

Did Jesus violate or revoke any Mosaic law during His earthly ministry?

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Lagos, Nigeria (Jan 28, 2019)

Introduction

There is need to carefully study the scriptures and answer the poser above. Sequel to my MDR treatise, some brothers via rejoinder articles and private WhatsApp chats, affirm that Jesus overturned several aspects of Mosaic Law during his earthly ministry. See samples below:

EM

So often the Lord said, "Ye have heard that it was said, . . . but I say unto you. . . ." In such statements the Lord was not explaining the law, and He was not "patching up" the law. He was giving His teaching which would become a part of HIS NEW TESTAMENT. There is a principle that law can be stated before it comes into effect, as in John 3:5. Does this passage discuss how men enter the kingdom? Where is it repeated after Acts 2? The Lord, while on earth, gave instruction which was to apply after the New Covenant came into effect, as-the beatitudes, the parables regarding the kingdom, John 14:6; Matthew 7:21; Matthew 28: 18-20; Luke 22: 30. "Do these belong to the Old Testament, or do they apply today?"

PO

I believe Jesus was giving an entirely new command that set aside Moses' law of divorce for just "any cause"... Remember he also refused to have the woman who committed adultery to be stoned. This tells me that Jesus was giving a new order different and apart from the O. T order for separation of marriage other than death. Although his Testament was not fully in force. Hence, he says "ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you that ye resist not evil : but whoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" . Is this not a repealing of the old law? Jesus Testament became fully in force after his death (Heb 9:15). But all that were to be enforced he taught while alive. He broke the law of Sabbath and others because he was the Lord of the Sabbath.

JRO

Jesus simply allowed fornication as a ground for the dissolution of what God had hitherto joined on the condition that both parties will abide by His laws which, unfortunately, a party has betrayed. Did Jesus not also allow eating every food which God earlier prohibit?

JO

He said "he that is without sin should cast the first stone" which led them to be "convicted in their consciences" and leave one by one. That is a departure from the OT requirement bcos even under the OT there would have been none "without sin" amongst the accusers. Furthermore, in Matt 5:33-37, the Lord reversed Lev 19:12, Num 30:2, etc. Also, all the laws concerning hating the human enemies of the Lord were all reversed by the Lord in Matt 5:43 even for the Jews. Examples of such laws can be found in Deut 23:3-6. Our brethren who teach that Jesus COMPLETELY upheld the OT laws before his death are being academic and dangerously generalist. The Lord Himself said He deliberately gave them a "faulty" law temporarily, so this should come as no surprise (Heb 8:7-8).

The Import of the Topic

From the stated quotes, it is evident some individuals in the Lord's church believe and proclaim that Jesus was not just expounding the Law of Moses but was rather making new promulgations for all His listeners. If so, were the people aware they should not obey until after His death? While it is true that Christ has given mankind a New Covenant, when and how He did so is crucial. The scriptures clearly states that Jesus was born under the law (Gal 4:4-5, Lk 2:21-24, 40-49) which He kept perfectly while on earth (Jn 8:46) and that He enacted the New Testament with His blood after His death (Heb 9:15-17). In the eyes of those who do NOT fully understand OT passages, Jesus seemed to have broken or overturned the law on several occasions.

If Jesus gainsaid Mosaic precepts and broke God's law then He would just be another sinner and could not have qualified to be our Saviour –Heb 7:25-28. **I disavow that Jesus violated, reversed or instructed people to infringe Mosaic laws while He lived on earth.**

Recall that Moses and other prophets foretold that the Messiah would teach Israel God's way and be a branch of righteousness; the NT also declares that Jesus never sinned in word or deed.

1John 3:4,8 *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law... He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.*

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Galatians 2:17 *...is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.*

Hebrews 4:15 *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

1 Peter 2:21-23 *For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: **Who did no sin**, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*

Examination of the Claims

Someone opined that the Lord originally gave Israel 'a "faulty" law temporarily,' let us consider the passage he alluded unto for his assertion.

Hebrews 8:7-10 *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*

That the first agreement had to be replaced was not because of inadequacies with God or His law. God found fault with THE PEOPLE: their attitude, disposition and response to the first covenant NOT that He found fault with the law detailing the agreement itself. Contrary to the supposition that God gave Israel a "faulty" law, the OT itself declare in Psalms 19:7 "**The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.**" Psalms 119:128, 140-142, 172 says the law is right, pure, truth and righteousness.

Jesus often taught the people using the scripture given by Moses and the prophets (Lk 4:15-22) which remains background material for anyone to really understand and appreciate the gospel.

When Jesus taught a concept ('required of man') that is exclusive to the imminent gospel age

in application, he contextually relates such to ‘*the kingdom (of God/heaven)*,’ as in Jn 3:3-5. It was evident that when the Lord taught about being ‘*born of water and of the Spirit*’ or about His memorial ‘*breaking of bread*’, He was instructing on things that would later take place in His coming kingdom (1 Pet 1:18-23, Lk 22:16, Gal 4:29) not things belonging to the OT era. Is it accurate that in the beatitudes, “**Jesus was giving a new order**” that “**was not fully in force**”? Was Jesus talking about a futuristic or exclusively church matter when He taught on divorce or vengeance? No! He gave expositions on the law and the prophets, unto the audience in a way that was imperative; they grasped that instant compliance was needed (Mt 5:16; 7:12, 28-29).

Someone remarked that Jesus “**broke the law of Sabbath and others because he was the Lord of the Sabbath.**” Let us consider some pertinent passages.

Luke 13:13-14 *And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.*

John 5:15-19 *The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.*

The inspired gospel writers merely reported how detractors perceived Christ’s actions not that the Holy Spirit indicted Jesus. On all occasions that the Jews accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath (e.g. for doing miraculous healing), it is instructive to read the text further to discern His response unto those accusers. The Lord showed He was not sinning and that is true because:

(a) Miracles do not break natural laws but rather circumvent or suspend such.
(b) The law of the Sabbath was not intended to prohibit justifiable or divinely required activities. To better appreciate this point and the fact that Christ’s disciples did not sin when they plucked grains to eat on a Sabbath day (Mark 2:23-28), **one must understand the principle of the qualification of scripture.** Before proceeding, kindly download and review the article titled ‘[David eating the Shewbread: Was is lawful?](#)’ The principle of qualification is explained therein.

On the woman reportedly taken in adultery, her accusers were convicted of sin since they plausibly weren’t the ones who caught her and also did not bring along the man she committed it with, as stipulated by law. They were thus false witnesses who could not initiate her legal execution (Deut 17:5-7; 22:22) when told to cast the first stone. Christ knew they merely wanted to tempt Him and decided to be gracious to her by alluding to their imperfection and to due process. (In teaching, He upheld the death penalty of Exo 21:17 in Mt 15:3-5) The Lord who forgave David’s sin of adultery was the Son of man who had authority on earth to forgive sins.

Mt 15:15-20 shows that Jesus was talking about what defiles a man after His disciples were accused of violating the tradition (of the elders) **for not washing their hands before eating.** Christ did not teach the people to start eating prohibited foods during His earthly ministry. He permits eating all food only after the NT went into effect -Acts 10:9-15, Rm 14:14, 1 Tim 4:3-5. Let’s see other Mosaic precepts that Jesus supposedly reversed/violated while He was on earth.

Table 1: Comparative Teachings of Moses, the Scribes, the Christ and the Apostles

SN	What the OT Law stated (It is written...)	What the people heard from their religious leaders (Traditional interpretation)	What Jesus taught the people (His doctrine under the OT)	What the Holy Spirit inspired Apostles doctrine under the NT
1	Exodus 20:13 Thou shalt not kill. Leviticus 24:17 And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.	Matthew 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment	Matthew 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. See Jn 7:19	Ephesians 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 1 John 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.
2	Exodus 20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.	Matthew 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:	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. Mark 10:18 And Jesus said unto him...19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother.	1 Corinthians 7:2 Nevertheless, to avoid sexual immorality, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. James 2:11 For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. See Gal 5:19-21, Jms 1:14-15
3	Leviticus 19:12 And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD. Numbers 30:2 If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according	Matthew 5:33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.	Matthew 5:34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. 36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou	James 5:12 But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.

	to all that proceedeth out of his mouth.		canst not make one hair white or black. 37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. See Mt 23:16-22	
4	Deuteronomy 24:1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. 2 And when she is departed out of his house, <i>if she</i> go and be another man's wife. 3 And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; 4 Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. See Malachi 2:14-16	Matthew 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:	Matthew 5:32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.	1 Corinthians 7:10 And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: 11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. See 1 Cor 5:1-5; 6:9-11
5	Exodus 21:22 If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as	Matthew 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:	Matthew 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take	Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy

	<p>the judges determine. 23 And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, 24 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.</p>		<p>away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.</p> <p>See Mt 26:51-52</p>	<p>hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.</p> <p>See Rm 13:3-4</p>
6	<p>Leviticus 19: 17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. 18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.</p> <p>Deuteronomy 23:3 An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever: 4 Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee. 5 Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee. 6 Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.</p> <p>See Exo 23:4-5, Prov 16:7; 25:21-22</p>	<p>Matthew 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.</p>	<p>Matthew 5:44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?</p>	<p>Philippians 1:28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.</p> <p>Romans 12:14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.</p> <p>James 2:8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.</p> <p>See Rm 12:20-21, 1 Cor 7:14; 14:23-25</p>

Brief review of the issues listed in Table 1.

1. **Killing:** While the scribes and tradition unlawfully tolerated grudge so long one does not murder, Jesus reiterated the fact that grudge/hatred/anger motivates killing and warns against dissipating such emotion; averting murder.
2. **Adultery:** Unlike the superficial keeping of the mere letter of the law, Jesus warned against lust and adultery for the former necessarily precedes the latter. His statement is an apt way of restating *'thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife'*.
3. **Swearing:** The Mosaic injunction not to swear falsely was wrongly presumed to mean one should swear truthfully. Note, *'if a man vow... he shall not break his word...'* was not recommending oaths/vows just as *'if a man seduce/rape a virgin, he shall pay dowry...'* was not an endorsement of sexual immorality! Jesus debunked their misconstrued notion on oaths, etc. since Moses simply regulated many societal conducts without necessarily ratifying or promoting such. Any Jew who heard and hearkened unto Christ, not to swear would not violate Lev 19:12 or Num 30:2. Such would not swear falsely and could not break any oath/vow having made none. Nothing in Mosaic Law requires him to swear, One greater than both Moses and Solomon has clarified the Mosaic precepts & Eccl 5:5.
4. **Divorce:** This was misunderstood by the scribes of Jesus' era who argued whether Moses permitted divorce for every cause or not. Jesus did not change the penalty for pre-marital sex or for adultery, from execution by stoning, to divorce during His ministry as many suppose. Rather the Lord forbids putting away a wife save when the marital union itself is fornication as exemplified in Ezra 9-10 / Neh 13, required of Herod/Herodias, etc. For detailed explanation, see the presentation: [Is it lawful to divorce and marry another?](#)
5. **Vengeance:** A closer look at this OT law shows it addresses justice by the state (*'as the judges determine'*). That Mosaic precept was not promoting individual vengeance as the multitude had earlier heard and supposed. Jesus taught on not resorting to self-help by impulsively reacting in response to any attack from anyone. It was the notion of personal retribution which was never intended that Christ dismantled. He upholds responsible behavior and state administration of justice over interpersonal matters -Mt 5:25-26.
6. **Loving/Hating:** To love others and demonstrate so is a recurrent precept across all dispensations, God has never commanded his people to hate fellow humans. That the LORD prohibited Moabites from coming into His assembly under the OT did not imply Israelites were to hate them. 'Don't seek their prosperity' does not mean 'seek their adversity.' To treat an enemy good would either win such over as a friend or heap 'coals of fire' on his head. Ruth was a Moabite who was loved and she turned to the gracious Lord; she then bore David's grandfather thus Jesus descended from her!

Below is a quote from my first MDR article written some years ago.

Whenever Jesus remarked *"Ye have heard of old... but I say unto you;"* He was not implying that He was about to break the law or teach something totally different from Moses. What Jesus means was that the people have heard the doctrine and tradition of their religious leaders (Mt 15:1-9; 22:29) **but** He was about to give the true intent and meaning of the law –See Jn 4:25; 7:16-19. The Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees were engrossed with the letter, not the spirit of the law and they often misused it. That is why Jesus said: *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For 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. Whosoever therefore shall*

break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, 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. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” -Mt 5:17-20.

It follows that Christ was correcting misconceptions rather than teaching the people to break the commandments which God gave through Moses, till the OT was fulfilled. **It is an irony that while many in denominations misconstrue Mt 5:17-20 to aver that Mosaic Law is still in force today, some in the Lord’s church deny the veracity of the passage to aver that Jesus was a law-breaker when He lived on earth!** Either position is what is actually dangerous. It is sad any Christian would dare call Jesus a law-breaker in a quest to defend a view of MDR.

In His sermon on the mount (Mt 5ff) and on other occasions, Jesus authoritatively addressed His audience on contemporary and expected issues of life. He helped the people to better understand many divine precepts of that OT dispensation whilst simultaneously introducing the coming kingdom. His chosen, inspired apostles re-affirmed His teachings after the New Covenant was inaugurated. (We know the OT was abolished at Christ’s death - Eph 2:15, Col 2:14) It so happens that the same godly principles underlie issues in both the OT and the NT even when the details in the respective commandments vary. The letter of the law has changed but the spirit behind it remains since the LORD changes not. That is why even the NT writers quote or allude to the OT often (e.g. 1 Cor 9:8; 14:34). Punishment for infractions to God’s commands differ under both covenants but unrepentant sinners will not go unpunished (Heb 10:26-29, 2 Pet 3:9).

Christ is the central figure of the scriptures (Jn 5:39), love is key to pleasing the Lord and receiving eternal life in every dispensation; those who heed are saved by grace through faith.

Matthew 22:35-40 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Romans 13:8-10 Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Conclusion

The Mosaic Law, the Prophets and the Psalms were accomplished in Christ -Lk 24:44-47. **The answer to our topic is NO. Dissenters are inconsistent when they say Jesus is sinless and can be trusted.** While on earth, Jesus threw light on the shadowy aspects of the law that are now fully illuminated in His kingdom. He taught about the nature of the church age without telling the Israelites to violate their then existing law. After His resurrection and ascension, the inspired apostles elaborated on Christ’s teachings since all truth for life and godliness in this age was revealed unto them by the Holy Spirit -Jn 14:26; 16:13, 2 Pet 1:3. They have documented same for us to read and it can be understood -Eph 3:1-5. We must study and rightly divide all scripture since the inspired texts are profitable for us -2 Tim 2:15; 3:15-17, Rm 15:4.