

The Law Gives Everlasting Life? — Matthew 19:16-22

Posted By [ResLight](#) On July 21, 2009 @ 5:20 pm In [Jesus' sacrifice](#), [Justification](#), [Sin](#), [The Law Covenant](#), [bondage of corruption](#)

A respondent makes the claim that in the first century Jewish culture to be without sin did not mean that he had some special nature, it simply meant that he was obedient to God's Law...nothing more nothing less.

It is claimed that the New Testament records at least three men who were totally obedient to God's Law: (1) The rich young ruler who declared to Jesus that he had obeyed the commandments since his youth and Jesus did not correct him; (2) Paul says in Philippians that he was blameless before the Law; (3) and Jesus himself. It is claimed that Jesus was set apart by God's choosing, not by some mystical virgin birth or by some special nature. According this claim, Jesus was simply one of the flock chosen by God to fulfill his passover lamb: a human just like the rest of us.

We are not sure what is being mean by "nature" above, but we can say that Jesus was certainly not, by nature, a child of wrath, and never was such. — Ephesians 2:3.

Jesus' "nature," while he was in the [days of his flesh](#) ^[1](Hebrews 5:7), was just as Adam was before Adam sinned; he was indeed a human being, nothing more, nothing less, and we do not claim otherwise.

If by nature, it is meant that Jesus was God Most High and at the same a man, the Bible never says such a thing, and we certainly don't believe such an idea.

Jesus was the first man to totally obey the Law, since all the rest (excluding Adam before he sinned) were under the bondage of corruption and of sinful flesh, by nature, children of wrath. Jesus, however, was not born with sinful flesh, since his flesh was specially prepared by his God and Father. (Hebrews 10:5) Jesus was like Adam was before Adam sinned; Adam was not at that time, by nature, a child of wrath, nor a son of disobedience. (Romans 5:14) No one had perfectly obeyed the Law Covenant before Jesus, else they, having obtained life through the Law, would be alive and walking around on the earth today (assuming that they did not return to sin and condemned to the second death), and Jesus' ransom sacrifice would have been meaningless, since justification would have been by doing works of the Law. — Romans 2:13.

Jesus taught that, if a Jew under the Law Covenant could keep the commandments, that Jew could live forever. (Matthew 19:16-19; Mark 10:17-21; Luke 10:25-28) Paul also taught the same thing. (Romans 10:5) This offer was made, however, only to the Jew who was under the Law; no Gentile was ever made such an offer, and thus God overlooked the Gentile's ignorance of the Law. The appeal to the Gentile to convert is in view of the judgment day of the age to come, when the new covenant will be enacted throughout the world. (Acts 17:30) Those whom become Gods' sons in this age do so by partaking of the powers of that age to come. (Hebrews 6:5) Nevertheless, no Israelite has ever gained eternal life by keeping those commandments. We see no Jew walking around today who is several thousand years old, nor any one who has come out his dying condition that is upon him through Adam. The only one who did keep those commandments was Jesus, who gave up his right to eternal human life in order the redeem those under the curse of

the law. — 2 Corinthians 5:12; Galatians 3:13.

Matthew 19:16 Behold, one came to him and said, "Good teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

Matthew 19:17 He said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but one, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

Matthew 19:18 He said to him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not offer false testimony.

Matthew 19:19 Honor your father and mother. And, you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Matthew 19:20 The young man said to him, "All these things I have observed from my youth. What do I still lack?"

Matthew 19:21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Matthew 19:22 But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sad, for he was one who had great possessions.

Notice that the rich young ruler himself who made the claim of having obeyed the commandments. Jesus told him that if one were to keep the Law that one could enter into life. That is the promise of the Law. The man evidently realized that he did not have everlasting life (for he surely must have been aware of the aging and continued signs of a coming death), even with his claim to self-righteousness, self-justification, and asked what more he should do. Jesus, in effect, pointed out to that man that if he had actually kept that Law perfectly/completely, then he would have become perfected and would have life through that Law Covenant, as that is what the Law promises to any who perfectly do the Law. As a result, he would no longer have felt the condemnation of death in his body, and that man would still be alive on the earth today.

Although it is the promise of the Law that if one would keep the commandments, he would enter into life, not one person condemned in Adam entered into life by keeping those commandments. The lesson to be learned was that man, in his fallen condition, could not keep God's perfect law perfectly. But foreknowing this, God had made preparation for a repetition of the typical atonement day every year, so that the people might continue striving to attain eternal life, and be reminded of the need of a sacrifice for sin. Year after year, century after century, they failed in keeping that law perfectly, and discouragement took the place of hope. God was teaching them a great lesson respecting the need of better sacrifices than those of bulls and of goats, and also teaching them that there is no other means of justification in His sight. They had blessings under this covenant — educational blessings, but not the blessing hoped for, not life eternal.

We should realize that although Jesus had not yet completed his sacrifice while he was in the days of his flesh, during those days he did point to his sacrifice as the means of obtaining eternal life:

If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. Yes, the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. — John 6:51.

For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world. — John 6:33.

He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. — John 6:54.

This points to Jesus' sacrifice and the inauguration of the new covenant by his body of flesh with its blood. — Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19,20; Romans 3:25; 5:9; 7:4; 1 Corinthians 11:24,25; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Colossians 1:14,22; Hebrews 9:12,14; 10:10,14,29; 12:24; 13:12,20

Jesus also spoke of his giving his soul as a ransom. — Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45.

John the Baptizer introduced Jesus as the lamb, signifying one to be sacrificed for the sin of the world. (John 1:29) Jesus was the lamb given, not from the old creation under subjection to sin, vanity and corruption (Roman 8:19-22; 2 Peter 1:4), but his human life was a new creation not from the source of creation through Adam. If it had been, then Jesus would also have been subject to the same sinful conditions, bondage of corruption, etc., as the first creation, and would not have anything to offer to offset the sin of the first creation. From the old creation, there could come nothing new. (Ecclesiastes 1:9,10) Nothing of the old creation, under subjection to the "sun" of "vanity", could make itself straight. (Ecclesiastes 1:14,15; 7:13) Thus, Jesus said to the Jewish leaders: "You are of this world (the world condemned in Adam, in subjection to bondage). I am not of this world." (John 8:23) Likewise, with his disciples, authority was given so that they who were once children of disobedience and sons of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3) might become sons of God (John 1:12), "sons of the Most High" (Psalm 82:6), new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17), and no thus counted as no longer of this world, the creation in bondage to corruption. Thus, he says of them: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." — John 17:14,16.

Paul's statement that he was blameless before the Law (Philippians 3:6) does not mean that he had kept the Law perfectly, for he says: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." (1 Timothy 1:15) And he also said: "The doers of the law will be justified." (Romans 2:13) If Paul had fully kept the Law, he was therefore justified by the Law, and he would not have needed the ransom sacrifice of Jesus, for he would have already attained life by works of the Law. Yet he includes himself by saying "we": "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Yes, Paul was a sinner, just as the rest of us. He had never justified himself by obeying the Law, and he himself said: "By the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight. For through the law comes the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20) And yet, if he had been a "doer of the Law", he would have been justified, as he stated in Romans 2:13; therefore, the only conclusion is that Paul had not been fully a "doer" of the Law, or else he would have been justified by the Law.

Paul further testifies: "If there had been a law given which could make alive, most assuredly righteousness would have been of the law." (Galatians 3:21) And, "a man is not justified by the works of the law but through the faith of Jesus Christ." — Galatians 2:16.

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