
Matthew 5:17–20 Commentary

David K. Trudgett

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“Do not suppose that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets.”

This means that Yeshua did not come to destroy, abolish, end, conclude, finish, abrogate, nullify or make of no effect, any part of the Hebrew Scriptures, which we know as the Old Testament. Furthermore, it is a *commandment* to *not suppose*, to *not think* that he came to do away with the Law and the Prophets, i.e., all of the so-called “Old Testament” commandments. Every attempt to by-pass the plain meaning of this short passage involves breaking this commandment!

“I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.”

Yeshua came to do the precise opposite of abolishing: he came to establish, bring it to fullness, and to fulfill prophecy.

Many today read the word ‘fulfill’ and think that it means, “complete the terms of so that it no longer needs to be kept.” It would be as if someone, having been pulled over by the police for speeding, said to the officer, “I don’t understand, officer, I’ve been keeping the law perfectly and it is now fulfilled!”

But this interpretation is refuted by what follows, as well as what immediately preceded! To think this way means to believe Yeshua said, in effect, “Do not suppose that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to abolish by fulfilling.” That would be a decidedly odd and self-contradictory thing to say, especially since what follows proves that that is not his meaning!

If he had meant that, then he would not have immediately followed up with several very clear statements about the necessity of keeping every commandment in the Law.

“Because amen I say to you, until the heaven and the earth shall pass away, never ever shall one smallest letter or one tiny serif pass away from the Law.”

Yeshua emphatically impresses the truth of what he is about to say, when he states, “Because amen I say to you!” There is no doubt or hedging in any way.

First, he gives a time frame for the truth of his statement: “until the heaven and the earth shall pass away.” This means that what he is about to follow on with will remain true while the heaven (sky) and the earth continue to exist! A quick check out the window suffices to show that they indeed continue to exist, so what he is about to say is still true in our present time!

He asserts that not one single part or provision or statement or command within the Hebrew Scriptures will be abolished! He deliberately places an extreme emphasis on this point by explaining that not even a single letter of the Hebrew Scriptures, even the smallest, most insignificant letter (a yod), nor even the tiniest flourish on the tip of one stroke of a single letter (a serif) will be taken away! Thus, it is clear beyond doubt that not one single word, command, provision or statement within the Hebrew Scriptures will become null and void, contradicted, or countermanded while our physical universe continues to exist!

But many Christians today believe precisely that the old laws have been done away with, in direct contradiction to Messiah's own words to the contrary, because they think they are exempt from his Law.

“Until everything comes to pass, therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the Kingdom of the Heavens.”

Yeshua continues to emphasise the point that no change will occur until the sky and the earth shall pass away, that is, until everything has come to pass. Clearly, looking around our sinful world, it is evident that everything has *not* yet come to pass!

So *therefore* (Yeshua continues) anyone who so much as *relaxes* even one of the least of the directions given in Torah, and teaches this modified command to others, will be called *least* in the Kingdom of the Heavens. This is leaving up to the imagination what will happen to those who wilfully actually abolish any provisions of God's Law.

“But whoever does and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the Kingdom of the Heavens.”

Keeping and teaching even the smallest, most insignificant Torah Law to others results in being called *great* in the Kingdom of the Heavens, such is the importance attached to keeping the Law of God!

“Because I am telling you, if your righteousness shall not exceed that of the scribes and of the Pharisees, you shall never ever enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens!”

Everything Yeshua previously said about keeping every smallest provision of the Law, and not even relaxing a single one of them, was said for this reason: unless our keeping of the Law (which is *righteousness*) does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (who kept only the letter of the Law), then we will never, ever, in any way whatsoever, enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens!

It does not get any plainer than that.

But was all this quite plain emphasis on keeping God's Law only meant for his twelve disciples? or only for the Jews? or only for some other group, but not us?

No. God has only one people and one Law, according to Yeshua himself, as again recorded by Matthew:

“Go, and make disciples of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe *all things that I commanded you*. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

(Matthew 28:19–20)