



MATTHEW 5:17-48
MESSIAH ON A MISSION
(PART 8)

I Have Not Come To Destroy The Law



Introduction

The beatitudes have opened the sermon with an emphasis on God's kingdom arriving. With the move to Torah instruction, Matthew's Jesus deftly combines the two primary motifs of the sermon: kingdom and covenant loyalty. As such, the Sermon on the Mount "provides a vision of how discipleship ought to look as God comes to make all things right." (Keener, Matthew, 203.)

Matthew will highlight Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of the Torah, its embodiment (11:2–19; 12:1–13; 15:1–20; 19:1–26; 22:34–40; 23:23). The penultimate result of this fulfillment is the covenant obedience from his followers, often articulated in the teachings of Jesus as doing the will of God, is also a key theme in Matthew's writing (7:12, 24–27; 12:50; 19:16–26; 21:28–32; 28:19–20)

KEY THEME AND VERSE:

*JESUS AS THE CONSUMMATE
TEACHER OF THE LAW IS
ALSO THE POWER TO FULFILL
THE LAW!*

*“DO NOT THINK THAT I CAME
TO ABOLISH THE LAW OR THE
PROPHETS; I DID NOT COME
TO ABOLISH BUT TO FULFILL.”*

(Matthew 5:17; NASB)

Matthew 5:21–48 contains six contrasting interpretations of Torah commands (traditionally referred to as “antitheses,”). In these six teachings Jesus intensifies or magnifies a Torah command or prohibition. In this way, Jesus teaches a moral code that is infinitely more replete with righteousness than that of the Pharisees

Jesus does more than Moses — Moses announced and gave the moral contract to Israel

Jesus does more than the Prophets — Prophets revealed where and how they were in violation of the moral contract





Matthew 5:21–26
Murder Magnified To Anger

The prohibition against murder (Exod. 20:13) is magnified to a - prohibition against even anger.

(5:21–26; Gen 4:5,6; Gen 37:4,8; 1Sa 17:27,28; 1Sa 18:8,9; 1Sa 20:30–33; 1Sa 22:12; etc.; 1Ki 21:4; 2Ch 16:10; Est 3:5,6; Psa 37:8; Dan 2:12,13; Dan 3:13,19; Eph 4:26,27)



Matthew 5:27–30

Adultery Magnified To A Prohibition Against Lust

Prohibition against adultery

(Exod. 20:14) becomes in the teachings of Jesus a prohibition against even lust

(cf., 5:27-30; Gen 34:2; Gen 39:7; etc.; Exo 20:17; 2Sa 11:2; Job 31:1,9;
Pro 6:25; Jas 1:14,15; 2Pe 2:14; 1Jo 2:16)



Matthew 5:31–32 Divorce

Prohibition against divorce without certificate (Deut. 24:1–4; see Matt. 19:3) Prohibition against divorce except for sexual immorality and at that it is limited to a very narrow cause of a technicality of the culture of the Hebrews. Through the teachings of Jesus divorce is severely restricted.

(cf., 5:31–32, Mar 10:2–9; Gen 2:24; Mat 19:5,6; Eph 5:3; Rom 7:1–3; 1 Cor, 7:10–17)

Matthew 5:33–37 Austerity & Verity In Speech

Command to fulfill vows made to God (Deut. 23:21). Is magnified to become through Jesus a prohibition against breaking oaths, if taken. Command to keep the word, with no oath needed (prohibition against oaths)

(cf., 5:33-37; 23:16-22; Exo 20:7; Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; etc.; Deu 5:11; 23:21-23; Psa 50:14; 76:11; Ecc 5:4-6; 9:2; Nah 1:15; Isa 57:15; Isa 66:1; James 5:12)



Matthew 5:38–42 Against Retribution

5:38–42 Implicit: Prohibition against retribution that exceeds initial wrong done (Exod. 21:24) Prohibition against any retribution at all.

(cf., 5:38-42; Exo 21:22-27; Lev 24:19,20; Deu 19:19; Pro 20:22; Pro 24:29; Luk 6:29; 22:64; Rom 12:17-19; 1Co 6:7; 1Th 5:15; Heb 12:4; Jas 5:6; 1Pe 3:9; 1Pe 2:20-23)

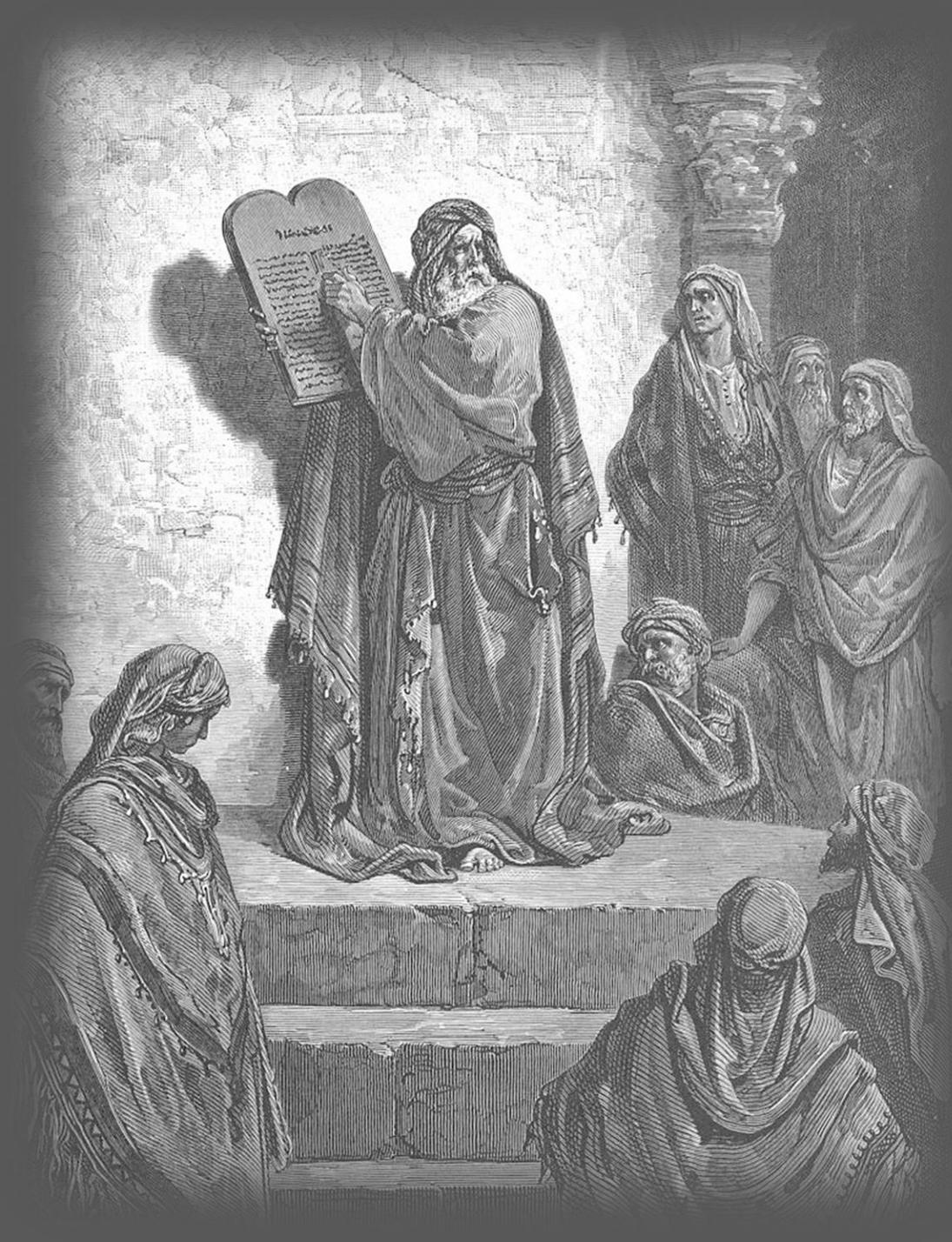


Matthew 5:43-48

Love Your Enemies

5:43–48 Command to love your neighbor (Lev. 19:18)
Command to love even enemy turned the Pharisees teachings on its head and in this way was Jesus the consummate teacher of the Law as not just the one who explains it but the one who fulfills it.

(cf., 5:43-48; 19:19; 22:39,40; Lev 19:18; Mar 12:31-34; Luke 10:27-29; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:13,14; Jas 2:8)



I have come . . . to fulfill them. Jesus challenges the idea that he abolishes the Torah, an action that he denounces for his followers in 5:18–19. Instead, he claims to fulfill the Law and the Prophets.

The magnification or intensifying of these six commands of Torah discussed in 5:21–48 is not between the Torah or Jesus' teachings but between one way of trying to obey the Torah juxtaposed with Jesus' own interpretation of it. Jesus' interpretive lens, which draws on the Old Testament prophetic tradition ("Law and Prophets"), views Torah prescriptions through the core values of love, mercy, justice, and loyalty (see 5:43–48; 9:13; 12:7; 22:34–40; 23:23)

Footnote 1: Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets.

(Stern, David H., *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1989)

I have come not to abolish but to complete, to make their meaning full. The Hebrew word "Torah," literally "teaching, doctrine," is rendered in both the Septuagint and the New Testament by the Greek word "nomos," which means "law." Greek has had a more direct and pervasive influence on English and other modern languages than Hebrew has, and this is why in most languages one speaks of the "Law" of Moses rather than the "Teaching" of Moses. It is also part of the reason why the Torah has mistakenly come to be thought of by Christians as legalistic in character (see Ro 3:20b N, Ga 3:23b N)

In Judaism the word "Torah" may mean:

- (1) Chumash (the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses); or
- (2) That plus the Prophets and the Writings, i.e., the Tanakh (known by Christians as the Old Testament; see 4:4-10 N); or
- (3) That plus the Oral Torah, which includes the Talmud and other legal materials; or
- (4) That plus all religious instruction from the rabbis, including ethical and aggadic (homiletical) materials.

Here it means the first of these, since "the Prophets" are mentioned separately.

Footnote 1 PT.2:

The Prophets

The word "Prophets," capitalized (as here, 7:12, 22:40; Lk 16:16, 28, 31; 24:44; Yn 1:45, 6:45; Ac 13:15, 27, 40; 15:15; 24:14; 28:23; Ro 3:21), refers to the second of the three main parts of the Tanakh. When the Tanakh prophets as persons are referred to, the word is not capitalized; "prophet" in the singular is never capitalized. By mentioning both the Torah and the Prophets Yeshua is saying that he has not come to modify or replace God's Word, the Tanakh. Compare Lk 24:44-45. To complete. The Greek word for "to complete" is "plêroôσαι," literally, "to fill"; the usual rendering here, however, is "to fulfill." Replacement theology, which wrongly teaches that the Church has replaced the Jews as God's people (v. 5 N), understands this verse wrongly in two ways. First, Yeshua's "fulfilling" the Torah is thought to mean that it is unnecessary for people to fulfill it now. But there is no logic to the proposition that Yeshua's obeying the Torah does away with our need to obey it. In fact, Sha'ul (Paul), whose object in his letter to the Romans is to foster "the obedience that comes from trusting" in Yeshua, teaches that such trusting does not abolish Torah but confirms it (Ro 1:5, 3:31). Second, with identical lack of logic, Yeshua's "fulfilling" the Prophets is thought to imply that no prophecies from the Tanakh remain for the Jews. But the Hebrew Bible's promises to the Jews are not abolished in the name of being "fulfilled in Yeshua." Rather, fulfillment in Yeshua is an added assurance that everything God has promised the Jews will yet come to pass (see 2C 1:20 &N).

Footnote 1 PT.3:

It is true that Yeshua kept the Torah perfectly and fulfilled predictions of the Prophets, but that is not the point here. Yeshua did not come to abolish but "to make full" (plêroôsai) the meaning of what the Torah and the ethical demands of the Prophets require. Thus he came to complete our understanding of the Torah and the Prophets, so that we can try more effectively to be and do what they say to be and do. Verses 18-20 enunciate three ways in which the Torah and the Prophets remain necessary, applicable and in force. The remainder of chapter 5 gives six specific cases in which Yeshua explains the fuller spiritual meaning of points in the Jewish Law. In fact, this verse states the theme and agenda of the entire Sermon on the Mount, in which Yeshua completes, makes fuller, the understanding of his talmidim concerning the Torah and the Prophets, so that they can more fully express what being God's people is all about. The Anglican Christian writer Brigid Younghughes supports my understanding of this passage in these words: "... I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.' And surely 'to fulfil' means to complete, in the sense of bringing to perfection, not, as Christians have all too often interpreted it, to render obsolete; to fulfil in such a way as to perfect a foundation on which to build further." (Christianity's Jewish Heritage, West Sussex: Angel Press, 1988, p. 8)

Footnote 2: Bywords and Insults in the Ancient World

(Archaeological Study Bible, Matthew 5:22)

1 SAMUEL 25 Nabal's answer to David's agents (1Sa 25:10–11) was a flagrant insult; David had been serving him with honor, but Nabal responded by speaking of David in scurrilous terms as an outlaw. In the ancient world men (and particularly warriors) placed an enormous premium on their personal reputations and thus took insults and perceived slights to their honor very seriously. Examples of this abound in ancient literature; perhaps the most famous is the Greek hero Achilles, who sat in his tent and refused to fight against the Trojans when he felt that his fellow Greeks had failed to show due respect for his prestige (as described in Homer's *Iliad*). When the Philistine Goliath defied the ranks of Israel (ch. 17), the young David regarded this as reason enough to go out to fight the giant. David was later willing to start a war with the Ammonites to avenge their humiliating treatment of his ambassadors (2Sa 10)

Insults and slights required an appropriate response on behalf of the individual so affronted. Exodus 21:17 prescribes the death penalty for those who cursed (reviled or insulted) their parents, and the 42 young men making fun of Elisha were mauled by two bears (2Ki 2:23–25). The New Testament calls upon Christians to be forbearing toward those who insult them (1Pe 3:9), but in order to understand David and his responses to taunts we need to comprehend the warrior-culture in which he lived.

In addition, as in the above examples, when Yahweh's people or his anointed are insulted the reputation of Yahweh himself has been affronted