

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Third Quarter 2014: *The Teachings of Jesus*
Lesson 10 “The Law of God”

Read for this week’s study

Matt. 5:17–19; 5:21–44; Mark 7:9–13; Matt. 19:16–22.

Memory Text

“ ‘If you love Me, keep My commandments’ ” (John 14:15, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Jesus Did not Change the Law
- III. Jesus Deepened the Meaning of the Law
- IV. Jesus and the Seventh Commandment
- V. Jesus and the Fifth Commandment
- VI. Jesus and the Essence of the Law
- VII. Further Study

Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Zdravko Stefanović

JESUS & THE LAW

A. Introduction

1. The term TORAH
 - a) Etymology
 - b) Semantics
2. Torah & the Covenant
 - a) Exodus 20
 - b) Two tablets (Exodus 32:15)
3. Vertical & horizontal dimensions
 - a) Dual parenthood (1 & 5)
 - b) Respect for dignity (2 & 6 – 8)
 - c) Integrity and commitment (3 & 9)
 - d) Respect for boundaries (4 & 10)

B. Torah in Judaism

1. Pharisees and the rabbis
2. Written and oral Torah

3. A fence and a yoke
4. Torah and the Torah-Giver

C. Jesus and the Torah

1. The “love” factor
2. To fulfill, not to abrogate
3. Traditions of the elders
4. God and human interpreters
5. Reading vs. hearing
6. The attitude behind the letter
7. Immanuel: Written & Living

D. Significant Passages

1. Matthew 5:14-48
2. Matthew 22:34-40
3. Matthew 23:1-12

“No other New Testament document represents Jesus upholding the Law so extensively as the Gospel of Matthew.”

W. F. Albright & C. F. Mann

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

All the law requires is that we love Him and we love each other—and that we behave accordingly. If God changes His law, the quality of life in the hereafter would deteriorate. We do not wish Him to change it! So eventually it will be written on our hearts, where a man does his thinking. It becomes thinking obedience, intelligent obedience. We don’t love because we’re told to; we love because we’re absolutely sold on this. We agree with God; we actually do love Him, and love each other. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Larger View*, part 2, recorded October, 1982, Monterey, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/2MMLVIEW>*

And he was chided—even by some Christians who hadn’t worked it out too well yet, and they would say to Paul, “Aren’t you doing away with the law by your emphasis on trust?”

“No,” he said, Romans 3:31. “Faith does not abolish law. Faith establishes law, by putting it in its proper perspective.”

Next question: “What is the proper perspective? What is the over-all view, the larger view of all this?”

The answer is in Galatians 3, the text that was the basis of the Minneapolis General Conference discussion. Look at that, Galatians 3:19.

“Why then the law?” he was asked.

“It was added.” What law was added? Remember the debate at Minneapolis? Was it the Ten Commandments? Was it the ceremonial law? They had quite a disagreement. When we get to Galatians, I’ll bring the documents (some of which are not published at the present time). Did you know that the President of the General Conference and a young physician—they wrote two books holding two opposite views on this matter? Elder Butler and Dr. Waggoner, I mean, how could a young physician talk to the General Conference President like that? It was very respectful! The introductions are very polite. But then they mince no words about their disagreement. So they went to Ellen White and said, “What law was added to be our guardian to bring us to Christ?”

“Why,” she says, “it was the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial law; all of it.” All law was added because of the emergency of sin.

But what is sin? Romans 14, “Sin is a lack of trust. A breach of trust.”

What is sin? 1 John 3:4, “Sin is rebelliousness.” Sin is a stubborn unwillingness to listen. Or in the book of James, sin is knowing to do what is right and not doing it. Doesn’t that perfectly describe the children of Israel when God brought them out of the land of Egypt? Was there trust?

Now, He gave them a chance, first. He said, “Let me be your God, and you be My people. Let’s trust each other. I can get you into Canaan. You won’t even have to fight.” And Ellen White observes it was never God’s design that they fight their way into Canaan, any more than they fought their way out of Egypt. He would have fed them and clothed them. Did they get ill in the wilderness? Did they lack anything? Nothing. He said, “I’ll take you there, and the angel will clear the way before you. Yes, I’ll have to lay many of My sinful children to sleep until the resurrection, but let Me put the Canaanites to sleep and all those other people. Let Me do it. They are My children.” It’s hard for us to kill each other without getting angry while we do it. Let the Eternal God put His own children to sleep. It would be much better, wouldn’t it?

But they didn’t trust Him—didn’t trust Him on anything. And when they got to the river Jordan, they begged Moses to take them back to Egypt. What do you do with people who aren’t willing to listen and don’t trust you? Rebellious people, (1 John 3:4) untrusting people (Romans 14).

Don't you have to do everything that is described in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy?

Well, there was one other thing God could have done. He could have said, "I think that surely none of My loyal angels would misunderstand Me if I let those noisy, troublesome, ungrateful, untrustworthy people go." But instead of doing that, He went to work. All through these books; first He raised His voice. Then He even had to tell them how to be modest in worship, how to be reverent, how to do this, that and the other, in great detail. How He could be misunderstood as a fussy, arbitrary, even fuddy-duddy God, hardly One to be revered and respected, surely not One to be loved; but a God who desires the service of fear.

But the prophets came along and they didn't misunderstand it that way, did they? How could Hosea, and Amos, and Micah, and David even, and Isaiah and Jeremiah understand as clearly as they did? Apparently, though, it takes a little time. It took Saul (later Paul), quite some time to put it all together. And when he put it all together, he wrote in Galatians 3, "Let me tell you why God gave us all these things in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. It was all added because we were such sinners, and so stubborn, and so noisy, and so ungrateful."

The amazing thing is that instead of giving us up, God stooped to meet us where we are. He spoke a language we could understand. He led us no faster than we were able to follow. And He ran a grave risk of being misunderstood, in using such methods to get our attention and hold it long enough to tell us more of the truth about Himself. In that light, all of this material in the Old Testament is magnificent evidence of the truth about God. What a condescending, skillful, versatile Teacher He is! If that's where the people were, that's where He met them. That's why He didn't give the Sermon on the Mount on Sinai. They wouldn't have respected it. They wouldn't even have heard it. It took thunder and lightning. What a terrible thing though, that He had to say, "Stop the killing, and the stealing, and the lying, and the cheating." But then in the tenth Commandment, He indicated how lofty His ideals were. He said, "When I've really fulfilled My purposes for you, My children, you not only won't do any of those things prohibited here; you won't even want to. You'll love and trust in the highest sense of freedom. That's what I want." But only occasionally did He have a friend who really saw the truth.

And I maintain that's where we are right now. And there's a call to go back to the symbols and to the legal picture, to the limited, legal model of things which God indeed most graciously gave us.

But that was an emergency measure. It's time for us to climb up the mountain to the mouth of the cave with Elijah, and to stand with Hosea, and Micah, and Amos, and David, and Paul, and realize that behind any and all methods, emergency methods that God has used for our sakes, there remains the one and only thing He has ever asked of His children, and that is trust. But His enemies have said He cannot be trusted. God has demonstrated the truth. Look what it cost

Him! Look what He's done to demonstrate that He can be trusted. Anybody who would go to those lengths can be trusted. But sometimes we get so involved in all the emergency measures; we forget what it is He really wants.

So the question today is, "Why, then, the whole legal model?" It was added because of lack of trust, because of rebelliousness. But let's not be so caught up in the emergency measures that we forget that God's intent is that ultimately we trust Him enough, even trust each other enough, and be trustworthy ourselves enough, to be safe for life to continue as it was in the beginning: perfect freedom, perfect security, perfect happiness; everybody trusting everybody else. Even God able to trust in us. If the whole plan of salvation and the blood of Christ do not lead us back to trust, they are of absolutely no avail. That's my absolute conviction from reading all sixty-six. And I see it in every one of the Books. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Leviticus, recorded October, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/5MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man. {GC 467.1}

Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men. {DA 763.2}

Jesus had not dwelt on the specifications of the law, but He did not leave His hearers to conclude that He had come to set aside its requirements. He knew that spies stood ready to seize upon every word that might be wrested to serve their purpose. He knew the prejudice that existed in the minds of many of His hearers, and He said nothing to unsettle their faith in the religion and institutions that had been committed to them through Moses. Christ Himself had given both the moral and the ceremonial law. He did not come to destroy confidence in His own instruction. It was because of His great reverence for the law and the prophets that He sought to break through the wall of traditional requirements which hemmed in the Jews. While He set aside their false interpretations of the law, He carefully guarded His disciples against yielding up the vital truths committed to the Hebrews. {DA 307.2}

The Pharisees prided themselves on their obedience to the law; yet they knew so little of its principles through everyday practice that to them the Saviour's words sounded like heresy. As

He swept away the rubbish under which the truth had been buried, they thought He was sweeping away the truth itself. They whispered to one another that He was making light of the law. He read their thoughts, and answered them, saying,— {DA 307.3}

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” Here Jesus refutes the charge of the Pharisees. His mission to the world is to vindicate the sacred claims of that law which they charge Him with breaking. If the law of God could have been changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have suffered the consequences of our transgression. He came to explain the relation of the law to man, and to illustrate its precepts by His own life of obedience. {DA 307.4}

God has given us His holy precepts, because He loves mankind. To shield us from the results of transgression, He reveals the principles of righteousness. The law is an expression of the thought of God; when received in Christ, it becomes our thought. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin. God desires us to be happy, and He gave us the precepts of the law that in obeying them we might have joy. When at Jesus’ birth the angels sang,—

“Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14),

they were declaring the principles of the law which He had come to magnify and make honorable. {DA 308.1}

But Israel had not perceived the spiritual nature of the law, and too often their professed obedience was but an observance of forms and ceremonies, rather than a surrender of the heart to the sovereignty of love. As Jesus in His character and work represented to men the holy, benevolent, and paternal attributes of God, and presented the worthlessness of mere ceremonial obedience, the Jewish leaders did not receive or understand His words. They thought that He dwelt too lightly upon the requirements of the law; and when He set before them the very truths that were the soul of their divinely appointed service, they, looking only at the external, accused Him of seeking to overthrow it. {RC 67.5}

The words of Christ, though calmly spoken, were uttered with an earnestness and power that stirred the hearts of the people. . . . They “were astonished at his teaching: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (Matthew 7:28, 29, R.V.). The Pharisees noted the vast difference between their manner of instruction and that of Christ. They saw that the majesty and purity and beauty of the truth, with its deep and gentle influence, was taking firm hold upon many minds. The Saviour’s divine love and tenderness drew the hearts of men to Him. . . . {RC 67.6}

In Christ's day the religious leaders had so long presented human ideas before the people, that the teaching of Christ was in every way opposed to their theories and practice. His sermon on the mount virtually contradicted the doctrines of the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. They had so misrepresented God that He was looked upon as a stern judge, incapable of compassion, mercy, and love. They presented to the people endless maxims and traditions as proceeding from God, when they had no "Thus saith the Lord" for their authority. Though they professed to know and to worship the true and living God, they wholly misrepresented Him; and the character of God, as represented by His Son, was as an original subject, a new gift to the world. Christ made every effort so to sweep away the misrepresentations of Satan, that the confidence of man in the love of God might be restored. He taught man to address the Supreme Ruler of the universe by the new name – "Our Father." This name signifies His true relation to us, and when spoken in sincerity by human lips, it is music in the ears of God. Christ leads us to the throne of God by a new and living way, to present Him to us in His paternal love.—*Review and Herald*, Sept. 11, 1894. {FE 309.1}

The law is an expression of God's idea. When we receive it in Christ, it becomes our idea. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165)—cause them to stumble. {1SM 235.3}

Those principles that were made known to man in Paradise as the great law of life will exist unchanged in Paradise restored. When Eden shall bloom on earth again, God's law of love will be obeyed by all beneath the sun. {MB 50.2}