



ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS -
THE SERMON ON THE
MOUNT 10

Relationship with Law (Mt 5:17)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Kingdom of Heaven (Mt 5:19-20)

“Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.



Initial Questions

- What are the Law and the Prophets?
- What would it mean to abolish them?
- What would it mean to fulfil them?
- How does Jesus fulfil them?
- What does Jesus mean by righteousness here?

THE BOOKS OF TANAKH

TORAH

(LAW)

GENESIS
EXODUS
LEVITICUS
NUMBERS
DEUTERONOMY

"No prophet like Moses..."

(Dt 34:10-12)

NEVI'IM

(PROPHETS)

JOSHUA
JUDGES
SAMUEL
KINGS

ISAIAH
JEREMIAH
EZEKIEL
THE TWELVE

FORMER
LATTER

"Distinction between the righteous + the wicked"
"Remember the law of Moses"

(Mal 3:16-4:5; Ps 1)

KETUVIM

(WRITINGS)

PSALMS
PROVERBS
JOB } "EMET"

Hebrew acrostic for "TRUTH"

SONG OF SONGS
RUTH
LAMENTATIONS
ECCLESIASTES
ESTHER } 5
"MEGILLOT"

5

"MEGILLOT"

SCROLLS
read during feasts

DANIEL
EZRA-NEHEMIAH
CHRONICLES

"Let him go up..."

(2 Ch 36:23)



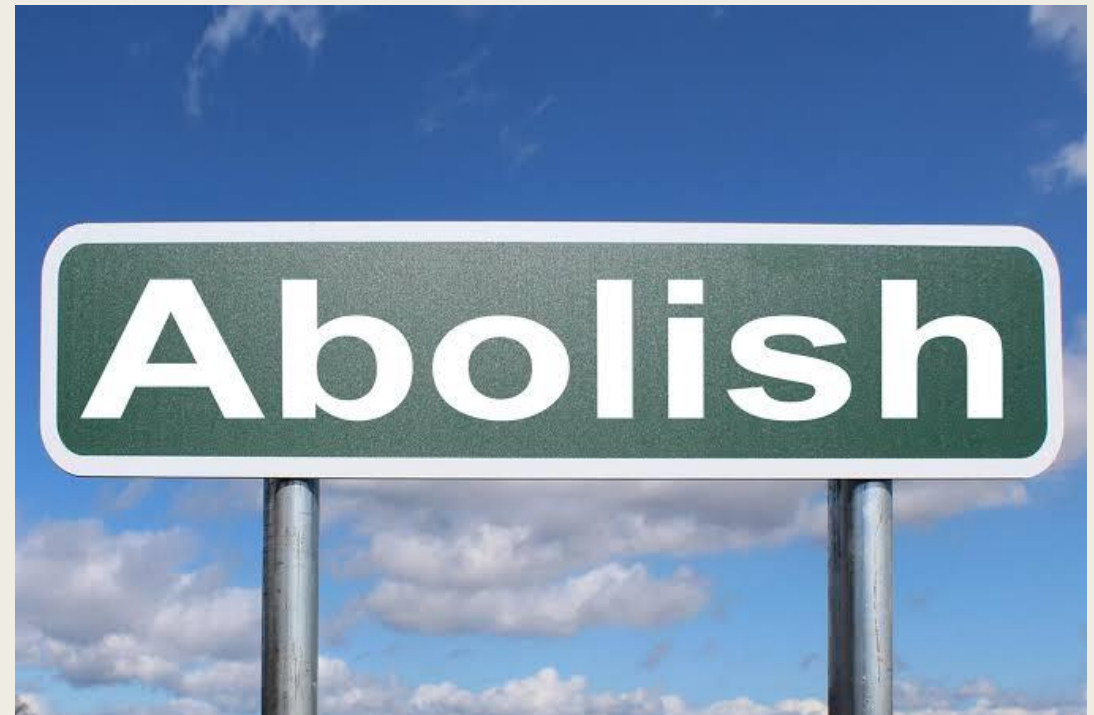
... written about ME in the LAW OF MOSES, the PROPHETS, & the PSALMS

(Lk 24:44)

THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

Abolish and Fulfil

- *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them*
- Jn 10:34... and Scripture cannot be set aside.
- Rom 3:31 Do we, then nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.
- So, what did Jesus say?



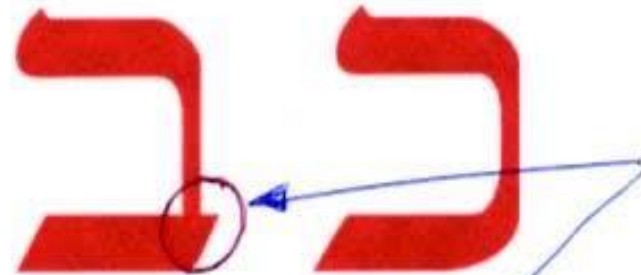
Jot



Yod

The word jot (Greek word: iota) is derived from Yod, the name of the 10th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Tittle



Beth

Kaf

Observe the Hebrew letters Bet and Kaf. The main difference is a small protrusion at the bottom right corner of the letter Bet. It is like the tail that distinguishes English letter Q from O. Such a small mark is called a tittle.

BUT, NOT THE
SMALLEST LETTER...

- not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished...

But what does fulfill mean?

- David Bivin has pointed out that the phrase “fulfill the Law” is often used as an idiom to mean **to properly interpret the Torah** so that people can obey it as God really intends. [See the chapter “Jesus’ Technical Terms about the Law” (pp. 93-102) in *New Light on the Difficult Words of Jesus: Insights from His Jewish Context*, by David Bivin (En-Gedi Resource Center, 2007).]
- **Fulfill = properly interpret the Law**
- **Fulfill = carry out the Law (obey)**
- Eg. If I were to say “cheat on my taxes” is ok if I give money to the poor or to the church then I would be abolishing Torah.

- <https://ourrabbijesus.com/articles/what-fulfill-the-law-meant-in-its-jewish-context/>



So, how does Jesus' teaching fulfill the Law?

- Bishop Ryle summed it up like this: 'The Old Testament is the Gospel in the bud, the New Testament is the Gospel in full flower.' [Ryle – Expository Thoughts on the Gospels by J. C. Ryle (1856; anniversary edition of Matthew and Mark, Zondervan)]
- Fulfilment of predictive prophecy... The time has come.. (Mt 4:17, Mk 1:15)
- His (Jesus) purpose is not to change the law, still less to cancel it, but 'to reveal the full depth of meaning that it was intended to hold'.
- How do you see it?

How does Jesus fulfill?

In other words, 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 toward which it points. Thus, the Law and the Prophets, far from being abolished, find their valid continuity in terms of their outworking in Jesus. [Carson]

What do you think about that?

So which laws still apply?

Reference Book Approach

- Several theories
- Moral/civil/ceremonial framework – Thomas Aquinas
- Only worry about laws repeated in the NT
- But can lead to inconsistency overall.

Unified Story Approach

- Jesus and apostles didn't seem to divide up the law – Jesus dealt with murder, ritual impurity, civil
- Fit into a unified story - play a role in what author is trying to communicate about God, God's wisdom and human nature through the cycles of the biblical story.

Great and Least in the Kingdom

- Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
- Obey + Teach => your Example, not just your doctrine.
- Which commands is Jesus referring to?
- Mt 18:4 therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- Mt 23:11-12 The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted
- Do I subscribe to God's upside down Kingdom values? Would Jesus call me great or least?





How much righteousness?

- For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5:20)
- So how's that supposed to work?
- What's your initial reaction to this?
- What is the key word here?
- Righteousness.
- What is Jesus getting at?



How much righteousness?

- For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5:20)
- What you currently understand about righteousness based on how the Pharisees and Sadducees define it, is wrong.
- Jesus is inviting us to a better understanding of what it means to be righteous.

How much righteousness?

By now it is clear that the Sermon on the Mount is not soporific sentimentality designed to induce a kind of feeble-minded do-goodism.

Nor do these chapters tolerate the opinion that Jesus's views on righteousness have been so tempered with love that righteousness slips to a lower level than when its standard was dictated by law. Instead, we discover that the righteousness demanded by Jesus surpasses anything imagined by the Pharisees, the strict orthodox religious group of Jesus's day. Christ's way is more challenging and more demanding—as well as more rewarding—than any legal system can ever be. [Carson]

Inclusio

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not **enter the kingdom of heaven**. (Mt 5:20)



Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord”, will **enter the kingdom of heaven**, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven (Mt 7:21)



Reflection

- How do I view the Hebrew Bible? [The Old Testament]
- What attracts me the most? Being great or being the least?
- What is my understanding of *righteousness*?