

## **But I Say To You**

by Hendrik Joubert

When Jesus quotes from the law, and then uses the phrase "***But I say to you...***," did the Lord merely comment on the interpretation of the law in His day, or is He announcing new standards? In order to make an informed decision one has to consider various statements in the context, but also other passages on the subject.

The section starts out with the declaration that Jesus did not come to ***destroy the law***, but to ***fulfill*** it. The terms ***destroy*** and ***fulfill*** suggest the same conclusion; however it is accomplished in different ways. ***Destroy*** implies bringing an end to the Law without its purpose (or purposes) being accomplished. ***Fulfill*** conveys the idea of bringing it to completion by having it serve the purpose it was designed for. Jesus did not come to ***destroy***, but to ***fulfill***.

***What purpose then does the law serve?*** This was the actual question Paul anticipated when he explained that the law does not save. It condemns all who fail to keep it perfectly without stumbling even once. (***Galatians 3:10-14***) The religious leaders of His day (especially) did not keep the law, they merely proclaimed it. (***Matthew 5:20***) The question concerning the purpose of the law as well as the reply is found in ***Galatians 3:19***. Notice the answer: ***It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.***

In this statement there is a familiar concept used by Jesus when He announced that He came to ***fulfill*** the Law. The Lord explained that not ***the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*** (***Matthew 5:18***) In ***Galatians 3:19*** we learn that the law was ***added because of transgressions till the Seed (Galatians 3:16) should come.*** In ***Galatians 3:23-24*** the Lord teaches us through Paul that Israel was ***kept in custody under the law***, that ***the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ.*** In the next verse he adds the conclusion: ***But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. (The Law) (Galatians 3:25)***

From what the Lord said in ***Matthew 5*** it is obvious that the Law would not pass away when the Seed (***Galatians 3:16***) was born, but only after He fulfilled both the Law and the Prophets. Jesus came to fulfill the requirements of this law and to redeem sinners from its curse by becoming a curse. (***Galatians 3:13***) When one notices the sayings of Jesus upon the cross the point at which it was accomplished (***Matthew 5:18***) becomes obvious. Some of the sayings are made ***that the Scripture might be fulfilled***, and then the final moments approach: ***After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" (John 19:28)*** Shortly after this the Lord says: ***"It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. (John 19:30)***

In Paul's letter to the ***Colossians (2:13-22)*** we learn how even non-Jews were redeemed from under the curse: ***And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, <sup>14</sup> having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*** In verse 16 we learn of the consequences: ***So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or***

***a new moon or sabbaths,<sup>17</sup> which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*** The substance, the true rest, is accessed through Christ only.

In his letter to the **Romans** the apostle asks: ***Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. (Romans 3:27)*** The believer is saved by a different set of rules, based upon faith in Christ, and not perfection by keeping the law without failing even once. Impossible! That is what the Law was to teach, not only the Jews, but also those who would assume that they are without sin.

Because of what God says concerning the Law the acts of obedience demonstrating faith is denied by many. The sinner is saved by those works which demonstrate his faith in God. (**James 2:14-26**) As in the case of Abraham faith is perfected by these *works*, and without these *works* faith remains ***useless***. Actions, such as baptism (**Mark 16:16**), serve no purpose other than to demonstrate faith in God and what He says. Faith cannot save until it is made alive by works. ***But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? (James 2:20)***

What then did Jesus announce when He said: ***"But I say unto you..."*** As the covenant He represents He lifted the laws to a spiritual level addressing the root of the problem, the heart of man. When Paul taught the Romans of the fulfillment of the Law the question anticipated is: ***What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?<sup>17</sup> But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. (Romans 6:15-17)***

The absence of the Law given through Moses is not a license to sin. In the final statement, ***you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered***, we find the confirmation of the ***law of faith*** which is to be obeyed ***from the heart***. Before James explains the role of works in salvation he writes: ***So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:12)*** The Hebrew writer exhorts: ***...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,...*** (Hebrews 2:3)

The Lord personally announced this salvation (the New Covenant) as He taught His disciples. They did not receive everything directly from Him as they were unable to bear it all. He would send the Holy Spirit to remind them of all He taught them, but also to lead them into all truth. (**John 16:12-13; John 14:25-16**)