Teaching keywords: God's Law; new covenant; holiness

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹ equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Hebrews 13:20-21

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.'" Mark 7:14-23