

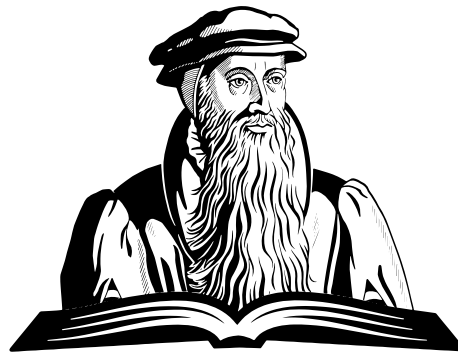
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# VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: TEN COMMANDMENTS

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## LECTURE 4: JESUS AND THE LAW

Lecture Presenter: Rev. A.T. Vergunst



**The John Knox Institute**  
of Higher Education

*Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide*

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# *Module*

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## **TEN COMMANDMENTS**

**18 LECTURES**

***REV. A.T. VERGUNST***

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## *Lecture 4*

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# JESUS AND THE LAW

Jesus said, Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. This weighty statement of the Lord is an important key in our understanding of the intention as well as the beauty of God's eternal law. Often we associate the Person and work of Jesus Christ with the word 'Gospel' and rightly so. But it may and must also be associated with the "Law of God."

Therefore in this module we will examine why the Lord Jesus is called the 'last Adam' and how that is related to His announcement that He didn't come to destroy the law of God.

### TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 4

Dear friends, it's always a joy to study the Scripture and to find new truths that are perhaps somewhat unexplored, though are undoubtedly somewhat known. What I have done in the previous two lectures, and we are studying the law of God, is to try to give a different perspective on the law. We began by looking first at the law-giver, and He is an awesome God: a God Who is love; Who reflects Himself in the commandment to love; a God Who is holy, separate from us sinners, but also intensely devotional, pure. This reflects itself in the law of God. [He] is sovereign, [a God] Who has given us laws according to His divine good pleasure, a God Who is just. He's not above the law. So, looking at the law of God from that perspective, hopefully, has already given us a deeper appreciation for what the law is all about. Now, the second nugget of gold truth is that we've looked at the law in Paradise, how Adam and Eve related to God and to each other and thereby reflected the image of God also in their life of obedience, loving God and loving each other. The law was written on the heart, and it was their joy to obey God in love and to love God in obeying.

Now in this lecture, I want to take you to the last Adam. He stands in contrast to the first Adam. There's a reason that God calls Him the last Adam. There is a similarity between the first and the last. Both of them, Adam before his fall and Jesus Christ, were perfect, sinless, holy. So, as the Lord Jesus is announced in the announcement to Mary by the angel, notice what the angel says to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing," that holy One, "that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). So, Jesus Christ as He is born, He is born, as Paul says, "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3) but not sinful. He is as Adam was in his first creation. He is also the last Adam. Many of us mistakenly say "Second Adam." I'm guilty of that, but the Scripture calls Him the "last Adam" for a purpose: there is no other one necessary. He has fulfilled the law, and that is what we will in this day also look at together.

Our thoughts are going to take us to Matthew chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon begins with a magnificent description of who are Jesus' kingdom people. The seven beatitudes describe, in a sketch, the characteristics of the born-again soul, and those seven are followed with two that describe the world's reaction upon these people. Then, Jesus gives a brief description of the calling of the citizens to be the salt and the light. And then, He comes to a very significant portion for our study about the law of God. Let me read verse 17. He says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Let's park our thoughts here for a moment and ask ourselves the question first, 'Why did Jesus teach this? What is the background? What is the motivation behind this?' And notice He begins, "Think not that I am come." He's obviously tying it into what people were thinking.

And what were people thinking? Well, His first reason for speaking this word is in defense of His own ministry. There are people out there thinking that Jesus Christ is overthrowing God's law as He overthrew many traditions and many commandments that had been added. They thought, 'He is overthrowing God's law.' Christ makes very clear that He is not come to destroy the law or the prophets. He wants to make it clear that He wants to bring a correction in how people thought about the law. And if you look through the rest of Matthew 5, you notice that the Lord Jesus carefully is correcting misinterpretations of the law. As He says, 'You have heard that it was said by them of old time' (verse 21). That's what they were thinking. 'But I say unto you [that] [these are] what God's thoughts are. This is what the original law was.' So therefore, Christ is defending His own ministry and correcting people's thoughts about the misinterpretation of it.

The second reason why He speaks this is to prevent a corruption of His teaching or a perversion of the doctrines of grace He came to bring in His teaching ministry. There are many who took Jesus' teaching about 'we are saved by grace alone' in a direction that came to mean 'obedience doesn't matter; we only are saved by grace; we're not anymore under the law.' [This is] a very important aspect, which we will discuss in a further study. But, everything in Jesus' ministry counters this interpretation that obedience doesn't matter.

Now the third reason that Jesus speaks these words from verses 17 to 20 has to do with what He says in verse 20. He is, also here, correcting a very false and fatal teaching of the Pharisees. Let me read verse 20, "For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." This teaching of Christ caused a little tidal wave in the people when they heard [it]. He literally turned the religious world of that day upside down with this verse: 'except your righteousness exceeds what the scribes and Pharisees are teaching and showing, you will in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Now, what Jesus did not teach there is, 'People, you need to have more good works, exceed the good works that the scribes and Pharisees have been trying to teach you and to do, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.' No, the word exceed doesn't go layer upon layer. The word exceed goes [in] the opposite direction. If it doesn't go deeper than the outside obedience that the scribes and Pharisees are teaching, you shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven. He goes at the heart, and really with this verse 20, the Lord Jesus Christ underlines the absolute necessity for Himself. For, there is no righteousness in our hearts, and if it has to come from there, it isn't there. So really, in a sense, verse 20 is also meant to lead us to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let's go back to verse 17. This is a cardinal verse in our study about the law of God: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." Did you notice, first of all, that Jesus makes clear that He values the law of God? He says, 'I am not here to destroy anything of the law or anything of the prophets.' This is a pillar of truth and vital for our understanding of how the law, today also, functions in the New Testament church and whether the 10 Commandments [have] relevance for us today. Jesus' ministry is to recover [and] to restore, not to rewrite or to overwrite the law of God. He's going back to the original, where it started, where it always was, and what it should be.

Now let's understand it well. He says, 'I am not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but I've come to fulfill it.' It is easy to see how Jesus fulfilled the prophets. He was born in Bethlehem. Micah said that. He was born of the Virgin Mary. Isaiah prophesied that. So, He fulfilled literally the details of hundreds of prophets in the Old Testament, but now let's take that law word: 'I have not come to destroy the law but to fulfill the law also.' What was meant of the law in this context must be determined out of the chapter. Some say the law means here the ceremonial law, the law that deals with the sacrifices, that deals with the temple worship. True. The Lord

Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the law of the ceremonies. But in the context of this chapter, He's not speaking about that.

You notice He's speaking about moral commandments: Thou shall not kill, shall not commit adultery, you shall love your enemies. Those are moral issues. So, it is only fair to conclude that Jesus here is thinking about the moral law in verse 17: I have not come to destroy, rewrite, overturn, the moral law. I'm not come to adjust it to a new New Testament context. I'm not here to do that. I am here to fulfill the law. And, the word fulfill has a beautiful meaning. It means 'to bring out the fullness of it.' It means 'to show forth the glory and the fulfillment of the law and the significance of it.' And, if you look at Jesus' life, and it's what I want to do with you briefly yet in this session, you will notice that Jesus Christ is the law of God made visible in His doings, in His actions, and [in] how He relates, how He reacts, how He loves. His entire life has one mission: to fulfill the law of God in a life that is devoted to God and to His name. Where the first Adam failed, the last Adam succeeded.

So then, how did Jesus fulfill the law of God? In three ways. First, He fulfilled it by the way He lived it. Just as He fulfilled prophecies by the way He lived, so He fulfilled the law by the way He lived. He made God's original law visible to us in how He lived the details of His life. No one since Adam's dreadful rebellion has lived a life of holiness, has lived a life of devotional love, like the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam, did. And therefore, friends, Jesus Christ is the exposition of the law of God as it originally was made and revealed. He honored it. He magnified it in the glory of His life, in His talk and actions. And, I will give you just two thoughts to ponder that.

The first part of the law is to love God above all, with all of what you are. Jesus did that. When He stood in His life as the last Adam, He faced the command opposite of what the first Adam received. The first Adam was told, "Thou shalt not eat." The second Adam is told, "Thou shalt drink the cup, the cup of the curse." That was Jesus' mission: to honor and obey His Father to the utmost. We know the first Adam failed. We know that this last Adam struggled. As we see Him in Gethsemane, we see His feelings of fear, struggling intensely to drink the cup His Father is holding out before Him. As He envisions being forsaken, as He envisions descending into the reality of hell, forsaken of God and of His church, He struggles. We know the story, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: but not my will but thy will be done" (Matthew 26:39). Eventually, Jesus denied His own feelings. He loved His Father's will above His own, and He loved His people to the end in paying the ultimate price.

Do you see the love to God illustrated in this glorious aspect? Notice His love to His neighbor, any neighbor that came across His path. He loved devotionally. He loved sacrificially. He loves them genuinely and beautifully, whether it was a foe or a friend. For three years, He walked with a man who is going to betray Him and have Him killed. He walked with Judas Iscariot. He showed him genuine love unto the last moment, devoted to him. He wasn't afraid to sacrifice His reputation, to stand up for women, to stand up for publicans and sinners, in face of the religious elite. Why? He loved them as His own. He even loved, devotionally, the Pharisees and the Scribes as He ministered to them, preached to them, reached out to them. He prayed for His enemies that crucified Him. He pardoned [a] repentant sinner who appealed to Him on the cross. All of it shows how He fulfilled law of God.

No place do we see an exposition of the moral law better than we see in the life of Jesus. That's the first way in which He fulfilled the law. The second way in which Jesus fulfilled the law is, of course, to do with His obedience on the cross. He bore the penalty. He took the penalty of sin on behalf of His church. Since that falls outside the scope of this lecture on the law of God, I leave that now further untouched.

The third meaning of fulfilling the law has to do with Jesus' work in writing the law in His people's hearts and lives. Just as the law on Mount Sinai was written with the finger of God in stone, so Jesus' Spirit writes the law upon the heart of sinners. In that sense, He also fulfills the law of God. And, this is a critical and important teaching, friends. In John 3, Jesus taught about the new birth: "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven" (verses 3-5). Notice the word cannot, not may not. May not speaks about permission. Cannot speaks about condition. He says, "You cannot in this fallen condition enter the kingdom of heaven. [This is the] kingdom law. You need to be born again." We need to be radically changed by the Spirit of God. That law has to be written in us, and Paul therefore refers to that in Romans 8:4. And the word fulfilled is in that text. He says about the work of grace, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." Now, salvation is not only to be parted from sin, [but] salvation is also to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. What a beautiful

prospect. And finally, redeemed humanity will shine brilliantly with the image of God in which we all will fulfill the law, as Jesus did in His life, in a new heaven and a new earth.

Now, let's run more to return to Matthew 5:18-19, briefly. You notice that Jesus underlines the permanency of the law. In verse 18, [He] very much stresses, even, "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." One jot or one tittle are the smallest little signs in the language that are almost insignificant, you'd say today, like our commas or apostrophe. Jesus says, 'Nothing of the law shall be taken away. Not the slightest change will I allow anyone to make.' And then in verse 19, He concludes this with a strong warning about "whosoever shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so to do, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

Now it's safe to conclude from what we've learned that the Lord gives an awful warning here about us not rewriting, ignoring, [or] canceling any part of the law of the 10 Commandments. And, that makes sense from what we learned in our previous lectures if the law is the reflection of the lawgiver. Therefore, the law can't change if the lawgiver won't change. And the lawgiver won't change; He is eternally the same. His character doesn't change; therefore, His law will not change. God's 10 Commandments are dateless, a predated creation of angels and men, and they will outlast this world forever into the New World, wherein dwells righteousness. And, Paul understood the significance of that, so he, after teaching the wonderful gospel of justification by faith, concludes Romans 3 with "do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

So, let us wrap this up. The gospel is the good news that God came to save sinners by the doing of the law and the dying, the penalty of the law, of Jesus Christ. In other words, friends, Jesus honored [and] obeyed the law both in the demand for obedience and in the penalty for disobedience. Where the first Adam failed, the last Adam succeeded. And on the basis of His own Word as the law keeper, Jesus now says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Maybe the law studies [are] going to increase a sense of unease in you and me as we look at this picture of what we are to be like and what love is supposed to look like and what the details of obedience, also in honoring God, [are] to be like. We will have a sense of unease and a sense of conviction. Maybe the viewing of God's holiness will make us a little uneasy. And then hear that message of the Savior, 'Come unto me, all you that are laboring and are heavy laden with guilt, with your inability, with your struggles, with your past, with your present, come unto me, and I will give you rest.'

And the rest that Christ gives is that He has fulfilled the law. That is that He kept the law, and by that also becomes a substitute for sinners. There is the rest of pardon on the basis of His blood. There is the rest of acceptance on the basis of His merits, but there is no rest in relaxing from obedience, as the Lord Jesus Himself concludes in that verse, "Take my yoke learn of me my yoke is easy light" (Matthew 11:29-30). And as Lord Jesus teaches us later in John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments." And those commandments aren't any different in than the ones He gave us in the 10 Commandments on Mount Sinai.

So, in the next two lectures, we're going to look one more time at the law in relationship to the sinner and in relationship to the saint, before we actually then move on to study the 10 Commandments. So, thank you again, and may God bless these words to you and me.