

THE LAW OF THE LORD

- A. Introduction: Jesus told His disciples that just before He returns to this world there will be much religious deception. He warned that many will be deceived by false messiahs. People are vulnerable to false messiahs because, not only is the person and work of Jesus being undermined, Bible reading is at an all time low, even among Christians. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24
1. People are ripe for deception because we live in a culture that increasingly defines truth according to how we feel rather than according to objective facts.
 - a. It has become fairly common to hear professing Christians make statements like these: I just feel that there are many paths to God and that a loving God would never let anyone go to Hell. I just feel that a forgiving God isn't upset by sin and doesn't care how we live—as long as we're happy.
 - b. Each of those statements is incorrect. Each statement is contrary to God's Word, the Bible. God doesn't reveal Himself or His will through subjective feelings. He reveals Himself the Scriptures.
 - c. The Bible is our only 100% objective, accurate source of information about God. We are taking time to look at who Jesus and why He came—according to the Bible—so we won't be deceived.
 2. Recently, we've been discussing the fact that there has been a huge explosion in teaching on grace in Christian circles. While some of it is good, much of it is inaccurate and has led to wrong conclusions being drawn by those unfamiliar with sound Bible doctrine.
 - a. Grace has become an excuse for lax and even sinful living among some people. Others say that if anyone tells you that, as a Christian, there are things you must do (such as pray, read the Bible, or live according to a certain standard) they're into works and are trying to put you under law.
 - b. So we've been examining what the Bible says about grace and works. In this lesson, we're going to add law to our discussion as we continue our study of Who Jesus and why He came to earth.
- B. Let's review: We must understand grace, works, and law in terms of God's overall plan. God created men and women to become His holy, righteous sons and daughters through faith in Jesus. Eph 1:4-5
1. Sin seemed to thwart this plan because a holy God cannot have sinners as sons and daughters, nor can He overlook sin or let men and women off the hook for their sin.
 - a. The penalty for sin is the wrath of God which is eternal separation from Him (John 3:36). There is no action we can undertake, no effort we can make, that will rectify our condition (Rom 5:6).
 1. God, motivated by love, chose to deal with us in grace and do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He took on flesh (became fully man without ceasing to be God), was born into this world and died to save us from sin and its punishment. John 1:1; John 1:14; Heb 2:14-15
 2. Jesus took our place and became our Substitute. At the Cross He took the punishment that should have come to us for our sin. He satisfied justice on our behalf. Isa 53:4-6; Rom 4:25
 - b. Grace is the unearned favor that God showed us by saving us from sin and its penalty through the Cross of Christ. Jesus didn't die to make it okay to sin. He died to abolish sin. Heb 9:26
 1. God, by His grace, has justified us. To justify means to render just or innocent—to acquit. Acquittal is a judicial (according to justice) deliverance from a criminal charge. All charges are dropped because there is no evidence of wrong doing. Rom 3:24; Titus 3:7; Col 2:14
 2. When you bow your knee to Jesus as Savior and Lord and accept His sacrifice, the slate is cleared. You are justified (acquitted, declared righteous), no longer guilty of sin.
 - A. God can now deal with you as though you never sinned. You are so cleansed by the sacrifice of Christ that God can indwell you (your innermost being) by His life and Spirit and restore you to your created purpose as His holy, righteous son or daughter. Col 1:22
 - B. The Holy Spirit transforms you from a sinner into a son through regeneration. You are literally born of God. You become a partaker of eternal life, the uncreated life in God—

united to the life in Jesus. Titus 3:5; John 1:12-13; I John 5:1; I John 5:11-12; II Pet 1:4; etc.

2. There are no works (no action you can take, no deed you can perform) that will earn you salvation from sin and nothing you can do to deserve regeneration. We are saved and born again—not by our own works or efforts—but by God’s grace when we believe on Jesus. II Tim 1:9; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7
 - a. We can’t save ourselves from our sin through our works. But now that we have received the gift of salvation, we are to do works. We’re supposed to begin to demonstrate outward evidence of the inward change that God, by His grace, has produced in us.
 - b. These works or actions are not a means of earning or deserving God’s help or blessings. Rather, they are demonstrations of the fact that we understand that we have been restored to our created purpose as holy, righteous sons and daughters of God. Eph 2:10; Titus 2:14
 1. The whole tone of the New Testament in regard to sin and holy living is: Act like what you are by the power of God in you—a holy, righteous son of God. I Pet 1:14-16; Eph 5:1-2; Gal 5:13
 2. A change in behavior, an attempt to live a holy live, efforts to obey the Word of God—although they don’t earn you God’s love and salvation—they are all expressions of genuine salvation.

If those things are lacking, there is concern as to whether someone has truly been born again.
3. Regeneration occurs in our innermost being (our spirit). Our soul (mind and emotions) and our body are not directly affected by the new birth. Our soul and body must be brought under the control of the new life in our spirit (lessons for another day).
 - a. The new birth is the beginning of a process that will ultimately fully cleanse your entire being from all corruption and conform you to the image of Christ. Jesus, in His humanity, is the pattern for God’s family. Rom 8:29-30
 - b. Right now, we are finished works in progress—fully God’s holy, righteous sons and daughters by birth, but not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ in every part of our being. I John 3:2
 1. God deals with us on the basis of our new identity as sons—on the basis of the part that is finished, because He is confident the entire process will ultimately be completed. Phil 1:6
 2. When you, as a holy, righteous son, sin (or commit an occasional act of unrighteousness), it does not change what you are any more than committing an occasional act of righteousness before you were saved made you righteous. Your sin does not undo the work of the Cross.
 - c. Knowledge of this process of progressive conformity to the image of Christ should inspire us to do our best to live righteously—not to earn or deserve God’s help and blessing—but because it is our created purpose. I John 3:3; Titus 2:11-13

- C. Now, let’s add the word law to our discussion of grace and works. Law is a concept that, if not properly understood, makes us more vulnerable to end time deception.
 1. The primary meaning of the word law according to *Webster’s Dictionary* is: a rule of conduct or action laid down and enforced by the supreme governing authority.
 - a. Law has become a bad word in certain Christian circles because it has become synonymous with “the rules” and, according to some, Christianity isn’t about rules, it’s about relationship. Yes, Christianity is about relationship, but this doesn’t mean that law and “rules” have no place.
 - b. As we begin our discussion of law, consider this thought. In the same discourse where Jesus warned His followers that religious deception will precede His return, He also said that iniquity or lawlessness will abound (Matt 24:12). Iniquity comes from a Greek word that means lawlessness.
 1. This same word is used to describe the final world ruler (Antichrist) who will oppose the return of Jesus. II Thess 2:7-8—For the mystery of lawlessness (same Greek word) is already at work...then the lawless one (same Greek word) will be revealed (ESV).
 2. Daniel prophesied of this final world ruler: He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall think (hope) to change the times and the law (Dan 7:25, ESV).

3. It's amazing to see that, at the same time religious deception is increasing in our culture, so is disrespect for law—even in the Church. Following a standard has become a bad thing.
- c. Like the words grace and works, the word law is used a number ways in the Bible. But, in general, law means the revealed will of God regarding human conduct.
 1. God's law (or will) has been expressed in different ways at different times throughout man's history on earth. But all these expressions call men to love God and love their fellow man.
 2. The first humans, Adam and Eve and their sons, Cain and Abel, were under the Law of love. Jesus said that God's Law can be summarized in two statements—love God with all your heart, soul, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. I John 3:11-12; Matt 22:37-40
2. When the term law is mentioned, the Law of Moses is usually what first comes to mind for many. The Law of Moses (which includes the Ten Commandments) was given at a specific time in the history of man to a specific group of people for specific purposes
 - a. God gave this Law to Moses at Mount Sinai shortly after Israel was delivered from slavery in Egypt. It is the most detailed description of law given in the Bible. It includes civil and criminal laws, dietary laws, ceremonial and sacrificial laws.
 - b. The Israelites had lived as slaves in a foreign land for 400 years and the Law was designed to help them set up a functioning society and live in relationship with the Lord once they settled Canaan.
 1. Much of the Law was given to expose and remove the practices associated with idol worship that Israel picked up while living in Egypt. Ex 23:19; Lev 17:7; Lev 18:23; Lev 19:19; etc.
 2. The Law was given to expose sin, and then through the penalties proscribed by the Law, show men that sin brings destruction and death and obedience brings life. Rom 3:19-20; Deut 30:19
 3. The Law was also intended to reveal man's inability to live without sin, show men their need for a Savior, and make it clear that deliverance from sin comes only through blood sacrifice offered by a priest or a mediator (foreshadowing Jesus and His sacrifice at the Cross). Gal 3:24
 - c. We could do (but aren't going to) a series on the Law. However, consider this one thought.
 1. The place of the Law of Moses in the life of a Christian was an issue in the early church since many of the first converts were Jews who had lived under that Law their entire lives.
 2. The New Testament is clear that the specifics of the Law of Moses (regulations, ceremonies, sacrifices) aren't for Christians, but the spirit of the Law is: Love God and love your neighbor.
3. Here's the point for our present discussion. God's ultimate goal in redemption and salvation is more than giving men and women an outward code of conduct to improve our behavior.
 - a. His goal is to produce an internal change—change our nature from sinful to holy and give us power from within to express and demonstrate His righteousness as His sons and daughters.
 1. Man's problem is more than what he does. It's what he is by birth into a fallen race. Through Adam's sin, men and women were made sinners by nature. Rom 5:19; Eph 2:1-3
 2. God's aim is to remove sin and transform sinful men into holy sons. His goal is to make men righteous or right with Himself and right in themselves. The Law of Moses couldn't and was never intended to do that.
 - b. The Law of Moses was not deficient. It is holy, just, and good (Rom 7:12). The problem is that fulfillment of the Law depended on the power of fallen, sinful flesh to carry out its requirements.
 1. Even as God gave the Law of Moses to Israel, He promised that a day was coming when He would give them a heart that would obey Him (Deut 30:6), a message echoed by the prophets throughout Israel's history. Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 11:19-20; Ezek 36:26-27
 2. Rom 8:3-4—For God has done what the Law could not do, weakened as it was by the flesh. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and on account of sin, he condemned sin in the flesh; in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who order our lives not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Montgomery).

3. The Cross opened the way for us to become literal sons and daughters of God through new birth or regeneration. Now, by God's life in us, we can live unto (for) righteousness. I Pet 2:24
 4. A quick side journey: What about the Ten Commandments? Do they apply to Christians? While they are not specifically addressed in the New Testament, the spirit behind the Ten Commandments is.
 - a. The Ten Commandments are the core of the Law of Moses. The first four list Israel's duties to God, the last six list their duties to their fellow man. Ex 20:1-17
 - b. The sentiments behind them are all expressed somewhere in the New Testament, not as conditions of salvation, but as expressions of righteousness—the kind of behavior sons of God are to exhibit (1. Mark 12:30—2. I Cor 10:7--3. Matt 5:34—4. Heb 4:9—5. Eph 6:2—6. I Pet 4:15—7. Heb 13:4—8. Eph 4:28—9. Col 3:9—10. Eph 5:5).
 - c. Christians (like every human being since Adam and Eve) are under the Law of Christ which is the Law of love (love God and love your fellow man). Gal 6:2; John 15:12; John 15:17; etc.
 5. Some Christians (mistakenly) say that if you tell them they must “do” anything (obey any rules), you're putting them under back under law, and that's wrong because we're under grace now.
 - a. It is true that grace has saved us from sin, grace has made us righteous, holy sons, and grace is transforming every part of our being, conforming us to the image of Christ.
 1. However, new creatures (holy, righteous sons of God) still need to be told what to do (rules) because we are not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ.
 2. We need instruction on righteous living because our minds have been darkened by sin and our behavior has been devoted to self. We need a standard of righteous behavior. Rom 12:1-2
 - b. We see this pattern in the New Testament. In Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, he devoted the first three chapters to what grace has made us and is making us (who we are in union with Christ). But the last three chapters are devoted to how we are to live (the rules). Remember what law is—it's rules of conduct, the standard for behavior.
 1. New creatures need to be told: Don't lie, steal, or have sex with anyone but your spouse; etc. That's not law or legalism. That's instruction in righteous living. II Tim 3:16-17
 2. Instruction on how to live in a godly way comes from God's Word, the Bible. God's Law is expressed through His written Word.
 - A. The first time the word law appears in the Bible, it's a Hebrew word that means instruction, direction, or law. Ex 13:9
 - B. Ps 19:7—The Law of the Lord makes wise the simple (lit: the silly or seducible); making the ignorant wise (Harrison); Ps 37:31—The Law of the Lord is heart; he will never make a false step (Basic).
- D. Conclusion: We have more to say about grace, works, and law. But consider these thoughts as we close.
1. God's law is expressed in His written Word, the Bible. His Word (His Law) is part of the cleansing and transforming process that takes place in us when we bow our knee to Him as Savior and lord.
 - a. Eph 5:25-27—Jesus gave Himself for the church (believers in Him) that he might sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of the water of the Word.
 - b. When we believe the gospel concerning salvation from sin, the Spirit of God through the Word of God regenerates our spirit and transforms us into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God. John 3:3-5; Titus 3:5; I Pet 1:23; James 1:18; etc.
 2. Once we are born of God, the Word or Law of God is a vital part of the process of conforming us to the image of Christ. II Cor 3:18—And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit. (Amp)