

Which Law Is Written On Our Minds and Hearts?

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The New Covenant

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Bible Text: Jeremiah 31:33; Exodus 20:1-21

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You will take your Bibles and turn with me to Exodus chapter 20, a text that should be very familiar to you. Exodus chapter 20 we will read the entire chapter or at least to read down to verse 21 together beginning with verse one. The context is God's people have just been delivered from their bondage in Egypt. God has led them out to the mountain called Mount Sinai. They are standing at the foot of Sinai and God is about to inaugurate his covenant with his people Israel.

And God speaking from the thunders of the top of that mountain begins to thunder forth these words and speak audibly in the hearing of all the people. And it says this.

And God spoke all these words, saying: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet

your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."

Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."

So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.¹

Let's pray.

Our Father, we would pray again for the power of your Spirit that you would lead us and guide us and illuminate our minds that we would understand the Scriptures. But, Lord, help us not only to understand what it says, help us to obey what it says. Help us to walk in obedience as effectual doers and not as ineffectual hearers. Lord, our hearts may certainly be warmed and we desire that, but, Lord we desire changed lives. We desire to be walking in holiness according to your will and according to your ways. Grant us grace to do this, Lord, that we may be well pleasing to you. Help us to walk worthy of the gospel of Christ. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

There is only one body. There is only one Church. There is only one people of God. And that body transcends the testaments. It goes through the Old and New Testament this one Church that exists, but in both Old and New Testaments. God chose the entire number of his church in Christ before the foundation of the world. He chose them and he set his grace and love upon them. He predestined them to be adopted as sons and not only did he predestine them to be adopted as sons, he predestined them that they would be made in conformity to the image of their elder brother, Jesus Christ, that we would be made conformed to the Son of God and his image.

And when Jesus Christ came to this world 2000 years ago by his life, by his death, burial and resurrection, he secured all the blessings of eternal life and salvation for that entire number of people. God the Father gave them to him as his own special possession and he laid down his life for them.

And then that has everything to do with you this morning and the way you are supposed to treat your wife. You are supposed to treat your wife in a way that you don't treat any other woman on the face of the earth. Why? Because Jesus Christ loves his bride and gave himself for her. And you are to imitate him in loving your wife in a peculiar manner even as Christ loved his bride in a peculiar manner. There is a holy sobriety to the office

¹ Exodus 20:1-21.

of a pastor, because I have to tend the sheep which are the sheep and the flock of God which he purchased with his own blood. They are his precious possession. And so as an elder, as an overseer of his Church, I must constantly live in a kind of sense of sobriety and fear. I am recognizing how do you treat Christ's bride, because some day I am going to give him an account of how I treat Christ's bride.

But the Church has been organized, as we have been seeing, under two different administrations. At the foot of Mount Sinai, God organized the Church of the Old Testament into a nation state. And the old covenant given through Moses was the constitution of the Church as it was. But now in Christ Jesus by his blood he has taken away the old covenant and he has made a new covenant in his blood and now that is the new covenant, it is the constitution of the New Testament church is the new covenant.

Now we have been considering these things together. And last Lord's Day we began to enumerate the effectual blessings of the new covenant.

Remember in the old covenant there were potential blessings, but there were also potential curses. And it was dependent upon man's obedience to God's law whether he was blessed or cursed under that covenant. Well, we have a sinner having to be faithful to God's law, what do you think he is going to inherit? He is going to inherit cursing.

But under the new covenant they are no potential curses. As a matter of fact, there are no potential blessings either. There is only effectual, realized blessings. They are certain and they are sure for every true heir of the new covenant who is an heir by spiritual birth through the blood of Jesus Christ. And that is good news.

Aren't you glad there are no threatenings under the new covenant? Aren't you glad there is no fear of condemnation under the new covenant? There was perpetual fear of condemnation under the old, but there is not under the new.

And so we began to enumerate what these blessings are and I told you last week what they are. There is four of them from Jeremiah 31. Do you remember what they are? The first is this. "I will write my law on their minds and on their heart."

The second is this. "I will be their God and they shall be my people."

The third is, "They shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them." You couldn't say that under the old covenant. Not everyone under the old covenant knew the Lord, but under the new covenant everyone who is an heir to the new covenant knows the Lord whether you be small or great.

And, finally, the fourth blessing he says in light of all the others, he says, "I will remember their lawless deeds and their sins no more." God remembers not your transgressions. What a blessing.

And these are yours in Christ Jesus.

We began to enumerate the first blessing. What does it mean to have God's law written on our mind and our heart? And the first answer to that, there were three answers we gave last Lord's Day, is that first of all it means that God gives a new heart to every heir of the new covenant. He takes out our heart of stone and he gives us a heart of flesh.

The second blessing is not only does he give us a new nature, he gives us his own Holy Spirit to live inside of us. Aren't you grateful for the blessed Holy Spirit and his presence in your heart and in your life?

Do you ever go inside of a non Christian home and look around and I have felt this before because usually I am in Christian homes, but when I am in non Christian homes there is something I notice and it is like it is a blink factory. There is something missing. I walk in and what is missing here? What is it? There is something intangible, but it is there. And what is missing is the presence of God's abiding Holy Spirit.

And the third place, God, by writing his law upon our minds and hearts causes us to work in persevering obedience to his commandments which is exactly why John can say in 1 John chapter two:

Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.²

He is lying when he says he knows the Lord. You can't have one blessing of the new covenant without having the other blessings as well.

But there is another question that comes to our minds as we think about all this and it is this. What law has God written on our minds and hearts? What law has he placed there? And what does that mean to us? We know that there is a discontinuity between the old Mosaic covenant and the new covenant, but we also recognize, I hope you recognize that there is also continuity between Old and New Testaments. There is something continuous between the two. And how do we discern exactly the line where one starts and the other stops? How do we recognize that thing?

Maybe the question gets down to this. Are you and I as New Testament Christians obligated to obey the precepts of the Old Testament Scriptures? If you say no then let me just warn you that on the day of judgment Jesus is going to say you are least in the kingdom of heaven. He says just the opposite.

He says, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."³

All right?

² 1 John 2:3-4.

³ Matthew 5:17.

But these are hard issues, aren't they? They are hard to wrestle with because we recognize there is continuity and discontinuity and it is a struggle.

Let me set it before you this way. Let me give you several different Scriptures. Do you ever notice that sometimes the New Testament seems to treat the law and the gospel as if they were the most bitter of enemies and other times they will treat them as if they are the dearest of friends.

Let me give you an example. In Acts 15 and verse 10 the controversy over circumcision was raging and Peter said this, quote, "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"⁴

He calls the Old Testament law a yoke of bondage that we could not bear, nor could our forefathers. So why are you having the Gentiles be circumcised?

In Galatians 4:9 Paul says, "How is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements?"⁵

Some of the types and shadows of the Old Testament law and calls them weak and beggarly elements.

...to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.⁶

That is seemingly the negative side, but let's listen to the positive side.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:17, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."⁷

And Paul says in Romans three verse 31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."⁸

Romans seven and verse 12. Again the regenerate Paul says, "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."⁹

Verse 22. Again, the regenerate Paul.

"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."¹⁰

⁴ Acts 15:10.

⁵ Galatians 4:9.

⁶ Galatians 4:9-11.

⁷ Matthew 5:17.

⁸ Romans 3:31.

⁹ Romans 7:12.

¹⁰ Romans 7:22.

Hebrews four and verse nine.

“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.”¹¹

How do we understand these tensions that are before us? Well, I am not going to try to give you the whole answer to that today, but I want to start going that direction.

Now I want to begin by simply giving you two simple points this morning as we ask the question: What law has God written upon our hearts in the new covenant? And I would say before you two things. First of all, the law of God was written on two tablets of stone under the old covenant and, secondly, the law of God is written on tablets of flesh under the new covenant.

The point I am trying to make and let me just be very clear at the beginning is this. That there is a difference of administration between the old and new covenant, yes, but there is continuity of the same standard of righteousness, the law. And the same law that was written on two tablets of stone in the old covenant is the same law written in a different place on our minds and hearts under the new meaning we are obligated as New Testament Christians to walk in persevering obedience to the 10 Commandments is what I am getting at.

So let me just throw that out at you first. And now let me set this before you, first of all, that under the old covenant God wrote his law on two tablets of stone. Now I want to set before you what was the nature and the application of the Old Testament law? This is important for you to grasp because it will help us in weeks to come as we wrestle some of these issues together.

I have been telling you repeatedly that the old covenant was the constitution of national Israel and I hope you have seen that very clearly. But what was that constitution made up of? Well, at its moral heart, at its very center were the 10 Commandments. The 10 Commandments are sometimes called the Decalogue out of the word δεκά (dek'-ah) means 10, the word -logue from our Greek word λογος (log'-os) which means word, the Decalogue is the 10 words of God, the 10 Commandments. And these were at the very moral heart of the old covenant.

If you turn will turn to Exodus chapter 34, look at verse 28 you will see that this is clearly spoken. Exodus 34 verse 28.

“So he [he was Moses, he] was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the...”¹² What is the word? The covenant, the 10 Commandments. The 10 Commandments were the 10 words of God.

¹¹ Hebrews 4:9.

¹² Exodus 34:28.

But I would set before you that the 10 Commandments were not the only part of the old covenant. As a matter of fact, by the time you get to the end of the books of Moses which is the book of Deuteronomy, you could enumerate some 613 specific laws of Moses and each one of these, a I shall attempt to prove to you in a moment, every one of those is a part of the old covenant. It wasn't just the 10 Commandments. It was all 613 commands given to Moses that were part of the old covenant.

And so how are we to understand these 613 commandments?

Well, historic protestant theology has always taught that there is an understanding of the Old Testament law that understands it as its moral, ceremonial and civil aspects. Now I am not going to try to prove to you that this is a legitimate way of understanding the law this morning. God willing in a few weeks I will get there, ok? This morning I am just going to set it before you that historically this has happened and it goes right past even Augustine even into like the second century that men began understanding there were differences in the Old Testament law.

And I would call the Old Testament law a triplexity. And I am using that term very deliberately. I do not say that the Old Testament law is a trichotomy.

And you are saying, "Well, I have no idea what the difference between them is."

Well, I will tell you. A trichotomy emphasizes the division of parts. It is this forensic separate division that you have three distinctive parts that are not necessarily connected. They are three distinguishable parts.

I triplexity, the word triplex means trifold. In other words, you have three division, but they serve as one single unit. That is what I am saying. That is what I am saying the Old Testament law was. There are three understandable divisions, distinguishable divisions and yet there is just one.

Our God, you might say it this way, is triplex. He is only one God, but there are three distinct persons in the godhead. All right? God the Father did not die for our sins, neither did God the Holy Spirit. But God the Son did. And yet there is only one God. Three distinct persons yet one single essence. There are not three gods in heaven. There is one God in heaven. And yet that God exists as three. And while I don't understand it, the point is he is triplex, right? He is a three fold unit if you want to... if we could speak in those terms.

Well, I would submit to you that the Old Testament law is the same way. It is moral. It is ceremonial and it is civil. And let me express this to you. What do I mean by these different parts?

The moral law, let's begin there. Of the moral law, the 10 Commandments stand in a unique place from the rest of the law of Moses. And let me prove that to you. First of all

it is this. Of all the 613 commandments God spoke audibly from the top of Mount Sinai only the 10. He spoke those audibly and we just read it where he spoke audibly in the hearing of all the people and thundered forth from Sinai his 10 words. And the people got what he was saying.

Turn with me Deuteronomy chapter five. Moses is recounting what happened there at Sinai. He goes through a restatement of the 10 Commandments in verse 22 of Deuteronomy five.

He says, “These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me,”¹³ says Moses.

He says, “God spoke only these words. He gave these only from the top of Mount Sinai.”

And as he did so there was a clear message that was ringing forth as God spoke. What was he saying when he said these 10 Commandments? What he was saying was, “Be ye holy even as I am holy.” That is what he was saying. That is why the people shook with fear because they got it. They understood God was revealing not just an arbitrary set of rules and regulations, he was showing them his own eternal, immutable character and saying, “Be like me.” And the people realized as they heard it how unlike him they are because the law of God shows men his holiness.

Why do you and I use the law of God as a tutor to bring men to Christ? Now just so we can say, “Look, here is a bunch of rules you broke.” It is to say, “Here is the thrice holy God. This is his nature and you are unholy.”

And the law of God shows that to men and when nothing else can. We can sit there and argue about our own righteousness and declare that we have it all together, but when the law of God is applied to my heart by the Spirit of God suddenly I realize I am a debtor to the law and I am debtor to my God and I am deserving of wrath.

But then the gospel comes and it heals those wounds that the law has gouged in my soul. It applies and says, “Here is the righteous satisfaction of God’s holy law. It is in Christ and in him alone and not in my own works.”

It is in Psalm 103 and verse seven that David says, “[God] He made known His ways to Moses.”¹⁴

What did he make known to Moses? His ways. The ways of almighty God, his own immutable, unchangeless character he revealed to his people. And the people got it.

You are in Deuteronomy five. Look at verse 23.

¹³ Deuteronomy 5:22.

¹⁴ Psalm 103:7.

So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. And you said: ‘Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives. Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do it.’ Then the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: ‘I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!’¹⁵

They were broken to the core. If you were sitting at the base of Mount Sinai you saw this furnace going up to heaven. You heard this sound of a trumpet that got louder and louder, the entire earth was quaking and God was speaking audibly, telling you of his commandments and his requirements for you, you and I would have been fearing, too. We would have been fearing, too. And that was the entire point.

But do you see already there is already something significant about these 10 words that is distinguished from laws such as circumcision and things like that.

Go on further. Of the 613 commandments, how many of them were written upon stone by the finger of God himself? Only these 10. They stood in a unique place. The rest of the 603 laws were written by Moses’ pen on parchment. And that does not make them any less the Word of God. It does not make them any less his commandment, but nevertheless there is a distinguishing mark here. He engraves these two or these 10 words upon stone.

And what is the essence of that law. That is, what is the summation that Jesus gives us of the entire law?

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’”¹⁶

What is that love for him and love for his neighbor look like? It looks a lot like obedience to the 10 Commandments. Right? Isn’t that what Paul says in Romans 13? Isn’t that what he tells us over and over again?

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 5:23-29.

¹⁶ Luke 10:27.

There is a third thing. Not only did God speak the 10 Commandments from the top of Mount Sinai, not only did he engrave them upon stone, but both Old and New Testaments teach the 10 Commandments as an inseparable unit. You cannot tamper with one of the 10 Commandments without destroying and doing damage to all the rest and that is both old and New Testament Scripture.

The Old Testament prophets rebuked the Israelites for their habitual sabbath breaking. Ezekiel 20 verse 16 is very illuminating on this point.

He says God says, "They despised My judgments and did not walk in My statutes, but profaned My Sabbaths."¹⁷

They broke my Fourth Commandment. Why did they break the Fourth Commandment?

"For their heart went after their idols."¹⁸

They broke the Second Commandment. That is why they profaned my sabbath. They made other gods for themselves. They went after other gods and that is why they did not keep my day holy, he says.

Does not James the half brother of Jesus say the same thing? Turn to James chapter two. James chapter two and verse eight.

Is he speaking here to Old Testament saints or New Testament saints? New Testament saints, obviously, right, heirs to the new covenant.

James chapter two and verse eight.

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.¹⁹

Now what law does he have in mind? Did he have the law of circumcision in mind? Well this is the same James in Acts 15 stood up and said, "I rule that we should not cause the Gentiles to be circumcised."

But what does he say here and what law is he referring to?

Verse 11.

¹⁷ Ezekiel 20:16.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ James 2:8-10.

“For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’²⁰ that is the Seventh Commandment, isn’t it?

“...also said, ‘Do not murder.’²¹ That is the Sixth Commandment.

What law is he referring to? The law written on stone, the law of the 10 Commandments.

“Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.”²²

Well, what is he saying? He is saying that the Decalogue is an inseparable unit. To do violence to one commandment is to do violence to them all. It is not something I made up. That is what the Scriptures themselves are teaching us, aren’t they? Both Old and New Testament.

Well, what about these other 603 commandments, then? How do we understand those? Well, one thing I want to set before you first of all is that some of these commandments simply show us what the moral application of the 10 Commandments are. Two examples should suffice to explain what I mean.

First of all, the Second Commandment says, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image.”²³

And you might say to yourself, “That is kind of a redundant restatement of the first commandment which is, ‘You shall have no other gods before Me.’²⁴” But it isn’t. It actually gives us something to chew on and think about.

Certainly the Second Commandment forbids us to bow down and worship the idols of false gods. Do you know what else it forbids us to do? It forbids us from making any image of the three persons of the triune godhead. It forbids us to make graven images of him. In a broader application, not only are we not to fashion images of the true God, we are not to fashion extra biblical ways and methodologies of worshipping the true God that he himself has not ordained in holy Scripture.

Nadab and Abihu found this out the hard way in Leviticus chapter 10. The Bible doesn’t say that they offered fire to God that was contrary to what God had commanded. It is simply they offered strange fire to God which he had not commanded. The invested of their own minds.

Here is the inauguration of the priesthood. Hey, you know what? We ought to get some special fire and add some hoopla and fireworks to everything. And God sent fire from

²⁰ James 2:11.

²¹ Ibid.

²² James 2:11-12.

²³ Exodus 20:4.

²⁴ Exodus 20:3.

heaven to destroy them because they had dishonored God's name by trying to come up with their own devising of ways to worship God that he had not ordained.

And in Deuteronomy 12 verses 29 to 32 you can read explicitly where God says to his people, "You are not to add to or take away from anything I have commanded you in worship. You are not to subtract anything out. You are not to add anything to it. But you are to allow my Word to be sufficient for you and I submit to you the same principle is true, new covenant worship that was in old covenant worship, that we are to allow the Word of God alone to be our sufficiency.

So often we think, oh, I will invent some new kind of way of worshipping God that will attract people and get things out. Let me tell you something. Whenever man adds something by his own devising, what God has ordained to be done gets thrown out. The first thing that gets thrown out is the preaching of God's Word. Whenever you add strange fire to the worship of God it destroys everything else and contaminates it. We need to strive to be pure in our worship of the Lord.

But do you see the point? The Second Commandment has more to do than just graving, worshipping the idols of the false gods.

The Seventh Commandment, "You shall not commit adultery."²⁵

Now when you first hear that word "adultery" you might say to yourself, "He is forbidding sexual immorality of the extramarital variety." And certainly he is, but as you read the rest of the law of Moses you realize he is condemning all kinds of sexual immorality and he enumerates what this.

And so there is this inspired commentary of what defines sexual immorality. Sexual immorality of the premarital variety is condemned as well.

Great. Incest, bestiality, sodomy of any form, the uncovering of the nakedness of another. All these things are commanded under that one single commandment that all these things are sinful and wrong. And when you get to the 10th Commandment you find out that even looking at your neighbor's wife in a covetous manner is sinful and wrong.

Jesus wasn't adding anything new in Matthew chapter five when he said, "If you look after a woman to lust after her, you already committed adultery in your heart." He was just magnifying what the Old Testament had already told and said. It is sinful even in heart, because what is demanded of the law is not just external conformity to a standard, but righteousness and obedience that comes from the heart. And it has always been that way even in the Old Testament.

But do you see the point? Some of these commandments are simply explaining and expounding what the meaning and the implications are of the 10 Commandments to us.

²⁵ Exodus 20:14.

Let's move on to the ceremonial law. What is the ceremonial law? Generally speaking the ceremonial laws are those laws which distinguish Jew from Gentile. They made a wall of division that God himself had erected that kept Jew separated from Gentile. God wanted his people to be separate and set apart from this world even as he wants them set apart today. But he literally gave them physical boundaries that separated you from Gentiles. And so you had circumcision, kosher diets, ceremonial washings, feast days, seven distinctly Jewish sabbaths. All of these things were a covenant with Israel to distinguish them from the surrounding Gentiles. It was a wall of division God had set up.

By the time that Jesus came to his world, the temple actually they had built a wall around the temple that was called basically the wall of the Gentiles. A Gentile could not go through that wall. If he went through that wall there was actually a sign. They have actually found the sign. They have excavated it. They found the sign that said if you are a Gentile and you walk through this wall you will be killed, you will be killed on site. There was a wall separating Jew from Gentile. What God had said, if you will, figuratively in the Old Testament they had made an architectural part of the architecture in the temple.

Well, in the book of Ephesians in chapter two the Bible says that Jesus has broken down the middle wall of division between us. That wall is gone.

What is that wall? He tells us. We won't take the time to look at it today. We will, God willing, in a few weeks be coming back to it. But what he says is, "The law contained in ordinances, contained in ordinances," ceremonies that separated Jew from Gentile.

Interestingly enough, go on the rest of the book of Ephesians and get to chapter six and he quotes the Fifth Commandment, "Honor your father and your mother," and applies it to the children who are there. Again, he makes a distinction between the ceremonies and the ordinances that separated Jew from Gentile and the moral law of God which he still saw as binding and obligatory to God's people.

The ceremonial law also is sometimes called the Levitical law because it consisted of the Old Testament Levitical priesthood and the animal sacrifices. Why was this in place? Because God graciously made provision for his people whom he knew were going to break his law that they could find atonement from their sin when they broke God's law.

And so what did he do? He gave them an office of a mediator. The priests were people who represented God's people before God himself. Their back was to the people. Their face was towards God.

Do you remember the breastplate? The breastplate of the 12 stones that were on the chest of the high priest? What was engraven on each one of those stones? The names of God's chosen people.

And what was he doing as he stood at that sacrificial altar? He was making blood atonement for the sins of God's chosen people and he was praying and interceding before God. Have mercy upon them, oh God.

Remember Moses who was a Levite himself? Remember when God says, "I am going to destroy all them and I am going to make of you a great name"?

And Moses pleaded. He said, "If you are going to take them away, then blot my name out of the book of life."

And he pleaded for them for God to have mercy upon them. What was he doing? He was intervening. He was interceding and mediating between God and his chosen people pleading for God to have mercy upon them.

And that is what all of those Jewish sacrifices were about. Here all these bloody altars. What a gory thing it would have been to have seen the high priest. He had this really wonderful uniform and it was covered head to toe in blood. Right? Because he was slaughtering animals for the sacrifices of people.

But could the blood of those animals ever wash away the sins of God's people? The writer of Hebrews tells us they couldn't. They were only pointing to the perfect Lamb of God who would come to this world, Jesus Christ, and would become the great high priest to his people and would be a mediator. And not only would he be the priest, he would also be the sacrifice and lay himself down and make a perfect and complete sacrifice. All these were just shadows and types to point people to the reality that there is a coming one who is going to pay for your sins in full.

"You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."²⁶

Right?

When John the Baptist stood up and proclaimed and he saw Jesus standing on the shore and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"²⁷ every Jewish mind understood exactly what he was saying. They got that. This is the sacrificial lamb who is innocent and blameless and without spot who is going to lay himself down as a sacrifice in the place of others.

Well, this is what all these things were pointing to.

Well, now that we have the reality, now that we have the final sacrifice, now that we have such a great high priest, do we need the Levitical priesthood anymore? No. Do we need the old types and shadows of the Old Testament and the sacrificial system? No. Because they have all been fulfilled in Christ himself. And he is our great high priest. He is our sacrifice.

²⁶ Matthew 1:21.

²⁷ John 1:29.

But was the ceremonial law a part of the old covenant? I want to show you that it was in Ezekiel 44, if you will turn there.

Ezekiel 44 verse six.

Now say to the rebellious, to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "O house of Israel, let us have no more of all your abominations. "When you brought in foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to defile it—My house—and when you offered My food, the fat and the blood, then they broke My covenant because of all your abominations."²⁸

Do you see what he is saying? Here is a ceremonial type of show. You allowed uncircumcised Gentiles into my temple and they defiled it and when you did it, you broke my covenant.

But what does he have in mind? Circumcision and those kinds of things. So even the ceremonial law was part of the old covenant.

In the third place, the civil law. You have got the moral law, you have got the ceremonial law and the civil law. Are you tracking with me? I see some head nods here. You follow where I am going with this. The civil law sometimes called the judicial law. All right? The judicial law was this, that the visible church of the Old Testament was organized as a nation state, church and state were one in the same in the Old Testament. National Israel was state and they were also a church.

I keep saying that Israel was a church. I just wanted to make sure you know that is not original with me. It is original with Stephen the martyr because in Acts 7:38 he speaks of Moses who was in the church in the wilderness. He was with the assembly. He was with the εκκλησια (ek-klay-see'-ah) of God in the wilderness wanderings. The Church was wandering through the wilderness he is saying. So the old Israel was the Church.

But before the old covenant, under the old covenant it was organized as a nation state. Think of it. if you were part of the old covenant you are part of Israel. Israel had the power to wage war against other nations. They had the authority to put men in prison. They had the authority to put men to death, capital punishment. And do we have that authority as a church now? No. We have the authority of restorative Church discipline, but we do not have the authority of capital punishment. The state does. The state does not wield the sword in vane says Paul in Romans 13.

There is now under the new covenant a biblical distinction between Church and state. Right? It is not Church... separation of Church and state like the ACLU talks about. You

²⁸ Ezekiel 44:6-7.

know what the ACLU is, right? The Anti Christian League of Unbelievers, ACLU. Anyway, that was a joke. These are the jokes, people.

All right.

But what was the civil law? In so many ways it was the civil application of the Decalogue. Because if you realize that of the first violations of the first seven of the 10 Commandments you could be put to death. If your husband was unfaithful to you, you would have the right to remarry another man. And that is not because the law of Moses gave you the right to divorce him. It gave you the right to get him stoned to death. If you were unfaithful to your wife you... the penalty was stoning, right? So if you broke the Seventh Commandment you could be put to death in many, many cases. If a man raped someone, then he could be put to death under the old covenant. If you broke the Fifth Commandment, if you were habitually rebellious to your parents you could be taken out and stoned. If you took God's name in vain in violation of the Third Commandment you could be stoned to death. If you worshipped other Gods, stone to death. If a prophet calls you to worship idols, stoned to death.

You see? What was the implication of all that? What was the message that was clearly ringing through it all? It was this. The wages of sin is death. Right? It is deserving of death. And that was the clear message. When Paul said that, too, in Romans, "The wages of sin is death," every Jewish mind would get that. They understand that the wages of sin is death. If you transgress God's law you deserve to die.

Well in the new covenant, as I said to you, the Church and the state are separate. This is important. Brethren, we need to be careful about theologies that are leading us to put nation or trying to take state and Church and wed them together, because this is a dangerous thing, because the problem is whoever is on top is going to persecute his fellow Christians.

If the Reformed Presbyterians are on the top, then they are going to persecute the Reformed Baptist brethren. If the Reformed Baptist brethren are on the top, they are going to persecute the Reformed Presbyterian brethren. If the Charismatics are on top, I mean, that is the question. Who gets to be in control? And we need to realize there is a separation between Church and state under the new covenant.

And the Bible enumerates over and over again our duties to the state. We are to submit to the government. And when Paul said that in Romans 13 Nero was in power and he says, "Submit to the governing authorities for they are appointed by God."

He tells us Jesus said, "You will be witnesses for me to kings. You are going to share the gospel with kings."

When we find Paul before King Agrippa does he say, "King Agrippa, we need to resurrect the civil law of the Old Testament?" Does he ever do that? No. He shares the gospel with him. He preaches Christ to him. And we are told to pray for the government,

to pray for their salvation. Pray for our president that God will give him a new heart. Pray for our supreme court justices that God will bring them to true salvation. Oh, what great justices they would be if God would write his law upon their hearts and minds, no?

What if our legislators in congress and the senate had God's law written on their mind and heart? What difference would that make? All the difference in the world. They would protect the unborn, wouldn't they? Certainly they would. They would protect the rights of the underprivileged and the widow and the orphan, certainly because God's law is written upon their hearts.

But was this a part of the old covenant as well? Was this civil law part of that old covenant? Indeed, it was.

Let me prove this to you again. Jeremiah 34. I just want to show you I am not... didn't make this up. This really is in the Bible. Jeremiah 34 verses 13 to 14.

Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, saying, "At the end of seven years let every man set free his Hebrew brother, who has been sold to him; and when he has served you six years, you shall let him go free from you." But your fathers did not obey Me nor incline their ear. Then you recently turned and did what was right in My sight—every man proclaiming liberty to his neighbor; and you made a covenant before Me in the house which is called by My name.²⁹

Do you see what he is talking about? He is talking about the legislation for slaves under the old covenant. And he is saying, "You did not release your slaves like you were supposed to on the seventh year." The seventh year is a sabbath year in which all your debts are canceled, all prisoners go free and you had to realize that prisoners were people who had done minor offenses. If you did anything major you are already dead. You would have been stoned to death.

But and slaves are no longer captive. They are now freed men. And he says, "You broke my covenant because you broke this civil law concerning slaves."

So do you see that all 613 laws of Moses are comprehended in the old covenant.

Well, it has been important to take the time to lay this groundwork and, God willing, we will try to bear fruit from it and reap from it in days to come. But let me very briefly say this.

Second place, the law of God is written on tablets of flesh under the new covenant. What law is written upon our hearts and minds? That is the question we are trying to get at, right?

²⁹ Jeremiah 34:13-15.

Well, there is a sense in which you can say all 613 laws are written in our hearts and minds, in one sense. We don't have to be circumcised now physically. But do you have to be circumcised in your heart? Yes.

Do we have to observe the every 50 years year of jubilee? No, but Jesus said, "I came to proclaim the favorable year of our Lord."

Slaves... when captives are set free, debts are forgiven. Jesus says, "I am your jubilee," right? "I am the one in whom prisoners are set free."

There is a sense in which all of them are applied in a spiritual way to our hearts. But in particular when Jeremiah uses the language, "I will write my law on your mind and on your hearts," as I said to you before, have you not seen that the 10 Commands, the Decalogue have a unique place in the old covenant. And I submit to you that the same content written on those two tables of stone is now the same content written on our minds and hearts.

Listen to three parallel texts.

Exodus 31 verse 18. I am going to read it to you.

"And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God."³⁰

Jeremiah 31 verse 33.

"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts."³¹

All right, so the same finger that wrote it on stone now writes it upon my heart, right? We need to make sure that we understand the same content is there, 2 Corinthians chapter three verses two and three.

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.³²

Three parallel texts, the same law written on two tablets of stone, now written on our minds, now written upon our hearts. The same standard of righteousness, different administrations. And I would submit to you, just throw this out as something to think

³⁰ Exodus 31:18.

³¹ Jeremiah 31:33.

³² 2 Corinthians 3:2-3.

about. The law of God is applied differently under the new covenant than it was under the old. And we will try to begin expounding that in days to come.

But let me set two things before you and then we shall move on to the Lord's table. First of all, the law of God is the revelation of God's holy and immutable character. What does that mean to you?

In Isaiah chapter six when Isaiah saw a vision of God—and let's be clear—he saw a vision of Christ, the second person of the godhead. John tells us it was Christ high and lifted up. His train filled the temple. There were two seraphim flying behind him, pure undefiled with sin and yet here was one so holy they had to cover their eyes. They had to cover their feet and with two of their wings they flew.

And what did they cry out? What was the central attribute upon their minds?

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord god of hosts.”

We move to Revelation four. We see John hearing the angels saying the same thing.

“Holy, holy, holy. The thrice holy God is before us. The whole earth is full of his glory.”

Here is Isaiah the prophet. What was his first response?

“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”³³

When he saw the holiness of God all he could see was his own unholiness, his own sin and the sin of God's people.

Brethren, when you see the holiness of God you will see the same thing. It will reveal your unholiness. It will tell you there is a just God in heaven and his holies demands exact perfect obedience to his holy law and anything short of that is unworthy of him and is worthy of his damnation. The violation of even one commandment is enough to worthy 1000 hells. And we have broken every commandment times beyond number. It is the revelation of a righteousness of God. But that is the good news this morning is the gospel is also the revelation of the righteousness of God. That is exactly what Paul says in Romans chapter one, isn't it?

He says, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed.”³⁴

³³ Isaiah 6:5.

³⁴ Romans 1:16-17.

But not according to the commandments. Rather, through Christ. But it is not in disharmony to the commandments, but the contrary, because when Jesus Christ came to this earth—get this in your mind, he fulfilled all 613 of the laws of Moses.

Why does Luke include the detail that after his birth on the eighth day after his birth Jesus was circumcised? Because Jesus even from his infancy was fulfilling the ceremonial law of God on our behalf.

Why do we find that Joseph and Mary offered the sacrifice necessary for a new first born son? Because Jesus was fulfilling the law. We find Jesus in everything he does always obeying. We get a glimpse, one little window of his relationship to Joseph and to Mary and what is it? He submitted himself willingly to his parents. Why? Because he fully kept the Fifth Commandment. Even though, get this, he was their Creator, nevertheless he was their son and so he submitted to them.

Isn't that something?

Over and over and over again what was God's own declaration of him?

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”³⁵

At Sinai he was shouting, “Be holy even as I am holy.”

This Son is that holy one. He is the one who walks [?]. At Sinai he was simply declaring the character of Jesus Christ. Jesus kept the sabbath perfectly. He obeyed all the commands of God perfectly and he didn't just do it outwardly sort of like begrudging outward conformity. No.

“It is my food and my drink to the will of my Father,” said Jesus.

Never once even a lustful glance, never once entertaining a lustful thought. Every reaction to every sinful thing done to him, perfect.

You know, I don't know about you, but one of the things that really irritates me is when others sin against me and I sin against them in the way I respond to them. Don't you hate that? It is like, come on. I can't... I just blame them instead. And yet I see sin in me. But Jesus always responded perfectly, always in just the right way. he knew when to rebuke, he knew when to just let things go. He was perfect in all of that.

And yet this perfect one who did not deserve to die suffered under the civil law of the Old Testament because he suffered capital punishment. Why? Because he took the crimes of his people upon himself and bore the responsibility for them.

Do you understand that when Jesus died on the cross he was taking responsibility for our sin as if he is the one who had committed them? That almost sounds blasphemous,

³⁵ Matthew 3:17; 17:5.

doesn't it? Even though he had committed none of them. But he was being... he was being the payment, the one who says, "I will take all their debts, all of their liabilities upon myself." And the Father poured out the full fury of his wrath upon him. That is why he called out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

But then he also cried out, "It is finished. It is paid in full. God's wrath has been exhausted for my people and there remains not an ember more for them."

If you are Christ there is not so much as an ember of wrath working against you. There has been an extinguished and exhausted on Christ.

He died and was buried in that grave. Three days later, though, he rose again. The sign that God has given us that, indeed, his sacrifice for sinners was accepted by him and he ever lives to intercede for those who are his.

Well, if you are here and you are in Christ the day you believed... remember all that perfect obedience I was talking about? All that perfect obedience that Jesus the Son of Man perfected, became yours. God treated you now he treats you as if you are the one who is responsible for Christ's obedience because he treated Christ as if he was responsible for our sin. And that is a good exchange.

My sin for his perfect righteousness. Isn't this what Paul means when he says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."³⁶

It is like Paul looks at us in Romans eight and says, "That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us,"³⁷ because we are in Christ Jesus. And his perfect fulfillment of his law it answers on our behalf and his blood shedding takes away all our lawlessness so that God remembers not our sin.

If you are here and you are outside of Jesus Christ stop trusting in your righteousness. Stop trusting in your obedience to God's law. Stop trusting in your own morality. We are all by nature self righteous. It is time to put your self righteousness to death and stop trusting in yourself and trust in the perfect and finished work of Christ alone for his salvation and to trust in him only, to repent of your sins, to repent of your righteousness. Doesn't the writer to the Hebrews talk about repenting from dead works? Repent of your righteousness and put all of your faith and all your hope in Christ and him alone. He is willing to save. He is able to save. He desires to save. Will you not come to him and flee from the wrath that is to come?

If you are in Christ, aren't you so grateful that God has written his law on you mind and heart? Don't you rejoice in the inner man with the law of God when you hear of it? Did you rejoice and just resonate with Exodus 20 even though you said, "Lord, I fall woefully

³⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:21.

³⁷ Romans 8:4.

short of what you say there, but yet I rejoice. It is holy, just and good and my heart resonates with that. I see the righteousness of your Son right there.”

Well, brethren, what a joy it is. There was a time when we were hateful and hated one another, but now God has put the legislation of love in our hearts, in our minds so that we love the Lord our God and we are growing to love our neighbor as ourself. Thank God for it, that he changes us. This meal before you as a reminder of why you are an heir of those blessings. It tells you because Jesus’ body was broken and his blood was shed, you are a partaker of his righteousness. You an heir of the new covenant. So I encourage you, if you are in Christ to examine yourself. Make sure you have a conscience devoid of offence before God and men. Take of this table and remember what great things Jesus Christ has accomplished on your behalf.

If you are outside of Christ, please do not partake. The truth is, if you are outside of Christ by your impenitence and the hardness of your heart and by your failure to believe, you are heaping up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of Jesus Christ. If you in that state partake of this table all you are doing is adding more to the fire. So may the Lord use this to show you your need to cross that line called conversion, to repent of sin and believe in Christ that you might be saved. But if you are here and in Christ rejoice that your sins are washed away.

Aren’t you grateful? Sometimes I thank God for even most of my sins, but you know, there is that one thing I did that somehow he is begrudging against me. Have you ever felt that way? Just one thing that I have confessed to him 2000 times or maybe it is a particular besetting sin that you struggle with over and over and you ask God’s forgiveness and then you fail. How many of you have a favorite sin? We all do, don’t we? Ok. Do you realize you have a God who remembers not? That it is not just the part, but the whole that is nailed to the cross and therefore you bear it no more?

This table should be a reminder to you. I am accepted in the beloved. I am accepted in God’s beloved Son. He remembers my sins no more. He has thrown all my sins into the sea of forgetfulness never to rise again because they have all been paid for in full by Jesus Christ.

So often I will confess my sins over and over and think if I just really, really mean it this time God will really, really forgive me. And then I remember Jesus died for me. And I understand the reason that God can forgive me for my sins.

So get your eyes on your mediator. Get your eyes on your perfect sacrifice. Get your eyes on Christ. That is what this table is meant to do.

Let’s still our hearts and prepare to partake of this table.