

Matthew 5:17-20 (NKJV)

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

How should we look at scripture?

Our passage this morning is so very helpful at letting us know how Jesus regarded scripture.

Here are 4 common views of how scripture was inspired.

Neo-orthodox

Dictation

Limited Inspiration

Plenary Verbal Inspiration

Neo-orthodox-

This view says that the Bible is not really the word of God. Rather it just tells us about Jesus. The words used are just fallible words. The Bible is only inspired in that God sometimes uses the words to speak to individuals.

Dictation-

This view says that the words of the Bible truly are the words of God. But it says people essentially took dictation for God. God spoke and these people, not needing to give it any thought just wrote down what entered their ears or their mind.

Limited Inspiration-

This view is like the first in that the words may or may not be fallible. This view holds that **historical** information may be wrong, but God protected it from having doctrinal error. They say that God gave some inspiration to the individuals writing scripture but it was primarily a work of man with limited spiritual intrusion.

Plenary Verbal Inspiration-

Plenary means complete or full and verbal means the very words of scripture. So this view says that **every single word** in the Bible is the **very word** of God. It isn't just His ideas or thoughts. It is the **words themselves** that are God breathed.

Then scripture tells us How it happened. And Plenary Verbal is that explanation that most fits.

1 Pet 1:21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Let's look at what Jesus says in our text in verse 18.

18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

We are going to look at this in detail this morning and we will see how Jesus views the Old Testament.

First Jesus says about the Law or the Prophets that He came to **do no damage** to them at all but to **uphold** them to the point of **fulfilling** them. Christ gave an absolute endorsement of them. But to what degree? Was it just the **general idea** of them? Was it just the **core doctrines**? Was it just their **moral influence**? No Christ will be extremely specific about **how** He regarded the inspiration of the Old Testament. He will tell us how far **He** takes this concept.

He starts by saying **Assuredly I say to you**

This is a very strong statement. His audience would have known to **take notice** at this. They would have known that what Jesus was going to say next was going to be **very emphatic**. He would essentially be saying "**I am telling you the absolute truth without qualification**. Make no mistake. This is the absolute truth and it is not going to change."

He says this to make a point that He probably thinks **needs** to be said this strongly because it is likely to **not be believed**. Jesus does not want to be misunderstood. He does not want this thing He is saying to be forgotten.

Then He says **till heaven and earth pass away**

This is describing the end of earthly history as we know it.

2 Peter 3:7 (NKJV)

7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

2 Peter 3:10-13 (NKJV)

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the

heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

We are not sure exactly how this will all be carried out. But one thing is for sure. It is in **the future**. And we **will know** when it has happened. And until that time we know one thing. What Jesus says about the word will **remain true**.

This is helpful because it gives us a time parameter. We don't have to guess when God's word will be fulfilled. It will not be fulfilled prior to this catastrophic event. We can categorically reject **any subtle theories** about how all this might happen here and now.

It is interesting that Jesus made a similar claim about His word, about the things He was saying, the things coming out of His mouth. He says this-

Matthew 24:35 (NKJV)

³⁵ **Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.**

Here Jesus makes His words superior to the Law and the Prophets. The law and the prophets will be utterly fulfilled. The words of Christ will be effective forever. At least that is how I understand it.

So what is it that will not happen prior to the catastrophic **end of life as we know it** on planet earth?

Back to our text-

¹⁸ **For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.**

one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law

What does this mean?

Well the **jot** is the smallest letter. The smallest letter was the iota in Greek and yodh in Hebrew.

A **tittle** is literally a little horn and it is the mark that helps distinguish one Hebrew letter from another. It is a very small thing that helps identify letters to ensure the correct word is understood.

What Christ is saying is that not only won't the **smallest letter** be changed but even the smallest **part** of a letter won't be changed.

What Christ says here is so very helpful to us. Look at what is implied here about how Christ looks at the Law and the Prophets.

Christ regards the selection and meaning of **each and every word** in the Old Testament to be **so important** that not even a nuance will be changed by allowing a letter to be wrongly read.

That is what his audience would have instantly understood.

He is not talking about the authority of the word being held in its **ideas**. He does not regard it as a noble attempt by man to write down **some important things**. No. He is essentially saying that God communicated to man with **every single word** that was written. Every single word. The words were selected with purpose.

Now I believe that this only perfectly applies to the **original document** in the **original language**. There may now be errors in translation. Men are now choosing the best words to use to represent what was said in the original. And that is a very difficult process. And there may have been errors as it was passed down. The great thing is we have enough historical documents that we can make **very reasonable guesses** about where those problems are. And we can even appeal to the **original languages** and the oldest and most accurate manuscripts. So we need to add these caveats. But the important point is not lost.

God chose **even the words** that He would use in His communication to us.

The original document is certainly a **supernaturally transmitted truth** and is specific to the very word that was selected. There were no mistakes.

Sometimes I lose track of that when I read God's Word. **I forget what it is** that I have in my hands. I forget just how absolutely amazing it is that we have the **Words of God** in front of us. We have God's direct communication to us. And these words have absolute authority, the very authority of God.

We can have an astounding confidence that when we understand scripture correctly, we **know God's intent**. We know His **directions**. We know **His slant** on things. We know what He thinks to a small needed degree. We know what **pleases** and **displeases** Him. And to the degree a human can, by reading His words **we know Him**. We can have an understanding of this God to the extent of our human capabilities.

Jesus endorsed this view of scripture. Now how did Christ apply this in day to day life? Did he really treat scripture like every word was important?

Well let's look at an example.

Matthew 22:31-32 (NKJV)

³¹ **But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying,**

³² **'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.'**

The context of this passage is this.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. And they thought they had a valid point because it is **not mentioned often** specifically in the Old Testament.

Now it is important to look closely at **how** Christ argued His point from scripture. Because that is **the degree** to which **we** too can trust it.

Look at Jesus whole point. It centers on the **verb tense of a single word**. It is the verb tense in the statement **I AM**. The verb tense is **present** tense. It is not past tense.

Jesus treated this doctrinal statement with complete confidence. And the only way you could do this is if you believed that the **specific word** was **intentional** specifically **inspired**. This particular word and its verb tense was chosen by God. So Christ could make the strength of His argument on that **single word**.

Do you see what I mean? Christ was basing this on the **jot and the tittle**.

When we get picky about exactly what a verse says, we are copying Christ's style of Biblical scholarship.

Now we must compare scripture with scripture to make sure we are getting it right. Study is needed by us. But we can make some **tremendous assumptions** regarding scripture because the **Word Himself** made those assumptions. We can model our Biblical study after His.

Now how much did Christ depend upon scripture? The largest percentage of what Christ taught can find its basis on what was taught in the Old Testament. If we wanted to, we could spend the rest of our time together this morning just reading scriptures where Christ quoted the Old Testament.

He knew them and studied them and memorized them. He knew what they meant and He knew how to properly use them. We cannot possibly know **Christ** or the **New Testament scriptures** as well as we should without the **Old Testament**. One scholar, when asked to interpret Revelation replied that he would not be able to do so until He had done a thorough study of the whole Old Testament, which he did. Then many years later he took his people through a study of Revelation.

If we want to **best understand Christ**, we should study the Old Testament with a **view for Christ**.

If we want to best understand **marriage and sexuality** we should study the Old Testament with a view for marriage and sexuality.

If we want to know how to think about **money and resources**, we should study the Old Testament with a view for it.

I think you are getting what I mean.

The words in the Old Testament are God's words. And they are the backdrop for the New Testament. It is hard to have a proper perspective on **where you are** if you have no idea of **where you came from**.

Now, I do not spend much time in circles with people who call themselves Christians but **do not have any regard** for the clear teachings in the Old Testament. Probably the issue where this becomes clearest is the issue of homosexuality. Many people try to make a wrong distinction between the Old and New Testament. They say the Old Testament was all about law but the New Testament is all about grace. The law no longer has any place. Love is the theme and loving is defined arbitrarily based on our culture's understanding of love. So these folks take a word from the New Testament, define it with an extra biblical definition, and then seek to apply it in all kinds of situations. They apply it in a way that would have us completely **confused** about right and wrong, about truth and lies, about what is proper to do and what is improper.

Any attempt to quote the Old Testament by folks who think like this is dealt with anything from **skepticism** to outright **hostility and mocking**.

Certainly we should be loving. We should reach out to meet any non believer's need without regard for the expense and we do it because of our relationship with Christ. Certainly that is always called for. But we need not be **morally confused** in order to do it. We do not need to **redefine** right and wrong to do it. Hurting a person's feelings with the truth is often required to help them. A diagnosis of cancer always hurts a person's feelings, but a doctor is immoral if he knows the disease exists without telling that to the patient. And we do not need to succumb to any worldly pressure to try to make God look cool.

Now those who claim to be Christians but try to redefine sin and redefine love have a real problem. And this is the crux of the problem.

Does this **Christ** they **claim to worship** know what He is doing?

MacArthur says it well:

If the Old Testament contains any errors we must conclude one of two things about Jesus Christ. One possibility is that He was ignorant of those errors, in which case He was not omniscient and was therefore not God.

The other possibility is that He knew of the errors but denied them, in which case He would have been a liar and a hypocrite, and therefore not holy God.

The question to ask a person who claims faith in Christ but has no confidence in the Old Testament is this:

How could Christ **not have known** what you know?

Christ had **complete confidence** in the accuracy and authority of Old Testament scripture. How could He **not known** what you know?

Obviously the problem is not with Christ. The problem is with having a view of scripture counter to His.

Back to the text-

18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

Until all is fulfilled or accomplished. In Verse 17 the word “fulfill” has the idea of completion. The word for fulfill in verse 18 is different but similar.

What does this total fulfillment consist of? What does it mean “**till all is fulfilled**”.

How will everything the Bible says be fully complete? How will it be fully accomplished, fully obeyed?

For sure it applies to Christ. He fulfilled the law by keeping it perfectly. He became the perfect satisfaction of its wrath. He has, or will be, the perfect fulfillment about every Messianic prophecy. But the whole world will also be changed. All of us will be changed as well.

I think this fulfillment being spoken of is even more expansive. I believe this is talking about when everything becomes exactly what it is supposed to be. It is when everything conforms to the perfect will of God, the will described by what He desires.

Everything is rendered righteous. Everything becomes perfectly pleasing to God. **His character** and **our environment** will finally become congruent.

There will no longer be a **useful purpose** for sin or suffering. And there will be no sources of **violation of God's intents**. There will be no influence from the devil or the the flesh. There will no longer be an old nature. There will no longer be a curse. Even the animals will get along. No more tick bites or mosquito bites or bee stings.

No more sickness. No more Covid.

No more stress.

The perfect law of God, all the **desires expressed by God's words**, especially as emphasized by Christ, will be perfectly in place.

Wow what a day that will be.

And **when** will it be?

It will be **after heaven and earth pass away**.

And even then, God's desire will not change. I think we will look back upon His words of the Old Testament scripture for Eternity and we will sing Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty.

We will be glad that the law is **no longer needed** to restrict our behavior because **our hearts** are perfectly aligned with the **intentions** of God. There is no struggle. There are no widows or orphans needing protected. There are no civil disputes needing resolved. There are no diseases that need stopped. There is no problem with family boundaries or land disputes. Theft will be a distant memory, as will hunger and poverty and healthcare. None of the reasons that the law was so necessary will still exist.

Isn't this all just amazing?

What are you facing today that is **not worth enduring** to reach this end?

Why is it so difficult for us to accept **the suffering we must go through** now knowing that **this is the life promised to us**?

Can we not have just the little faith that it takes to say, it will be worth it all when I see Jesus?

This law is going to be completely and absolutely fulfilled. It will be complete. It will no longer be needed for what it is needed for now.

And we will be continually driven by our deep appreciation to **sing out in praise** to the God who provided all those things we so deeply need.

Have you considered lately just how blessed we are to have God's Word so readily available. We have the resources to access as many different versions as we want. We have access for free to amazing study resources. I don't know that **any generation** has ever had as many resources to know and study God's word as we do.

And does it not encourage your soul when you **read it**, when you **study it**, when you hear it **preached** by gifted scholars and communicators? It is a rich spiritual feast that God has provided for us. Do we regard it like Christ did?

Do we see those words as the **very word of God**, the sustenance of our souls?

What do we choose **instead**?

Maybe a good emphasis this week would be to renew our commitment to reading and studying His word.