

The Answering Service

FROM AMERICA'S PROMISE

Answers to questions from Radio and Tape Listeners

No. 12 - October 15, 1981

Question No. 1:

What is meant by (The Law and the Prophets were until John...), Matthew 11: 13 and the first half of Luke 16:16? My friends use these to insist we are no longer to observe God's Laws.

Answer:

Those who insist those, phrases abolish the law ought to read the entire passages. The rest of **Luke 16:16** reads, "Since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it," and in the very next **verse (17)**, Jesus says, "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the Law to fail (weaken)."

Since Jesus can not be saying both: that the Law is put away, and then that it can not be put away. Something else in the passage must explain the seeming contradiction.

In this case it is the phrase, "since that time (when John came,) the kingdom of God is preached."

Actually, it is the "kingdom of God" or as Robert Young more correctly renders, it in his Literal Translation of the Bible, "the reign of God," that is the subject of this passage.

We learn from the Law and the prophets that God selected Israel as His own possession, over whom he was to be

King. This arrangement was short-lived because of Israel's preference of an earthly king. **1 Samuel 8:7**, "and the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

From that time until the appearance of Jesus, Israel had operated politically under either an earthly (human) king or no king at all. During this interim, the law and prophets proclaimed "a coming king." Israel's prophets preached, and the law symbolized the coming of Jesus our Saviour and King. One way the law symbolized this was in, the ordinance of Passover. Thus, up to the time of John the Baptist, the law and prophets were still proclaiming a future Messiah who would reign over Israel. .

With John's appearance we detect a difference in that proclamation. the long awaited, future reign was now "at hand." This was the good news, or gospel. Israel was to have a heavenly King again, and that royal event (the receiving of His reign or Kingdom) was now "at hand." **Matthew 3:1&2**, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent Ye: for the Kingdom (reign) of Heaven is at hand." It was no longer a future prophecy; it was right at the door, it was beginning to take place. Thus "The law and the prophets were until John". Since that

time the Kingdom (reign) of God is preached". The reign of God, over Israel, could not have been rightfully-proclaimed until it was beginning its fulfillment with John, who was sent to announce its arrival. (**Matthew 3:3**)

Jesus, during His life, ministry, death, and resurrection actually-fulfilled this. His sovereign reign is announced in **Isaiah 9:6 & 7**, "For unto us (Israel) a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government (reign) shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government (reign) and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgement and with justice from henceforth even forever," and in **Matthew 28:18**, "and Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He mounted the throne of God (in this case, also, the throne of David as Israel's King) and has ever since been Israel's King. The fact that the majority of Israelites have not recognized Him as their King does not invalidate his reign. Israel will one day repent and accept her rightful national King.

This belated acceptance of the true King reminds us of David's coming to the throne of Israel about one thousand years earlier than Jesus, who was called "the son of David." David was selected by God, anointed as king (therefore true king) but waited several years for his subjects to accept him. This story is found in **1 Samuel 16**, to **2 Samuel 5:3**.

Likewise, the reign of Jesus was established, and we are waiting for Israel to recognize Him. Then the marriage of the lamb will be complete.

The laws of God were not abrogated in the past, when Israel underwent a change in rulers. Neither were they canceled when Jesus took His throne over Israel. As stated at the beginning of this answer, the subject of the passage is not a change in the Law, but rather a change in the King. Until John announced Jesus as King, Israel had no true King, but only "the law and the prophets" which foretold His dominion. So the passage, instead of saying that the Law and the prophets were ended, simply added that what they foretold had now come to pass. The proclaiming of Jesus' Kingdom "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" did NOT supplant the law and the prophets, but rather, was added to it.

To prevent His hearers from thinking He had come to supplant the law and the prophets, Jesus immediately added (**vs. 17**) that the law would not fail, and of course, He also said in **Matthew 5:17**, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

Question No. 2:

What is the meaning of the word "adultery?"

Answer:

Adultery usually means marital unfaithfulness. Special reference is made to Israel's unfaithfulness to her husband, God.

The word itself, from both Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek, carries the connotation of contamination or to make impure by adding something that is improper, as can be seen in its sister-word "adulterate." Adultery is not confined to the traditional idea of sexual sin. In effect, any notable act or attitude which would damage the purity

of the marital bond could actually be an adulteration. **Matthew 5:28**, "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." This is not trying to describe some "spiritual sin," which is commensurate to the physical act. Rather, it is plainly stating that the bond of love in one's heart is weakened or "adulterated" by allowing lust to enter. As the adulteration in the heart grows, thus, weakening that bond, it can then easily manifest itself in an outward act of adultery.

This process is exemplified in Israel's history. She covenanted with God in marriage, and promised to be a faithful wife, **Exodus 19:3-8** And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain saying, thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings. and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people... and all the people answered together and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."

The institute of marriage is described as bringing two separate people (or entities) into the bond of "oneness" **Genesis 2:24**, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." This oneness is sanctified and pure unless we defile it by contamination through lust or action. Alienation of heart precipitates complete alienation of the person. Israel began lusting after other husbands (gods), and soon found that this adultery had alienated her from God. **Jeremiah 3:9**, "and it came to pass through the lightness of her (Israel's) whoredom, that she

defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks (trees)." **Ezekiel 23:37**, "They (Israel) have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols they have committed adultery..."

When one's love for their mate becomes defiled and weakened to the point of unconcern, usually some outward act of infidelity follows in its path. To separate from your mate, breaking the union, would, also, come under the title of adultery. **Matthew 5:32**, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery."

This adulterating, or defiling of the "one flesh" union has a weakening effect. When such an act has been committed, one cannot erase it as though it never happened, although we can repent and be forgiven. One must discontinue his adulterous ways and "sin no more." In **vs. 8:11**, this, too, is symbolic of Israel's adultery.

Coveting your neighbor's wife could be considered "adultery in your heart." This is covered in the 10th commandment, which overlaps many of the other commandments.