

## Christ Fulfills the Scriptures

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Matthew 5:17-20

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### **JESUS AND THE PHARISEES**

Jesus lays down two propositions in our text:

1. He says that everything He is going to teach is in complete harmony with the OT Scriptures.  
(v. 17-18)
2. He says that all of His teaching is in complete contradiction to what the Pharisees are teaching.  
(v. 19-20)

It's important that we understand that Jesus wasn't in favor of ecumenicalism. He exposed and took issue with the false doctrines of the teachers of the Law. As you can undoubtedly imagine, this created a no little commotion amongst the teachers of the Law. Here was a man who wasn't a Pharisee nor was He schooled in the customary channels of Jewish religious teaching. He was obviously teaching, but He denied the authoritativeness of the religious leaders. He deliberately and unashamedly criticized them for their lack of understanding and misguided doctrinal views. He spent time with low class tax collectors and sinners, and He didn't observe and obey all of their religious rules and regulations.

As you can imagine, people began to ask, "Who does He think He is?" Does he not believe our Scriptures? Does He intend to do away with them? Why does His teaching seem to be denouncing the Law and the Prophets? We are the people of god, but He seems to be teaching that there is a new way to God. Has He turned His back on our heritage and belief system?

There are those who think that all Jesus did was to continue the Law and there are those who think that Jesus came only to abolish the Law. Neither are correct.

1. God's law is absolute and eternal; It's demands are permanent and can never be changed or done away with.
2. Jesus has not come to destroy or even modify the Law, but rather to fulfill (keep) it completely.

## HOW DOES THE CHRISTIAN RELATE TO THE LAW

In light of Jesus' statement, "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," how are we as believers to understand our relationship to the law? When we speak about the Law and our relationship to it today, we need to understand it as having three facets:

1. With regard to the ceremonial law – Jesus has fulfilled it completely.

All of the Old Testament ceremonial law was fulfilled in Jesus. He is our High Priest, He is the offering and the sacrifice presented once and for all, He has presented His blood in heaven for those who believe (Hebrews 9:12).

2. With regard to the judicial law given to the Nation of Israel – Jesus has fulfilled it completely.

God's judicial law applied primarily and especially to the Nation of Israel who were God's theocracy. We know that Israel is no longer a theocratic nation. Jesus, in one of the most important new testament verses as it pertains to His fulfilling the law said of Israel, "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits" Matthew 21:43. It's interesting to note what Peter says in 1 Peter 2:9-10 concerning the Church. He says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." Nation here is the word *ethnos* (people). While the Church is not a physical nation like Israel, we are the people of God. \*Note: Peter is not saying that the church has replaced Israel (Replacement Theology).

3. With regard to the moral law - We are to heed and obey its righteous demands!

The moral law of God is permanent and perpetual. Jesus summed up the moral law in Mark 12:30-31 when He said, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." We should note that in 1 John 3 we are reminded that sin is *anomia* - a transgression or violation of the law. We are to obey the law, but we are not to trust in our obedience to the Law.

Do you remember what Paul said in Galatians 3:10? He said, "For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, cursed be to everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." That is a devastating blow. That is the verdict and the sentence that has been issued to each one of us. But thanks be to God that Galatians 3:10 isn't

the end of the story. Paul continues on verse 13 saying, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.

We can’t truly understand the cross unless we understand it in terms of the law. On the Cross Jesus was enduring in His body the very penalty prescribed by the law. The law demands perfect obedience – but we have all failed. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Not only does the law demand perfect obedience, but it also condemns sin and demands death for all who disobey its requirements (Romans 6:23). Sin demands death and therefore, someone must die. Jesus not only perfectly met the Law’s moral demands, but He also willingly paid the Law’s penal debt - a debt that he didn’t owe. Forgiveness only comes because sin’s penalty has been exacted in the person and work of Christ. For those of us who know Him – He has died your death. Hallelujah, what a Savior! Kent Hughes says:

*Jesus’ words in verse 17 are our hope. He said, “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. This is our hope because Christ did what we could never do – He fulfilled the Law. His righteousness exceeded that of the Pharisees. And because He fulfilled the Law, He can give us a righteousness that exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees. He fulfilled the Law by a perfectly righteous life. He fulfilled its demands against us by dying for us.*

## HOW DID JESUS VIEW THE SCRIPTURES

Scripture finds its fullest meaning in Christ. It is written by Him; it’s for Him; and it’s about Him. When we read Scripture, we must read seeing Jesus at its core – Jesus read it that way. Jesus, who authored the Old Testament, became incarnate and fulfilled it, and then He inspired the New Testament writers to correctly interpret the things that He had already done. It’s been said that a good teacher will tell their students what they are going to say, then say it, and then they will tell their students what they have said. Jesus in His coming did the same thing! He foretold His coming in the Old Testament, He came, and then He told men about it. Jesus saw the Scripture, specifically the Old Testament (NT was forthcoming), as inspired, authoritative, and finding its fulfillment in Himself. I want to show you how Jesus used the Scriptures. Let’s look first at Jesus’ interaction with Satan just one chapter back in Matthew 4:

<b>Satan</b>	<b>Jesus</b>
And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” Matthew 4:3	But he answered, “It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” Matthew 4:4  <b>And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your</b>

	<b>fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Deuteronomy 8:3</b>
Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Matthew 4:5-6  <b>For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. Psalms 91:11-12</b>	Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Matthew 4:7  <b>You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. Deuteronomy 6:16</b>
Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Matthew 4:8-9	Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Matthew 4:10  <b>It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. Deuteronomy 6:13</b>

After His temptation, Jesus went home to Nazareth and it was there that He began His formal Ministry. At the dawn of Jesus' public formal ministry He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and was asked to read the Scripture. Upon this request, Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah and opened it to chapter 61 verses 1-2 and read. He said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" Luke 4:18-19. What was Jesus saying? He was boldly claiming to be the Messiah, the One about whom Isaiah had written and the entirety of the Old Testament Scriptures testify. Jesus was saying that all of the Old Testaments Scriptures find their fulfillment in me. He says that explicitly in verse 21, "And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus reiterates Isaiah's prophesy in Matthew 11:3 when His disciples ask the question, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" Jesus responded by saying, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me" Matthew 11:4-6.

Jesus often appealed to the Scriptures to support His actions. He defended the cleansing of the temple in Mark 11:15-17 saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." This is a quote from Isaiah 56:7, "These I will

bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

He referenced His submission to the cross in Matthew 26:53-54 as being a fulfillment of Scripture, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?"

He foretold the scattering of the disciples as He was arrested in the garden in Mark 14:27 saying, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'" This is a quote from Zechariah 13:7 where Zechariah prophetically proclaims, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me," declares the LORD of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones."

In John 5 Jesus is teaching the Jewish rulers of the numerous witnesses to Himself. He says John was a witness to me (v. 33); the works the Father has given to me to accomplish bear witness to me (v. 36); the Father Himself bears witness to me (v. 37). But what do you think Jesus will say is the greatest witness to his authority and claims? Look at verse 39. Jesus says, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they (Scriptures) that bear witness about me" John 5:39. And then he takes them to the heart of the law and says that Moses, on whom you set your hope, will ultimately condemn you – He is also a witness to me. Jesus said, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words" John 5:45–47?

What do we see on Jesus' heart and lips at the culmination of Jesus earthly ministry? We see Jesus using the Word of God as it relates to the prophesy of His death and resurrection. Matthew 27:46 records Jesus' last words uttered from the cross. Matthew says, "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" This is a quotation from Psalm 22:1 - a Messianic Psalm from David. David writes, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?"

Lastly, just a few days after His resurrection Jesus is found walking on the road with a couple of His disciples who apparently were struggling to understand the significance and necessity of His sufferings. Where do you think Jesus points these two fellas? He points them to Scripture. He said, "And he said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' And

beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Luke 24:25–27<sup>1</sup>

## **NEXT WEEK**

We will pick our study back up next week and finish this section of the Sermon on the Mount with Jesus' words from verses 19-20: "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. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

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<sup>1</sup> Many of these examples were taken from *The Sermon on the Mount* by James Montgomery Boice.