

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository  
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

25- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 5  
The King Fulfills the Law and Brings in The  
Righteousness of Faith- Part 1

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Church August 14, 2022

## **Matthew 5:17-20**

**17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.**

**18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**

**19 "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

**20 "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;  
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Now you may not realize this- but this Passage here in Matthew is perhaps, one of the most important Passages in the entire Bible. So, I pray that you can understand this Passage rightly and fully; and that I can preach it rightly and fully- because it really is that important.

Now as far as I can determine- there are at least 5 Subjects being dealt with here in these 4 inspired and infallible verses:

1. The Importance and Permanence of “*God’s Law*”
2. What did Jesus mean when He said He came to “*fulfill*” the Law?
3. What is the connection between Jesus fulfilling the Law and the “*Righteousness of God*”?
4. What is “*Human Righteousness*”?
5. What is the “*Righteousness of Faith*”?

... and all five deserve to be explained and explored rightly and fully so we can comprehend what Jesus was talking about.

Now when I was saved, back in 1971, it wasn't long before I read this Passage. And it was explained to me that Jesus fulfilled the Law- and by the "Law" they said it was the "*Law of Moses*". And so, because Jesus fulfilled the Law- Christians didn't have to worry about the Law anymore.

And this was the first time (sadly, it wasn't the last) that my own conscience would NOT allow me to obey my spiritual Leaders. They told me that since Jesus fulfilled the Law- I didn't have to pay anymore attention to that Law. But my own conscience dealt with me that I still could not lie; or steal; or dishonor my Parents; or commit Adultery- just like the Law said. And I spent a great deal of time praying and asking God to give me Strength so that I would NOT do those things that the Law forbade. And it was very confusing to me. And I kept pondering this Question over and over in my head, "*Did Jesus fulfill the Law or not? And if so- why was I still struggling with trying to obey it?*"

So, there was a disconnect between what they were teaching me and the way I wanted to live my life. And it was very confusing. As a 16 year- old Believer- I was in awe of my spiritual Leaders. So, it never dawned on me that they might be wrong; or that they were *minimizing* this important Subject; or that they might not actually understand this either.

And that Confusion led me to go to others, who seemed to understand the Bible. And I would ask them, "*What does it mean for Jesus to have fulfilled the Law? Are we still bound by its moral Pronouncements? And how do I distinguish between the Divine Prohibition to NOT commit Adultery and the Prohibition to not eat pork? Or how can I navigate through the maze of honoring my Parents and keeping the Sabbath?*"

And the Answers I got were so contradictory and so confusing that I decided that the best thing I could do was to stop asking and to just do my best to obey *some* parts of God's Law while NOT obeying other parts and then act like I understood why.

So, as the years went by; and I grew in both Grace and the Knowledge of Jesus Christ- I realized that MOST of the people in the modern Church were as confused as I was about this. And many of them were trying to "*wing it*"- just like I was. And it is this general Confusion about what Jesus meant when He said He came to fulfill the Law- that opens the door for the various Cults to come in with seemingly a much better Answer than was available in the Christian Church among genuine Believers.

But if Jesus fulfilled the Law- why do I have to worry about telling Lies; or Stealing; or worshipping Idols? And if I DO have to worry about those things- don't I also have to worry about what I'm eating; and *where* and *when* I worship

God? And if I have to be concerned about ALL of those things- how was the New Testament any different than the Old; and how did Jesus fulfill the Law?

If all we have under the New Covenant are a different set of Rules we are supposed to follow- then we aren't any better off than we were under the Old Covenant. Back then- nobody could obey the Old Testament Rules. So, if the New Testament demands equal Obedience- how is the New Testament, "*Good News*"?

But if we are supposed to follow and obey the Law of God today- it doesn't seem to me that Jesus fulfilled very much.

We have to realize that the reason that 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists worshipped God on Saturday was because God's Law told them to. They didn't make it up. And they talk about it all the time. And they don't eat pork- again because God's Law told them not to.

But that same Law also said we are not supposed to wear clothes made from different material (**Deuteronomy 22:11**). And yet most 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventists don't seem too worried about *that* part. It is all so confusing.

The very people, who teach that we are supposed to keep the Old Testament Sabbath today also teach that Jesus fulfilled the Law. So, in what way did Jesus fulfill the Law- if we are all supposed to obey that very Law?

Now keep in mind that keeping the Sabbath or obeying any part of God's Law is NOT about a different way to understand the Bible. God's Law says that those who DON'T obey it- are damned to hell. So, this is a big deal that we should understand correctly. This Sermon series will attempt to give us the Answers we need.

But even more important- think of how the average Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century heard what Jesus said here. Because Jesus is actually doing two things. First, He is giving honor to God's Law by saying,

**Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets... For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

The Jew of Jesus' Day would have been very happy that Jesus talked that way because it seems that Jesus is giving due benevolence and Respect to both Moses and God and the Law itself.

But then Jesus said something else that would have brought great consternation to the mind of the average Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century when He said things like:

**... I did not come to abolish [the Law] but to fulfill... For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

And this would have made the Jew very nervous and yet, very curious, as to how this itinerant Preacher; this son of Joseph was going to “fulfill” the Law of God- when the greatest Jews in History like David and Isaiah and Moses himself were *unable* to fulfill it. Because the word that was translated here into English as “**fulfill**” comes from a Greek word (*pleeroo*; Strong’s # 4137), that means: *to complete; to consummate; to bring to an end; to carry out; or to perform.*

So, the average Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century would have heard Jesus tell them that He intended to complete the Law of God; that He was going to bring the Law of God to an End; or that He was going to carry out the Requirements of the Law of God- without any fault!

So, Jesus was telling the Jews of His Day that He was going to do- what none of the heroes of Jewish History could do. Jesus said that He was going to carry out all of the Requirements of the Law- perfectly! And in doing that- Jesus was going to usher in an infinitely superior Law that would supplant or replace the Law of God!

Now this would have classified as being Blasphemy to the Jew of Jesus’ Day. And if the Jew had any Self-respect and any love for the Law of God at all- he would have looked at Jesus with absolute scorn and distaste and would have made plans to never have anything else to do with Him. And if he didn’t rip his garments- he would have wanted to. I mean, for Jesus to say this- meant He was obviously a Heretic; a Blasphemer; and a son of Belial. And not only should He be harshly rebuked- He may even qualify to be stoned to death.

So, as far as the average Jew of that Day was concerned- nothing Good would have come out from this Statement by Jesus. And yet, it is one of the most wonderful and glorious and important Sayings that Jesus ever uttered.

Now most of us are very upset about the general Lawlessness that we see in our Nation today. A couple of years ago, groups like “ANTIFA” and “Black Lives Matter” rioted in the streets of several large cities and burned down Businesses and even a Police Station to the tune of over a billion dollars worth of damage. Yet many in the Media denied it ever happened; and liberal Politicians offered to pay the bail of the rioters and anarchists if and when they actually were arrested.

Now, the reason I am brining this up- is because, believe it or not- there is a direct connection between the various examples of Lawlessness that we see all around us- and how we understand the Passage here in **Matthew 5** where Jesus said He fulfilled the Law. So, exactly what is “**Law**”? And why are we *commanded* to obey it? And by what Authority to we *enforce* the Law? Because if Law is made by Man; and is enforced by Man; and is not more important than that- then all Law- sooner or later- can be amended or even over-ruled by Man. And that means that Law is NOT any more important than the grass that grows up between the cracks of the sidewalk.

Now I’m not in the habit of quoting anything from a Harvard Law Professor. I am ashamed at what Harvard has become. And unless they radically change- I wouldn’t send my worst enemy to Harvard Law School or to Harvard Theological Seminary. But there was a Law Professor at Harvard, Harold J. Berman, who died back in 2007, who wrote a book back in 1974 called, “*The Interaction of Law and Religion*”. And in that book, Berman puts forth an amazing Thesis that says,

“Since the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Western Culture has had a massive loss of Confidence in Law along with a massive loss of Confidence in Religion. And Berman sees that one of the Causes of this loss of Confidence is the radical Separation of one from the other. And his Conclusion is that you cannot have Law; you cannot have Rules for Behavior without Religion. And that is true, because it is Religion that provides the absolute Base for both Morality and Law.”

Now as far as I can tell, this Harvard Professor was not a Believer. But I absolutely agree with the Thesis of his book. Berman feared that Western Culture is doomed to the curse of “*Relativism*”- as far as Law goes- because of the loss of “*Absolute Truth*.” You see, there is Truth that is “*Absolute*” and “*Eternal*”. This is Truth that is a “*fixed Reality*” and one that *cannot* ever be changed or altered. And it is that Truth that was the bedrock Foundation of this Country as articulated in the Declaration of Independence.

But sadly, the United States has been purposely moving *away* from Religion- and specifically Christianity- along with its Absolute Truth as fast as they can for over 150 years. The Government; the Courts; the Schools; the Businesses; the Military; and the Media have all broken away from the Concept of God; and away from Absolute Truth.

And what has replaced God and Absolute Truth is “*Existential Relativism*” when it comes to making Laws. And back in 1974, Berman said that Law and Religion and the Truth that flows out from them will either stand together or they will fall together- but they CANNOT and SHOULD NOT be separated! And here

is why. “*Religionless Laws*”- Laws made and enforced that have NO connection to the Absolute Truth of God- can NEVER command Authority. They can NEVER expect everyone to obey. Because in order for a Law to have the Authority by which everyone MUST obey- it HAS to have “*Transcendent Value*”. Behind the Law there MUST be a “super-rational Absolute Truth” that is the bedrock of the Law and out from which the Law flows.

Now in that book, Berman quotes a Law Professor at New York University, named, Thomas Franck (1931-2009). And in the *New York University Magazine*, Franck wrote,

“Law has become undisguisedly a pragmatic human process. It is made by men, and it lays no claim to divine origin or eternal validity.”

... and that Reality led Professor Franck to the view that a Judge in a Court reaching a Decision is NOT propounding a Truth, but is merely “*experimenting in the Solution of a Problem*”. And if his Decision is reversed by a higher Court, or if it is subsequently overruled, that doesn’t mean it was wrong, only that it was, or became in the course of time, “*unsatisfactory*.” And Franck said,

“Having broken away from religion, Law is now characterized by ‘Existential Relativism’. Indeed, it is now generally recognized- **that no judicial Decision is ever Final; that the Law now follows the Event; and is not Eternal nor Certain. It is wholly made by Man; and is not Divine or even True.**”

Then Berman extrapolated what Franck’s Statement means in the United States and he said,

“If Law is merely an Experiment, and if judicial Decisions are merely Hunches, why should individuals or groups of people observe those legal Rules or Commands if they do not conform to their own interests?”

Now what does that mean to us and how does it connect to what Jesus said here? Jesus said,

**Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**

So, the first thing we need to know is that Jesus clearly said He did NOT come to abolish God's Law. In other words, Jesus wants God's Law to be known and understood and to remain as the Foundation of everything we build in the Future- *especially* the Laws we have to live by; and *especially* the way we love and obey God.

Jesus *valued* God's Law- and so should we. Jesus *honored* God's Law- and so should we. Jesus saw the *Importance* of God's Law- and so should we. And Jesus did NOT *ignore*; nor *minimize*; nor *abolish* God's Laws- and that should be our Position as well.

Yet this Country has gone out of its way to *ignore*; *minimize*; and outright *abolish* God's Law in everything it now does. And as a result, this Nation is now foolishly endeavoring to have Rules without an Absolute. But when a Nation *abandons* God; and when they *abandon* Theology and when they *abandon* Absolute Truth- they become Foolish; and Depravity becomes "*normalized*." And this is what the Apostle Paul was "moved" by God the Holy Spirit to write down in **Romans 1:18-32:**

**18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,**

**19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.**

**20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.**

**21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.**

**22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,**

**23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.**

**24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.**

**25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.**

**26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,**

**27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men**

**committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.**

**28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.**

The Apostle said that the Wrath of God is revealed against those who, “**suppress the truth**”. This “suppression” is NOT carried out by people who are ignorant of God’s Law- but by those who have God’s Law within their minds and hearts and yet who do not love what they have. And so, they *voluntarily*; they *willingly* “tamp” God’s Law down- this Absolute Truth. They *suppress* it by either *minimizing* it or by *ignoring* it all together.

You see, trying to make Laws and then enforce those Laws without Absolute Truth under-girding them; and without an Ultimate Value upholding them- is both Unreasonable and Unworkable. You simply CANNOT build a consistent Legal System (or a Church or a Civilization) on “*Philosophical Humanism*”. You CANNOT achieve “*Legal Stability*” that is based on a fluctuating, ever-changing Principle of what is objectively “Right” and what is objectively “Wrong”.

The Apostle correctly described what has happened:

**19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.**

**20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.**

**21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.**

**22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,**

**23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.**



You see, when the “*Absolute Truth*” of God is *purposely* abandoned, “*Common Sense*” and “*Legal Stability*” are replaced by trying to make “*Foolishness*” the “*Foundation*” and “*Madness*” the “*Norm*”. This is because they have made a sinful “*Exchange*” (verse 23). And the Result is that God now “gives them over” to Chaos and Madness:

**24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.**

**25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.**

**26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,**

**27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.**

**28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,**

**29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,**

**30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,**

**31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;**

This is the “Judgment of Abandonment”- where God no longer brings Conviction to their minds and allows them to continue on in their Sin- without any restraint. Yet His Promise to damn all who participate in these things has not changed. And so, the Judgment of Abandonment is the most frightening of all God’s Judgments.

So, for example, we have a man, who is a four-star Admiral in the *United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps*. This man has served as the United States assistant Secretary for Health since March 26, 2021- having been appointed by President Biden.

And this man thinks he is a Woman. Now he isn’t a Woman. And He will NEVER be a Woman. But he thinks he is. And because our Country has *abandoned* Absolute Truth- God has now “turned him over” to his Folly. And this confused and disturbed man is now a Leader in our Country. And instead of this poor Man getting the psychological and spiritual Counselling and Help he needs- so he can understand the Absolute Truth that nobody can change their Gender-

those around him, who have also been abandoned by God- nod their heads and agree with him- that he is a Woman!

So, instead of helping this mentally confused Man to realize that whatever feelings he is having about himself are both inaccurate and unworkable- his Confusion is being labeled “Good” and “Right” and “Wonderful”. And this Man is being held up as a Hero and as someone to be proud of- rather than speak the Absolute Truth that God created them uniquely Male and Female on Purpose.

So, instead of telling the Truth- this Man and the current Administration of this Country are working overtime- trying to get every man, woman and child in this Country to ignore Common Sense; and ignore Absolute Truth; and ignore Biology; and ignore Physics; and ignore the Bible and go along with the ridiculous Myth that this Man is a Woman. And then to add insult to Injury- they then allow this confused Man to stand before the American people- to encourage us to take an unproven and unvetted Vaccination- because we are supposed to, “*Follow the Science*”!

### **Romans 1:32**

**and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.**

Peter Steinfels is a Catholic journalist, who for some reason, works at Esquire Magazine. And in a February 13, 1979 Article entitled, “*The Reasonable Right*”, Steinfels said,

“How can moral principles be grounded and social institutions ultimately legitimated in the absence of a religiously-based culture?”

... and the Answer is, “*They can’t!*”

In my lifetime, I have seen Federal agents forcibly remove a statue of the 10 Commandments from the Supreme Court Building in the State of Alabama. And their Reasoning for removing a Statue that had been there for almost 200 years was, the “*Separation of Church and State*” Yet, when asked which Religion the 10 Commandments supposedly promoted- they realized that their Logic was faulty and the spokesman said, “*We don’t know*”.

So, even the Lost realize that if there is no Absolute Truth, and if there is no Absolute Standard of both “Right” and “Wrong”- and if there is no God, Who ALONE establishes the Foundation of ALL Law- then there can be no real Law. Because you will never get people to keep Laws- long term- that are actually just “*Judicial Guesses*.”

And so, each one of us must ask ourselves a very serious and profound Question:

**“What is the absolute Source of Truth? What is the absolute Standard of Morality? What is the absolute Rule of Justice? Where does this Evil Society, floating on top of a Sea of Relativism, find its Anchor?”**

... that’s the real Question. Is there an eternal and unmovable and fixed Absolute Standard to live by? Is there an Absolute Authority that is *higher* than us; and more *important* than us; by which we may receive Absolute Truth? Is there an unchanging Authority on which we can find an inviolable Law?

And from the inspired and inerrant and infallible Words that Brother Vern just read to us- from **Matthew 5:17-20**- we find that, indeed, there is! And that is Cause for Celebration! And that Law to which Jesus referred is none other than the Absolute Law of God. And the Lord Christ said,

**... until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**

... and whoever teaches somebody to break the least of those Commandments will be the least in the Kingdom. In other words, God has laid down an absolute, eternal, abiding Law. And every single human on the earth is accountable to that Law and will be judged in accord with that Law.

Now one of the characteristics of being “Fallen” is that we *despise* Authority. We don’t want anyone to tell us what we should do- not even God. I was speaking recently with a man, who espouses Libertarianism. And it wasn’t long before he showed his true colors and basically said that he was his own Authority. And I asked him how that squared with the Christianity he also laid claim to. And the Conversation ended very quickly after that.

The Truth is that God alone is the great Sovereign of the Universe. And it is His Own pristine Character and Nature that is the Authority behind ALL of His Commandments. And that is why, for example, when God is laying down His Will concerning ALL Human Sexuality in **Leviticus 18**- He periodically interrupts what He is saying by interjecting, **“I am the Lord!”**

In other words, God is telling all of Mankind (NOT just the Jews) that ALL forms of Human Sexuality that can be conceived in the mind of Man are forbidden except one: Intimacy between 1 naturally born Man and 1 naturally born Woman- within the *narrowness* of the Covenant of Marriage. And every other expression of Human Sexuality is a Sin that will be judged by God. So, as far as Human Sexuality is concerned- the MORE narrow it is defined- the MORE it pleases God.

And every attempt at widening or broadening Human Sexuality to include other forms- is rebellion against Almighty God and it is thumbing their noses at the Absolute Truth of God's Law.

You see, there are two reasons that God desires that Human Sexuality be narrowly allowed between 1 Man and Woman within the Marriage Covenant and that is:

1. Since Marriage is an earthly, tangible; natural; and temporary *Representation* of the Covenant between Jesus and His Church- ALL Intimacy MUST occur ONLY within the God-blessed Parameters of the Marriage itself.
2. Sexual Intimacy outside of Marriage is ultimately destructive to people

### **1Corinthians 6:18**

**Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.**

And so, at the end of verse 2 and 5 and 6 and 21 of **Leviticus 18**- God gives us the Authority behind the Commandment. God says,

**“I am the Lord!”**

... and at the end of verses 4&30- He said, **“I am the Lord your God”**.

So, it is God Himself- in, by, and through His Own perfect Attributes that God has the Authority to make such Statements and hold people accountable to them. So, yes, there is Absolute Truth. And the Foundation on which Absolute Truth stands- is the personal Integrity and Righteousness of God Himself! And that is what undergirds all of God's Law- God Himself!

Recently, I had contact with a reporter from our local newspaper (The Sun Herald). And in the course of talking about the Issue of sexually perverted people targeting children- the subject came up about whether the Bible ought to be believed in terms of the Home. And this Reporter said to me, *“You don't seem to realize that times have changed. The Bible doesn't fit in with 21<sup>st</sup> Century people.”* And I said, *“No, you have it backward. God is Absolute and His Word is Absolute and Eternal Truth. So, it is the people of today; the people of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century that don't fit in with the Bible. Yet it is the Absolute Truth of the Bible that will judge every human on earth. And that is true- whether the people believe the Bible is true or not!”*

So, then he said, *“But that's just your Interpretation.”* And I said to him, *“Have you ever read the Bible?”* And he said, *“Some”*. And I said, *“What parts*

*did you understand?”* And he said, *“I pretty much understood what I read”* And I said, *“Were you able to form an opinion about what you read?”* And he said, *“Sure.”* And I said, *‘If I told you that was just your Interpretation- I would actually be insulting you- because you have a brain and you understood pretty much everything you read, right”* And he said *“Yes”*. So, I said, *“The Reality is that people say that simply to try to diffuse the Conversation- not because it’s true.”* And then I invited him to church.

The reality is that the Absolute Truth that people got from the Bible when they read it 2,000 years ago wasn’t anymore popular then than it is today. And the same amount of people hated it back then; and tried to ignore it; or minimize it; or outright abolish back then as they do now. So, the Bible has NEVER been popular with Lost people. And yet, without the Bible being preached and listened to and believed- NOBODY GOES TO HEAVEN!

The Reality is that the Bible confronts you at exactly the Point where you don’t want to be confronted. And when that happens, rather than repent- many simply say, *“The Bible’s out-of-date or the Bible needs to be reinterpreted.”*

People today want to reinterpret the Bible. They want to deny its Authority. Whole Chapters we once believed to be written by God are now said to be written by some rabbi who added it in. Portions of the Scripture that we don’t agree with or don’t want to abide by, we just shuffle off out of the picture. We reinterpret the verses to say what we want them to say. We say, *“Well, that’s cultural and it doesn’t relate to today,”* anything at all to evade allowing the Bible to confront us at our time and place in the history of the world.

But Jesus said,

**... until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**

... so, nothing ever changes in the Bible- nothing.

Now in this Passage- we see Jesus’ View of God’s Law. And *whatever* Jesus thinks about God’s Law is True and Right. But it is also what His Church believes and teaches. Now some would say, *“But, Brother Blair- there are churches all over that don’t believe or teach that.”* Yes, there are. But that means, that unless they repent and change- they are NOT a true Church. Because there is NO such thing as any Church that belongs to Jesus- going their own way and disagreeing with Jesus about anything.

So, the Effort to either try to discredit the Bible or to ignore what it says- will continue until Jesus comes back. And so, 2,000 years after the Resurrection, people- both in and out of the Church- are *constantly* overturning historical

Interpretations that have been analyzed and tested and proven to be true- thousands of times.

And it doesn't matter if they have "*Reformed*" or "*Protestant*" over the door of the Church- or how old the Denomination might be. Recently, somebody within the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) thought it was a good idea to go through the Hymnal and throw out any song that has to do with the Blood of Jesus or the Wrath of God. How in the world could they do that? They no longer believe in God's Law or Absolute Truth. But they also don't believe in their own History.

Look, this Church is about 23 years old. But that Church has existed, in some form or another, for about 500 years! So, they don't have to listen to somebody like me- trying to reason with them from the Scriptures. All they have to do is to read what the Leaders of their own Church wrote about those Issues for 500 years! The Episcopal Church in America recently said they are now going to encourage people, who think they can change their Gender and help them do that- even children! How does a 500 year- old Denomination get to that point? They no longer believe in God's Law or Absolute Truth.

So, the Decisions they have made; and the Acts they have done- that they rejoice over- are the very ones they should be ashamed of. Truly God has judged them and has "**turned them over**". (**Romans 1**)

Now in this Passage, Jesus presents what He thinks of God's Word. And, at this time, "God's Word" was comprised solely of the Old Testament. And so, this is Jesus' Perspective on the Old Testament. And Jesus said this about the Old Testament,

**... not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**

... and that usually brings up this Question,

**"Is the Old Testament binding on the Christian? How much of the Old Testament is binding on the Christian? Do we have to fulfill all those things today? How important are the things of the Old Testament to Christians?"**

Now these are vital Questions that Bible scholars have wrestled with for many years. But it is very simple to answer. Look again at what Jesus said,

**Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**

Now we can get at least two things from what Jesus said here:

1. Jesus loved the Old Testament; and He honored it and believed what it said
2. There seems to be something that is going to happen that will alter the *Position* of the Old Testament.

... so, Jesus used words here like, “**fulfill**” and “**accomplished**”

So, as the new “*King*” over this new “*Kingdom of Heaven*” that will be occupied by a new “*people of God*”- Jesus is going to do something that He called, “*fulfill the Law of God.*” So, what will that be?

Now keep in mind that the average Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century had an understanding of the Messiah; and what He would do when He got here- that they had learned from the Pharisees. But what the Pharisees had taught them was wrong. It was so very wrong.

And now Jesus shows up and begins to teach and perform incredible Miracles and they are excited and confused and bewildered and afraid- all at the same time. And they very seldom see what they wanted to see. What they were looking for was a man, who would fulfill what the Pharisees had taught them. But what they got- was God Incarnate, who taught and did things that were diametrically different from what they were expecting.

So, the “Followers of Jesus”; the “Students”; the “Learners; the Mathetes- were asking themselves some pretty important Questions like:

- What kind of Revolutionary was Jesus?
- What kind of King would He be?
- Was Jesus going to annul Moses’ Teachings?
- Was Jesus going to deliver Israel from the occupying Roman Army?

Remember, all these men knew about the Messiah and the Future was what the Pharisees had taught them. And Jesus didn’t look like them; He didn’t act like them; and He didn’t teach like them either. Jesus was Humble- the Pharisees were amazingly Self-righteous. Jesus taught as one who had Authority- the Pharisees and Scribes had NO divine Authority. The Pharisees were concerned with external Appearances- they wanted to “look religious”. Jesus was concerned about the Reality of their Hearts.

Jesus’ Call to Repentance; His Proclamation of the Gospel; and His Announcement of a new Kingdom that would be inhabited by a new people of God- made people listen to Him. But it also made them wonder, “What kind of a

Ruler is this? What kind of a Prophet is this? Was He a Revolutionary? He is so different. What was His Attitude toward the Mosaic Law?"

The fact that Jesus was so different- so unique. He didn't sound like anybody they were hearing in their Day. And so, their natural Reaction was to wonder whether He was really an Old Testament Prophet or not. Because He didn't echo the prevailing Theology of His Day. He refused to identify Himself with any of the Sects of His Time. His preaching was so different from the Pharisees and Scribes, that people were inclined to think He intended to subvert the Authority of the Word of God, and substitute His own. He was against ALL the Traditions of Men; ALL the extraneous, legalistic Rules and He kept putting an Emphasis on inward Morality.

Jesus was also a Friend of the Publicans; a Friend of Sinners; and a Friend of the worst riffraff in Society. And He proclaimed Grace and Forgiveness of Sin; and He dispensed Mercy. So, their natural Reaction was, "Is this a revolutionary new thing? I mean He doesn't sound like the rest of the people we hear. He doesn't sound like the scribes and Pharisees." And so, they were wondering, *"Is He tearing down the Old Testament? Is He destroying all the Absolutes of the Mosaic Law? Is He removing the Foundations for some new thing?"*

I mean that is the way of most revolutionary Leaders- to sever all ties with the Past and to do everything they can to completely repudiate the Traditions that have gone before.

And, for a long time in Israel, there were certain people who believed that the Messiah would do just that. There were some who believed the Messiah would radically overturn the Old Testament. These were sort of the anti-Pharisees. They were somewhat sickened by the Pharisees, and they were looking for a time when Messiah came and threw out all that Law stuff, and they were thinking, *"Maybe this is the one. Maybe He'd come in with radical changes, overthrow the ancient order of legalistic religion."*

So, they were wondering, and rightly so. And we can understand that. *"Does this Teacher believe in the Holy Writings? Does He believe in Moses? Does He believe in the Prophets? Does He believe in the Law in all of its Fullness?"*

Of course, His Meekness and His beautiful Humility made Him easily distinguishable from the rest of the Leaders in Israel, who were proud, boastful, and hypocritical- always looking for some way to lift themselves up; some way to prop themselves up.

After all, where all the Scribes and Pharisees were always expounding the Law- Jesus didn't do that. He was busy talking about Grace and talking about Mercy. So, where the Pharisees and Scribes were binding the Law on people, He was busy forgiving people. And where they were always talking about the outside, He was



always talking about the inside. And He even blasted away at some of the most sacred of their Traditions. So, will Jesus preach a new Theology?

So, right here, Jesus puts an end to all the speculation. And He tells them, *“What I’m doing will NOT abolish the Law- but fulfill it. I’m going to honor the Law better than anyone who ever tried to obey it. And the Way I’m going to honor the Law is by fulfilling it! But I will NOT hurt or transgress even the smallest Letter or the seemingly most insignificant stroke.”* So, Jesus loved God’s Law and He never did ANYTHING that would harm or ignore or minimize or abolish God’s Law. And that should be our Position as well.

**Amen. Let’s pray.**

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

