

# Jesus is King: The Old Covenant was a Cliffhanger – Week 5

## HOOK

I hate cliffhangers. Ex. J.A.G. show – season cliffhanger when I was a kid.

## INTRO

Jesus has begun His ministry through baptism and defeating the devil in the wilderness temptations. Huge crowds have started following him. (**Matt. 5:1**) *Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them...*

Jesus opened His sermon with a list of those who would be blessed in the kingdom of heaven (a.k.a. The Beatitudes). Because of His audience, this would have left the crowd electrified. But, they aren't a checklist for believers. Like a stained-glass window, they make up the singular quality of a believer – Christlikeness.

But being like Jesus alone isn't the end of following Jesus. Followers have purpose, and this is described by Jesus as being "salt" and "light" in our worlds.

The first and last beatitude alert us that this sermon is acknowledging a kingdom – the implication being that a kingdom is ruled by a king.

## BOOK

**Matthew 5:17-20** - *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. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

## LOOK

The Law = The system of laws given by God through Moses to the nation of Israel.  
The Law (Torah) and Prophets (historical and prophetic writings) = The whole O.T.

- Hendiadys – ex. From N.Y. to L.A. = The United States

Fulfilled = bring to completion or reality something promised or predicted.

- It implies something was left open-ended or unfinished but has now been completed or satisfied. Like a parent following through on a promise or a satisfying Part 2 to a TV show cliffhanger, He completed the O.T. Law.
- **How does Jesus FULFILL the Law and the Prophets?**

## The New Moses

In a kingdom, it is the king's prerogative to be the lawgiver. This "sermon on the mount" is King Jesus imparting HIS law. This is massively significant because it is a fulfillment of prophecy. Not just anyone's prophecy, but Moses the lawgiver's prophecy from God.

**Deuteronomy 18:18-20** – (God speaking to Moses) *I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.* (**John 3:18**)

- Moses filled 3 (arguably 4) offices – Prophet, Priest, (Judge), and King
  - He was appointed by God to deliver and install the "law."

Matthew has been showing us Jesus is the prophesied prophet "like" Moses.

1. Joseph's dreams brought them to Egypt
2. The slaying of the innocents
3. Coming out of Egypt
4. The Red Sea (Baptism)
5. 40 years (days) in the wilderness
  - a. The devil picked up on it. Why else would he use the bread temptation?
6. A prophet going up a mountain to deliver the law

Jesus is the new Moses. He is the King of the Kingdom and it's His prerogative to also be the Lawgiver. But He does something interesting. In history, when a revolutionary or a new king took power, they eliminated the former ruler's laws and set up their own. But Jesus DOESN'T do that. Instead, Jesus affirms the Old Testament is inspired, authoritative scripture. It is spoken by God to give Himself glory, to reveal Himself, and to equip His people. All of it is important down to the smallest letter (jot = yod) and smallest (distinguishing) mark (tittle). Jesus teaches there are no unimportant details in the law AND it will always be valid.

**Why wouldn't Jesus change anything?** Because Moses didn't give them the Law. God did. And Jesus isn't just a normal prophet. He IS God. The God who does not change. Jesus' life and teachings will always align with YHWH's because He is.

**How will Jesus fulfill the Law and the Prophets?**

### #1: HE WILL CORRECTLY INTERPRET THE LAW FOR HIS PEOPLE.

He's being clear upfront what His ministry is because He's about to be very controversial. He doesn't want them understanding something He's NOT saying. He's not saying He's displacing Moses' law. He's not abolishing it but showing how God meant for it to be followed.

- He begins with six “you have heard it said” statements. He will quote a law, then give a superseding interpretation of it. He's going to move the emphasis of the law from the behavior to the heart.
  - It may be easy to follow the law and NOT go next door and murder your neighbor. **But God knows the heart.** He judges the anger in your heart as equally guilty to the murder you didn't outwardly commit.
  - **God has NEVER been focused on behavior modification, but on heart transformation.** When our hearts belong to Him, then our actions will align with our affections.

**This is the main point of Jesus' entire sermon on the mount.**

- Giving to the needy? Where is your heart?
- In prayer, fasting, giving forgiveness – Where is your heart?
- In the focus of our lives, in the anxiety of our minds – Where is your heart?
  - Towards the end of His sermon, He sums it up: **Matt. 7:12** - *So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (“Love your neighbor as yourself” **Matt.22:39**)*
- And closes with the parable of where your house is built. The sand represents the unfulfilled Law of Moses. The rock represents the Law of King Jesus who's targeting, not your good behaviors, but your heart.

**BUT ... Jesus fulfilling the Law and the Prophets is going further than just interpreting it. He's completing.**

### #2: HE WILL COMPLETE THE LAW FOR HIS PEOPLE.

**Rom.3:20** - The Law “was designed to show people their sinfulness and then drive them to God for His gracious salvation (Believer’s Bible Commentary).”

It was a step, a Part 1, in God’s plan of salvation for humanity. (**Matt.11:13**) But the ministry of Jesus heralded by John the Baptist brings a fundamental shift, the concluding episode to God’s rescue mission.

By saying He came to fulfill the Law, Jesus was making the claim **1**), HE is the final chapter, the climax, and the conclusion to the entire O.T. **How?**

1. He is the One all the Messianic prophecies foretold and will do all the Messiah is prophesied to do.
2. He completes the purposes and supersedes the O.T. anointed ones
  - a. E.g. Adam, Moses, Samuel, David, and etc.
3. He becomes the perfect sacrificial Lamb and permanently removes sin from His people completing the sacrificial system.
4. Others: Fulfills the Purity Laws and the Wisdom Precepts

**Luke 24:44-45** - *Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...*

**Matthew 5:18** - *For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*

- **What does “all is accomplished” mean? The end of time or Jesus’ death?**

### **Argument for Jesus’ death and resurrection.**

**Romans 10:4** – *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

**Galatians 3:24-25** – *...the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian...*

**John 19:30** - *...He said, “It is finished,” and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.*

- I believe Jesus is talking about God’s plan of salvation is complete.
- **How can the Law have validity to the end of time but still be accomplished at His death in 33AD? If Jesus fulfilled the Law so we no longer must follow the mandates of Leviticus, hasn’t He abolished it? (“old wineskins” **Matt.9:17**)**

**No.** Jesus was clear that His ministry would delete no part of the Law. It would remain valid. This is the difference between abolishing the Law and fulfilling it.

### **Two Illustrations:**

Jacqui's anniversary present – 1) I handed her the handwritten lyrics to a song which very much looked like a poem. This is the Old Covenant law. Meaningful, beautiful, from the heart of the person who loves her.

2) I played the song for her and the composer, himself, called to wish her happy anniversary. Then, the composer attributed the lyrics to me. Jacqui didn't just have the song. She had the lover behind the song! This is the New Covenant under Jesus.

Since that day, I've never seen Jacqui remove the lyrics again and sit down and study them. Why? Because those lyrics are in a greater form. She has the song totally memorized. HOWEVER, the lyrics are still just as valid. If they were removed it would be meaningless music.

We don't have to live under the Old Covenant rules because, according to [Jeremiah 31](#) and through the power of the cross, God has put His song with His heart-transforming lyrics in our hearts. FURTHER, the loving author of the song, through His Holy Spirit, is now WITH us.

The long distance Olympian runner – **God's expectation for righteousness revealed in the Old Covenant can be compared to a long-distance race.** He holds the gold medal in His hand and the victor's wreath has been draped over His neck. Does completing the race invalidate the 26 miles the winner ran? NO, it doesn't go away. The gold medal He holds confirms the race was valid.

Jesus has won the race. We are poor, wretched, and sickly, who at our best, can barely leave the finish line. Jesus meets us where we are and calls to us to follow Him. We cry out, "Have mercy on me! All my thoughts and all my ways are wicked. I can't stand, let alone take a step toward the finish line of righteousness." Then, He stoops down and wraps our frail arm around His neck and stands us up. He puts the medal into our dirty hands. He takes the wreath off His own shoulders and drapes it over us. He turns us toward the holy God who sees on us the righteousness of Jesus Christ and the medal of holiness sparking from between our fingers. And the Judge of the race declares us victors! That... is why we are MORE than conquerors.

Therefore, the Covenant of Moses is wholly permanent until the end of time AND Jesus validates it even more through His fulfilment of it. Everything it promised to do – revealing God and saving us from our sin - but could not do climaxed at the cross and was finished by the work of Jesus. Then, to all those who call on His name and make Him their Lord, He imputes His righteousness to them.

**2 Peter 1:4,11** - *...He has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*

*... in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

### What does it mean that Jesus fulfilled the Law and the Prophets?

1. The King has interpreted His law.
2. The King has completed His law.
3. The King has given us citizenship in His kingdom (through the high price of His own death).

King Jesus interprets the Law. King Jesus completes the Law.

**King Jesus warns against abuse of His law.**

**Matthew 5:19** - *Therefore whoever relaxes (unties) one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

- It's clear from verses like Matt.18:6 and James 3:1 that God stands against those who not only complacency but leading others into. It's actually quite shocking that those Jesus is talking about are permitted in the kingdom at all.

#### What does it mean to relax King Jesus' law?

- **But watch what Jesus does.** Jesus is standing near a group of people who are proud of how well they keep the law and consider themselves teachers of it.

**Matthew 5:20** - *For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

- This is God's judgment against them and it's condemnation. **Why?**
- Because what their following and teaching others to follow is EXTERNAL righteousness. It's inadequate for King Jesus' kingdom. It never touches the heart. If anything, it causes more sin through pride and self-righteousness.
- **What does it mean to relax King Jesus' law? To make it about works instead of about the heart.** But works can never transform the heart.

**C.H. Spurgeon** (paraphrase) “You can’t polish the outside of a wine bottle and turn ditch water into wine... You can’t polish a penny and turn it into a quarter... You can’t care for a thorn bush until it becomes an orange tree.”

- There must be a higher understanding of the Law. More human works won’t obtain righteousness. Only the work of King Jesus obtains righteousness.
- Only He can remove a heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh.

## TOOK

Several kinds of people who are mistaken about God’s law.

- Those who believe they must get sin out of their lives before being saved.
- Those believing they must keep up their salvation with works worried they’ll lose their salvation because of sin.
- Those abusing God’s grace thinking He’s tolerant of sin because they’re saved.

## RECAP

- The Law was the legislation God gave His people through the prophet Moses.
- Jesus comes on the scene as the new Moses and giving God’s law.
- Jesus doesn’t abolish the old law but fulfills it.
- He fulfills it by correctly interpreting it, completing it, and attributing to us perfect adherence.
- He also warns about becoming complacent about His law in making it about works instead of the heart.
- Only Jesus, through His work on the cross, can transform the human heart.

## FURTHER INQUIRY

What heart condition is Jesus calling for in the passages about anxiety?

[Matt. 6:25-34](#)

**Challenge 1:** Read the sermon on the mount – Matt. 5-7. Look for the heart condition Jesus is calling for in each portion.

**Challenge 2:** Select one activity you do every day and pray about how you can do that same activity as worship instead of as a task.

## eGroup Questions /// The Old Covenant was a Cliffhanger

**Pray.**

**Scripture:** **Matthew 5:17-20** - *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. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

### **Questions:**

1. What's a show/movie that left you hanging the most? (*Warning: Only get one or two answers, or you'll spend all your time on this one.*)
2. Why do you think, in God's rescue plan for His people, He chose to work in several stages? Why have more than one covenant?
3. Why is it important that Jesus DOESN'T abolish the law?
4. What are some O.T. characters whose lives foreshadow Jesus' ministry? (*This could be fun to discuss.*)
5. What is God's Law which believers are under today? (*After a few minutes of discussion, direct them to Matt.22:35-40. Give them the chance to come up with it on their own.*)
6. How can we be "livers" of God's word and not lose the heart behind His law?
7. How can we be teachers of God's Word and not lose the heart of His law?
8. How can we turn mundane, daily activities into worship? How can we make them "unto God," or expressed differently, "for the love of God"?

**Ask for prayer requests. Pray.**

**Fill out student contact sheet in your folder.**