

The Sermon on the Mount
What Your View of Scripture Says About You (Part 1)

Matthew 5:17-20

February 26, 2012

Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher

Countryside Bible Church

www.countrysidebible.org

I'm always amazed at God's providence. Last weekend we had our Essentials Conference and we looked at the place and priority of the word of God in our lives as believers. And in God's good providence, this morning we're going to return to that theme. But we're going to return to that theme from the mouth of our Lord Himself in the next section of the Sermon on the Mount.

Today we begin a new section of Jesus' most famous sermon, we call the Sermon on the Mount, preached somewhere on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was taught immediately to the twelve that He had just chosen that morning to be His apostles—to be His sent ones, His official representatives. Gathered around them was a larger crowd of His disciples. And then there was a large crowd of just the interested and curious and those who'd come to be healed, there on that hillside on that day. But it's addressed primarily to His disciples, to us. Now, to make sure that we don't get lost in the details, I want to begin this morning by giving you a brief outline of the entire sermon, so you see what the Sermon on the Mount looks like.

Here's the structure. First of all, there's an introduction, there's the body of the sermon, and then there's a conclusion—three parts. The first part is really just introduction. I've called it the citizens of the kingdom. This is who those who belong to Jesus' spiritual kingdom are. Here's how you identify them. And He shows how to identify them by their character, in the beatitudes, those wonderful qualities that we looked at together. If you belong to Jesus' spiritual kingdom, then you are described in those beatitudes. That's who you are. Because of who you are, you and I become salt and light. That's our influence. We become salt in the middle of a decaying world. We become a preservative. We become light in the middle of the darkness, and we talked about that. That's who we are. Those are the citizens of the kingdom.

Now that brings us to the heart of this message, really the body of the sermon. In Roman numeral II, I've called it the righteousness of the kingdom. Once you're in, once you are a citizen, here's how we are to live. Here's how we are to live out life in the spiritual kingdom over which Jesus rules. That begins in 5:17 and runs all the way down through 7:12. Now, I've broken that section down into three subdivisions. The righteousness of the kingdom is shown in a right relationship to the scripture. That's the section we begin today. That's essentially the rest of chapter 5. Jesus is going to explain what our relationship to the scripture should be. We'll look

at that today. Then He's going to give six examples of what our relationship to the scripture should look like, and He ends chapter five by summarizing, and by saying, be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The second way our righteousness, now that we are in Jesus' kingdom, is expressed, has to do with the right relationship to God. This is chapter six. There should be no hypocrisy in our relationship to God. Our prayers, our giving, all of our interaction that has to do with God should be genuine spirituality, and not hypocritical, done for God and not for the people around us. We should be undividedly devoted to God. You can't serve God and anything else, Jesus says. When it comes to God, you must be completely devoted to Him. And chapter six ends by telling us that we are to have an unwavering trust in God. He will provide for us. He will provide for our needs. We don't have to worry. We don't have to fret. So chapter six has to do with our relationship to God. Chapter seven has to do with our relationship to others. (the first twelve verses of chapter seven.) Now that's the body of the sermon. This is how we who are citizens of Jesus' spiritual kingdom are to live.

Now that brings us to the conclusion of the sermon. And in the conclusion of the sermon, in the third major division of this sermon, (begins in 7:13 and runs down through the end of chapter seven,) we have the dangers related to the kingdom. And Jesus specifically identifies three dangers, and they are terrible dangers. The first danger is beware of the wrong entrance into the kingdom. You remember, he says, make sure you get the right gate, the narrow gate, that leads to the right road that leads to life. Because there are a whole lot of people who find the wrong gate, get on the wrong road, and end up in destruction. Then, beware of false teachers. This, by the way, is one of the ways you get to the wrong gate, and on the wrong road. Beware of false teachers. There will be people who say they love and believe in Jesus Christ, who are in reality teaching you complete error, contrary to Christ, and Jesus says you'd better beware. And then He ends His sermon with the warning of the danger of a false profession. Those who say Lord, Lord, and yet live as if He's not, and in fact don't belong to Him and will hear Him at the judgment day say "depart from Me, I never knew you."

So that's the structure of the sermon. Now, notice 5:17 to 7:12 is the body of the sermon. Now, I want you to see how the body of Jesus' sermon is bracketed. Look at 5:17. "Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." You notice, He's talking about the scripture, the Old Testament. Now go over to 7:12. Here's the end of the body of Jesus' sermon. "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Do you see that Jesus brackets really the heart of His sermon with this reference to the Law and the Prophets, the Old Testament. So the Sermon on the Mount is, in a sense, Jesus' exegesis of how to understand the scriptures they had at the time, what we call the Old Testament. Now, the proposition of His message, the main theme of

His message is introduced to us at the beginning of this central section of the sermon. In 5:17-20. And that's the section I want us to begin to study today.

Look at it with me. Matthew 5:17.

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

Now let me begin by admitting to you that this is a very difficult section of scripture. In fact, none less than contemporary theologian D. A. Carson writes this. "Matthew 5: 17 to 20 are among the most difficult verses in all the Bible" There's a lot of confusion about what our Lord means here. But let's start by identifying what this paragraph is really about. Whenever you study a paragraph of scripture, look to see what the theme is. And one of the primary ways to identify the theme is to look for repetition. Repetition in words, phrases, or ideas. Now when you do that in this paragraph, immediately you see that there is one clear theme, and you can discern that theme by the repetition. Look at verse 17. "the Law or the Prophets". Verse 18 "A letter or a stroke from the Law". Verse 19. "one of the least of these commandments". Jesus is talking about what we call the Old Testament; what they at that time would have called the scripture, the only scripture they had. Jesus is concerned that His disciples might come to a wrong perspective about their relationship to the scripture, now that they're His followers. Jesus is going to make some, really, amazing claims about the scripture and His own view of scripture in this passage. Lord willing, we're going to look at Jesus' view of the scripture in depth next week, but this passage is not about Jesus primarily. This passage is not about His view of scripture, but what His disciples view of scripture should be—what our view should be. Notice how verse 17 begins. It's addressed to His disciples, to us. "Do not think" Jesus wants us as His disciples to make sure our own thinking is right. Down in verse 19, the word *whoever* has to do with His disciples and their response to the Law and the Prophets. Now why is Jesus starting here? Well, because He is aware of two dangerous tendencies. One of those tendencies is to think that the Old Testament no longer matters. Now that you're a follower of Jesus, you can essentially abandon it and just listen to Him; that's one tendency. The other tendency is for His disciples (and by the way we see these same tendencies today don't we) the other tendency is to copy the external legalism of the scribes and Pharisees to say we need, as followers of Christ, to keep all of the letter of the law and to do everything it prescribes, and essentially miss the

whole point of the Old Testament. That's the danger. Jesus was addressing it then. It very much needs to be addressed today as well.

So with that background then, let me summarize for you Jesus' teaching in this paragraph this way. I'm going to summarize it and then, as we unpack it over the coming weeks, I think you will see this theme come out of the exposition as we move forward. Here is a summary of this paragraph. A true subject of Jesus' spiritual kingdom will always have a right relationship to the scripture. Specifically, the Old Testament scripture in this context, but to the scripture as a whole as we'll see as we move ahead. A true Christian can always be recognized by how he or she responds to the scripture. But what exactly is a right response? How are we as believers in Jesus Christ to properly think about the word of God and to properly treat the word of God? Now this is such a monumental text that it's going to take a couple of weeks to adequately cover it, but let me lay out a road map for you so you know where we're headed--what this passage, 5: 17- 20 looks like. In this paragraph Jesus identifies for us three responses to the scripture that should characterize every genuine believer—three responses to the scripture. Number one. You must understand Jesus' relationship to the Old Testament scripture, that's verse 17. Number two. You must believe Jesus' view of the scripture, that's verse 18. And number three, you must accept Jesus' diagnosis with the scripture. Because in verses 19 to 20 Jesus says you can identify, yourself, whether you are least in the kingdom of heaven, whether you are great in the kingdom of heaven or whether you're not in the kingdom of heaven at all, based on how you respond to the scripture. So that's where we're headed in the next couple of weeks.

But today I just want us to consider the first response that we as Christians should have to the scripture. We must understand Jesus' relationship to the Old Testament scripture. This is in verse 17. Look at it with me. "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill." Now in the first century, (we need to start by knowing what Jesus is talking about hereHe's talking about the Law and the Prophets.) In the first century, the expression the *Law and the Prophets* was shorthand for what we would call the Old Testament--What theologians would call the Old Testament canon. Have you heard that word, the canon of scripture? That's not like the gun that shoots, c-a-n-n-o-n. It's c-a-n-o-n, the canon of scripture. The English word canon comes to us through the Latin, but ultimately from the Greek word that actually appears several times in the New Testament. It's *kanon*. Originally the Greek word meant a straight rod or ruler, often marked into units of measurement. Think, like our yardstick. A ruler with marks on it indicating units of measurement. Eventually the word came to be used not only for the ruler itself but for the series of marks on it as well.

So, as a result of that, when we speak of the canon of scripture, we're not only speaking of the fact that the scripture is what we measure ourselves against, but we're thinking of a list of books that are in that approved list of books. Alright? Let me say it a different way. When we use this word to refer to the canon of scripture, we mean two things. We mean there is a list of books

which are acknowledged to be inspired by God. If a book is in the canon, we're saying it's in the list. And, because it's in the list, secondly we're saying those books that are in the list are the yardstick, the ruler against which we measure what we believe and how we live. That's the canon of scripture. Now, when Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount there was already a definitive list of books that were accepted as having been breathed out by God. Did you know that? It was clear, defined. There was a canon. There was an accepted list.

So what are those books? Well, the books in the Jewish canon of the first century contained exactly the same content that is in our English Old Testament today, although the Jews counted the books differently. We have 39 books. It varied, sometimes they had 22 books, sometimes 24 books based on how they combined books. For example. They combined 1 and 2 Samuel into one book. They combined 1 and 2 Kings into one book. 1 and 2 Chronicles. Actually, the Kings and Chronicles were sometimes together. Ezra and Nehemiah they combined in one book. And the twelve minor prophets (minor not because they're unimportant but minor because they are short), those twelve short prophecies at the end of our Old Testament, they combined into one book. So they ended up with a different number of books, but (here's what I want you to understand) the same content. In fact this Old Testament canon was considered as completely settled by the time of Jesus Christ. There was no question about whether or not a book was in the canon (the list of accepted inspired books).

By the way, this is the common view even of Jewish scholarship. There are two Jewish scholars, one dating to the 12th century, another to the 15th century. One by the name of David Kimchi, the other Elias Levita, both recognized academics and scholars. They both taught that the final of collection of the Old Testament canon, that list of books, was finished by the time of Ezra and the great synagogue, 400 years before Christ. Josephus, the Jewish commander who was captured and later became a friend of Rome, wrote a history of the Jewish nation. He wrote in the middle of the first century. He lists the same content that are in the books in our Old Testament. And he argues that that canon, that list, was completed during the life of Ezra. It makes sense when you think about it doesn't it? I mean Ezra was a likely candidate for several reasons. He was a scribe. He studied (remember) the Law so that he could teach it in Israel. He probably not only wrote the book that bears his name, Ezra, but he probably also wrote Nehemiah, which was mostly pulled from Nehemiah's personal journals. But in the Jewish Bible, they were combined—one book, Ezra-Nehemiah. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi were all contemporaries. Jewish tradition says that Ezra and Malachi were part of the great synagogue that collected the scripture, preserved the scripture, and even affirmed the final canon of the Old Testament, 400 years before Jesus. The Old Testament canon, the list of books accepted as inspired was closed by 400BC.

Now, when you come to the New Testament, what we call the New Testament--those books written by the apostles or those who were friends of the apostles, under their auspices--when they

refer to what we call the Old Testament, they refer to it in one of three ways. They don't call it the Old Testament. That's our title. First of all they call it the Law. Sometimes that expression is used not for just the first five books, but for the whole Old Testament. For example, in John 10:34, John 12:34. The writer quotes from Psalms and calls it the Law. In 1 Corinthians 14:21 Paul quotes from Isaiah and calls it the Law. So, sometimes it was just called the Law; that's the Old Testament. Other times, as here in Matthew 5, it was called the Law and the Prophets. Jesus does this again, by the way, over in Matthew 7:12 when He ends the body of His sermon—you remember I read this to you--this is the Law and the Prophets. But look over at Matthew 22:40. After Jesus is asked what are the great commandments, and He says “love the Lord your God with all your heart, . . . and love your neighbor as yourself”, He says this in Matthew 22:40. "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” There it is; it's the Old Testament—the Law and the Prophets. But there's one other way the Old Testament is referred to in our New Testament. Jesus Himself does it in Luke 24:44. You don't need to turn there, but He calls the Old Testament the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. So, what I want you to see, though, is this. During Jesus' lifetime the exact books that are identified as the Old Testament in the Bible you hold this morning were considered to be the inspired scriptures. It was settled, done, finished.

You say, well wait a minute. I thought that they used primarily the Septuagint in the first century, those who didn't speak Hebrew. They used a Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint. And I thought I read that the Apocrypha was included in the Septuagint. Is that true? Yes, it is true. They were included in the Bible the first century, but--and here's what's important for you to understand. They were included, but never as part of the canon. Never as part of that list of inspired books breathed out by God. They were never considered to be on that level. Let me give you a couple of reasons we know that. First of all, we know that because of even someone like Josephus. Josephus had and used the Septuagint, the Greek translation which had the Apocrypha in it. But listen to what Josephus writes. "We have not tens of thousands of books, discordant and conflicting, but only twenty two (that's our Old Testament not counting the Apocrypha) containing the record of all time which had been justly believed to be divine". Then he adds this "from Artaxerxes, (the time of Ezra or so) to our own times, a complete history has been written (now he's talking about the apocrypha), but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets." In other words, they weren't written by men who were clearly prophets of God, and so we don't accept them at the same level as the twenty two books equivalent to our thirty nine books. Josephus goes on to add "no words of God had been added to the scripture since 400BC with the last Old Testament author."

But lets not leave the last word with Josephus. What about our Lord and His apostles. Do you realize that in the New Testament the New Testament authors quote the canonical Old Testament books and say, *thus it is written*, or *so the scriptures speak* almost 295 times? And yet not one

time do they quote the Apocrypha as authoritative, even though it was in their first century Bible. Oh, and as a little aside, even in the Roman Catholic church, the Apocrypha was not accepted as equal with scripture until the middle ages. So, Jesus' comments (this is what I want you to get) Jesus' comments in Matthew 5 are about the 39 books in our Bible we call the Old Testament. That's all the inspired scripture they possessed at that point in the first century. Now, keep your finger in Matthew 5 and go back to the table of contents in your Bible. I want you to look at the table of contents. Humor me, okay? Table of Contents, books of the Bible, the Old Testament. You see it? I want you to look at that list. Genesis through Malachi. What I want you to understand is the content in our Genesis through Malachi was exactly, without question, unequivocally, the content of the Jewish Bible in the first century. Both within the scriptures we know that, and from external evidence we know that. So, Jesus then, is commenting on those books that you have in your Bible. Now go back to Matthew 5. In verse 18, our Lord Jesus Christ unequivocally endorsed that canon as the very words of God. And we'll look at that next week. That book you hold in your hand that has that Old Testament section—understand that our Lord Jesus Christ himself said that's it. That's God's word. You don't have to be in any doubt about it.

Now, I want you to go back, though, and look at verse 17. In verse 17 Jesus makes two definitive points about how we who are His followers are to think about the Old Testament canon of scripture, those 39 books. The first way we're to think is negative. Don't think like this. The second half of the verse is positive. Do think like this. So let's look at it. How did Jesus want us to see His relationship to the Old Testament scriptures? Number one, Jesus did not come to abolish the Old Testament. Look at verse 17. "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets." Notice Jesus begins this verse with a command. Do not think. This particular Greek word for *think* is a little bit of an unusual word. It has a couple of nuances. It means to form an idea. But it means to hold or believe an idea that was commonly held. Jesus is saying, listen, there's an idea circulating out there and I don't want you to embrace it. Specifically, an idea about His relationship to the Old Testament scriptures.

Now, there's no record in the gospels that Jesus' enemies ever directly accused Him of wanting to abolish the Old Testament. But it was an accusation that later was leveled at His disciples. Look over to Acts 6:11. Here you have Stephen and in his ministry; they resent his ministry, the Jewish people there in Jerusalem. And notice what they said in verse 11. "Then they secretly induced men to say, we have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against (*what?*) Moses" He's contradicting the Old Testament, is what we would call it. He's contradicting the scriptures. Look down at verse 13.

"They put forward false witnesses who said, this man (*Stephen*) incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; for we have heard him say that this

Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place (*and watch this*) and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

Early on, the followers of Jesus were accused of destroying the Old Testament. Go over to chapter 18. This comes back up in the ministry of Paul, a couple of times—I'll just show you one time. Acts 18:13. Here, against Paul in Corinth, Verse 12.

While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat,. . . (*and here's their accusation*)
This man persuades men to worship God (*what?*) contrary to the Law

Contrary to the Old Testament. So, you understand that eventually this accusation came. It's possible that Jesus' enemies leveled this same charge against Him during His lifetime. I mean, after all, Jesus really didn't fit in. He wasn't a Pharisee. He hadn't been trained in their schools. He publicly and deliberately criticized them and their teaching. He called them 'those who taught such error that when they'd made a proselyte they'd made him twice a child of hell than they were'. He said they were snakes and vipers. He took issue with their legalism and taught instead the doctrine of divine grace. He hung out with sinners and lowlifes, even tax gatherers. And on top of all of that, He often violated their tradition. Now, you've got to understand, their tradition was nothing more than their interpretation of the Old Testament. So, when Jesus didn't march to the beat of their little drum, they took that to mean that He was ignoring the Old Testament, because they believed their interpretations were on a par with the scripture itself. And you see this with the Sabbath laws. You remember how often Jesus and that group were coming against each other on the issue of the Sabbath? On the ceremonial washing of hands? Jesus wasn't violating the law. He was violating their interpretation of the law, and they thought the two were the same thing. Because from their viewpoint, He didn't appear to be taking the law seriously, so it's very possible they accused Him of tearing down the Old Testament.

It's even possible that Jesus' disciples were confused about Jesus' relationship to the Old Testament. And so Jesus says to them, "do not think that I came to abolish the Old Testament scriptures". The word *abolish* is a very strong Greek word. It means to demolish, to tear down a structure, a bridge, a wall, a house. It's even used of destroying the temple. You remember in Matthew 24:2—we're studying this (Mark's version of it) on Sunday night--we just came through it, where Jesus says, speaking of the temple, "not one stone here will be left upon another which will not be torn down". That's the word. Demolished. Completely destroyed. Now when it comes to, not a building, but a text, an authoritative text, it means to declare it no longer valid or binding. To demolish it, to tear it down and say you don't have to do it.

So Jesus is saying this. Don't you for a moment believe the common misperception that I have come to tear down the Old Testament, either in My teaching or in My life. Whether it's the Law,

the first five books of the Old Testament written by Moses—(by the way, Jesus affirmed the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch) or whether it's the Prophets, the rest of the Old Testament. Jesus did not intend to tear the Old Testament down in His own practice by failing to keep it. Nor did He intend to tear it down in His teaching by undermining its authority in the lives of God's people. William Hendricksen, the great Presbyterian commentator says "His ministry was not in collision with the Old Testament but in harmony with it."

Now folks, as New Testament believers, we love the New Testament, don't we? We read the New Testament. That's where you spend a lot of your time, and rightly we should. But don't think that the Old Testament scriptures are any less worthy of your attention and your reading and your study. The Old Testament scriptures are as much a part of that breathed out by God as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are as much a part of the Christian faith as the New Testament. Don't forget, Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 3 about the sacred writings and the scriptures being profitable. He was talking primarily about what? The Old Testament. Eventually, the New Testament came to be called scripture also, but the Old Testament. Let me just ask you, let me ask you a question. I want you to answer this question in your own mind. Have you even bothered to read through the Old Testament? Have you ever read through the Old Testament? Do you know what it says? Or are you so unfamiliar with it you think Hezekiah is actually a book? Or like most Christians, you thank God for Psalms and Proverbs, because if it weren't for Psalms and Proverbs, you'd never go east of Matthew.

Listen, the New has not replaced the Old. They fit together to form a unified whole. In fact, let me show you something Jesus said. Turn over to Matthew 13. Jesus was talking about a scribe, someone who understood the Old Testament law, coming to genuine faith. And when that happens, look at Matthew 13:52. "Jesus said to them, therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven (*in other words a scribe who understood the Old Testament law, taught the Old Testament law, becomes a follower of His.*) That's like the head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old" It's like you have in your house. You have treasures, heirlooms that were passed down to you from previous generations, and those are treasures to you. They are special to you. But then as you live through this life you pick up some treasures of your own, contemporary treasures. That's what Jesus is saying. That's what it's like between the Old Testament and the New Testament, between what He's revealing, and what His apostles will write, and the scriptures as already written in the Old Testament. They're all treasures. That's the point. And they all ought to be treasures to us. As the Puritans used to say, the New is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New revealed. J. C. Ryle writes "the Old Testament is the gospel in the bud, the New Testament is the gospel in full flower" If you're a follower of Jesus Christ, in this text Jesus is saying to you, don't for a moment think that I have come to demolish God's revelation in the Old Testament. And we all live the light of that.

But this passage makes a second point about the Old Testament that we need to understand. Not only did Jesus not come to abolish the Old Testament, but Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament. Look at the second half of verse 17. "I did not come to abolish (*to tear down, to demolish*) but to fulfill" It's a remarkable statement. The question is, how? How did Jesus fulfill the Old Testament? And there's been a lot of ink spilled here. But let me give you the three primary possibilities. Here are the three primary explanations for what this means. Number one. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament by bringing out the complete meaning of the scripture in His teaching. A second possibility is: Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament by perfectly obeying the Old Testament in His life, something no one else has ever done. A third explanation is that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament by bringing its message to full fruition in Himself. He was the final fulfillment of all that it pointed to. Those are the three possibilities. Now, look at those three for a moment. I think that all three may very well be in Jesus' mind here, because all three are taught in various places in the New Testament. Here, primarily He's focusing on one of them, but I think all three are in the background of His mind.

Let's consider them one at a time. Let's take the first one. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament by bringing out its complete meaning in His teaching. This one I know is true. In the context, it's clear because the rest of chapter 5 illustrates this very point. In a series of six stunning examples, Jesus shows how badly the Jewish people in the first century understood the Old Testament, and how they should have understood it. Let me just show you a couple. Look back at Matthew 5:21. Right after this paragraph, next thing He says. Verse 21. "You have heard that the ancients were told, YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER." They knew the Old Testament. That's one of the commands. They understood this was God's law given by God (His own mouth) from Mt Sinai, one of the Ten Words. They understood that. "and whoever commits murder, (*notice that's in lower case*) shall be liable to the court". So this was their spin on it. Basically all it means is this—this is what they said. All it means is, listen if you're sitting here this morning and you've never taken an instrument and killed someone, taken their life, then God's good with you. It's great. You can move on to the next command. Jesus says, no. Not true. Look at the next verse, verse 22. "But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be guilty" of violating this command, as far as God's concerned. And He goes on to talk about how anger expresses itself—calling people names in anger. God says, Jesus says, from God's perspective it's not enough just not to take a gun and shoot somebody. If you take your anger and you focus it on someone and then you take your mouth and shoot angry words at them, in God's eyes it's just as if you were guilty of murder. Jesus says that's how you should have understood it.

Look at another example. Verse 27. "You have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery" True, biblical command, one of the ten commandments. They had said, look, if you don't actually get physically involved with another entity, another person, then you haven't violated this and you're okay. Jesus says, not true. Here's what God really meant. Verse 28

"but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart".

Those are two of six examples Jesus is going to make to show what they should have understood the Old Testament to be. But they had been badly taught. So in the teaching of Jesus we learn the true divine intention behind the Old Testament. By the way, I'm on really good ground here, and in good company. Martin Luther says He speaks here of fulfilling that is accomplished by teaching. John Calvin writes "the question here is a fulfilling by teaching." So there's no question. In the context, in the voice of church history, this first one Jesus has definitely got in mind in this passage. When He says I came to fulfill it, He came to fill out its meaning. Think about it. Jesus as the Messiah, He alone has the right to make a definitive exposition of the Old Testament, and He does it here.

There's a second possibility, and I think it's also included in what Jesus says here when He says I fulfilled the Old Testament, and that is, He fulfilled it by perfectly obeying it. Jesus never felt compelled to keep the Pharisees' rules and traditions, but He always kept the Old Testament in the way God intended it to be kept. You understand that? When He broke their little rules, those weren't God's rules. Those were their interpretations, and they weren't understanding it properly. But He always kept God's law. Listen to Matthew. I won't take you through these texts and have you turn, but listen to them. Matthew 3:15. Jesus says to John the Baptist, I want you to baptize me. It's fitting for us to do this so that we will *fulfill*—there's our word---all righteousness. That is, by doing this, we will be keeping God's requirements. By the way, what was John's baptism? The baptism of what? Repentance. God required His people to repent in preparation for the Messiah. You say, well, Jesus didn't need to repent. Why was He baptized? I believe (this is a different message for a different time) it was vicarious repentance. You and I have never adequately repented for our sins, but Jesus did in our place. Just like He did everything else in our place. Different story, different message. John 8:46. Jesus says "which of you convicts me of sin?. You imagine standing up in front a group of biblical scholars and saying okay, point out a single sin I've committed. They couldn't do it. He kept the law. Or listen to this remarkable statement. John 15:10. "I have kept My Father's commandments.". Wow. Galatians 4:4. It says Jesus was born of a woman, born under the law. That is, born responsible to God's law to keep it, so that He could redeem those who were also born under the law but didn't keep it. So He fulfilled it. Jesus fulfilled it by perfectly obeying it, and He's the only one who ever has. Do you know, as you sit here this morning, you benefit from this great reality. If you're in Christ, you have never ever kept God's law. Do you know that? If you've been here any time, you've heard me say that before. Let me say it, so you get it. Have you ever in one moment in your life perfectly loved God with all your heart soul and mind? No, you haven't. Neither have I. Have you ever, a single moment in your life measured up to the standard of loving someone else like you love yourself? No, you haven't. Neither have I. But Jesus did, perfectly. Every moment of

his life. And according to Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21, that perfect righteous life becomes mine. It's credited to my account at the moment of salvation.

There's a third way Jesus fulfilled the law. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament by bringing its message to complete fruition in Himself. Matthew, by the way, loves to use the word fulfilled like that. He uses it ten times to speak of something the Old Testament pointed to that has now become a reality. One particular text I want you to notice though, that I think will add some insight here. Go back to Matthew 11:12. Jesus says of John, "from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force." What does that mean? I remember when I was in seminary I had to write a paper on that verse, and I was struck with it. Basically what John the apostle was writing here is that desperate men and women, who desperately want the forgiveness Jesus offered, who desperately wanted to be in His kingdom—it's as if they were storming the castle, knocking on the door, please let me in. It's like the first beatitude. Beggar in spirit. Please, you've got to give this to me. They were storming the kingdom as it were. But then notice the next verse, verse 13. "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John." Anything strike you as strange about that verse? We know that the prophets prophesied, right? But Jesus here says the Law prophesied. The first five books of the Old Testament prophesied. It all prophesied. That means the entire Old Testament was pointing to and prophesying about Jesus. And so Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament in that sense. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament in all of its prophecies about the Messiah. That's documented throughout the gospels and the rest of the New Testament. Jesus also was the reality to which the ceremonies of the Old Testament pointed. Paul says to the Corinthians. Christ is our Passover Lamb. Jesus also fulfilled the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. You remember that we read about that in Hebrews 10 this morning. He was the one to whom all of those sacrifices pointed. He fulfilled it all. Let me show you this. Turn over to Luke 24. Jesus said this about Himself, first on the Emmaus Road to the two Emmaus Road disciples. Luke 24:25.

"He said them, O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, (*of the entire Old Testament*) He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the scriptures."

He says, here, it's to Jesus. It's to the one who's died. Scriptures all said this. He fulfilled it all. And then He meets with His disciples down in verse 44. He tells them the same thing.

"Now He said to them. These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be (*here's our word*) fulfilled. (*I fulfilled it all*)

Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures, (*wouldn't you have loved to have been there for that lesson?*) and He said to them thus it is written, that the Messiah would suffer and rise again from the dead, (*all this is written in the Old Testament--and rise again the third day*) and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things."

It's all come to fruition, to fulfillment now. You saw it. Jesus says I fulfilled it. I fulfilled it all.

In John 5:39 Jesus says the scriptures, speaking of the Old Testament, testify about Me. Look at Colossians 2. I love the image in this. I remember when I first saw it in the Greek text—it's a little bit hidden in the English text, but I'll show you. Colossians 2:16. Paul has just said back in verse 14 that when Jesus died we were forgiven all of our transgressions. And what were our transgressions? Verse 14. It was a "certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us". What's that? You owed God obedience to all of His decrees. I did as well. And we didn't keep them, and so we accumulated with God a certificate of debt, and if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, when Jesus died, your certificate of debt was nailed to the cross and canceled. "Therefore, (*verse 16*) no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink" Now he gets into the ceremonial laws. He says because of what Jesus did at the cross, because that certificate of debt against you was cancelled, don't let anybody judge you whether or not you eat clean or unclean foods; whether you keep the festival of the new moon and the Sabbath day.

By the way, there are those who believe in a Christian Sabbath and they say this means special Sabbaths. Let me just challenge you with something. This is what changed my mind on the whole Sabbath issue, because after all, it is one of the ten commandments. But here, Paul specifically lists three things. Festivals, new moons, Sabbaths. I challenge you to find wherever those three things occur together in scripture: the annual festival, the monthly new moon, and the Sabbath. Always, always without exception it's talking about the weekly Sabbath.

Paul says don't let anyone judge you in respect to that. Because those are—watch this—a shadow of what is to come. But (notice the marginal reference for the word substance) the body, literally, belongs to Christ. Do you get the picture? It's like somebody's coming. You can't see them yet but you see their shadow there. And you can see certain things about them from their shadow. You can see whether they're tall or short, whether they're wide or narrow. You can see certain things through the shadow, but you don't really get a full picture of the person. But when the person shows up, when the body arrives, a shadow is just a shadow. It's still helpful. It's still there. It's still reality. But the body is Christ. He is the fulfillment of all of those ceremonial things. He fulfilled the Old Testament. D.A. Carson writes 'Jesus does not conceive of His life and ministry in terms of opposition to the Old Testament, but in terms of bringing to fruition that to which it points.' Michael Wilkin writes" Jesus fulfills all of the Old Testament in that it all

points to Him, not only in specific predictions, but also in its sacrificial system, in the laws which only He perfectly obeyed, in the wisdom literature which set forth a behavioral pattern that only His life exemplified. Jesus' gospel of the kingdom does not replace the Old Testament, but rather fulfills it as Jesus' life and ministry coupled with His teaching complete the meaning of the Old Testament.”

This coming week, let me challenge you to meditate on the richness of this one magnificent verse, Matthew 5:17. Christ came to fulfill the Old Testament, and He did so by explaining the true meaning of the scripture in His teaching. By obeying it perfectly in our place, and by bringing the entire message of the Old Testament to completion and fruition in Himself. Let me put it another way. Jesus explained the Old Testament in His teaching, He obeyed the Old Testament in his life, and He embodied the Old Testament in His person. No wonder the apostle John called Him the living Word.

Take a look at that Bible you hold in your hand. Do you understand that that Bible is a complete revelation from God. It is held together by a common theme. God is redeeming a people by His Son, for His Son, to His own glory. In the Old Testament the message is, He's coming, He's coming. In the New Testament, in the gospels, it's He came. In Acts and the epistles it's He came, and here's what it means. And in Revelation, it's He's coming again. But it's God's revelation. Do not think, Jesus says, that I came to demolish the Old Testament revelation. I did not come to demolish it, but I came to fulfill it.

Let's pray together. Our Father, thank You for these remarkable words of our Lord. Father, I pray that You would help us to live in light of them. Help us while we're New Testament Christians, to love all of Your revelation. Father forgive us for mistreating some of Your sacred revelation to us. I pray that You would help us to have a renewed resolve to study it and read it and learn it, to understand it. Father, thank You that our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled it. He fulfilled it and in the weeks and months ahead, as we see Him open it up in the rest of chapter 5 in Matthew, Lord, I pray that You'd help us to truly understand its meaning, its spiritual meaning. To see beyond the external legalism and to see Your heart. Father, thank You that our Lord fulfilled it by keeping it perfectly. Lord, we never have. Not one of us, not one moment. But thank You O God that Jesus did in the place of every one who will believe in Him. And that right now as we sit here this morning we sit clothed in His righteousness, you see us as if we had kept it like He did. Father, thank You that He fulfilled it by being the person to whom it all pointed and in whom it's all fulfilled. We thank You for our Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to listen to Him, to hear His voice, to understand what He has to teach us about the scripture, and to accept it and embrace it. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.