

Jesus and Biblical Law - Part 3

Jesus: Authoritative Interpreter of Biblical Law in the Gospels

Torah/Biblical Law - Pentateuch; 613 law code instructions, literally: teaching or instruction

Halakha (the way to go/walk) - The disciplined, communal, and authoritative process by which Israel interprets the Biblical Law, through discernment and debate, in order to determine how God’s wisdom is faithfully obeyed in concrete, everyday situations and practice (e.g. Mishna and Talmud).

KEY: Jesus was a 1st-century Jewish Rabbi who grew up studying biblical law and the Hebrew Bible

Pharisee (separate/observant ones) - A social, political, and religious group that encouraged Israel to return to faithfulness to the biblical law. They would engage in halakha to apply biblical law to the average 1st-century Judean.

1. **The Sermon on the Mount** - Jesus’s description of the arrival of God’s kingdom and restoration to Israel and renewal of covenant relationship.

“The Antitheses”

Biblical Law (application)	Biblical Law (wisdom)
No murder (Exod. 20:13)	No hatred (Lev. 19:17-18)
No adultery (Exod. 20:14)	No lust/coveting (Exod. 20:17)
Divorce (Deut 24:1-2)	Sexual immorality (Lev. 18:6)
No false oaths (Lev. 19:12+more)	No oaths (Deut. 23:22)
Eye for eye (Lev.24:20+more)	Turn the cheek, lend to who asks (Deut 15:1-2,7-8)
Love your neighbor, hate your enemy (Lev 19:18)	Love enemies (Exod. 23:4-5; Lev 19:18)

KEY: Jesus claimed to fulfill (do, accomplish) biblical law in the renewal of the covenant, not abolish (destroy, tear down) them.

2. Jesus Engaging in Halakhic Debate with Pharisees:

- The logic of Sabbath override principles in Luke 13 and 14.
- Jesus disagrees about the interpretation of purity laws in Luke 11 and Mark 7
- **Jesus does NOT accuse Pharisees of legalism, but accuses some of misinterpretation and misapplication of biblical law, greed, and performative actions**

Conclusions

Mark 10:17-27 (*Jesus does not devalue or replace biblical law, but sees it as essential to the restoration of Israel, as faithfulness to vows is essential to the renewal of a marriage, not that the marriage is based on earning or merit, but that covenant faithfulness is expressed in embodied actions*).

Potential Discussion Questions:

- How have you seen Pharisees misrepresented?
- How should we think of Jesus's disgust with performative acts of justice?
- Have you ever heard a sermon about the "royal law" of Christ in church?
- How could churches engage in halakha today, the way Jesus does, thinking through engaging with the world in God's wisdom?

Reading for next time: Deuteronomy 28-32; Jeremiah 29-33; Ezekiel 36-37

Additional Reading:

- ***Jesus and the Law of Moses: The Gospels and the Restoration of Israel within First-Century Judaism*** by Paul T. Sloan
- ***The Stomach Purifies All Foods: Jesus' Anatomical Argument in Mark 7:18–19*** by Logan Williams
- ***Jesus for Everyone*** by Amy-Jill Levine



