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Torah Observance (Part 2)



Torah Observance - Steve Gregg

The concept of Torah observance and the new covenant is further explored by Steve Gregg. He emphasizes the promises made by God to Israel and the inclusion of Gentiles in the new covenant. Gregg discusses the enduring nature of the old covenant and the need for responsible interpretation of its laws. He delves into the meaning of the Greek term "olam" often translated as "forever" and its application to eternal laws.

Furthermore, he examines the relationship between the law and prophets, suggesting that they anticipated Christ's coming. Gregg also addresses Jesus' statement about the passing away of heaven and earth, asserting that it symbolizes the fulfillment and continuity of the law.

Transcript

We were talking about the covenant, the covenants. There's two covenants. The law, the Torah, was the covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai.

Jesus came, as Jeremiah predicted one would, and made a new covenant. Now it's true, Jeremiah said the new covenant would be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Because of that statement, some people think that hasn't happened yet because the Jews have not come around to Christ yet and they think that's a future thing.

But when God made promises of the Messianic Age to Israel, not every time but frequently, he mentioned the remnant of Judah, the remnant of Israel, the remnant of Jacob. There was never a time when every Jewish person was in line to receive all the blessings unless they were part of a faithful remnant. And any Jew could be part of a faithful remnant, but it just happened most of them weren't.

And so Paul, when he's talking about these matters in Romans chapter 9, I think it's verse 27, he quotes from Isaiah chapter 10 where Isaiah said, Though the children of Israel be as the sand of the seashore, only a remnant will be saved. So the promises of God to Israel are to that remnant. And you'll find many times if you get a concordance, look up the word remnant in the Old Testament, that the promises God made to Israel

sometimes are stated to be to the remnant, not always, but frequently enough to realize that this is what he has in mind.

Now when Jesus came, the faithful remnant of Israel recognized the Messiah and came to him. They became what were later called the disciples and later called Christians. The remnant of Israel were those who were faithful to the Messiah and they were in the upper room with Jesus when he handed out the covenant, this is the new covenant.

God did make a new covenant with the house of Israel. It was the remnant who were with Jesus at that time. That remnant grew, of course, on the day of Pentecost.

It grew from those first 120 to 3,000 and then more and more and more. By chapter 4 of Acts, we've got 5,000 in the group and it just kept swelling until it was probably hundreds of thousands and possibly that many before there were any Gentiles involved. So it was the house of Israel that the new covenant was made with, but Gentiles were allowed to become part of it and that's been good for us who are Gentiles because otherwise we would not be included, but we are.

Now, what I said in our last lecture was that the coming of the new covenant according to Hebrews 8.13 makes the first one obsolete. Now, I don't know why anything that's obsolete would be considered to be binding on persons who are involved in the new covenant, but that's exactly what's under debate here. The Torah observance movement says that we are supposed to be keeping these even though we're in Christ, we're Christians, but the obligation is to keep the law.

And one of the things that seems like a strong point in their argument is the frequent use of the word everlasting or eternal when associated with certain things in the Torah because if something is eternal, then it's eternal, right? It doesn't ever end. And so I want to show you some of the scriptures that would tell us what to do with this kind of statement. In my debate with Doug Hampton, actually it was a debate he had with someone else online, he said, the church cannot abolish the everlasting covenants of God.

God cannot renege on everlasting covenant. I think it's a rather bold thing to say. First of all, the church doesn't have any business changing anything about God's plan, nor does do we claim that the church did.

The question is whether God has struck a new covenant or not. He says the church can't change the everlasting covenants of God. God cannot renege on an everlasting covenant.

Well, I'd be very cautious about saying what God can or cannot do, but I think what he's saying is it's logically impossible. Just like God cannot make two plus two equal five, God cannot take what is everlasting and make it not everlasting. So God cannot renege on an

everlasting covenant.

The interesting thing is that when the Bible uses the term everlasting covenant, as it does a few times, it's always talking about the new covenant. In Isaiah 55, 3, it says, I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the sure mercies of David. Well, what are the sure mercies of David? According to Paul in Acts chapter 13 and verse 34, God made the sure mercies of David with Israel and with Christ in the resurrection of Christ.

Actually, Paul actually says in that he raised Christ from the dead. He has written, I will give you the sure mercies of David. So he's talking about the resurrection of Christ.

The establishment of the new covenant is really where this everlasting covenant comes in. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the sure mercies of David. That's the new covenant, not the old one.

In Jeremiah 32, 40, it says, I will make an everlasting covenant with them. Again, talking about the new covenant. Just one chapter after the first announcement about the new covenant.

In Hebrews chapter 13, 20, it says, Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, and it goes on and on, but through the blood of the everlasting covenant, which was struck by Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep. You see, you do read of an everlasting covenant in the Bible, but it's always the new covenant that's everlasting. The old covenant is not said to be, but many of the laws in the Old Testament do seem to be said to be everlasting, and we need to deal with that fairly and responsibly.

I have no desire to explain anything away. I'd like to explain some things. I think when we explain some things, they do in fact go away, but to explain something away suggests that you've got an agenda and there's hostile data against you, but you give it some kind of a lame explanation to kind of make it disappear, and that's not what I want to do.

The word everlasting or eternal in the Hebrew is the word olam. Now, the basic root of the word olam is the word hidden. It means hidden, but it came to mean something that's hidden because it's so far away you can't see it, like beyond the horizon, and olam technically means very distant.

We could say you can't see it from here, but that doesn't mean it has no end. Now, some of the things that are olam or everlasting or eternal, obviously everlasting and eternal are not good English translations, but that's what we have in our English versions. The word doesn't necessarily mean everlasting.

It means of such long duration that the end cannot be seen because it's beyond the

horizon, beyond the next mountain. You can't see what's over there, but there's something there, and it might be that the road you're on ends there. You don't know.

It just goes as far as you can see, and that's what the word *olam* means, and in many cases, it's applied to things that are not eternal at all. It's used over 300 times in the Old Testament, at least 20 times. Speaking of things in the eternal past, but not really eternal, it means hidden beyond the vanishing point or the horizon.

The basic meaning of *olam* is, quote, most hidden, most distant times, whether past or future. Therefore, the possible meanings of *olam* is a broad range between the remotest time and perpetuity. Most of the occurrences of *olam* indicate an indefinite continuance into the very near future.

Now, I got that from Spiros Zotiades, not so much a Hebrew scholar. He's more Greek, but that's in one of his lexical works, and I found in the lexicons, for example, Brown, Driver, Briggs, Jacinius, Unger, White, Harris, Archer, Waltke, and Vines dictionary. All of them pretty much say the same thing.

They all agree. The word means distant times. Now, distant times obviously are not necessarily endless times.

They might be, or they might not be. But God is referred to as *olam*. He's the eternal God.

Now, God, of course, exists forever. There's no beginning or end to him, so he's truly what we would call eternal, and something that is *olam* can be eternal. It's just that the word *olam* doesn't tell you for sure whether it is or not, because you don't know where the end or the beginning is of something that's *olam*.

So in Isaiah 42.14, we read of the word translated for a long time. In Isaiah 42.14, the word *olam* is translated for a long time. In Jeremiah 2.20, *olam* is translated long ago.

In Exodus 21.6, it tells us that if a slave wants to stay with his master beyond the seventh year of his slavery, he's offered his freedom, but he wants to stay, he can have his ear pierced, and then he'll serve his master *olam*, forever. Now, let's face it, that man's not going to be a slave into eternity, certainly not beyond his lifetime. But it's a long time.

He doesn't know how long it'll be. He doesn't know how long he'll live. It certainly is referring to the end of his life, but it's still said to be *olam*.

It's still forever, it's translated. Forever is another English word that's used to translate the word *olam*. Several words are.

Long ago, for a long time, forever. And there are quite a few. I have some in my notes.

I'm not going to go over all of them. When they put the stones in the Jordan River, when they crossed with Joshua in Joshua 4.7, it says those stones will be there as a memorial forever, olam. I don't know if those stones are still there.

You can get some scuba divers to go check it out, but I wouldn't be surprised if the tide has washed them away. They might be there. I'm not saying they aren't, but there's no guarantee that they are.

The fact that they're to be there for the duration, as long as anyone can say, is all that is necessary to be understood. In 1 Samuel 1.22, when Hannah is praying for God to give her a son, she says, I'll give him to you, he'll serve you in the tabernacle forever. Is Samuel still in the tabernacle in Shiloh? I don't think so.

Forever would mean for his lifetime, of course, but it's olam. It's not eternal. 1 Samuel 27.12 speaks of David being the servant of Achish forever.

Achish was the Philistine king that he became loyal to, or pretended to be loyal to, in the land of David's running from Saul. 2 Kings 5.27, Gehazi got the leprosy that had been Naaman's. And Elisha said, therefore his leprosy will cling to you forever.

Olam. Forever a leper? Even into eternity? I think not. Jonah, when he was swallowed by the fish and he prayed to God in Jonah 2.6, he said, the bars of Sheol closed around me forever.

But that ended up only being three days. That forever. That olam.

1 Kings 9.3, God told Solomon, I'm going to put my name on this house that you've built me forever. Olam. That house is not there.

It was even rebuilt after it was destroyed, but that one's not there either. And as far as I know, it's not coming back. Some Christians think it will, but it hasn't been there forever.

It really means for the foreseeable future, or there are sometimes conditions stated, you know, unless such and such happens, well, then that changes the whole story. All bets are off. In Exodus 40, verse 15, it says that Aaron's priesthood is forever.

Well, the writer of Hebrews tells us that, and so. And so that's all of those are cases where olam is used, which means that when you experience, you come to the Old Testament expression forever or eternal or everlasting, you have to say, OK, does this, does this in this case mean what it on some occasions does mean, which means something that never ends like God himself? Or does it just mean for the foreseeable future for a very long time to the distant future or sometimes referred to the distant past to the distant time? If that's so, then you can't make too much of God saying that circumcision is to be a sign of the covenant between him and Abraham's seed forever. Olam or that Sabbath is to be observed forever.

Olam or any of these other things, the Passover is to be kept forever. Olam, these laws are often said to be olam forever. But we find other biblical information that tells us they aren't anymore.

Remember, it says in Hebrews 7, 12, the priesthood being changed, there must necessarily be a change of the law. The priesthood has been changed. The Aaronic priesthood is over.

One of the things that was said to be olam. Solomon's temple isn't there. It's replaced by a spiritual temple made of living stones, a habitation of God through the spirit.

But it was supposed to be olam too. Circumcision was olam, but Paul says if you get circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. You've fallen from grace, you who are circumcised.

You're obligated to keep the whole law if you do that, which he said is a bad thing. But you do need to be circumcised in the heart. Many times the things that were olam, that were rituals of the old covenant, they continue in a sense in their spiritual mode.

They've been transformed. Some people would say that's what Jesus meant when he said he came to fulfill the law. It was an external shell of behavior in the old covenant.

It was a ritual. But what Christ has come as he's filled it full. He brought a spiritual meaning.

It's replaced the old ritual with the spiritual reality. We now have spiritual circumcision. We have a spiritual Sabbath according to Hebrews 4. We have a spiritual temple, a spiritual priesthood.

We offer spiritual sacrifices, scripture says. And so these forever ordinances of the Torah, according to the New Testament, they are now in a sense replaced or subsumed or fulfilled in something that's spiritual, not ritual. Now that's an awfully hard bit of data to get over if you're trying to prove that we're supposed to keep these laws.

And the main reason is because we read forever, forever, forever about them. It's always olam. And it was a very long time.

It was 1400 years. No Jew could have foreseen the end of it or when it would end. But Jesus came and he did fulfill it.

And with the fulfillment of it, a great number of things have changed. I dare say everything has changed in the law. The moral standards have not changed, but that's not distinctly what the Bible is referring to by Torah.

Sometimes when we think of Torah, we're thinking of a moral code. We think of the second temple of the law, especially. Don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal,

don't bear false witness.

That's a moral code. And that was, of course, incorporated into the law. But it was not what made Israel distinct.

Many nations around Israel had laws against murder. In fact, most nations historically have. It was wrong in almost every society to dishonor your parents in ancient times.

Adultery was considered wrong, wrong enough that you could commit murder in order to take a man's wife rather than commit adultery, according to people in Abraham's day, before the law was given. But you see, murder, adultery, stealing, all of those things have been punishable crimes in every society, because that's not the Torah that distinguishes Israel. It's the ceremonial laws that are the laws of holiness.

Those are the laws that separate Israel from the nations. Their tabernacle, their priesthood, their diet, their holy place, their holy days. These are all said to be the things that set them apart as holy.

They're all ritual. And there is a difference between ritual and ceremonial law. I'll say more about that later, but I don't need to right now too much.

The point I'm making is, if someone says, but I want to believe that all those laws are eternal and unending. Well, you can do that if you're willing to see that they pass through a transformation to a spiritual mode from a ritual mode, when Jesus fulfilled them. Or it could be seen another way.

They were not forever. And what Christ has brought is not just a renewing and a spiritualizing of the law. There's something entirely new that Christ has brought.

It doesn't really matter, because in either case, we're going to need to be spiritually circumcised, offer spiritual sacrifices, be a spiritual priesthood, be a spiritual temple, and keep spiritual sabbath, all those things. Regardless of how we define how the word eternal is being used or forever is used. The point here is, the Bible does not give good grounds for saying that these laws are to be kept for all eternity.

Even though some of our English translations use wording that may give that impression. The law, as we know, was Olam, but it was temporary. And Jesus made that statement very clearly.

He said in Luke 16, 16, the law, the Torah, and the prophets were until John the Baptist. Since then, the kingdom of God has been preached. There's a new message.

Not the Torah. The kingdom. Christ is king.

That's the new message. We've got another king, one Jesus. There's a Lord now.

Not a law. A Lord. The new covenant brings people under the authority of a Lord.

The old covenant brought them under the authority of a law. And the law was good until John began to preach the kingdom of God. Since then, Jesus indicated, it's a new ballgame now.

The law and the prophets were until John strongly suggests, he's going to suggest that they are no longer. And he does suggest, since then we've got a new message, the kingdom of God is being preached. Luke 16, 16.

Paul said in Romans 10, 4, Christ is the end of the Torah for righteousness for all who believe. Now, the word end could be like the goal. But whether it's, the word end can mean, either it can mean like the cessation of something.

Or it can be the goal of the thing. But in most cases, when you reach the goal, you cease the pursuit. The law was the pursuit of something.

And Christ is what it was pursuing. What the law looked forward to was Christ. He is what it fulfilled.

He fulfilled it. He is what it was looking forward to. He is the end of the Torah.

And if Paul says that the end of the Torah has been in Christ, I'm not sure who wants to say it didn't end. Is it not then saying that Christ is not the end of the Torah? Isn't that kind of demeaning of Christ? Is that why Paul said, if you come under the Torah, you've been estranged from Christ. Christ will profit you nothing, he said.

Because it's either Torah or Christ. You're either under a law or you're under a Lord. That's the two choices.

You either have a law given to you written on stones, or you have a law that's written in your heart, which is the law of love, which Christ gave. And he is the one who governs and leads his disciples. Paul said in Galatians 3.9, The law was a tutor until the seed should come.

Now, in the same chapter, Paul says the seed is Christ. Until Christ would come, the law was here to be a tutor. He says that when faith in Christ has come, we're no longer under the tutor.

I don't see how that could be any clearer. The law was there, it was added because of transgressions, because it did keep people in line somewhat, not enough apparently. But it was better than nothing, it's better to have laws than no laws.

If you've got no inward laws, you better have outward laws. If you don't have inward controls, you better have outward controls. If you don't have self-discipline, you're going to have imposed discipline.

That's just the way reality is. Before Christ came and wrote laws in the hearts of all his people, there had to be an imposed law. That was there sort of as a babysitter, as a tutor, a schoolmaster, the King James says.

And it was there until Christ came. And when faith in Christ has come, we are no longer under the tutor. I mean, there's no way to take that some differently than Paul, I think, obviously said it.

At least I can't think of any exegetical device for doing so. In the same chapter, Galatians 3, verses 23 through 25, Paul likens us to children. Now my Bible got misplaced somewhere.

Can I grab your Bible just for a moment? Thank you. Yeah. Which one is this? It's the NIV.

NIV, how dare you? I don't. Okay, all right. That's okay.

Even the NIV works in this case, you know. Any Bible that's based on the New Testament is going to work in this particular instance. And I didn't write out this whole passage in the notes, I'm sorry to say, but it's one of the few I did.

But in Galatians chapter 3, verses 23 through 25, Paul said, Before faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

Now, that's kind of unambiguous. Even in this translation it's unambiguous. Actually, that translation exists to make it less ambiguous than it is in the literal, but even in the literal it's unambiguous.

So it's very clear. The New Testament says that although we read in the Old Testament that laws were olam, olam didn't mean they're not going to end because Jesus and Paul said they were temporary, they were until a certain point. And that point was, of course, Christ coming.

Now, we've got a little bit of a problem, though, because of that statement Jesus made in the Sermon on the Mount. And especially that phrase he used, till heaven and earth pass away. That's a bugaboo.

Because Jesus said, Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily, verily, I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one yod or one tittle will pass from the law until all is fulfilled.

Now, what we've got there, that's Matthew 5, 17 and 18. Verse 18 is where we find this statement, till heaven and earth pass away. It's difficult.

But it's difficult not just because it seems to go against what I'm saying, but it's difficult

because the sentence is a difficult sentence. There's one event that is described, the passing away of one yod or tittle of the law. And he said, that won't happen.

And then there's two untils. There's until heaven and earth pass away and until all is fulfilled. So how do we deal with that? Does it mean heaven and earth are going to pass away at the same time that it's all fulfilled? That'd be probably the simplest way to look at it, but it wouldn't make any sense.

The sentence is difficult because there's two duration clauses for the same event. When one yod or tittle passes from the law, that's when it's all fulfilled. That's when heaven and earth pass away.

Or is that what it's saying? Well, there's different ways to look at this, but there's fortunately other biblical information that might help give light on it. Let me just tell you what are the impossible possible meanings. The unacceptable possible suggested meanings of this statement.

First, it cannot be saying that some parts of the Torah will never be fulfilled and never pass away. Because he said, it won't happen until. Which means there's a time when it will.

There's a time when the law and the prophets will pass away. The question is when. If someone were to say, well, it's until heaven and earth pass away, therefore it's still in force, well, that's one opinion that needs to be considered.

But the one thing we can't say is that the law and the prophets are never going to pass away because Jesus made the point that they won't until something happens. Namely, they're fulfilled. In connection with that, he mentioned something about the heaven and earth passing, which we'll talk about more.

Another thing we can't conclude from it is that some parts of the Torah will pass, leaving others still in force. Now, because he said, not one bit of it will pass until it is all passed, so it's all fulfilled. So you can't have it that, okay, parts of the Torah have passed, but the other parts, they're still with us until the end of the world.

Okay, well, but you can't have that. Either it's all in force or it's all fulfilled because the one thing Jesus said is you can't expect some little parts of it to change before all of it has changed. That's an impossible suggestion.

That means, of course, that if we are under any part of the law, if any part of the law is still unfulfilled, then all of it is unfulfilled and we have to offer the animal sacrifice. There's no choice. It's a major portion of the law.

We need to go back to Jerusalem. We need to build that temple. We need to start, you know, ordaining Aaronic priests.

We need to keep all the holy days. We need to offer lambs and bulls and goats because that's a big, big, big part of the law. That's not a little jot or a tittle.

That's a major portion of the law. And we can't take Jesus' statement and say, some parts will be fulfilled before others. He's left that option off the table with this statement.

What else can it not mean? It cannot mean that the Torah had already been fulfilled at the time that he was speaking. I don't know anyone who suggests this, so I'm just taking all the things it can't mean. He did not say that it was already fulfilled while he was speaking because his... It won't be fulfilled... Pass right, until all is fulfilled, he's speaking of a future thing.

How far in the future is open to question, but it's still future from the point of his speaking. The Torah was not yet fulfilled. It would be.

Now let me just say this. This somewhat explains to me the statement he makes in verse 19 where he says, therefore anyone who breaks the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so is least in the kingdom of heaven. Those who keep them and do them is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Yeah, while it's still in force. He was saying, I'm not telling my disciples to show contempt for the law of Moses. I'm not here to do anything destructive.

Fulfillment isn't destructive. When a child is born, his existence predicts something, and eventually an adult. Children generally, if all goes well, grow up and become adults, and when you have a baby, you expect an adult to come.

When the baby grows up, there's no more child. There's an adult, but was the child destroyed? No, it was fulfilled. It's come into maturity.

The passing away of the law because it's fulfilled is like the passing away of a child by becoming a man. You know, Paul said, when I was a child, I spoke and I thought and I acted as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things. It's interesting that the word put away he uses there is the same Greek word that Paul uses in Colossians chapter 2, where he says that Christ abolished the commandments.

Put them away. Same Greek term. You put away your childish things when you become a man.

The law is a childish thing. Paul referred to it in certain places as the *stoicheia*, which in the Greek means the basic elements. In fact, *stoicheia*, scholars sometimes equate with the alphabet, the ABCs.

You have to learn the ABCs before you can read or write. It's the first thing a child has to learn. It's basic stuff.

In fact, I think there's probably some paraphrases, because there's a lot of paraphrases, that probably have Paul saying that they're the ABCs, because that's kind of what the essence of the stoicheia is. He referred to the laws of the Old Testament as the stoicheia, and he rebuked the Galatians that they wanted to go back there after they'd already come to maturity as sons of God. So it doesn't destroy the law to fulfill it.

It fulfills it, which is a positive thing. But, of course, its fulfillment means it's not there anymore, or not in the same form, at least. It's not the same thing anymore.

A child no longer exists where there once was a child. If that child has come to maturity, been fulfilled, become a man. And so the childish things are put away.

And one other thing it can't mean, his ambiguous statement, cannot mean that the Torah would remain unfulfilled after his mission had been accomplished. Why? Because he says, I came to fulfill the law. So he's not saying, and after I'm done here, it'll still be unfulfilled.

Then why did he come to fulfill it and didn't do it? He came to do it. And at the end of his life, when he's praying in John 17, he says, Father, I've finished the work that you gave me to do. So he didn't come to do something and fail to do it, including establishing the kingdom.

Dispensationists say, well, he came to establish the kingdom, but the Jews didn't cooperate, so it was postponed. He couldn't do it. No, Jesus finished the work he was sent to do.

If he was sent to establish the kingdom, he did. If he was sent to fulfill the law, he did. His statement cannot be understood to mean that the fulfillment of the law would fail to be accomplished by him at his first coming.

Because that's at his first coming, he came to do it. Now, what does heaven and earth passing mean then? Well, that's still for us to consider. Let me consider some possible meanings.

I'm not sure which one is correct, but there are some that are possible and there are some that are impossible. The ones that the Torah observant people use, they fall into the impossible group. You can't have some laws passed and not others, for example.

But there are several meanings of this that are reasonable and possible, although I confess to ignorance as to which is the one that Jesus intended. One possible meaning is that the end of the universe occurs at the same time as the ultimate fulfillment of the passing of the law, which means that the end of the universe happened in the lifetime of Jesus or through the mission of Jesus, and we'd have to take the end of the universe basically symbolically. And many people do, especially full preterists, and some partial preterists too, believe that the passing away of the old heaven and the old earth and the

coming of the new heaven and the new earth is a symbol for the passing of the old covenant and the coming of the new covenant.

Remember, Paul said, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, like a new heaven is a new earth, so to speak. A new creation has come in Christ, and that's the new order, the new covenant, and the end of the old order was necessary before the new could come. So some would say, passing of heaven and earth that Jesus mentions there is the same as the passing of the old covenant, and that is the figure of speech.

That is not impossible. I don't particularly favor it, but I'm not saying it's wrong. It's only one possible meaning.

Another possible meaning is that the law and the prophets will never pass away without being fulfilled, even if the universe does. So that we read in Luke 16, 17, which is kind of a parallel, but worded very differently. Luke 16, 17, Jesus said, it's easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.

Now, for the law to fail would mean it would come to an end before it's fulfilled. So he's making essentially the same statement we find in the Sermon on the Mount, but worded differently. He says it's easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for any jot or the tittle of the law to come to an end without being fulfilled.

So he's saying that the fulfillment of the law, ultimately, is as certain as the continuity of the universe. That'd be sort of a thing to say. And Jesus actually did say that in another place, and whether that's what he means here or not is not certain.

It could mean that, because it could mean... It could be like when you say, when hell freezes over. Yeah, I'm going to do that when hell freezes over. Oh, really? When's that going to happen? Well, it's not going to happen.

Oh, okay, so you're saying you're not going to do that. Till hell freezes over is a way of emphatically saying, what I'm saying is, like, true, you know? It's not going to happen. It really means unless hell freezes over, which isn't going to happen.

Sometimes when you say, till this happens, it really has the force of unless this happens. And it could be saying that unless heaven and earth pass away, which isn't going to happen, not immediately anyway. Until heaven and earth pass away, simply means this is a firm, unchangeable, true statement that I'm about to make.

Namely, that not one jot or tittle of the law will pass until all has been fulfilled. It could mean it that way. And we see something like that in Jeremiah 31 and 33.

In Jeremiah 31, verses 35 and 36, Jeremiah says what God says, thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinance of the moon, and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea and its waves roar. The Lord of hosts is his name. If those

ordinances, what the sun, moon, and stars, the heavens and the earth, if those ordinances depart from before me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before me forever.

In other words, it's not going to happen. There'll never be a time where the true seed of Israel ceased to exist as a holy nation. Remember Peter says about the church, you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

God's people are still a holy nation. They're the remnant, the faithful. But the point is, when he says, if those ordinances, if the sun passes away, if the moon passes away, then I'm going to be done entirely with my people Israel.

But he's not. The remnant of them he saved. He's not done with them or us who've been grafted in among them.

But the point here is, the force of it is sort of like this isn't going to happen. The sun, the moon, these ordinances are not going to pass away. So you can count on what I'm saying being, you know, a universal truth.

That's kind of how it's used there. Also in Jeremiah 33, 25 and 26, he says, thus says the Lord, if my covenant is not with the day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinance of the heaven and the earth, then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Is God ever going to not allow one of the descendants of David to be the ruler of his people? No, Jesus is a descendant of David.

He's ruling at the right hand of God. He's never going to go anywhere. There's always going to be a ruler of the sea of David over his people.

That ruler's name is Jesus. But he says, you know, if heaven and earth pass away, then I will fail to keep my promises about this. That sounds very much like what Jesus said.

It really means this isn't going to happen. This thing I'm about to say is never going to happen. And the reference to heaven and earth pass away is again, like I was saying, until hell freezes over, something like that.

I think that may be what Jesus has in mind, because Jeremiah did. And he's essentially saying, this is absolutely true what I'm about to say. Not one jot or tittle of the law will pass until all is fulfilled.

That's what I understand Jesus' statement to mean. And if someone says, well, I don't like that, that doesn't sound quite so literal as I'd like it. Look, you can have another choice, but you can't have one of the choices that are impossible choices.

I told you what possibilities are possible and what ones are not possible. And to be Torah

observant today, you have to take one of the impossible choices. One in particular.

Now, I'm going to give you another break in a few minutes, but I just want to finish this portion with this consideration. And that is, what in the world was the transfiguration about anyway? I always wondered about that as a kid reading the Gospels. They made such a big deal of it.

Peter and James and John go up on a mountain for the night with Jesus. He's praying. Moses and Elijah appear.

The disciples are, you know, stoked. Peter says, wow, Lord, this is great. Let's build three tabernacles, one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah.

In other words, let's keep all you guys around here. Let's have a great camp meeting. We got the best preachers in history with us here.

We got Jesus, Moses, Elijah. That'd be a great weekend. Let's build enough tents that you can all stay.

But it didn't happen that way because once, in fact, the Bible even, when the Gospels record this, and three of the Gospels do record it, and Peter speaks of it also in 2 Peter 1, the Gospels, they all say Peter said that because he didn't know what to say. In other words, he wasn't saying something well advised at all or well thought out. It was not really a good thing to say.

What was wrong with that? I would have probably said something like that. I love it. Jesus is here.

Now Moses and Elijah, I mean, they died, or Moses died 1,400 years earlier. Elijah was taken up into heaven 700 years earlier. How many people in my generation get to see these two guys? Pretty cool.

Let's keep them as long as we can. But that didn't happen. It was a misstatement.

And suddenly a cloud came over them, it says, and Moses and Elijah disappeared after giving their endorsement to Christ. They disappeared. And then Jesus alone was left, and a voice from heaven said, This is my son.

Listen to him. Now what's the meaning of that? Of course, it describes that Jesus himself was transfigured, that he glowed like the sun, he seemed glorious. And that's how I always saw it.

I just thought, oh, this is a great opportunity for the disciples to see how glorious Jesus was if you peel away the skin, you know, to see what's really inside that man. He's gone. And that's kind of how I understood it.

And that is no doubt one of the meanings. But what's Moses and Elijah got to do with anything? Well, a great deal, it seems to me. Moses obviously represents the law.

How could anyone deny that? Elijah almost certainly represents the prophets. To the Jews, he was like the prince of the prophets. And so the law and the prophets, or the Tanakh, the Old Testament writings, these were the authorities that Peter and his friends had lived under for all their lives.

They were Jews. They had been under Torah all their life. The law and the prophets were their guides, were their instructors, were the ones that God assigned to be listened to.

But now they show up, they give an endorsement to Jesus and go away. And only Jesus left. God says, this is my son, listen to him now.

See, people who want to keep Jesus and Moses and Elijah all on the same level, they're making the same mistake Peter did. Let's build three tabernacles. Why do these guys have to go away? How cool is it that they're here? It's wonderful.

They're wonderful. The law is wonderful. The prophets are wonderful.

But they had their time. They've given their endorsement to the Messiah. Now they go away.

They're in retirement. There's now one that we're to listen to, him. And what this teaches us is that Christ, who's the mediator of the new covenant, is the new one that we listen to, not Moses, who mediated the old covenant.

Not the stipulations given in the old covenant, but those given by Christ. Christ is the one. Let me tell you some of the lessons of the Transfiguration before we just take our break.

In Ephesians 1.22, Paul said that God has put all things under Jesus' feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the church. Now I'm in the church, and God has made him to be the head over all things. Now the law governed all areas of life to the Jew.

Their diet, their movements, their calendars, what they wore, what they could touch, what they couldn't touch. I mean, they were definitely regulated in every area by the law. But now Christ is the head over all things to us.

I don't need to consult the law about what I must do. I consult my head. I'm part of his body.

The head, I have a relationship with him. He's my Lord. He's the head.

And he's the one I have to follow, not the law or the prophets. Now the law and the prophets still have their value, and the Bible, I think every Christian recognizes that. But

it's not the same.

It's not that they have the value of being the authority over our lives as they were in the old covenant. They are types and shadows. They are instructive.

They're a schoolmaster. They point to Christ. That's true.

No one should discard their Old Testament. The Old Testament is the only Bible the apostles preached from, or Jesus either for that matter. It's a good book.

Paul was talking about the Old Testament when he said, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and profitable for reproof and for doctrine and correction and instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work. He's talking about the Old Testament writings, the law, the prophets, the Psalms. And we see that they put their money where their mouth was because they quoted them all the time, especially the Psalms and the prophets, but also the law.

They quoted them. The law and the prophets have the types and shadows and the truths that are profitable for our instruction, Paul said. And the apostles and Jesus used them.

That's why Paul could say, I believe everything that's in the law and the prophets, but I serve God according to the way that's called the sect, the way, which is the following of Jesus. I serve God according to a certain way, but I believe everything in the law and the prophets. Yeah, every Christian should be able to say that.

Second Corinthians chapter 10, verses 4 and 5, Paul said, for the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but mighty in God, for the pulling down of strongholds, casting down arguments, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Torah. Oh, I'm sorry. That's not right.

It's bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Christ is the head over all things. Torah is not.

Our warfare is to bring every thought under Christ's lordship, under Christ's authority and obedience to him. There's no part of our mission ever stated in the Bible to bring people under Torah. In John 8, 31, Jesus said, if you continue in my words, then you are my disciples.

Indeed, his words. Now, of course, a lot of Torah observers say, well, Jesus was God, and therefore the Torah was God, was Jesus's words too, because he was there and gave the Torah and so forth. Well, it's true.

Jesus was there and Jesus was involved in, I suppose, making the old covenant with the

old people. But now he's making a new covenant and his words. He still has words for us.

I don't think the disciples were intended to understand him say, I'm God. I gave you the Torah. Jesus never declared himself very plainly to be God.

He did allude to it sometimes. And frankly, I don't think the disciples even knew he was God right away. I think I think it dawned on them eventually.

But when he said continue in my words, they would naturally have the words that you've heard me speak. Now, what did Jesus speak? He spoke a lot of words, but he never put them under ceremonial laws of the Torah. It's true.

The moral issues that are in the Torah, he reaffirmed, because moral issues never change. They're universal. They're not the distinct laws God gave to Israel.

All people, Cain and Abel were under the law. You shall not murder. It wasn't stated, but it was a requirement.

You're not supposed to murder. That's why Cain got punished. But what was distinctive about Israel's law, the Torah, were the Levitical laws.

Jesus never enforced any of them. He never commanded to keep the Sabbath. He never commanded to keep festivals.

He never commanded to keep kosher. In fact, a number of things he said, as we'll see after we take a break, seem to have said, never mind those things. But we don't ever find him affirming them, ever.

And again, we'll save some of that for next time, but I just want to read a few verses more, and then we'll take our break. Matthew 28, 18 through 20, is, of course, what we call the Great Commission in Matthew's Gospel. And Jesus said, all authority has been given to me.

Authority is the right to rule, the right to dictate, the right to make the decisions. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me, Jesus said. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations.

Now, what's a disciple? Jesus said in John 8 through 21, if you continue in my words, you're my disciples. So how do I make disciples? I teach them to continue in Christ's words, and Jesus said in that way, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Now, by the way, the mission of the church for the first years was to the Jews only.

They didn't need to be told to keep the Torah. They'd been told that by their rabbis. It's what Jesus commands, it's what we teach people.

We don't teach people Torah. We teach people to do what Jesus said. He's the head.

He's the Lord over all things. In 1 Corinthians 9, 21, Paul makes a distinction between the Torah and the law of Christ. I'm giving you this from the New American Standard, which I think is better.

1 Corinthians 9, 21, Paul said, and he's talking about his evangelistic strategy. To the Jews, I became like a Jew so that I might win the Jews. Now, by the way, I want to say this.

Torah observers say Paul always maintained his Jewish identity. To him, he was always a Jew. Why do you say I become like a Jew when I'm with Jews? He was not identifying himself as a Jew.

There's no Jew or Gentile in Christ. Christ is the identity of the believer, not Jew or Gentile. I'm in Christ, and when I'm with a Jew, I act like a Jew, that I might win the Jews.

To those who are under the law, which is the same category, the Jews, I act as one under the law, though not being under the law myself. Interesting. Paul says, I am not personally under the law, but when I'm with people who are, I behave like that to reach them, to avoid offending them.

But notice the next line. To those who are without law, meaning the Gentiles who don't follow Torah, I become as without Torah. In other words, I don't observe Torah when I'm with people who don't observe it.

Though not being without law to God, but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without the law. Now, when I'm with Jews, I keep the Torah. I'm not under the Torah, he says, but I'll do it to win them.

But when I'm with people who are not under Torah, I don't bother. No need. Now, by the way, if Paul believed that Torah observance was a Christian duty, he would not have the liberty to stop following the Torah just because he happened to be in a Gentile home.

He clearly is at liberty to keep the Torah or not. It's not obligatory. He can do it, it'll help him win people, or he cannot do it if it'll help him win people.

It's not a matter of obligation. And he says, he says, I'm not under the law, but he says, in parentheses, he says, I'm not without law. I'm under the law of Christ.

Now notice he says earlier, he said, I'm not under the law, meaning the Torah. In that verse, he says, I'm not under the Torah. But then he says in parentheses, I am under the law of Christ.

While I debated Doug Hamp, he kept insisting the law of Christ is the Torah. No, Paul made a distinction between the two. I'm not under the Torah, I am under the law of

Christ.

What's that mean? I don't have to consult the Torah about my duties, I consult Christ. I have a Lord, he tells me what to do. I'm a servant, he's a master, I'm not my own, I've been bought with a price.

And I follow his instructions, his law. Whatever Christ says, that's what I'm obligated to do. But not what the Torah says.

In 1 Timothy 6, 3 and 4, Paul said, Now what Paul is saying is, anyone who teaches anything other than that we need to obey Christ doesn't know what they're talking about. Now I'm not saying that the Torah observance people say we shouldn't obey Christ. Because they say that Christ taught that we should keep the Torah.

So we should obey the Torah and thus obey Christ. But we see that Paul makes a distinction between keeping Torah and keeping the law of Christ. And so we see that the Transfiguration tells us that the Torah and the prophets, they had their role, they were God's instructors to Israel in their childhood.

Until faith came. The tutor can go now. We've grown up, we're not children anymore.

We're putting away childish things and we now have the fulfillment, which is Christ. And he is the Lord. And as Lord, he tells us what to do and what not to do.

Jesus said in Matthew 12, 8, It's interesting how the context is, his disciples were being blamed by the Pharisees for not observing the Sabbath properly. And he defended them against the accusations. Now he didn't say they were keeping the Sabbath.

He instead compared it with another breach of the law that David did. He says, have you not heard what David did when he ate the shewbread? That was not lawful. See, some people say when Jesus defended his disciples for breaking the Sabbath, they would say, oh, they weren't really breaking the law.

They were just breaking the rabbinic traditions about the law. Well, if that was true, Jesus could have said so, because sometimes Jesus actually did say that when they were accused of not washing their hands. He said, those are just traditions.

If the problem here was the disciples were not violating the Sabbath, but they were violating only the traditions of the Sabbath, Jesus could have said, hey, that's just tradition, guys. You're wrong. Instead, he said, wait a minute.

David broke the law when he ate the shewbread. Isn't that a breach of the law? It is. Why don't you blame him? Now, what he's saying is what my disciples have done is somewhat parallel to what David did.

He was hungry. They're hungry. They're picking grain and eating it.

Yeah, maybe that's a violation of Torah. So was what David did, a violation of Torah. But you don't blame him.

And then Jesus says this really remarkable thing. He says, and do you not read in the law that the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath daily and are blameless? Now, it's interesting. The priests profane the Sabbath.

That means they treat it like an ordinary day. They work all, they work seven days. People aren't supposed to do that under the Sabbath law, but the priests did.

And Jesus said they profane the Sabbath, but they are blameless. You mean someone could actually profane the Sabbath and be blameless? Jesus said so. That was even true under the old covenant because they were under special orders to do the work of the temple.

And then Jesus said, but one greater than the temple is here. So if your priests can profane the Sabbath to do the work of the temple, then my disciples, I who am greater than the temple, they're authorized to do whatever I want them to do, including break the Sabbath. That's his argument.

There's no other argument he's making there. That's his argument. And they said, for the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.

Now, what does that mean, even of the Sabbath? He could have just said the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, and we could have puzzled over what that means. But when he said even of the Sabbath, it kind of brings clarity. He's the Son of Man is the Lord of Sunday and Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and Friday, and even of the Sabbath.

He's the Lord all the time, which means the disciples' obligation is not defined by a calendar day. It's defined by the Lord of all days, even the Sabbath day. Christ is the Lord 24-7 for his disciples, and it is not incumbent on them to check their calendar to see if they can do this or that thing.

They check with the Lord because they're his servants, and he can break the Sabbath. He did. He said he did it because his father did.

He said, my father works, or the two of us work on the Sabbath. Now, my disciples can do so under my authorization. Because your priest can do so to serve the temple.

My disciples can do so in the service of me because I'm the Lord, even on the Sabbath day, not just the other six, which means Jesus made all days pretty much the same in terms of obligation for disciples. He's the Lord every single day, and that's, again, a Lord instead of a law. God might lead you to rest on Sabbath if you're working among Jewish people or something like that.

I mean, to not work on Sabbath, but that's up to him. It's not a written code that tells you whether you should do that or not. And frankly, most preachers, a lot of people think Sunday's the Sabbath.

Of course, the Bible doesn't support that. Saturday is the Sabbath. There's never been a Sunday Sabbath recognized in the Bible.

That's kind of a Catholic invention, but it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what day is Sabbath. Jews keep Sabbath.

Christians keep every day alike, or at least are authorized to. Some keep one day better, but that's not required. It's up to them.

If God wants them to, to their own master, they stand or fall, Paul said in that particular passage. Let me give you one more passage, and then we're on a break. Second Corinthians 3, verses 7 through 13.

I want to give you this because there are some that I've debated who've said, we still have to keep the Ten Commandments, but what Christ fulfilled and we don't have to keep is the Levitical laws. Now, the Torah observant people go further and say we have to keep those too. But many Christians, like Seventh-day Adventists, for example, they don't believe you have to keep all the Levitical laws, but they think you should keep the Ten Commandments.

And they say what Jesus fulfilled was not the Ten Commandments, but just the Levitical laws, so we still keep the Ten Commandments. Of course, that includes Sabbath. But Paul said this in Second Corinthians 3, verses 7 through 13.

He said, but if the ministry of death, that's his term for the Old Covenant, written and engraved on stones, that's his reference to the Ten Commandments, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit, he means the New Covenant, not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation, that again is the Old Covenant, the law, had glory, the ministry of righteousness, the New Covenant, exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious, apparently Moses' face, had no glory in this respect because of the glory that excels. That'd be the glory of Christ, probably transfiguration glory that the disciples saw.

For if what is passing away was glorious, what's that? What's passing away? What's passing away is the ministry of death, the ministry of condemnation, engraved on stones. Wouldn't that be the Ten Commandments? If that which is passing away was glorious, what remains is more glorious. What does remain? Christ remains, of course.

Moses and Elijah disappeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus remained. And God

said, this is my son, listen to him. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech, unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly at the end of what was passing away.

The law, the covenant, which Moses stood for, he actually had a glow on his face that was a reflection of the glory of that covenant, made when he saw only the hind side of God. We get to see Christ's face. That's what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4. But we all, well, actually in this very passage, chapter 3, verse 18, we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are transformed from glory to glory into that same image.

Or in 2 Corinthians 4, 6, God who commanded light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus. Moses got to see God's hinder parts. We see the glory of God in that which remains, which is in the face of Jesus.

The covenants are not like each other. One is instructions in the alphabet for babies. The other is solid food, not milk.

And so the writer of Hebrews, of course, makes that comparison too. So we'll take a break here, but understanding the covenant and what the word *olam* means is a very important aspect of this whole debate. But if you actually, if you take the whole counsel of the scripture, there's really not that much to be confused about here, which is why it took a long time, many centuries, for the church to become confused again after Paul wrote Galatians.

The church was confused before Paul wrote Galatians, and for some time afterward, they were called the Judaizers. The Judaizers were Christians. Many of them were based in Jerusalem.

Some of them were afield following Paul around, getting in trouble. But the Judaizers were Christians who said you have to keep the law, and the book of Galatians was written to refute them. And eventually, this doctrine faded out.

Many people in their reconstruction of history say it was because of the anti-Semitic church. They banned all things Jewish, and so the Torah observance got marginalized. But it was actually Paul that marginalized Torah observance, as we see in his writings, and we'll have more to say about that after we take another break.

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