



Growth Group Questions
October 1, 2023
“Jesus, Grace and the Law”

Context

Jesus moves on from talking about salt and light to a conversation about the law and prophets. The “kingdom of heaven” has arrived with the ministry of Jesus. All the teachings of the Old Testament are being fulfilled in Jesus, but the crowds and religious teachers were having a hard time understanding how Jesus felt about the law and the teachings of Moses. In Mark 2:27 he said in response to the Pharisees questioning him about picking heads of grain, *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”* Could it be that Jesus was actually okay with breaking the law?

Jesus makes it clear that he did not come to set aside the law, but to fulfill it by his obedience to it and by his interpretation of it. The first “Amen” – “Truly I tell you” – appears in verse 18. When Jesus begins a sentence with Amen or Truly I tell you it carries the highest authority. The prophets always spoke in the third person when speaking of God, but Jesus speaks in the first person, which signifies his close relationship with God.

Verses 17-18 are really about the relationship between Christ and the law. Jesus had come to fulfill the doctrinal teaching of the law. He had come to fulfill the predictions or foreshadowing of the Messiah talked about in the prophets, and he came to fulfill the moral law which he goes on to speak about in verses 21-48. As the apostle Paul would later write, “Jesus is the culmination of the law.”

As we move into verses 19-20 we read about how believers are to relate to the law. A believer’s righteousness is greater than the Pharisees because it is a righteousness of the heart. The righteousness that Jesus is talking about is not based on a sort of rigid and external obedience to the law, but rather is based on an inward righteousness of mind and motive because God is interested in the condition of our heart.

Jesus’ issue was not with the authority of the law, but with how the Pharisees were interpreting it. They were distorting and loosening the demands of the law and Jesus says I am actually going to call people to a higher righteousness, a righteousness that can only be received and practiced when the Holy Spirit dwells in people’s lives.



Scriptures:

John 1:14

14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Matthew 5:17-20

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Romans 10:4

4 Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Isaiah 55:10-11

10 As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, 11 so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Hebrews 4:12

12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.



Questions:

1. In John 1:4, we are told that “the Word became flesh.” What does that mean?
2. Why do you think Jesus thought it was important to tell his disciples that he had not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets?
3. In Romans 10:4, what does it mean that Christ is the “culmination” of the Law?
4. In Isaiah 55:10-11, we read that God’s Word will not return to Him empty? What does that mean to you?
5. Pastor Paul said that it is important for us to allow the Word of God to be the authority in our lives. What does that mean to you? What does it look like to have the Word of God as the authority in your life?
6. In Ezekiel 36:26-27 God tells us that He will give us a “new heart” and put a “new spirit” within us. Why do we need to have a new heart and a new spirit? What does it look like to have a “new heart”?
7. Pastor Paul told us that it is important that we read God’s word, not just read about God’s word. Why is this so important?
8. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the “Word of God is alive and active.” What does that mean?

Are there other scriptures that help you to understand what it means that God’s Word is alive and active?
9. What are some practical ways in which we can center our lives on God’s Word?

