



1362 US Highway 395 N Ste 102-200

Gardnerville, NV 89410

E-mail: bill@liferesource.org

Website: www.liferesource.org

Presentation Transcript
Law of God – Part 4 – Which Part Today?
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If we look at what other Christians outside our own little group are saying, we find that most of them think that we need to obey God. But they also think that certain parts of the law are set aside. And that would, pretty much, include the entire law of Moses. They tell us that because we now have the Holy Spirit, we keep the law in our hearts now – a conveniently, almost diffuse, ethereal concept. You can go a lot of directions with that – a concept that can mean whatever they want it to mean. So, there's no need to keep the Sabbath, the holy days, the food laws, tithing, divorce. It's okay for some of them. It's also interesting to notice that all those things are hard to do. So that makes it somewhat suspicious.

So, what we're going to talk about here are the parts of the law that are there, and why should either keep them or not. People have been dividing the law up into parts for a long time. So, my divisions might not be as fine as some other people's.

So, let's think about the law in the Bible before Abraham. Well, we saw earlier in this series that anytime you find the word *sin* in the Bible before Abraham, that means that there was a law that was being broken. That's what sin is – a breaking of the law. So, when Cain murdered Abel, that was a sin. He broke the law. The law was in effect. It might not have been codified, but it was there. And sin would be breaking any of God's laws.

So, we know the Sabbath was before Moses, because we can read that in Genesis. It says, also in Genesis 1:14, that there are certain appointed times that God observes. And the Sabbath would be one of those. But we know that He gave us the Sabbath to rest and that He set an example for us by resting.

We know, too, before Abraham, that animals were designated as clean or unclean. How do we know that? Well, because Noah divided up the animals that way when he loaded them into the ark. I think there were seven pairs of each kind of clean animal, and one pair of each kind of unclean creature.

That's quite a few laws – right? – that are in effect – all of God's laws. And there is a specific example for the Sabbath and for clean and unclean foods.

Now, let's go to once God began to work with Abraham. We learn that there was a priesthood. The high priest's name was Melchisedek. Interesting about this guy, as delineated by Paul – he had no beginning of days and no end of days. So He was God. He was probably Christ. We know that Abraham tithed – probably to Melchisedek. He said he'd give a tenth. We know that he sacrificed to God. There were sacrifices. And we know that God told Abraham to circumcise himself and his family – the males – because that was a sign of the covenant between him and God. So, that's pretty easy to understand. All the laws that were in effect before – sin was still a sin – basic laws of God.

Now, we come to Moses. Many of the laws found in the law of Moses predated Moses, like the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath, tithing, food laws, sacrificing. These were all done before, but were included in the codification of the law that God gave to the Israelites so they could run a nation on them. So, there was the Ten Commandments, there was the Sabbath, the holy days. We know that there was a priesthood established – no longer the priesthood of Melchisedek, but now the priesthood of Aaron. And there was a temple – or a tabernacle at first – and then sacrifices. We can read about that in the Bible. Then there are a large number of statutes and judgments – they're called in the Bible – about how to run the country – things like health laws – like, if an animal dies in one of your clay pots, you're supposed to break the pot. Why would they do that? Because a clay pot is porous, and the corruption from the dead body – the bacteria – could seep into it and make you sick. There were other health laws as well. We know the laws of clean and unclean, which were apparently in effect from the beginning, were delineated in the statutes and judgments. Also, there were laws for social regulation – about crimes – what constituted a crime and what constituted a punishment in those days. And that was how the nation of Israel was to handle various kinds of crime. So, the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath, the holy days, the priesthood, temple, sacrifices, national laws – all these were a part of law of Moses. Many of them were continued on from previous times. Circumcision is listed, because all the people that were in Israel were from Abraham, so they, at that time, were still under that covenant.

Now we come to Jesus. We learn from the apostle Paul – I'm not going to read it to you because we quoted it earlier in the series – that Christ is our sacrifice now. And He's the High Priest, not Aaron. And so we don't do sacrifices, because there's been one sacrifice done once for everybody. So, we don't need to do that. Now, I wouldn't get any argument about that from any other Christians probably. No temple worship. The church is now the temple, and beside that, in 69 AD, the temple was torn down and hasn't been rebuilt since. Also, in Jesus' day, you can read in Matthew 5, that *all* the laws of God have been elevated to spiritual intent, not just the physical. If you kill somebody, you've committed murder. Now, if you hate somebody, you're breaking the law of God. The law of God is all about loving God and loving others. So, God didn't go that far in the law – well, I guess He did, actually, but it wasn't spelled out so much about love, but about murder.

So, let's stop going through our list here of the things that we don't have to do under Christ and do have to do under Christ, and talk about the social context in which Jesus operated.

We talked about this distortion that was going on earlier, but it bears repeating. In the centuries after the Jews returned from captivity, they became rigorous in the observance of the law. They became legalistic. This was an attempt to keep people far away from breaking the law by imposing many rules that the elders created to keep people as far away from breaking the law as they could. I think I mentioned the term *Sabbath day's journey*. Well, you can't find that in the Bible. There was never any specific distance you could go without breaking the law of God. It was just not talked about. That was a rule that the rabbis imposed to try to keep people from traveling on the Sabbath. And it was also a great way to control the population for personal gain. So, Jesus preached against all of these man-made rules.

A really great example of that can be in the series, *The Chosen*, where Jesus healed a man crippled from childhood. He would lie by a pool, hoping to jump in when the water was stirred up, because people had been healed when they did that. He been there for thirty-eight years, and he'd never been able to be the first one in the pool, because he was crippled – couldn't walk – so other people would beat him into the pool. So, Jesus had compassion on him, and He healed him – a miracle. And there were Pharisees there who saw it and noticed that Jesus told him to pick up the pad he'd been lying on and walk. And He did this on the Sabbath.

So, what can we learn from this? It might not be direct, but we can learn that it's okay to do God's work on the that day. There are other examples of them walking through the fields on the Sabbath or the holy days. It was okay for him to carry his stuff that he'd been lying on for all those years. It wasn't a major project. He was going home anyway. But the Pharisees, instead of being happy for the man, were jealous of Jesus' power. They couldn't heal him. They claimed that Jesus instructed the man to break the Sabbath by carrying his mat and blanket. That did break a law. It broke *their* law. It broke the oral law – the traditions of the elders that they had added. And Jesus didn't observe those. He taught against them. It doesn't mean that He was telling people to break the Sabbath altogether – just the part that they'd added. Jesus was *not* against the law that He and the Father had created. (I'm tempted to say, "Duh!" right there, but I won't.)

There are other examples of this in the Bible. Let's read one – it's in Matthew 12, starting in verse 1.

Matthew 12:1 – *At that time, Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.* Now that was a common thing that people did back then. You weren't supposed to be stingy with your crops. And farmers were told to leave the corners ungathered so that the poor and people in need could gather it. So that was kind of the *fast food* of the day, I guess. *But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him,*

“Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” Okay? Now, was that a law that God had imposed? No, that was, again, one of *their* rules. *And He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him, how he entered house of God and ate the bread of presence, which was not lawful for him to eat, or those who were him, but only the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here, and if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would have not condemned the guiltless.”* So the man that got up and carried his pad had not broken God’s law. He broke theirs, but not God’s. *“For the Son of man is the Lord of the Sabbath.”*

So, He, in no way, is saying it was okay to break the Sabbath. He’s just saying you don’t need to follow their rules that are so rigorous and tight on people that it makes it burdensome to them. Jesus made the Sabbath. And it was a gift to us from creation. And it was made way ahead of Moses. So, I don’t think anybody would argue that Jesus knows how to keep it. So, the way they made it, it was not by a lot of rigorous oppressive added rules. Think about it. Does it sound here like Jesus thinks we don’t need to keep the Sabbath? It’s still a part of God’s law. He kept it. He just didn’t keep it the way they did because of their added rules.

So, here’s something Jesus said a long time before that. It’s in Isaiah 58:13.

Isaiah 58:13-14 – *If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, and the holy day of the LORD honorable, if you honor it, not going your own way or seeking your own pleasure or talking idly, then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the high places of the earth. I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob, your father. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*

So, I’ve called this the New Testament Sabbath in the Old Testament. Get your foot off My day! I mean, we all know what’s our own pleasure. We know what delight is. People who keep the Sabbath and think it’s a burden, they’re not keeping it delightfully. But if you read this carefully, you’ll know how to keep it. You don’t have to have a list of rules. You just have to understand the intent.

But keeping it and knowing how are two different issues, rather than one. God equates the Sabbath observance that He had in mind with delighting in God. So, it’s a day that’s about the *quality* of our relationship with God. Do you want to ramp up your relationship with God, you want to delight in Him like He delights in you? Well, here’s a challenge for you: As the sun sets on Friday evening, put aside all your work, and your worries. Eat a nice meal with your family, your friends. As the sun sets light some candles. Maybe read a scripture about the Sabbath or some other blessing God has given. And then hold hands and go around the table thanking God for the Sabbath, what it means, what it does for you. Express appreciation for a day that was made especially for your restoration and relationship with God. Teach your kids how to do that by involving them in it. See, that’s a day that’s a shadow of a time when Christ will be present

with us on earth. So, we can thank Him for that. Start doing that every Friday night, and watch what happens as the weeks, and then months roll by. Do it and see. It's changes your attitude.

What else can we learn? Well, we talked about this already. There's the new priesthood now. He's the High Priest, so no sacrifices. Tithing doesn't stop. He said so. He said tithing should not be left undone, but it's just that they go to Him now. Temple worship has been set aside in favor of the New Jerusalem – Zion, the holy city – which is the church. There's no temple to worship in anyway, so that's not a problem for most of us. We can't. So also has circumcision. That was a sign that they were under the Abrahamic Covenant and also the covenant of Moses. All Jews were of Abraham, but not anymore. Salvation, while it is *of* the Jews, is no longer *for* just Israelites. It's for everyone. So the New Israel is the church, made up of all kinds of people. And it has a High Priest, which is Jesus Christ. And He's the sacrifice that was made once for all. So, we're not doing those things any longer.

Let's talk about the holy days now. Most people don't even know what those are. Here are the reasons why a Christian should keep them. Jesus kept them – not just because He was a Jew. The New Testament church kept them – many mentions of that – of Pentecost, and Passover, and Atonement – all mentioned in the New Testament *years* after Christ died and ascended to heaven. Also, Paul tells us that they are shadows of things to come. They're instructional for us. They teach us about how God is going to save us. You wouldn't want to forget that, would you? Since we've gone into detail about the holy days previously, I'll refer you back in the series to those things. I won't go further. After Christ's return, observance of the holy days is going to be back. So, you might as well get used to it. Start observing them now. Because everybody that is with God will be doing it later.

Let's talk a bit about food laws. Everybody thinks that was done away with temple worship when it didn't have anything to do with temple worship. There was no temple in the time of Noah. And yet, they knew all about unclean and clean meats. So, there's a scripture that is used to show that we can eat pork now or whatever. It's in 1 Timothy 4:3. He's talking about bad people, who:

1 Timothy 4:3-5 – *...forbid marriage – ascetics – and require abstinence from food that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving. For it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.*

Which food did God create to be received with thanksgiving? There were certain foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving. That doesn't mean that every food is to be received with thanksgiving. We're to be thankful for the food that He *created* to be received with thanksgiving. So what foods are those? Well, all you have to do is read the Bible, and that tells us what is okay to eat. Peter said that he had never eaten anything unclean years after Christ. If Jesus ate pork chops, don't you think that would have created a stir among the Jews? I don't think He did. And I don't think He didn't just because He was a Jew. Moses' law contained rules

about food that were in effect long before. And pigs are pigs, and they've always been pigs. Nothing about pigs has changed. The New Testament shows that the early church told Gentiles to abstain from blood and from things strangled. What's that about? Well, those are part of the prohibitions that God gave regarding food laws. It's not just that we shouldn't eat pigs. It's that we shouldn't eat the blood of any kind of animal. The blood and the fat of beef is not good for you either. So, an animal that's bled properly, and is killed rather than dies of its own – if it's one of the animals that chews the cud and has a cloven hoof, like a beef cow, or a deer, or a sheep – those things are okay to eat. But, if they were strangled, which is what they did in pagan religious ceremonies.... So, I was just asked if I had a scripture for those. All you have to do is go into your Bible search feature on computer, and type in the word *strangle*, and you'll come up with a New Testament scripture about it. So, in both of those prohibitions that were given to the church – to the Gentiles in the church – were about the same food laws that prohibited the eating of pork.

I was noticing on the Website of the church that used to be called The Worldwide Church of God, that they no longer believe that unclean meats are unclean, and that no one can prove that unclean foods of the Bible are not good for us to eat for health reasons. But I didn't see this scripture in their presentation. It's in Exodus 15:26.

Exodus 15:26 – *If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in His eyes, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes – that would include the laws about not eating pigs – I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD your Healer.*

You know, I even heard, one Sunday morning, a Baptist TV evangelist explain that a pig's digestive tract is way faster than a bovine, and that pork is much fattier than beef or mutton. Now, the scripture I quoted isn't proof, but it helps us understand why. The proof of what we should eat is in the example of what the New Testament church ate or didn't eat. Peter tells us that he had never eaten anything that was common or unclean. Why would that be? Because he was a Jew? Well, I think he didn't eat it because Jesus didn't. And I think he understood that that wasn't a part of the Mosaic Covenant. It was a part of the law of God that's always been there and always will be. A pig is always going to be a pig.

Have you ever noticed, when you go to Costco, and you order one of those big hot dogs that are a quarter-pound – I know they're really bad for you because they have all kinds of salt in them, nitrates and all that stuff – but those hot dogs are beef. They're not pork. So, they're fantastic! They taste wonderful! So, it's not a big sacrifice to eat beef in a hot dog. Some people think you just can't live without pork, but I've been doing it for a long time and I'm faring quite well. Thank you.

That's a lot of things that changed when Jesus came and when He died. We no longer have temple worship. We no longer have the Aaronic priesthood. But He did keep the Sabbath, the

holy days. The New Testament church kept all of those things. Nobody changed the way they ate. So that's important for us to know that.

So, we're not going to move what's going to happen after Christ comes back. And we know from dozens of scriptures in the prophets that after Christ returns, the temple, the sacrifices, the Sabbath, the holy days, and many of the statutes and judgements in the law of Moses will once again be observed. God says He's going to write His law into the hearts of all the people. And He's going to do that with the Sabbath, the holy days, the statutes, the judgments in addition to the Holy Spirit in us.

There are people today that tell us we don't need to observe the Sabbath, because there's no such thing as holy time – that they are spiritual people now because of the Holy Spirit. And those old ritualistic, legalistic rules aren't necessary. If you believe that way, you better think again. If you ever hope to be with Christ when He returns, you will have to accept all the practices that you have rejected. Why not just give up the resistance and get with the program and learn to love God's gift of a rest day? Express thankfulness in prayer to eat the good food God has delineated for us. Start keeping the holy days and, for the very first time, understand the plan of God that they reveal. I mean, why not? What's to lose?

So, we started out the day intent on showing what parts of the law we need to keep today, according to the Bible. And it's a *big* topic. Lots of laws. Lots of people to break or keep them. Lots of Bible study to be able to prove it. However, it's really important. It's not just some legalistic issue. Why? Because God uses His law and His law observed, along with the Holy Spirit, to write His own character and Spirit into our hearts. The law of God is *not* a bad thing. It's not restrictive. It's not out-moded. It doesn't cause us to become legalistic or anything bad. So, what happens when we observe the law of God as Jesus lived it? Well, that's what we're going to cover next time – how the law changes us.

So, don't forget to check out our Website. The rest of this series, as completed so far, is on there. Noticing some donations coming in – very appreciative of that. We're so happy that people are supporting what we're doing.

So, until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.