

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."



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George L. Faull, Editor

### **MATTHEW 5:17-19 RE: THE LAW**

**Dear Brother Faull,**

I have a good friend who's out of the country for his job and is messaging me with questions about Matthew 5:17-19 and the law. I'd like to send him a concise organized teaching about it. He is teaching a Jewish person about Jesus, which led him to his own questions. Can you provide an answer that focuses on this?

**ANSWER:**

The Bible tells us to compare spiritual things with spiritual things. There are four gospels with a purpose. Some additional information is found in other Gospels to harmonize the difficult one we may be reading. Let's take the first verse. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, OR THE PROPHETS; I am not come to destroy but to fulfill."



A man courts a girl and she comes to love him and accepts his proposal for marriage. Her little brother loves him greatly but he cries and cries when someone told him that his sister's friend is not going to be engaged to his sister anymore.

He misunderstands and asks him, "Is it true you're not going to be by sister's fiancé anymore?"

The man sets down and explains to the boy. "No, she will not be my fiancé anymore and we will not be engaged anymore. I am going to fulfill the promise I made to her when we became engaged. Tomorrow she will be my wife and you will be my brother-in-law. I am not destroying the engagement, I am fulfilling it by making my fiancé my wife". Oh, how happy the boy is to know what it means to "fulfill" instead of "destroying" or "breaking" the engagement. So Christ fulfills the Law and the prophets. He makes them true as promised.

And as we notice above, more is added in the other gospel. One says, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled". That sounds like heaven and earth is going to pass before all is fulfilled. But no, in no wise would these

things not be fulfilled. Let's read it in the other Gospel. **Luke 16:17**, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." He had just said in the preceding verse, "...the law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is preached and every man presseth into it."

If I say, "Hell will freeze over before I deny the Lord", is not a promise that Hell will ever freeze over. Jesus is saying "It would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the Law and prophets to fail".

As for verse 19, it is not speaking of the Old Testament commandments but rather the commandments he had been giving in the Beatitudes. And in verse 20 he says that "our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, or you (plural) shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven".

He then shows the commandments the Pharisees kept were surface obedience to the old law, but Jesus shows the law is much deeper and must affect the heart and our emotions. The man who keeps the beatitudes and lives and teaches them, will be called great in the Kingdom; the man who breaks them, will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Which would you prefer to see in your children, the attitudes of the beatitudes or that of a Pharisee who was a superficial keeper of the commandments of the law? Jesus gave the beatitudes so we would not be like the scribes and Pharisees who were "letter of the law people", but those who practice the beatitudes are "Spirit of the law people". They are "keepers of the intent of the law".

Jesus' teaching fulfills the law. The people who are fortunate enough to recognize the spiritual poverty of their souls, and mourn for their sins, and have meekness (strength under control) and who hunger and thirst for righteousness, are merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, suffer persecution for righteousness sake and are able to rejoice for suffering for their lifestyle are the kind of people who preserve the world like salt. As light they cannot be hid. Their good works bring glory to the Father in Heaven.

That sure does not destroy the Law, but fulfills it.