

- 1) At the conclusion last time we were dealing with the question “**Why could Jesus not just abolish the Law?**”
- 2) The answer was according to Paul that the Law defines sin – sin from God’s perspective which is the only perspective that matters.
- 3) One other reason we should deal with is that scripture tells us that the Law is perfect...

Psalm 19:7 (ESV)

⁷The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

- 4) So, continuing, if the Law is perfect, then what we must deal with next is what Jesus means when He says He is fulfilling the law.
- 5) Olmstead in the BHGNT says the following about this word “fulfilled” as used in our passage.

Conclusions about meaning of fulfilled ($\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omega\sigma\alpha\iota$) here must take into account Matthew’s use of the term elsewhere and the force of both this paragraph (5:17–20) and the extended discussion that follows (5:21–48, the so-called antitheses).⁶

- 6) Let’s look at a sample of these “so-called antitheses” – I’m sure you will recognize them.

Matthew 5:21–22 (ESV)

Anger

²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

- 7) Again, just one example – we will go over these in detail when we get there...
- 8) But, notice the nature of this statement – “You have heard that is was said ...” rather than “It is written ...” or something to that effect.
 - a) This is the fundamental idea behind Jesus addressing the “Oral Tradition.”
- 9) Olmstead further explains this **concept of fulfillment** in a chapter he wrote for a book *Torah Ethics and Early Christian Identity*.
 - a) His central claim in the writing is that Jesus is the perfection of Torah.
 - b) Jesus does not abolish Torah but brings its intended shape and purpose into concrete reality.
 - c) That perfection is located in Jesus and it shows how Torah’s intention is to be lived.

⁶ Wesley G. Olmstead, *Matthew: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, ed. Lidija Novakovic, vol. 1, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 85–86.

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- d) From that premise he draws out how Matthew's narrative also sets up how Christians are to imitate God by imitating Jesus, who faithfully reflects God in his conduct.⁷
- 10) As we said earlier, the fulfillment of the Law was another part of Jesus' mission.
 - a) His teachings are such that, as we have said, the Law moves to the heart.
 - b) Jesus definitely did not add to the Torah – He clarified.
 - i) And the clarification showed the hypocrisy and deceit of the way the Pharisees were demonstrating conformance to the Law.
 - c) Keeping the Law changes from showing how righteous we are by how many of the Laws we keep, **to** being righteousness because the Law is in our hearts where God intended it to be.
 - i) If and when we get that, it changes our lives and our relationships.
 - ii) And, most importantly, it becomes the true way to bring glory to our God.
- 11) Jesus makes this abundantly clear in the “woes” of chapter 23:23 when He says ...

Matthew 23:23 (ESV)

23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

- 12) Christ further brings the importance of the Law into perspective by what he says next in ...

Matthew 5:18(ESV)

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.

- 13) What I just read was the ESV, many of you have different words here – jot/tiddle, smallest letter/least stroke.
- 14) Let's use the “smallest letter” and the “least stroke” and talk for a second about where that comes from.
 - a) The smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet is the “yod.” (size and shape of an apostrophe).
 - (1) Hebrew Letter: Yod (י) The smallest letter in Hebrew. (JOT English for the Greek word iota)
 - b) The phrase least stroke here literally means “little horn.” TITTLE
 - i) It refers to the small extension marks that help distinguish some Hebrew letters that are very similar.
 - (a) Vav (ו) vs. Zayin (ז) Dalet (daleth) (ד) vs. Resh (ר)
 - c) Jesus' comment I think says several things clearly:
 - i) First, the Law is and has been protected – not just the Law but the entirety of God's word.

⁷ Olmstead, Wesley G. “Jesus, the Eschatological Perfection of Torah, and the *Imitatio Dei* in Matthew.” In *Torah Ethics and Early Christian Identity*, edited by Jonathan R. Visscher and Jason S. DeRouchie, 43–58. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2016.

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- ii) Second, he is talking about the Law – not the added stuff – interpretations and the like.
- iii) Finally, the word “accomplished” indicates that the Law will remain until God sees there is no further need of it – this of course is when the new heaven and new earth arrive.
- iv) God does have a plan of fulfillment.
- v) What we are studying puts us right in the middle of the plan!

- 1) Now, for verses 19 and 20 which will lead us into the real heart of fulfillment ...

Matthew 5:19-20 (ESV)

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 heaven.

- 2) The “therefore” here is because Jesus says he is not going to abolish the Law or the Prophets.
- 3) What he is going to do is fulfill them.
- 4) Jesus’ concluding statement regarding the righteousness of these folks exceeding that of the Pharisees must have really been perplexing to them at this point in the sermon.
 - a) To the average Jew sitting in the audience of this sermon the Pharisees were probably the epitome of righteousness.
 - b) However, their eyes are about to be opened as Jesus continues.
- 5) The real question in these verses then becomes how we can keep all the Law if the Law remains in place.
- 6) The answer lies in the actuality of the fulfillment – how that fulfillment operates differently across **different types of commands**.
 - 1) Ok, let’s take a look at each one of these “types of command” and how they are fulfilled.
 - 2) We will see that the **fulfillment is really transformation**.
 - 3) To be clear, the Law as given in the **Torah functions as a unified covenantal system**.
 - a) There are no separated or distinguished parts of the Law within the Hebrew scripture.
 - b) However, there are three distinguishable functions or purposes displayed within the Law as it was given and in order to talk about fulfillment, we must talk about these functions.
 - c) They are:
 - i) **Civil or Judicial Functions**
 - ii) **Ceremonial or Ritual Functions**
 - iii) **Moral Functions**.

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- 4) **Civil (Judicial) Function of the Law** - given to provide unique identity for Israel as a nation that belonged to Jehovah.
 - a) These are laws relating to agriculture, settlement of disputes, courts, and community life – basically what we would call today, crime and punishment.
 - b) Israel was a theocratic nation and as such the Law was a set of special standards by which God's chosen people were to live before Him and apart from the world.
 - c) In this context, sin threatened communal holiness – especially egregious sin.
 - d) As a theocratic nation, the people (the community) were responsible for punishment as called for by the Law.
- 5) The **fulfillment** of these **Civil (Judicial) Functions of the Law** comes through the establishment of the kingdom at Pentecost.
- 6) The Church, the “now kingdom,” as established by Jesus the Messiah is not a nation state.
 - a) This combination of the now kingdom (the Church) and its being a non-nation state ends the requirement for the community to punish sin. No more stonings etc.
 - b) The crime and punishment portions of the Law move from the kingdom to the entities in which the members of the kingdom live.
 - c) The responsibility not to do the things that are listed in the Law are still in place but the punishment is either divine or local.
 - i) However, to be clear, this does not negate the Church's responsibility to deal with sin as is explained throughout the New Testament – just not judicial punishments.
 - d) Unrepented deliberate sin is judged by Jesus and appropriate punishment given at the Judgement.

John 5:22–23 (ESV)

22 For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, **23** that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

- 7) **Ceremonial Function of the Law** – its purpose was to maintain holiness and access to God.
 - a) It governed the form of Israel's worship.
 - b) This is the set of Laws that deal with all the sacrifices, purity laws, and atonement rituals.
 - c) It also includes diet, cleanliness, dress, and such matters.
- 8) The **fulfillment** of the **Ceremonial Functions of the Law** came when Jesus died (**was sacrificed**) on the cross.
 - a) Jesus bore the sin of the entire world past and future as the ultimate sacrifice.
- 9) The Hebrew writer spends most of chapter 10 explaining this.
 - a) The two major passages are 10:1-4 and 10:11-14.

Hebrews 10:1–4 (ESV)

Christ's Sacrifice Once for All

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¹ For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? ³ But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

10) Abundantly clear – bulls and goats do not hack it!

Hebrews 10:11–14 (ESV)

¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

- a) It becomes obvious in this last passage that the Hebrew writer is saying clearly that Christ was the ultimate sacrifice which ended all other sacrificial requirements.
 - i) therefore – no further physical sacrifices at all!
- b) Additionally, from this same passage we see that the priests were a major part of the ceremonial functions in the Law.
- c) In this regard, again, the Hebrew writer makes clear the fact that Jesus Christ is the ultimate priest and no further sacrificial priesthood is required.

11) Ok to the final function ...

12) **Moral Function of the Law** – the purpose of the moral functions of the Law was to reveal God's foundational character and will.

13) Moral Law includes, but is not limited to, the ten commandments.

- a) It also encompasses other commands about justice, respect, sexual conduct, honesty, and loving God and one's neighbor.
- b) Many of which are reaffirmed separately in the New Testament.

14) The **fulfillment of the Moral Function of the Law** came in two ways:

- a) **Clarification** – this entire sermon is really a clarification of and moving of the Law to the heart.
 - i) Clarification in many cases as we will see is defining the why we keep the Law – a transfer from rote to righteous.
- b) **Demonstration (Perfect Righteousness)** – Christ obeyed every commandment, He met every requirement, and He lived up to every standard.
 - i) And He did it from the heart – not just to tick the boxes.
- c) Patrick Schriner adds to this idea that Matthew's gospel amplifies the fact that Jesus is the Davidic King.
 - i) In the ancient near east, righteous kings were the demonstration of the law.

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- ii) The truly righteous kings lived out their own laws.
- iii) As the Davidic King Jesus lived out the Laws of his Father.

15) It is important to state again that, as with the rest of the Law, the ***Moral Function of the Law*** did not go away, it was **transformed**.

16) Last time we started a discussion of the ten commandments which form a central expression of the Moral Law functions.

- a) There is one that stands out as a requiring special consideration – Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it Holy.

17) Most scholars really consider keeping the Sabbath to be part of the Ceremonial Law.

- a) This is not a contradiction because in truth, the Sabbath command contains both a moral principle and a ceremonial covenant sign.
 - i) Morally, it reflects God's concern for holiness, rest, mercy, and devotion to Him.
 - ii) Ceremonially, it functions as a specific sign of the Mosaic covenant, tied to the seventh day and enforced within Israel's theocratic structure.
- b) The moral principle is enduring.
 - i) Jesus' Sabbath healings demonstrate that compassion and restoration fulfill the Law's intent.
 - ii) These healings and the confrontations that accompany them, expose the reduction of Sabbath observance by the Pharisees to mere regulation of "work."

18) In the early church, many Jewish believers continued Sabbath synagogue participation for the teaching and for witnessing.

19) As the separation between Judaism and Christianity became more pronounced, this practice diminished.

20) Christians gathered from the beginning on the first day of the week in celebration of the resurrection, without transferring Sabbath law to Sunday observance.

21) Thus, Christians are not bound to the Sabbath as a ceremonial regulation, yet the moral principle it embodies – devotion to God expressed through rest, mercy, and worship remains.

Deuteronomy 5:12 (ESV)

¹² “ ‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.

What say you about the commandment?

Ceremonial? (passed away) no longer a consideration at all?

Moral? (still in effect) we should observe?

If Moral and we should observe then HOW?

- a) Old Testament ...

Exodus 20:8–11 (ESV)

⁸ “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall

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not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

- b) New Testament ...

Hebrews 10:24–25 (ESV)

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Next question, does the day of the week really make a difference?

- c) No – Paul tells us in two different places that the day does not matter (with a caveat).

Romans 14:5–6 (ESV)

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Colossians 2:16–17 (ESV)

Let No One Disqualify You

¹⁶ Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Are we limited to one day?

- d) No – fact is that the early church met together every day for worship.

Acts 2:46–47 (ESV)

⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- 22) I know this has been a lot but I want to look at two other things that will perhaps help solidify all this.
- 23) First, an overall dare I say perhaps the perfect case study of “fulfillment,”
- 24) This is found in the first verses of John 8.

John 8:3–11 (ESV)

³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge

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to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, “**Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.**” ⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, “**Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?**” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “**Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.**”]]

25) To break this down quickly, we must consider,

- a) The Law required stoning,
- b) Jesus does not deny the Law.
- c) Instead, He exposes three things:
 - i) human unfitness to execute judgment.
 - ii) his authority to forgive.
 - iii) the coming shift from covenant enforcement to mercy.

“**Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.**”

- d) To get the complete picture of the case we must also note,
 - i) Jesus upholds the moral law (“sin no more”).
 - ii) He suspends the punishment by showing the true condition of the judicial penalty.
 - iii) He acts as the one who will bear judgment.