

The Old Testament and Christ

By Don Green

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Bible Verse: Matthew 5:17-18
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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

For tonight, we have the privilege of returning back to the Sermon on the Mount, certainly one of my favorite long texts in Scripture and one that's been most formative in my theology, formative in ministry, formative in my personal life, formative in my family for many of us, and so we come to Matthew chapter 5, verse 17 and following again and I just want to read verses 17 through 20, then we'll move into the text. Verse 17, Jesus said,

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. 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. 19 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. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Last week, we introduced this text and tried to explain why Jesus said this where he did. He had just been speaking on the Beatitudes, speaking about Christian character, talking about his disciples being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and he needed to interject a clarification because the things that he was teaching about the nature of the true kingdom of God and the true citizens of God was diametrically opposed to the standing religious authorities of the day, the Pharisees. What he was teaching was much different from what the people were used to hearing from their religious leaders at the time and so the danger for his audience, and the reason that Jesus was saying this now, was to help them see that he was not changing or altering anything about the received Old Testament. Rather, he was actually fulfilling it in everything that he taught and in everything that he said. The problem was not with what Jesus was now teaching, it was the fact that the Pharisees had corrupted the teaching of the word of God over the prior centuries so that everything that was true about God, about the kingdom, about true spiritual life just sounded so different from what the people were used to hearing. And I think we made passing note that that's often the case even today. We accumulate things as we grow up in certain spiritual environments, we learn things, we assume things, we presuppose things, so that biblical teaching sometimes sounds strange and different and there's almost a tendency to react against it because it's not consistent with what you

previously knew, but the problem is not with the biblical teaching, it's with what you previously knew.

So in other words, the people had to unlearn quite a few things as they were learning from the lips of Christ and tonight what we're really going to focus on mostly is there in verse 18, look at that with me, the end of verse 17 and into verse 18. Jesus said, "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." His purpose in coming to earth was to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures. Verse 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." And hopefully, if you were with us for the "Building a Christian Mind" series, many of the things that we'll say tonight will remind you and will bring back echoes of things that we said. Back on last April, almost a year ago, I did a message titled, "How to Know Jesus as Lord," and I immediately followed it with three supporting messages that all built on the same thing that is related to what Jesus says here. And the question is this, and you know I had opportunity to just kind of think back to my own early Christian experience and what I knew about Jesus in the early days and all of that, and there's perhaps a tendency, I haven't really thought all the way through this, but the question is, how do we know that Jesus is Lord, by what method or to what proof do we look to establish the Lordship of Christ? Now that's a more involved, there's a broader answer to that than you might suspect, and for those that are used to only hearing teaching from the New Testament, for example, it would be easy to miss a very important biblical aspect to that. You know, you might think, "Well, you know, Jesus came down and he was on earth and he did miracles and he taught with authority, he died, he rose again," all of those things are true, all of that establishes the Lordship of Christ, yes, absolutely. But there's more to it than that. You could almost have, if you only looked at it in terms of the four gospels, you would miss the fact that there's an entire context surrounding his coming. God had laid the foundation for Christ for some 1,500 years before Jesus actually arrived and it's important to understand that, that Jesus didn't come without a prior context.

He didn't just drop down out of the sky, so to speak, and start doing things. There was a context to what he did. And how do we show that Jesus is Lord? We do this, what the Bible in particular does is we show that Jesus Christ is the one whom the prophets foretold in days gone by. We establish the context of biblical history. Or you could say, we establish the context of revelatory history, the history of how God made himself known to his people over the course of time. And that's what Jesus is pointing to there in verse 17. Look at it with me. Tonight's message has the clever title, "The Old Testament and Christ." The Old Testament and Christ. That's not one that's going to generate many clicks on the internet, but that's okay. It's what I want you to see is to make a connection in your mind between the Old Testament and the coming of Christ. Jesus said in verse 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." So in this opening formative sermon that Jesus gives, he quickly draws attention to the law and the prophets and says, "I've come to fulfill them." And so it drives us back to the Old Testament. You can't have a full picture of the Lord Jesus until you have realized and understood what went before him and that he is fulfilling something that was in the developmental stages for some 1,500 years.

It's very crucial in biblical teaching. In fact, just turn to the book of Romans. I want to remind you of this opening passage in Romans chapter 1. Romans, the most systematic presentation of the gospel in the New Testament in the Bible. Notice what Paul says in Romans chapter 1, verse 1, these opening verses that it's so easy to pass over and say "Well, it's just introductory. It can't be that important." It's very important Romans 1, verse 1, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures." Paul saying, "I'm an apostle. I'm an appointed representative of the Lord Jesus. I'm set apart for the good news of God." And he immediately having said, made reference to Christ, making reference to the gospel, he says, God promised all of this beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. What I want you to see is that we are supposed to include the Old Testament in our understanding of Christ because the Old Testament laid the groundwork, it prepared the path, it prepared the way for him.

Just thinking of that, in Isaiah chapter 40, if you want to turn back there with me for a moment, Isaiah chapter 40 in a verse that is quoted in each of the four gospels, the prophet says in verse 3, Isaiah 40 verse 3 says, "A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." And that's what the Old Testament was doing, it was preparing a highway for the presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ. You travel down the wide boulevard of the Old Testament and you come to its destination, which is the magnificent temple of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Old Testament delivers you there as you go down that road. And if you know the prophets, then you realize that the prophets lead you inescapably to the conclusion that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And in those verses that I did last year, we looked at how the gospels, how Christ, how the apostles, how the epistles, they all made a huge point about the fact that they were presenting, as they taught about Christ, they were presenting the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

And so just to kind of pivot and take a step forward here, the Spirit of God uses the word of God to affirm the Son of God. The Spirit of God uses the word of God to affirm the Son of God and I'm going to be a little bit direct here. I mean this to help and edify you. We've got to get beyond being satisfied with sentiment about loving Jesus and feeling Jesus in our hearts, and I know that that's the realm where so many live, but that is not the basis on which that you know that Jesus is Lord. You know that Jesus is Lord because we examine the Old Testament Scriptures and see that Christ is the fulfillment of everything that the prophets foretold. And the truth of the matter is, beloved, you cannot understand the Bible until you see this point, you cannot understand the message of the Bible until you see that point, that going back all the way to Genesis, God was laying a foundation, preparing prophetically, preparing through types and sacrifices and all kinds of things, giving the people pictures, giving the people bits of information here and there so that when Christ finally arrived, there was a 1,500 year testimony that had prepared the way for him. If you think about 1,500 years in our context, that takes you back to 500 AD. What was happening in 500 AD? Well, I don't know, but for that length of time all along, God was preparing for the coming of his Son.

And so when Jesus says, "Do not think that I've come to abolish the Law or the Prophets," he's referring to what today we know as the Old Testament and what Jesus is doing for his audience as he's teaching them, as he's there as a contemporary with them in the first century, he's saying, "As you see my life, as you hear my teaching, as you watch the works that I do, understand that I'm fulfilling what the Old Testament had to say and that the Old Testament affirms and prepared the way for my life." And so he says there in verse 17, look at it there, he says, "Do not think that I've come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. It's going to sound like I'm teaching you something different because of what you're used to from the Pharisees, but don't think that way." And the form of the command in the original language, it has the idea that it forbids even beginning to start something. "Don't even start to think that I've come to abolish the Old Testament." It's very graphic, it's very emphatic. He's saying, "Don't even start to think that." We might say in our colloquial language today, we might tell somebody, "Don't even go there. Don't even go there in your thinking," so that he places this boundary around their minds so that they start to think, "What I'm seeing in the person of the Lord Jesus is a fulfillment of the Old Testaments that my parents have taught me since I was at their knee," for the Jewish mind. And so Jesus says, "Don't think that I am in opposition to the Law or the Prophets because it's just the exact opposite. I didn't come to set anything aside. I've come to bring it all to fruition."

Now the word abolish there, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets," it's a word that's used in other places to describe the destruction of buildings, you know, to destroy the temple. What Jesus is saying is, "I did not come to dismantle the Law. I did not come to introduce something new and different and to replace what the Old Testament has said. The Old Testament stays in its place of authority but it finds its fulfillment in me," the Lord Jesus says. Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament Scripture. Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament Scripture. Now I repeat that and I emphasize that because, beloved, that is far more breathtaking than you might realize. Think about it just from this perspective. There are 39 books in the Old Testament with 929 chapters written by different men from Moses through Malachi over the course of a thousand years, followed by a 400-year period of silence, multiple prophets, multiple miracles in the course of some of these things, the rise and fall of the nation of Israel, the rise and fall of Egypt, Israel rises and falls, Assyria rises and falls, Babylon rises and falls, Persia comes onto the scene, all of these multiple great movements of world history taking place just on a historic world government sort of way. Over the course of a thousand years, godly men have come and gone. David lived and died. Solomon lived and died. All of those things and then think about what Moses introduced when God gave the law and he introduced a system of elaborate sacrifices that were given, and sin offerings and burnt offerings and guilt offerings and wave offerings and all those things that you read about in Leviticus, the tabernacle in the wilderness, the people wandering through the wilderness and water gushing out of the rock. And you move on and the temple is built and the glory of God is manifested there, and I'm going back and forth in the history. The Red Sea is split. The people walk through on dry land. Egypt pursues them and it comes down and the waters are released and drowns the greatest army on the face of the earth at that time. And on and on it goes. I hope that somewhere in your life or in your future you have made plans or you're making room in your life to be reading through the Old

Testament. and being familiar with the history and the language and the whole content of the Old Testament because it's all foundational to the point of Christ.

Now, with all of that, the sacrifices, the civil law, the ceremonial law, the moral law that's given, the Ten Commandments, the authoritative instruction for God's revelation of his holiness, I just multiply that brief survey of Old Testament history to say this, you think about the magnificent complexity and the enormous amount of material that is there and the rich significance of everything that is said, and the courageous prophets and the kings and all of those men of God that were in the face of everything that was happening in the Old Testament, and just gather all of that up together and Jesus says, "I've come to fulfill all of that. The moral law, the Ten Commandments, it's mine to fulfill it. The ceremonial law, the sacrifices, it's mine to fulfill it. The civil law, the judicial law, I've come and when I'm done that will be filled and done away with." Done away with in just the sense that its purpose will have been fulfilled and met in the life of Christ. My whole point here is that it is just breathtaking for anyone to say that, "I've come to fulfill the Old Testament. I am here as the culmination of 1,500 years of divine revelation. I am here to fulfill everything that the prophets predicted would happen. I've come to fulfill and to meet every demand of God's moral law that no one has ever met before, that no one has ever obeyed perfectly. I'm here to obey all of that. I'm here to fulfill everything the sacrifices pointed to. I'm here to do it all."

It's a breathtaking claim for him to make and so what we want to do tonight is just look at what Jesus says and divide it up into a couple of different sections here. Jesus said, "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." What I want to do is just look at how Moses pointed to Christ and then secondly, look at how the prophets pointed to Christ. And the real, the fuller teaching of this will be in those messages that I did last year; this is more of a survey. But let's look, first of all, at how Moses pointed to Christ. How Moses pointed to Christ. Moses is the author of the first five books of the Old Testament. Moses wrote Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And beloved, let me just say in passing that no matter where you might hear it from, if you hear people that start to use substitute terms for the author of the first five books of the Bible, they don't want to say Moses wrote the Bible, that's something that needs to alert you and alarm you and cause you to step back and say, "Something funny is going on here. I think I'll move along to another teacher." Because the Bible says over and over again that those five books are the book of Moses, that God gave it to Moses. Moses, Moses, Moses. And so when someone tries to undermine that or waffle on that or fudge on it and say that, "Well, there were multiple writers or there was someone else other than Moses who gave it to you," just politely pick up your things and walk out and don't listen to that, because that is the start of the undermining of the full authority of Scripture. So just be aware of that. I mention that only in passing.

The law had been written by Moses 1,500 years before Christ and as Moses wrote that, he was recording events that occurred another thousand years before then. So God revealed history to Moses going back a thousand years before the time Moses wrote. Moses was writing 1,500 years in round terms before the time of Christ. So you have 2,500 years or

more of earth history that is recorded in what Moses had to say and so there's this vast chronology that is covered by the work of Moses, the writing of Moses, that extends back further than going back to the time of Christ our day, if that gives you any perspective. And so the law that he gave, that God gave through Moses, was multifaceted. It governed moral life, the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, repeated in Deuteronomy 5. It governed religious life. It laid forth the sacrificial system and the tabernacle and how they were to approach God. It set forth the history of the twelve tribes of Israel. It governed daily life in Israel as you read the latter half of Exodus and you see the detailed legislation for their lives. And here's what I want you to see, beloved. is that through its morality, through its sacrifices, the literal animal sacrifices and grain sacrifices that it describes, through the judicial structure that it described and prescribed, the law of Moses was designed to point people to a coming Messiah.

Look at verse 18 with me. Jesus says, "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." Now as we've said in the past, the Hebrew letter Yod, which is kind of like the English letter I, it looks like an apostrophe in the Hebrew text. It's just a little curve that rests above the line, and other aspects of the Hebrew alphabet would use tiny strokes of the pen to distinguish one letter from another. And so Jesus is describing the most minute aspects of the Hebrew alphabet, the most tiny details to look for just as you're visually looking at the text, he's looking at all of those things and going down to the smallest aspects of detail in it and what he's saying here is, is that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets down to the smallest details without any exceptions, that there was nothing that would be missed in the process.

So everything that the law taught was looking forward to Christ. We should never draw such a sharp distinction between the Old and the New Testament that we don't see that the Old Testament was pointing forward to our Lord. So for example, you can look in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 18. Deuteronomy chapter 18. Moses is speaking here and he's at the tail end of his own life here, he will die soon after the book of Deuteronomy is completed, and he's pointing forward and he says, "the LORD your God will raise up for you," this is Deuteronomy 18:15, "the LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers--it is to him you shall listen." And there was never a prophet like Moses until Christ came on the scene. And I want you to think about it from this perspective, we'll go back and we'll do a little bit of Old Testament history survey here. The different books, the different epochs of the Bible end with someone dying. And so in the book of Genesis, for example, you read about Joseph in chapters 37 to 50 and he rose to such great prominence in Egypt. He's the Prime Minister of Egypt. He rescues the people of that entire region from famine by his wisdom and his foresight after he had gone through many different providential difficulties and challenges in his life. And you look and you see this man rising up, you wonder about his greatness, Genesis ends with him dying. You read about Moses and what follows in Exodus, and you read through Leviticus and Numbers and Deuteronomy, the greatness of Moses. He's a deliverer of the people. He's a mediator with God. And you just see him in this exalted role, you might say, in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy ends, Moses dies. You go into the book of Joshua, strong, courageous leader, leads the people to divide and conquer the

nations and there's a distribution of the land and Joshua is just such a great, mighty man of God, a warrior for God and a strong and courageous leader, one of only two men who survived the wilderness wanderings, and when all of Israel dies in the wilderness except for Joshua and Caleb, and he's obviously a distinct, unique leader, and the book of Joshua ends and he dies. You read in the books of 1 Kings, 2 Kings, and in the corresponding books of Chronicles, you read about the rise of great kings like David, like Solomon. As you're reading along, you're thinking, does this man deliver, is this man faithful all the way to the end? David, nah, he's a disappointment. He sins with Bathsheba, he kills Uriah, he throws the kingdom into turmoil. Solomon reaches a peak of the greatest wisdom and the greatest wealth on the world and the Queen of Sheba goes to hear his wisdom for herself and her breath is taken away by the magnificence of Solomon, and you think there's this man of great prominence and he fails. He's drawn in by foreign women and he leaves the kingdom to be divided among his subsequent sons. You continue to read and you read about other kings that rise up, good kings, King Asa, King Hezekiah, King Josiah, and others that you could mention, and every time, every time, Scripture brings forth how they sinned, how they failed so that you have been introduced to Moses saying, "Look for the prophet like me, listen to him," there's just this, it's like riding a roller coaster. As you read about these men, your hopes get up for them and then the coaster plummets down and it ends in failure. He's not the one. Not only did he sin, he died. Can't be the one, can't be the one. There's almost this tiresome cycle, especially as you're aware of it and you become familiar with it and you watch it, you just say, man is destined to fail, man is destined to fail, man is destined to fail, and yet there is this promise of a coming prophet to whom you could listen. As we'll see later tonight, there are these anticipations of the one to come but every time you think this might be the one, this might be the one who fulfills it all, it ends in death. It ends in disappointment. And so for Jesus to say that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets down to the smallest details, all of a sudden the Jewish mind is perked up. They've been looking for this Messiah for a very long time and now the question becomes will Jesus be able to deliver?

Well, turn to the book of Luke. Go to the gospel of Luke here and remember when Jesus was speaking to the men on the road to Emmaus. After his resurrection, he met with these men walking on the road to Emmaus. Who he was was hidden from their eyes. And in verse 15 of Luke 24, "While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, 'What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?' And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?' And he said to them, 'What things?' And they said to him, 'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people.'" You see how their hopes were raised by what they saw in Christ. They had been conditioned by the Old Testament to have this messianic expectation, the Messiah will one day come. And verse 20, "how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened." Their hopes were raised by the life, the ministry, the miracles of Jesus, and now they're walking three days after he had been put in the tomb

and they're crushed. They're confused. They're so disappointed. If he wasn't the one, if he was just in the line like all of these others that we've been talking about here tonight, then where are we ever going to find the promised deliverer to come? This is a very deep-rooted disappointment and confusion that they are expressing when they say, "We had hoped he was the one."

But then there's this confusing element added to it. Again, put yourself in their shoes. Verse 22, "Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." And Jesus interjects now in verse 25, "And he said to them, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!'" Do you see it there? Everything that the prophets had spoken. You should know based on what the prophets had said how to interpret these things. He appeals to the ministry of the prophets and that's our point here for this evening, the foundation that the prophets laid. Verse 26, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Have you not read Isaiah 53 about how the suffering servant of Isaiah, for example? And then look at what happens in verse 27, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

So, Sermon on the Mount early on in his ministry, Jesus says, "I've come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. Don't misunderstand, I've come to fulfill them." He completes his three years of ministry. He's crucified. He's resurrected. What does he do? He comes full circle back to the original point that he was making, Scripture says he interpreted from Moses and prophets all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. And so this is fundamental. This is absolutely essential to the way that Jesus presented himself.

And look at verse 44 there in Luke 24, "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, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'" Everything written about in the law of Moses and the prophets, it has to be fulfilled and it's fulfilled in me. You see why I say this is breathtaking, this is staggering, 39 books, 929 chapters written over 1,500 years covering more history than that, sacrifices, tabernacle, temple, promises, prophecies, kingly line, genealogies, all of those things fulfilled in Christ.

Now the impact that this is supposed to have upon us and what we are supposed to do is, you can think about it this way, that in one hand you've got an Old Testament, and you're reading and you're saying, "Okay, it says this, this, and this," and then in the other hand, you've got the four gospels and you're reading about Christ and you're saying, "This is here, this is here, this fulfills that," and you realize how these things come together so that, beloved, the testimony of God to the Lord Jesus Christ is not at all limited to the

three years of his public ministry, although that is more than enough to make someone responsible to believe in him, there had been this prior testimony for millennia saying and outlining, "This is the one to whom you shall look." And Jesus looks at that Old Testament and claims for himself, "I am the fulfillment of it all." If you or I had tried to say that, we should get locked up in a psychiatric facility. You should be taken away and put in a white coat because there's no way, there's no way that you or I fulfill any of that despite the woman I met recently who seemed to think that she was a fulfillment of some of that, and she had ideas about who the father of her children were. She said it was Michael the Archangel was the father of her children. I said, "You know, I don't think I can help you." That was weird. That really happened. I'm not making that up. The point being that Jesus was in his right mind and speaking the truth when he fulfilled it. He said, "I've come to fulfill it. I have fulfilled it." Anyone else to say that would be, it would be insanity. It would be a delusion. It would be a falsehood. No one else. Moses points to Christ, and Christ claimed that after his resurrection, "It was necessary for me to fulfill all these things."

Now let's look a little further into this and consider point number two, how the prophets point to Christ. The prophets point to Christ. Over the thousand years that followed Moses, different biblical writers recorded God's word to the people. They wrote the history, they recorded the history of God's people, they interpreted the history of God's people. They called people to repentance when they strayed. It wasn't just that the prophets were foretelling the future, although they did that, they were forth-telling the law of God and calling people to repent.

Let's go back to Isaiah for just a moment here and this is a little bit off the beaten path for what I wanted to say, but it's still good for us to hear these things and to consider these things. In Isaiah chapter 1, verse 10, just to get a sense of the ministry of the prophets, speaking to the people of God, he says, "Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats." They're going through the religious motions with the sacrifices that God had presented, but their lives were full of sin. They were not obedient. They were disobedient people, even as they were outwardly religious and God says, "I'm not having any of that." The ministry of the prophet Isaiah was to rebuke them and to call them back to true heart religion, of which the sacrifices were supposed to be an overflow, not a substitute for.

And in verse 12 he says, "When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations--I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood." So he calls them to repentance. He says, "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless,

plead the widow's cause." Repent like that and then maybe we can talk. A healthful reminder to our day even that the outward performance of religion is meaningless if it's not accompanied by a life of personal holiness.

And so the prophets said these things to the people. They called them to repentance. They promised blessing for obedience. They warned them with curses for falling into sin. And as they did that, as they ministered in the midst of the people, ministered and spoke in king's palaces and spoke to kings, they did something else. Along the way, they spoke about a Messiah who would deliver the people of Israel from their sin, a Messiah who would bring national peace to them. And in bits and pieces, as you go through the Old Testament, you see, I hesitate to describe it this way, but you get different puzzle pieces laid out there and when Christ comes, you put the pieces together and you see the full picture that all of the prophets together were giving.

So let's just take a little bit of a quick chronology here. Some 1,000 years before Christ, turn to Psalm 22 verse 16. Some 1,000 years before Christ, King David said this, he gave a picture of the crucifixion before crucifixion was even a thing, before it had even historically appeared in the annals of human history. Psalm 22 verse 16, "For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet--I can count all my bones--they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots." A thousand years before the crucifixion, a thousand years before Jesus was nailed to the cross, a thousand years before the Roman soldier thrust his sword into the side of Jesus, a thousand years before they gambled for his garment, you see this recorded in the Psalms. It was part of the picture to help recognize the Messiah when he came and it was fulfilled to utter perfection at the cross.

Go forward 300 years to again to the ministry of Isaiah. Look at Isaiah chapter 7 with me. Isaiah chapter 7. And the chronological markers are important here. A thousand years before Christ, 700 years before Christ, obviously we're talking in round numbers. In chapter 7 verse 14, we read, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Fulfilled in Matthew chapter 1 and recorded as a fulfillment of that prophecy.

Look at Isaiah chapter 53, we alluded to this earlier. Isaiah chapter 53. In verses 4 and 5, let's start in verse 3, it'd be easy to read the whole chapter and more. Isaiah 53 verse 3, "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth." And on it goes. What a remarkable picture of the work of the Lord Jesus. And in John chapter 1, verse

29, John the Baptist said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," in part echoing back this picture from Isaiah of the lamb that was led to slaughter.

You can listen as I read from Zechariah chapter 9, verse 9, Zechariah being just a little bit harder to find in your Bible, and for the sake of time, I'll just read it. Zechariah chapter 9, verse 9, foreshadowing, predicting the events just prior to the crucifixion. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." You could look at Micah chapter 5 verse 2, that the Messiah would be born in the village of Bethlehem, and just on and on it goes. And as you read the New Testament over and over again, you will see not only general statements about, as we saw from Romans chapter 1, general statements about how the prophets laid the foundation for Jesus Christ, you will see over and over again specific statements that this happened in order to fulfill what the prophet said. Over and over again.

For tonight, here's the point, beloved. Going back to Matthew chapter 5 now, let's just come full circle as we begin to wrap this up and start to get something of the magnificence of what Jesus is saying. You know, I'm a big fan of people reading through the Bible on a continual basis, you know, to read through the Bible in a year or if it takes you two years, but just reading through Scripture and becoming familiar with everything that it says. I encourage that, I practice that. And yet when we read, if we're just reading and not stopping to think about what we're reading, it's so easy to come to a verse like chapter 5, verse 17, and just kind of hurry our way through it and not realize the full significance of what it means. Jesus said, "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." And so let's pull everything together that we've been saying here tonight and contemplate the greatness of what Jesus is saying. Moses and the prophets writing over the course of some thousand year period, the sacrifices, the tabernacle, the temple, the people of Israel, the kings, the genealogies, all of those things that we've already mentioned, you take all of that and you bring it as a whole before your mind, realizing the great intricacy, the great depth, the great volume of it all, and realize that Jesus says, "I have come to fulfill all of that." For centuries, the prophets were giving advance notice of the Messiah, and as it were to a people that were conditioned and who knew the Old Testament, Jesus says, "All of that Old Testament," he lifts his hands and he says, "I am that Messiah." What God's prophets had been writing for 1,500 year, this one itinerant teacher in the land of Israel, he's the fulfillment of it all? That's the question. And the answer is yes, he is. The fulfillment of the sacrifices, the hope of every God-fearing Jew for 2,000 years is in front of them in human flesh? Yes, he is. Jesus, you're going to take up the Scriptures and expound them on your own authority? You're going to tell us exactly what Scripture means, not by appealing to others, but simply because of your say-so you're going to declare what the word of God means? And not only that, you're going to obey them perfectly when no one before you, even our greatest kings, failed? Yes, that's exactly what he's going to do.

You step back, realize that Jesus was a man of human flesh just like ours. Yes, he was God in human flesh, but as we sing at Christmastime, veiled in flesh the Godhead see. So this one who is saying, "I'm the promised Messiah. I am God in human flesh. Everything that's been written for 1,500 years is pointing to me. All of the sacrifices, I'm going to fulfill them and put an end to them." And you look at that, and you just look at it in purely human naturalistic terms, and you say, "This is insanity." This man has no appearance that we should be attracted to him. The religious leaders, the religious authorities of the day utterly despised and rejected him. How could he possibly be what he claimed to be? And yet, and yet he performs these miracles. He opens the eyes of people who were born blind and not only can they see, they can rightly interpret what it is that they see that they've never seen in the course of their lifetime. He speaks to a raging sea and the sea obeys him. He tells Lazarus to come out of the tomb and Lazarus obeys. And not only that, when he teaches, there is a unique authority to everything that he says. So the people say, "We've never heard a man speak this way."

Now beloved, here today, here tonight, what you should be doing and what should be coalescing in your mind is this, all of that coming together in a most powerful testimony by the ministry of the Holy Spirit deep in your heart that thousands of years of biblical revelation are pointing to Christ. All of his teaching is pointing to the authority of Christ. His great miracles are pointing to the authority and the deity of Christ. And the Spirit of God by his ministry in your heart is all affirming it to you as true. You know what I'm saying is true because the Spirit is affirming it to you even as I speak. And so all of a sudden, in a most real, divine, but invisible way, our room here tonight is filled with the presence of Christ, the authority of Christ, the reality of Christ, and it's utterly breathtaking, and it's especially breathtaking because it's all true. It's reality. It's the way things really are.

Look at John chapter 5 verse 39 for our closing text here this evening and avoiding a tangent that I'm deeply tempted to go onto. Look at John chapter 5, verse 33. "You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth." This is Jesus speaking, "Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved." Jesus lays all of these things out, he makes all of these claims, and one of the goals of his saying these things, beloved, to you tonight is so that you could be saved, so that you could be saved from your sin, so that you could call out to Christ as Lord and Master and Savior and be delivered from sin and judgment. "I say these things so that you may be saved." John, speaking of John, "He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent." Verse 39, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life," listen to this, beloved, "and it is they that bear witness about me." "The Scriptures bear witness about me," Christ says. "If you believe the Scripture, then you must believe me." Elsewhere the Bible says if they won't believe Moses, they won't believe if a man comes alive from the dead. The Scriptures are sufficient for us to believe

in Christ, and yet Jesus says to his contemporaries, "yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life." Beloved, let's wrap it up. Let's wrap it up there.

Jesus Christ is the focal point of divine revelation, divine history. He is the focal point of the word of God. No one has understood the Bible at all unless they see that Jesus is the central figure to it all. The question for you tonight is whether you have looked to Scripture and having looked to Scripture, have you then looked to Christ for the salvation of your eternal soul?

Let's pray together.

Our Lord, our Savior, we read the Scriptures, and by your grace we believe. We read of your mighty deeds, by the help of your Spirit we believe. We read your words and we say these are the words of the one who has eternal life. This is the words of God himself. No one has ever spoken like you have spoken. There is no other book on the face of the earth or anywhere in the four corners of the universe like the 66 books of the one true Bible, the true word of God. And here we are Lord, blessed by you to have the opportunity to open it, to read it, to have the help of your Spirit to understand it. We honor you. And Lord Jesus, we believe everything that the law and the prophets spoke. They pointed to you. Moses pointed to you. The prophets pointed to you. You fulfilled them perfectly while you were here on earth. You rose from the dead. You're ascended on high. Now you rule from heaven and one day you will come again, Lord, corporately we believe. We bow. We worship. And Father, may the corporate testimony that we make be the testimony of each individual heart with us here this evening, that each heart would bow before you, confessing you as Lord, confessing sin and receiving Christ for salvation. Father, may that be true of everyone under the sound of my voice, to the honor of your great and holy name, we pray, amen.

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