

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: Matthew 5:17-20

A Christian's Righteousness

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of

"Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most of our religious mistakes."
 - John Newton, *The Letters of John Newton*,
 40.

I. Introduction and Review of Last Week

- A. We have been reminded of what we are – Matt 5:2-12 ("Blessed are the poor in spirit...")
- B. We have been reminded to live out what we are – Matt 5:13-16 ("You are the salt of the earth...")
- C. What has Jesus said (or not said) up to this point to make his hearers think He wanted to "abolish the Law or the Prophets"? Was this a legitimate charge?

II. Matthew 5:17-18 - Jesus sets forth His place in history and explains the relationship between His Kingdom-preaching and the Old Testament Scriptures.

- A. "Law and the Prophets" = shorthand description of the Old Testament (Matt 7:12, 22:40; Luke 24:44)
- B. Possible meanings of "fulfill" in Matt 5:17:
 1. Option 1 - Jesus fulfilled the law by abolishing certain components of OT law (e.g., civil and ceremonial laws), while keeping others in force (e.g., moral laws).

"Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him...?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.)" (Mar 7:18-19)

"...he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Heb 9:26)
 2. Option 2 - Jesus fulfilled the law by *confirming* it in His teaching and disciples.

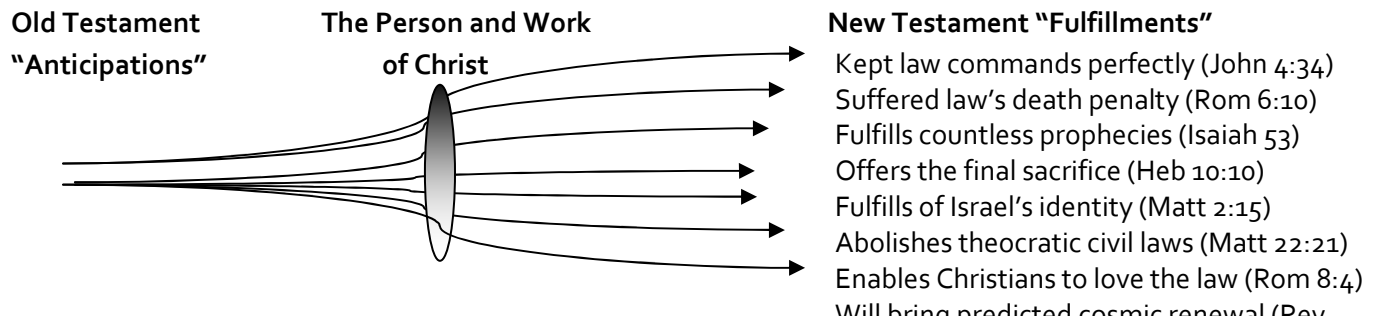
"[God sent his own Son] in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." (Rom 8:3-4)

- 3. Option 3 - Jesus fulfilled the law by performing its positive requirements and suffering its negative sanctions.

"Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.'" (John 4:34)

"For the wages of sin is death..." (Rom 6:23)

- 4. OPTION 4 (including and beyond Options 1-3!) – Jesus fulfills the Old Testament in a rich diversity of ways and serves as the lens through which Christians read the whole Bible!



"The New Testament interprets the Old as pointing forward to Christ and the blessings He brings." - D.A. Carson

"The New Testament is hidden in the Old. The Old Testament is manifested in the New."

- C. What does it mean to the Christian that not one "iota or dot" from the Old Testament will pass away (Is 25:6-9)? What does it mean for the law-breaker (Is 30:30-33)?

Yod (rhymes with *goad*) Bet (rhymes with *wait*) vs. Kap (sounds like *cough*)
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III. Matthew 5:19-20 – Jesus' teaching, in full harmony with the Old Testament, utterly contradicts the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

- A. What is implied by the fact that Jesus refers to the "greatest" and "least" commandments?
- B. Read Luke 18:9-14. What was wrong with the Pharisee's prayer to God? Describe his righteousness.

- C. How do we avoid true righteousness? What does true, Pharisee-surpassing righteousness look like?