

Yakov's Concern—Table Fellowship

Christians) with its persecutions of millions of Christians. Also, to fill the vacuum created by its jettisoning of Mosaic Law, Rome brought in false doctrines and pagan ceremonies (Sunday, Easter and Xmas). It's unfortunate that the Reformers continued to follow this heresy of the Roman Catholic Church.

One of the places that Christians scholars point to, to prove their theological position on the Law being annulled, is Mt. 5:17-18. The Lord Yeshua says that He came to *fulfill* the Law, but that it wouldn't depart until Heaven and Earth weren't around anymore:

¹⁷'Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to *fulfill*. ¹⁸For truly I say to you, until Heaven and Earth pass away, not the smallest letter nor stroke shall pass from the Law until all is *fulfilled*.' (Mt. 5:17-18)

Scholars explain that the meaning of *fulfill* is that Jesus did away with the Law by His sacrifice and established 'love' as the criteria for His Kingdom. This artificially juxtaposes Law and love. There is even Scripture that would seem to support their interpretation:

'Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the *fulfillment* of the Law.' (Rom. 13:10)

'Bear one another's burdens and thereby *fulfill* the law of Christ.' (Gal. 6:2)

Was Paul showing us 'a new way' when he spoke of *fulfill*? Hardly. To *summarize* the commandments of God into a single concept was nothing new to the Jewish people, of whom Paul was one all his life (Rom. 11:1). In the Talmud (*Makot* 23b-24a) there are a number of such summaries from the Old Testament:

"Rabbi Simlai said, 'Six hundred and thirteen commandments were given to Moses'" (a traditional 'count' of the number of commandments in the Law).

"David came and reduced them to eleven (Psalm 15)."

"Then Isaiah reduced them to six (Is. 33:15-16), Micah to three (Micah 6:8), and Isaiah ...to two, as it is said, 'Keep judgment and do righteousness' (Is. 66:1)."

"Then Amos reduced them to one, 'Seek Me and live' (Amos 5:4), as did Habakkuk who wrote: 'the righteous shall live by his faith' (Hab. 2:4)."⁶³⁷

These reductions or conceptual summaries of Mosaic Law in no way do away with any of its rules or commandments. They present a rallying point around which the Jewish people can focus. Paul does the same thing in Romans 13:10 and Galatians 6:2.

In a well known rabbinic story that goes back a generation before Yeshua, it's said that,

"A Gentile came to Shammai and said to him, 'Make me a proselyte, but on condition that you teach me the entire Torah while I am standing on one foot!' Shammai drove him off with the builder's measuring rod. When the Gentile appeared before Hillel, he told him, 'What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. *That is the whole Torah*. The rest is commentary. Now go and learn it!'"⁶³⁸

Obviously, neither Simlai nor Hillel would have thought that he was doing away with the 600 plus other commandments of Mosaic Law by summarizing it. Can Jesus 'fulfilling,' then, in Mt. 5:17, be biblically interpreted to mean that He was doing away with the Law so Christians wouldn't have to keep it? He had

⁶³⁷ Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 96.

⁶³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33. From the Talmud, *Shabat* 31a.

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just stated, in the very same breath of Mt. 5:17, that He *hadn't* come 'to abolish the Law.'

In Mt. 5:18, Yeshua speaks of the Law *remaining* until 'all is fulfilled.' Here, too, the Church takes the position that 'all was fulfilled' at the crucifixion. That the work of salvation that Yeshua came to do, the giving of His life in sacrifice for Israel, was accomplished at the crucifixion, is above argument. In His death we find life. In His death we have forgiveness of sins and are able to die to self and are given His nature. In His death we are given the Spirit of God. *All was fulfilled* concerning the *redemption* of Israel and those who come into her, but did that redemption mean that the Law was no longer valid?

Correctly interpreting Yeshua's thoughts on the Law, in v. 18 He speaks of the Heavens and the Earth departing *first* before any *letter* of the Law is nullified. It's simple. As the Heavens and the Earth are still with us and won't be gone until the Day of Judgment, it's reasonable to say that *Yeshua's view* of the Law for us *today* is the same as when He walked in Israel (cf. Heb. 13:8; 1st Jn. 2:6). Mosaic Law will no longer be necessary at Judgment Day because then we will become like He is now and the Law will truly be written on our hearts (Jer. 31:33). The point that dismantles the position of the Church on Mosaic Law and also cements the proper understanding of this entire passage is presented by Yeshua in the next verse:

'Whoever, then, breaks 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*.' (Mt. 5:19)

The Kingdom of Heaven didn't officially begin until Acts Two; *after* the sacrifice and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua. His reference to the Kingdom of Heaven in Mt. 5:19 can only mean that *in His Kingdom* Mosaic Law is still valid. In Yeshua's Kingdom those who *break* the *least* of the commandments *will be called least* in His Kingdom. Conversely, those who keep the least of the commandments of the Law will be called great in the Kingdom of Yeshua. This understanding of the validity of Mosaic Law for us today is from our Lord Himself. The choice is ours to make.

The Church's interpretation of Matthew 5:17-19 is based on a heretical theology that Mosaic Law has been done away with. The following five points explain what Yeshua meant when He said that He came *to fulfill the Law*:

1. In Mt. 5:17 Yeshua speaks of fulfilling not only the Law, but also the Prophets. What He primarily meant is that both the Law and the Prophets spoke of a coming Messiah. Yeshua, standing there that day, was pointing to Himself as the *fulfillment* of what both the Law and Prophets declared about the Messiah who would come (e.g. Dt. 18:18-19).
 - A. After His resurrection Yeshua *specifically* spoke of this understanding of *fulfillment* in Luke 24:44 when He said, 'These are My words *that I spoke to you* while I was still with you; that *everything written about Me* in Mosaic Law, the Prophets and the Psalms must be *fulfilled*.'⁶³⁹ (cf. Lk. 24:25f.)
 - 1) This *fulfillment* includes Yeshua satisfying the prophecies in the Old Testament about a *suffering* Messiah, which would also include prophecies concerning a Messiah who would be born in Bethlehem and beaten on the cheek with a rod (Mic. 5:1-2), and who would suffer and die an atoning, redeeming death for Israel (Is. 52:13-53:12; Zech. 12:10; 13:1).
 - B. Yeshua also *fulfilled* the Prophets' words of His ministry of healing (Is. 35) and His teaching of the Kingdom of God (Is. 55:3; 56:5; 60:19; 61:7-8; Jer. 32:40; cf. Mt. 5-7; Acts 1:1-3).

⁶³⁹ See also Luke 24:25-27, 45-49; Jn. 1:45; 5:39; Acts 3:18, 22-26; 4:2, 33; 13:29, 32, 38-39.