

Discussing Matthew 5:17-20 with Rob Solberg

Opening Statement :: Matthew chapters 5-7 have famously been called “The Sermon on the Mount,” because Yeshua is teaching people. At the end it is said (Mt. 7:28) that the crowds were astonished at his teaching. His **teaching** here is all about how we should behave.

I think all Christians understand this. When Yeshua says “Blessed are the merciful” or “Blessed are the peacemakers,” we understand he is calling *us* to be peaceful, merciful people. It’s even plainer in verses 10-12 when he tells the people: “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you (for righteousness)... rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great.”

He then tells them, “You are the salt of the earth” and “You are the light of the world... let your light shine before men so they see your good works, and glorify the Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:1-16 is Yeshua teaching about how *we* are to live our lives. How *we* should conduct ourselves.

In this specific vein of thought he says “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.” He didn’t come to abolish the Law in his *teachings*, he came to fulfill the Law in his *teachings* - that’s the immediate context.

Yeshua isn’t saying he came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets in the sense of fulfilling a prophecy, or what the Law said *about* him. The Law here refers to the commandments of Yahweh. The Prophets here refer to special, holy men, sent to the people of Israel, calling them to return to obeying Yahweh. Just as Yeshua said a few verses earlier (vs. 12), “for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Past prophets were persecuted for their teachings.

He mentions the Law and Prophets again in this same sermon, in Matthew 7:12, “Therefore, in all things, whatever you want people to do for you, so do for them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Notice here the “Law and Prophets” are something we obey.

Look at verse 19 in relation to verse 17 (I’m reading from the LSB): “Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.” The words “whoever then” refer to us; we should follow his example of not abolishing the Law. This is why he says if we annul the least of the commandments we will be least in the kingdom. Annuls in verse 19 interprets abolish in verse 17.

The flip side is “but whoever (that’s me and you) does and teaches them (the commandments) shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” “Does and teaches the commandments” (vs. 19) is an explanation of “to fulfill the law” (vs. 17). If you track from verse 17 to verse 20: Law and Prophets (vs. 17), Law (vs. 18), commandments (vs. 19), and your righteousness (vs. 20) are all synonyms. There is zero here about fulfilling prophecies; it’s all about Yeshua teaching us to obey the Torah, the Law of Moses, Yahweh’s Instructions.

The key point is that Matthew 5 is about Yeshua's teaching more-so than his personal life. It includes his personal life (because he was THE obedient Son of Yahweh), but it is primarily about what he taught others to do. In his teaching, he didn't come to abolish (annul) the Law or Prophets, he rather came to do the opposite: fulfill (do and teach) the Law and the Prophets.

Believing in what Yeshua did (and does) for us is necessary for salvation, but another way we believe in Yeshua is to follow what he *taught*. If you do not follow his teachings your faith is incomplete. Yeshua himself said (Lk. 6:40), "Every disciple, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher." Yeshua observed the Torah perfectly; a disciple of Yeshua seeks to imitate that.

Additional Points/Talks

5:17, Do We Take it Literally?

It's been suggested that since Yeshua sometimes speaks metaphorically (like in Matthew 5:29 where he says it's better to pluck out your right eye if it causes you to sin) that he must be speaking metaphorically in Matthew 5:17-20.

Well... what about Matthew 5:7 where he says "Blessed are the merciful," is that literal? Or Matthew 5:9's "Blessed are the peacemakers," should we literally be peacemakers? Or Matthew 5:24 where he says to leave the altar and go be reconciled with your brother, should we literally seek reconciliation?

I think it's obvious that Yeshua uses both literal and metaphorical speech in his teachings. In Matthew 5:17-20 we can know for sure that he is speaking literally because of his conclusion for us in verse 19. We are not to break/annul even the least of the commandments, but instead do and teach them. Doing and teaching the commandments is used all through Holy Scripture for righteous living (Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 119:96-100; 2 Kings 23:25; Ezra 7:6, 10; Lk. 1:5-6).

At the end of his sermon he makes it just as clear when he speaks of people who only hear his teachings but do not put them to practice; he calls that person the foolish man (Mt. 7:26). The one who hears him **and obeys him** is the wise man (Mt. 7:24). This is literal obedience or disobedience, not metaphorical.

5:17, Plerosai: Two Uses in Matthew's Gospel

One vital point often missed in discussions on Matthew 5:17's "fulfill" is that the Greek word plerosai is used, the active form of the verb pleroō, and it's only used 2x in Matthew's gospel: Matthew 5:17 and Matthew 3:15.

In Matthew 3:15 Jesus tells John (as he is requesting to be baptized by him), "for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill (plerōsai) all righteousness." Jesus and John are the active agents doing a work of righteousness. After Yeshua was baptized, it did not mean everyone else standing there on the river-bank did not have to do the same. They too needed to fulfill that act of righteousness.

Contrast this with Matthew 4:14's "in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled." This is referring to a prophecy coming to pass, but the Greek word for fulfilled is not in the active tense but rather in the *passive* tense (plērōthē). This *passive* verb is used 9x in Matthew's gospel, each time referring to a prophecy in the Tanak being fulfilled. We should not take 9 uses of the passive verb plērōthē (and the similar forms eplērōthē and plērōthōsin) and lay them over the 2 uses of the *active* verb plērosai.

Matthew 5:17's plerōsai is not about a prophetic fulfillment happening passively, it's about Yeshua doing an act of righteousness, just like in Matthew 3:15. Yeshua does the Torah, both in his practice and teaching, giving us a perfect example of how we are to behave. Thus his entire sermon is teaching us how to perform acts of righteousness.

In fact, if you'll notice carefully... not only is the Greek verb plerosai used in both texts, but the word righteousness (dikaiosunē) is as well, Matthew 3:15 and Matthew 5:20. In 3:15 Yeshua is performing an act of righteousness. In 5:17-20 he is teaching Torah to others so that they perform acts of righteousness. The word parallel between the two texts (in close proximity) is solid.

SIDENOTE: In addition to these two uses, the NT uses the precise plerosai only two other times, both in epistles of Paul. Romans 15:13a, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Here, it is Yahweh in-filling someone with something; there is nothing to do with passively fulfilling a prophecy. Finally, Colossians 1:25 where Paul speaks of being a minister, "so that he might fully carry out [*the preaching of*] the word of God." It is Paul actively doing something here (probably preaching), which makes all 4NT uses of plerosai having nothing to do with predictive prophecy coming to pass (being fulfilled).

5:17, Fulfill & Abolish in Rabbinical Literature

If you consult rabbinical literature, such as the Mishnah, you will find hundreds of places in which the Hebrew equivalent terms for fulfill (lekayem) and abolish (levattel) mean "to do the Torah" or "to break the Torah."

Here's one example from Avot 4:9 "Whoever fulfills the Torah in poverty, will fulfill it later on in wealth; and whoever abolishes the Torah in wealth, will abolish it later in poverty." The Mishnah also says that a rabbi who properly interpreted the Torah was said to have fulfilled the Torah, whereas a rabbi who misinterpreted the Torah (thereby causing his listeners to break said Torah), had abolished the Torah (in his teaching or interpretation). As one rabbi listened to another rabbi give his understanding of a Torah portion, a good teaching would receive the response, "Ah, he has *fulfilled* the Torah!" A bad teaching would receive the response, "Ah, he has *destroyed* the Torah!"

This rabbinical, Jewish use of abolish and fulfill harmonizes beautifully with Matthew 5:17, because in verse 20, Yeshua contrasts the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees with the greater righteousness that his students are to have; in other words, different teachings/

interpretations. Studying the groups inside of Judaism in the first century A.D. shows that although all groups believed in obeying Torah, they did not all agree on *how* each commandment was best obeyed.

We see a historical example of competing interpretations of Torah in the late B.C. early A.D. rabbis Hillel and Shammai. Both rabbis were Pharisees yet they disagreed on their approach to Torah as well as how to best obey Torah. Hillel is known for a more lenient, flexible, and patient approach, whereas Shammai is often depicted as stricter, more conservative, and hurried in his rulings. It is irresponsible to approach the teachings of Yeshua outside of this cultural context; other rabbis and people would have listened to Yeshua in the same manner they listened to Hillel or Shammai.

There was in fact an actual member of the Jewish ruling court (the Sanhedrin) who was a disciple of Yeshua, Yosef of Arimathea (Mt. 27:57; Mk. 15:43; Lk. 23:50; Jn. 19:38). There is no way Yosef would have considered Yeshua a genuine teacher if he believed Yeshua taught contrary to Torah. Yosef chose to side with Yeshua's way to walk-out Torah, like others decided to side with Hillel or Shammai.

5:17, Law or Prophets Meaning

Law or Prophets in 5:17 does not mean "Prophecies about Messiah in the Law," but rather "Commandments of Yahweh in the Law, preached by the Prophets." Yeshua had already mentioned the prophets being persecuted for righteousness (Mt. 5:12), and then "Law or Prophets" is mentioned again just as "the Law" (vs. 18), "these commandments" (vs. 19), and "your righteousness" (vs. 20).

It's much better to understand the word *prophets* in relation to the law in the same way as Daniel 9:10, "Nor have we listened to the voice of Yahweh our Mighty One, to walk in His laws which He put before us through His slaves the prophets." Also 2 Kings 17:13, "Yet Yahweh warned Israel and Judah by the hand of all His prophets... Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments... all the law which I commanded your fathers... sent to you by the hand of My slaves the prophets."

5:18, "Until all is Accomplished"

It is often thought by modern Christians that "until all is accomplished" in Matthew 5:18b is referring to Yeshua's life, death, and resurrection... but that is nowhere to be found in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Sure, Yeshua's life and ministry is one thing that was accomplished, but it is not the "all" that he speaks of here.

If we allow Yeshua to interpret himself, it is easy to see that "until all is accomplished" is a synonymous way of saying what he just said, "until heaven and earth pass away." The current heaven and earth is this present world; the world to come will be when this current heaven and earth pass away.

In Matthew's gospel, heaven and earth refer to the actual heaven above and earth below. In this same sermon, Yeshua just mentioned "your Father who is in heaven" (5:16); he prays to "Our Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 6:9), and asks "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt. 6:10). In Matthew 11:25 Yeshua says, "I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth." In Matthew 23:9 he says, "And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven." He is always speaking of the actual heaven above and this earth we walk on below. There's no need to read anything esoteric or metaphorical into Matthew 5:18. What Yeshua is saying is this: "until heaven and earth pass away, that is - until everything in this present world is accomplished - not the smallest letter or even one stroke of a letter will pass from the Law." It is probably the strongest way possible to speak of the Law's binding authority.

And think about this: if by Jesus' death and resurrection the Law became obsolete (just a few years later), then his mission was indeed to abolish the Law, which is what he just said he did not come to do in Matthew 5:17. Likewise the conclusion he arrives at in Matthew 5:19, that we should be meticulous in our commandment-keeping, doesn't hold that much weight if some of the commandments are soon to become irrelevant or not necessary.

5:18, Jot or Tittle

The jot in Matthew 5:18 refers to the yod in the Hebrew aleph-beyt, the smallest letter in all the Hebrew language. The tittle (keraia) refers to the even smaller curvatures on certain letters that distinguish them from similar looking letters (think of dotting an i or crossing a t). Yeshua is a Jewish Rabbi. His audience knows the Hebrew Scriptures, so he tells them his *teaching* will not destroy even the tiniest portion of the Law (which is complimented beautifully in verse 19 which speaks of the *least* of the commandments). His statement here also parallels nicely with what he told the Devil in Matthew 4:4 (quoting Deuteronomy 8:3), that mankind is to live by **every word** that proceeds from the mouth of Yahweh.

Yeshua's words echo statements about the Torah/Law that had been pronounced by holy men before and during his time. The Wisdom of Solomon 18:4 speaks of the incorruptible light of the law. Tobit 1:6 speaks of the Law as an "everlasting ordinance." 2 Esdras 9:36-37 (NRSV) says that those who have received the law and sinned will perish, but in contrast: the law does not perish. Baruch 4:1 (OSB) begins with "She is the book of the commandments of God and the law that endures forever." The Jewish historian Josephus writes (Against Apion II.277) that the law is immortal, and the earlier Jewish historian Philo writes (Life of Moses II.14-15) that the law is firm, immovable, continues as long as the sun and moon, and not even the smallest parts of the ordinances has been disturbed. It only makes sense that Yeshua would be echoing his Jewish counterparts about the Torah. He did not qualify or re-define the terms that all faithful Hebrews (before his ministry) believed.

I love the wording parallel in Deuteronomy 11:18-21. Deuteronomy 11:18 speaks of placing the commandments on one's heart and soul, and then verse 21 speaks of doing this "as long as the heavens are above the earth." Yeshua was very fond of the book of Deuteronomy, directly

quoting it three times in Matthew 4 to thwart off the Devil's temptation. Could Yeshua have continued to allude to Deuteronomy in Matthew 5:18? Considering what Deuteronomy 11:18-21 says (along with heaven and earth being a witness against those who break the Torah in Deuteronomy 30:19), this is a strong possibility.

5:18, Explaining it by "Jumping"

Sometimes people want to jump to later New Testament books where they think an author says that some practice taught in the Torah is no longer binding. But... none of that has any bearing on what Yeshua said in Matthew 5:18. You should be able to interpret Matthew 5:18 by the words of Yeshua in the immediate context of (1) his "Sermon on the Mount," and (2) this very Gospel record (book) of Matthew. If your first move is to jump out of Matthew's Gospel and try to explain it by something in Galatians or Hebrews, it is the sign of a failed argument. I hear a lot of "Yeshua couldn't have meant this because Paul wrote this;" that's backwards Bible study. Paul is an Apostle of Yeshua, Yeshua is NOT an Apostle of Paul.

Those of us in the Torah Community often get chastised for holding the Law, the Prophets, and most importantly Yeshua as primacy in interpreting Scripture, but traditional Christians have their own primacies in interpretation - they are always going to Galatians 3, Hebrews 7, Romans 14, Acts 10 whenever we bring up anything in Exodus, Deuteronomy, or even the Gospel of Matthew. With a short wave of the hand Deuteronomy becomes irrelevant all because they quoted an epistle of Paul.

We see what should hold primacy at many places in the Bible, but one of the best ones is where the Bereans are praised for listening intently to Paul and Silas preach, and then examining the Scriptures daily to see whether what they heard preached was accurate (Acts 17:10-11). The historical time-period of Paul's stay in Berea is around 50 A.D. - at that time there was no New Testament Bible to search. The Bereans searched what we call the Old Testament, which shows that the Old Testament held primacy in their interpretation (and they are praised for this); the Tanak is the foundation of the Bible, with the Torah coming at the very beginning. Once a foundation is laid you can build on it, but the foundation never goes away.

I am not saying the books of Galatians or Hebrews are not Scripture or are unimportant; what I'm saying is this: *when Yeshua taught his "Sermon on the Mount," Galatians and Hebrews had not been written*. The only Scriptures in existence were the Tanak. When Yeshua spoke of "the Scriptures," he was speaking of the texts that came before his ministry, the Scriptures the Hebrew people were accustomed to reading. So it is important for us to interpret Yeshua in Matthew 5:18 by the Scriptures that came before him, and most importantly the very words he spoke as recorded in his sermon.

I would be glad to debate or discuss Galatians 3 or Hebrews 7 with Professor Solberg one day, but this debate is about Yeshua's words in Matthew 5:17-20. Can we not honor Yeshua by interpreting his words in their own context? Can we not honor Yeshua by recognizing he was a strict, Torah-Observant Hebrew who knew his Scriptures meticulously? He loved Yahweh with

all his heart, soul, and strength just as the Shema commanded him. Is it then odd that he would teach his followers to do the same?

5:18, Some Parts are “Out of Gear”

It is sometimes said that Matthew 5:18 can't be saying to keep everything in the Law until heaven and earth passes away, because certain parts of the Torah cannot be obeyed today since the Temple is not standing and active in Jerusalem, but this is not equivalent to portions of the Torah being abolished. The same happened in the days of the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar, when he came into Jerusalem and ransacked the Temple and its utensils, carrying the Israelites as captives into Babylon. Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah, and Azariah were still holy, Torah-observant men in Babylon, even though they were not able to fulfill some Torah portions. The same goes for those in the 2nd century B.C. who fled into the wilderness after Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the holy city. They kept Torah the best they could during their persecution circumstance. Not being able to keep all of it, due to the lack of their Temple and city did not mean Yahweh's instructions were done away with.

Think about this... if I for some reason went blind tomorrow, I could no longer look upon my tassels and remember the commandments (as commanded in Numbers 15:37-41). Would that abolish the commandment to look upon the tassels? Of course not; my inability to do a particular portion of the Torah does not render that portion abolished, it is just out of gear for me due to my circumstance.

Here are *some* of the commandments we have the ability to keep today (that my Christian friends often ignore): (1) Speaking and honoring the Name Yahweh, (2) resting on the Sabbath day, (3) wearing tassels, (4) not marring the borders of the beard or side-locks of the head (for men), (5) not wearing a garment mixed of wool and linen, (6) fasting on Yom Kippur, (7) eating only clean animals, (8) not eating the blood of a clean animal, (9) not laying with one's wife during her monthly period, and (10) eating matzah during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

5:18, The Tie in With the Great Commission

One way we can know for certain that Matthew 5:18 speaks of the on-going validity of the Law of Moses, even after Yeshua is gone into heaven (post-resurrection), is by what is popularly called his “Great Commission” at the end of Matthew's gospel. He tells his disciples (Mt. 28:19-20) to make disciples of all the nations, baptize them, and teach them to keep all that he had commanded, mentioning the time clause of “even to the end of the age.” So until this present age ends (until all is accomplished) we are supposed to be making disciples (literally to train someone to be a scholar) by teaching them what Yeshua's commanded.

One thing Yeshua commanded... do not think I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets, so therefore anyone (that includes you and I) who breaks even the least of the commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven (cp. Mt. 11:11). But anyone who practices and teaches these commandments will be called great (cp. Jer. 31:34). There is a direct tie-in with Matthew 5:17-19 and Matthew 28:19-20. The Great Commission actually

includes teaching Torah to the nations; by doing so, once we are fully trained, we will be like our teacher Yeshua (Luke 6:40).

5:18, Until can mean Up to and Including

In Scripture, the word until has two uses. In some cases it means up to a point but no further. In other cases it means up to a point and further. I'm persuaded that this second sense is how the word until (Greek = *heōs*) is used in Matthew 5:18, **because the final Kingdom of Yahweh will not be lawless**. The difference is that the law is fully internalized on the citizens of this Kingdom, and thus the ability to sin is completely removed. In one sense there is no need of a Law because transgression is impossible, but in another sense the Law remains because the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven abide by what is fully written on their hearts and minds.

Some uses of "until" which include the point it goes to and after are (1) Genesis 49:10 where the scepter doesn't depart from Judah until Shiloh comes (Shiloh speaks of Messiah who was from the line of Judah, so the scepter remains in Judah), and (2) Matthew 28:20 where Yeshua says "I am with you until the end of the age;" is Yeshua no longer with us after this present age ends?

SIDENOTE: The passing away of heaven and earth in Matthew 5:18 makes the most sense if Yeshua is meaning what Isaiah 66:22-24, 2 Peter 3:10, and Revelation 21:1-8 spoke of - the end of this present world and beginning of the world to come. (I think Yeshua's point in Matthew 5:18 is the strongest language he could use due to all the Tanak texts that associate the durability of Yahweh's words with the time-length of the heavens and earth. For example, Psalm 119:89-90 says "Forever O Yahweh, Your word stands firm in heaven. Your faithfulness endures from generation to generation; You established the earth, and it stands." Jeremiah 31:35-37 likewise ties the nation-hood of Israel with the sun, moon, and stars, as well as the measurement and depths of heaven and earth. Compare Isaiah 40:8 where the grass and flower are gone but the word of Yahweh remains forever.)

5:19, The Conclusion of 17-18 is with US

If you misinterpret Matthew 5:17-18, verse 19 will make little sense. The conclusion of 17-18 lands on me and you in verse 19, showing again that the context is about Yeshua teaching us how to behave.

Verse 19 begins with "therefore" or "whoever then," meaning "based on what I just said." Because Yeshua came to fulfill the law in his teachings, and because every letter in the law stands firm until this current heaven and earth pass away, **you and I** must be diligent to keep even the least of the commandments. If we do not, we will be least in the Kingdom. But if we practice and teach these commandments (fulfill the law ourselves) we will be great in the Kingdom.

Is this you today? When you read the Bible, do you look for commandments you can obey? People always ask me, "Matthew, how do I know if a commandment is for me?" Listen... if you

read the Bible, and you come across an instruction that you have the ability to obey, it's for you. So if you read "Do not steal," you can fulfill that commandment, so don't steal. If you read "honor your father and mother," that's one you can do as well. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy"... can you do that one? Of course you can. Don't fight it. Even a small one, like coming across a bird's nest and not taking the mother bird with her chicks or eggs... you can do that one too, and it will be well with you, and you'll have a long life (Deut. 22:6-7).

Matthew 5:19 actually explains what Matthew 5:17 means by abolish and fulfill. The word breaks/annuls in verse 19 is equivalent with abolish in verse 17. Because he didn't come to abolish the Law neither should we. The words do and teach in verse 19 (then) beautifully explain what fulfill means in verse 17.

Verse 19 is the most powerful verse in this whole section, because it undeniably shows that **you** are supposed to keep the commandments, right down to the jots and tittles that Yeshua said would not pass away until heaven and earth pass away. We used to sing a song in church when I was growing up, "To be like Jesus, to be like Jesus, that's all I ask, is to be like him." Do you really want to be like Jesus? Or are you fighting many of the practices that Jesus himself did? Do you want to be great in the kingdom, or least in the kingdom? Is Jesus really your teacher?

5:20, Have Better Behavior

This is how we have a greater righteousness than a scribe or Pharisee - we obey Torah the way Yeshua obeys Torah. One example is that when we read "You shall not murder" we do not limit that to the physical act of maliciously killing someone; we realize that murder begins in the heart with hatred (Lev. 19:17-18). So obeying the 6th commandment includes not hating your neighbor. When we obey this we are fulfilling the Law; when we disobey this we are abolishing the Law.

This comparison with certain of the Pharisees is also seen throughout the remainder of Matthew's gospel. In Matthew 15 Yeshua reprimands some Pharisees for transgressing the commandment of the Almighty in order to keep their tradition. In Matthew 23 he tells the crowd that the scribes and Pharisees preach the truth (from the seat of Moses), but they do not practice what they preach.

When we actually take time to study the Torah, and we slow down and notice the particulars in Matthew 5, we see that the antitheses are not contrasts between the Law of Moses and the teachings of Jesus, the contrast is instead the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees - their interpretations and practice - with the interpretations and practice of Yeshua. It was an "in-house" debate. Both Yeshua and his opponents agreed on keeping Torah, they just sometimes disagreed on how that was best done, and on what took precedent. One example: some Jews didn't believe it was proper to heal on the Sabbath unless someone's life was at stake, but Yeshua taught that it was okay to heal someone even if their life wasn't at stake. He taught it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath, but he never taught the Sabbath didn't matter.

5:20, Imputed Righteousness?

Sometimes people read Matthew 5:20 and think that the righteousness being spoken of is the imputed righteousness of Christ. Let me say here that I believe Yeshua died for our sins, was resurrected for our justification, and that without Yeshua none of us would ever receive eternal life. Yeshua's personal work is our only hope from Sheol to an immortal, incorruptible resurrection from the dead. But... there is nothing in the context of Matthew 5 that leads me to believe that "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees" is speaking of the personal work of Christ being imputed to us. It is instead speaking of practical righteousness.

Right after verse 20, there is a string of 6 subjects that all talk about **our** behavior, how **we** should conduct ourselves as followers of Yeshua. For example, the first subject is about the command against murder, and how we should not hold hatred and bitterness in our hearts towards our neighbor. Yeshua teaches we should not call people empty-headed or fool. He even says we must seek reconciliation with our neighbor before approaching Yahweh for worship at the altar. All of this is something **we do**, something we perform.

The second subject is the same; we are not to commit adultery, even with our eyes. If something is causing us to sin we should cut it off or pluck it out. Again, all things **we** are to do. When we do these things (love our neighbor, speak kindly, reconcile, guard our eyes and heart) we are performing acts of righteousness.

If we keep reading, there is a direct parallel in Matthew 6:1 where Yeshua says (LSB) "Beware of doing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them." He goes on to speak of giving to the poor, prayer, and fasting, three active forms of personal righteousness. "Your righteousness" in 6:1 is the same as "your righteousness" in 5:20.

Righteousness is doing what is right, good, or holy. There is certainly a *positional* righteousness we obtain as believers in what Yeshua did and does for us, but there is also a *practical* righteousness that genuine disciples of Christ have. If we practice evil, we are walking in unrighteousness. If we practice good, we are walking in righteousness.

5:20, "Works Righteousness"

We have been bombarded for so long by Protestant preaching against something called "works righteousness" that it has caused us to deny or explain away actual Bible verses. Yeshua is straight-forward in Matthew 5:20, we are to behave better than the Pharisees else we will not enter the kingdom of heaven. We've been told so many times that we can't do that, and many of us have begun to believe it.

It is fine to understand our works of righteousness in the way Yeshua illustrated them, as good fruit which grows off of a healthy tree. Our works are the natural growth of the down-payment of the Holy Spirit inside of us. Nevertheless, the works are still there, and if they are not there it is evidence of a stony heart and a complete lack of Yahweh's Spirit.

“Keep the commandments” does not mean sinless perfection, it refers to a life of faithfulness - covenant loyalty. The Torah has a built in system of forgiveness, assuming that those who adhere to it are not sinless creatures. Part of obeying Torah is repenting when you sin and making restitution where necessary. The question is: are you faithful to Yahweh? Is He where your allegiance lies?

In Deuteronomy 6:5 we have the commandment to love Yahweh with all our heart (levav), soul (nephesh), and strength (me'od). That three-fold love is only repeated one time in Hebrew Scripture, in 2 Kings 23:25 where we read that there was no King like King Josiah who turned to Yahweh with all his heart, soul, and strength, according to all the law of Moses. I've heard preachers like Billy Graham or John Hagee say that no person can even keep one, single commandment. They are lying to you brothers and sisters. King Josiah did exactly what Yahweh required in Deuteronomy. You can do the same if you apply yourself, devoting your entire life to the Almighty.

Trying to be justified by works, as a negative thing, is more about only focusing on a few outward works of law while neglecting weightier matters in the law itself; it's like making sure to wear tassels and pay tithes, but you never show love to your wife or spend time with your family. It can also be cases where a person has developed works of their own making, traditions of men held up as though they are commandments, or traditions of men which actually end up annulling commandments. But recognizing that true *faith* is always *faithful* should not be a problem for someone who believes in the totality of Scripture.

5:21-48, “Said” vs. “Written”

When Yeshua begins his contrasts, starting in Matthew 5:21, he is not contrasting Moses with himself (or more directly - Yahweh - with himself; the Law being Yahweh's), he is contrasting some of the teachings in first century Judaism with his own teachings. This is why he begins each section with “You have heard that it was said” rather than “It is written” (like he did in Matthew 4 when tempted by the Devil). He does cite Scripture in each section of Matthew 5, but the “You have heard it was said” means that there was a prevailing *ideology* about a text, a *particular interpretation*. When he says “But I say unto you,” he is giving his own interpretation of said Torah text, and if you believe Yeshua is the Messiah, you realize his interpretation must be the correct one.

So for example, in Matthew 5:27 (WEB) Yeshua says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery;’ but I tell you that everyone who gazes at a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.” The Law certainly read, “You shall not commit adultery,” but some in first century Judaism limited adultery to the act of physical intimacy with your neighbor's wife, and some also believed that any lusting a man did for his neighbor's wife was *her* fault... she looked too attractive in public. Yeshua combats these views, these interpretations, by telling the men that they are the ones who need to guard even their hearts from bad desires, and if they do lust they should not be blaming the woman. But surely we

see that Yeshua's interpretation of Torah here does not abolish the letter of the law! Surely we believe Yeshua still taught not to commit physical adultery as the Law commanded!

5:21-22, Letter vs. Spirit (of the Law)

Sometimes you'll hear something like this: "We need to walk in the *spirit* of the Law (like Jesus taught) rather than the *letter* of the Law." In Matthew 5:21-22 Yeshua teaches that our anger towards people, as well as coarse words (like moron or fool) are sins falling under the category of "Do not murder." So the *intent* of this commandment (which is the real meaning of spirit of the law, intent) is to speak life rather than death... but does that mean the letter of the Law "Do not murder," is gone? Of course not. The letter is a good thing. All of Yahweh's covenant people abide by **both** the letter and spirit of the Law.

5:22-24, Sanhedrin & Offerings at Altar

One way we can know for certain that Yeshua is teaching of the on-going validity of the Law of Moses in Matthew 5, is his mentioning the credibility of the Sanhedrin as well as Offerings at the altar.

He speaks of the Sanhedrin directly in Matthew 5:22; your Bible might say "court" or "council" there, but the Greek text reads literally Sanhedrin. This is how it is carried over in the LSB as well as the HCSB. It refers to the official court over Israel, consisting of 70 or 71 men, patterned after the 70 elders under Moses. These were the judges who heard civil matters and decided on what judgments to give to their people, based upon the Law Yahweh gave through Moses. If Yeshua's fulfilling of the Law meant it was going away, there is no need to mention the on-going validity of the Sanhedrin.

The same holds true for verses 22-24 where he speaks of a person presenting their offering (or gift) at the altar. The altar was at the Temple in Jerusalem, and Israelites would bring various offerings (listed in Leviticus 1-7) to be presented before Yahweh as gifts by which they drew near to the Almighty.

Yeshua says that if you are about to offer your gift, your sacrifice at the altar, but you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering and go make peace with your brother. After that, he says to go back and offer your gift. His speech is something his first-century audience would understand. He assumes the on-going validity of the sacrifices brought according to the Torah. This shows his fulfilling the Torah could not mean the Torah was about to be irrelevant. He taught the people to offer holy sacrifices, just as the holy men of old.

Sometimes people want to split the Torah up into three categories: moral, civil, and ceremonial, but the commandments are never said in Scripture to be split into those categories, and everything Yahweh commands is moral. Nevertheless, if we want to use terminology like: general law, civil law, and ceremonial law to describe the Torah, all three are present here in Matthew 5:21-24, showing that the law Yeshua said he did not come to abolish is the law in its totality. "Do not murder (anger, hatred, coarse talk)" is covered in vs. 21-22a (general law), civil

law is covered in vs. 22b in mentioning the Sanhedrin, and ceremonial law is covered in vss. 23-24 with the offering of gifts at the altar. Yeshua didn't come to destroy any of this, he rather came to do and teach it, and he calls his followers to do the same.

5:31-32, Divorce

There are some key terms in the section about divorce that are often glossed over. If you'll notice in Matthew 5:31, "Now it was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'" That's a direct quote from Deuteronomy 24:1 where a man who wanted to divorce his wife had to (1) write out a certificate of divorce (*keriythuwth*), (2) place it in the woman's hand, and then (3) send her out of his house (*shalach*). Yahweh's Law then says that she may go and become another man's wife. Not a mistress, not an adulteress, but a **wife** to a new husband.

Notice in the 3-step procedure that the certificate of divorce is different from sending her out of the house. Although it would not be lawful, a man *could* skip straight to step 3 and send her away... but in such a case she would still be legally married to the man. The Greek equivalent for *shalach* (*apoluo*, to send away) is used in all sorts of contexts in the NT, but apostation (the Greek equivalent for *keriythuwth*) is a more technical term (used much less), referring specifically to a certificate of divorce.

In Matthew 5:32 many translations read something like this, "But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife," and then at the end, "whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." The WEB gets this more accurate in reading, "whoever puts away his wife" and "whoever marries her when she is put away commits adultery." Yeshua is condemning a man who sends away his wife without a certificate of divorce, he is not condemning a lawful divorce according to the 3-steps in Deuteronomy 24:1.

This practice still exists inside Judaism today, where a man sends his wife away but does not give her a "get," the Aramaic word for bill of divorce. The Jewish woman becomes an *agunah*, chained to a dead-marriage; she is not *lawfully* able to marry again inside of her faith, because no legitimate rabbi recognizes her as single or unmarried.

The Law of Yahweh in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 is not one which is punishing the woman with a divorce for something she did wrong. An adulteress was to be put to death not divorced, same for a promiscuous, betrothed woman. The unclean thing (*erwah davar*) the man finds in her is a light matter (compare Deut. 23:14's "anything indecent" LSB). Yahweh is actually protecting the woman here, commanding the man to divorce her, so she can find a good husband who will love her.

SIDENOTE, "Not So from the Beginning" (Mt. 19:8)

Some people bring up Yeshua's words in Matthew 19 where he says that divorce was not so from the beginning, and he cites the text in Genesis 2 concerning cleaving to a wife and becoming one flesh. Do you know what else was not so from the beginning? Wearing clothes; Adam and Eve walked around the Garden of Eden naked and unashamed (Gen.

2:25). After the fall into sin, clothes became so (Gen. 3:21). Capital punishment was not so from the beginning either; man was made to live in harmony. After the fall though, penalties had to be implemented against criminal activity (Gen. 9:5). Sickness and death were not so from the beginning, but they are so now. What if Moses balked at Yahweh way back in Deuteronomy 24 when he received the Law from Yahweh: “But Yahweh, this was not so from the beginning!”

It would be wonderful to live in a perfect world where all marriages lasted, but since the fall of mankind that doesn't always take place. What was not so from the beginning became so in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, from the mouth of Yahweh. It is Yahweh who instituted the law of divorce, specifically (in that culture) to protect the woman.

5:33-37 “Oaths/Vows”

Concerning oaths and vows in Matthew 5:33-37... Christians often think Yeshua added a law here, forbidding vow-taking, but the Torah itself says in Deuteronomy 23:22, “If you refrain from vowing, it will not be a sin to you.” Ecclesiastes 5:5 says, “It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.”

There were others inside the umbrella of Judaism in the first century that refrained from taking oaths. The Essenes avoided vows, and Philo of Alexandria advises against vows by saying, “Next to not swearing at all, the second best thing is to keep one's oath.”

It is wrong however to assume that Yeshua teaches it is a sin to take an oath. Yeshua is rather speaking against the *circumvention* of a vow (by some) due to not pronouncing the Sacred Name. This is why he qualifies his statement “make no oath at all” with “either by heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or the hair of your head or beard (the chinny-chin-chin). A “work-around” to free someone from keeping their word could be, “But I did not take the oath by the Divine Name” as commanded in Deuteronomy 6:13. Yeshua teaches that the oath is still valid, and one's word should be kept no matter what.

5:38-42, Eye-for-an-Eye

Concerning “eye for an eye” in verses 38-42 of Matthew 5... if you look up each case where this is mentioned in the Torah, it is always in the context of the judicial system, the judges of Israel pronouncing verdicts in court cases. It was never about personal vengeance on a day-to-day basis among Israelites. If we remove “eye for an eye” altogether (which means the punishment must fit the crime), then we would have to say that we aren't allowed to punish thieves, rapists, or murderers today. I think we all understand that some sins are crimes and there must be punishment proportionate to the crime committed in order for there to be a functioning society.

Now, what Yeshua is referring to here is *light matters*. He mentions a slap on the cheek, a taking away of a tunic, a request to go an extra mile, and giving to others or letting others borrow from you. All of these are *small* circumstances. He is not saying that if someone breaks into your home to rape your wife or murder your children that you have to sit still and let it happen in

order to show love to the intruder. The basic point he is making is that in our everyday life, with all the light infractions that may be done by mean people, don't return their meanness. Show kindness, repay evil with good.

SIDENOTE: An Example of "Light Matters"

Here is an example of a text that speaks of "light matters" or "smaller sins" without explicitly saying such. Luke 17:3-4 says, "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying 'I repent,' forgive him." We hear this preached and think, "Okay, good sermon," but is this talking about (for example) your brother sleeping with your wife seven times in one day?! Imagine you find out in the morning that your friend slept with your wife, but then he repents and you forgive him. Next thing you know he sleeps with your wife again at lunch-time. Do you forgive your friend again, and then five more times that day for committing adultery with your wife? Is that what Yeshua is saying? What if your brother murders you? You wouldn't even be there to forgive him if he repented. Of course this makes no sense; the text is speaking of light, everyday infractions that we sometimes have multiple times a day, and it's the same with Matthew 5:42-48.

5:43-48, Hate Enemy?

The last antithesis in Matthew 5 is where Yeshua says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" This is probably the best place to show Yeshua wasn't *just* quoting Scripture in verses 21-48. Not only does he begin each section with "You have heard that it was said," he also cites something here that the Torah does not directly say. Nowhere in the Torah do we read "hate your enemy," but some in first-century Judaism interpreted "love your neighbor" in Leviticus 19:18 to *mean* it was okay to "hate your enemy."

The Torah actually teaches to love one's enemy in Exodus 23:4-5. Proverbs 25, commentating on the Torah, says to give food and water to your enemy if he is hungry or thirsty. The prophet Elisha obeyed this in 2 Kings 6 when he told the King of Israel not to kill the captured Arameans, but instead to give them food and water and let them return to their master.

Notice the type of love Yeshua says we are to have for our enemy; he likens it to the sunshine and rain that Yahweh sends on everyone. The love Yahweh has for His enemies is a common grace He shows to them. When it rains here on my road, I don't just get rain on my garden, so does my atheist neighbor down the street. We humans imitate Yahweh by being kind and gracious to everyone we meet, so that we are not the cause of their blasphemy of the Creator.

Now someone always brings up cases in the Torah where Yahweh told Israel to destroy a certain people group. Here's the thing, if Yahweh says to destroy a person or a nation, He knows best, so His direct command overrides our *default mode* of showing peace. We show peace UNTIL Yahweh directly says to do otherwise. Yeshua speaks the same principle in Matthew 10 where he tells his disciples that if a house they go to is NOT worthy, let your peace return to you, shake the

dust off your feet, and that the day of judgment would be awful for that house. In the parable of the Ten Minas (Luke 19) Yeshua is the nobleman who went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then one day return. At the end of the parable, the nobleman says, “But these enemies of mind, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.”

Mt. 10:34, “Do not think I came to bring peace”

It’s been said that Yeshua could not have meant what he said in Matthew 10:34 in the absolute sense, because after all peace on earth was pronounced when he was born, and of course he is famously known as the “Prince of peace.” Neither of those contradict what he forthrightly said in Matthew 10:34. As a matter of fact, the better manuscripts of Luke 2:14 do not say “peace on earth good will towards men/people (in general),” but rather peace on earth “among men with whom he is pleased” as evidenced in the NRSV, LSB, and others.

Yeshua’s statement in Matthew 10:34 is an absolute, just like his statement in Matthew 5:17. In context there he is speaking of the turmoil that his teachings and practice would cause among even close family members. He says that when someone devotes their life to him (as his disciple) “a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household,” (vs. 36). He is explaining to us that this will ALWAYS happen to a true follower. He is actually quoting here from Micah 7:6, again showing that what he came to do (Mt. 10:34b-35a) was exactly what the Older Testament demanded.

This means that if you love your parents or children more than Yeshua, you are not worthy of him. Where he is truly proclaimed, in his person and teachings, there will *always* be a sword among people. There’s no need to try and make Yeshua not really mean what he said.

The reality is, Matthew 10:34 is a beautiful parallel to Matthew 5:17. Peace and sword are opposites, which means fulfill and abolish are opposites. To say that fulfill really means, “I will do this, but then it will pass away” is not the opposite of abolish but synonymous with it.

Mt. 15, Yeshua’s Reprimand of the Pharisees

To compliment Matthew 5:17-20, Matthew writes a lengthy historical account of Yeshua’s encounter with some Pharisees who prided themselves in a handwashing ritual. These Pharisees were concerned that Yeshua’s disciples broke the “tradition of the elders,” which stands for offshoot teachings based a particular group’s understanding and interpretation of the Torah. Fences were sometimes built around the written-Torah in order to keep a person from getting close to violating the actual commandment.

Yeshua’s doesn’t even start his reply by answering them, but instead asks them why they “transgress **the commandment** of the Almighty for the sake of **their tradition.**” He then goes into this loophole some Pharisees had contrived whereby they free’d themselves of having to take care of their elderly parents, because they’d gifted all their belongings to the Temple (the “Corban Rule”). He contrasts what Yahweh says in the Torah (commandment) with what they

say about their gift to the Temple (tradition), telling them they invalidate the word of the Almighty for the sake of their tradition.

This would all be so very odd if Yeshua did not teach the on-going validity of the Torah. As a matter of fact, Yeshua even here promotes the penal sanctions in the law, reminding the Pharisees that neglect of one's parents is a capital crime deserving the death penalty. Yeshua alludes to Exodus 21:15 and 17 when he says (Mt. 15:4b), "He who speaks evil of father or mother is to be put to death." So much for the belief that Yeshua did away with the death penalty.

SIDENOTE: Mark 7 Parallel

The beginning of the chapter shows this is a dispute about *ritual purification*. The Pharisees asked Yeshua why his disciples ate bread with defiled hands, breaking the *tradition* of the elders; they didn't ask, "Why do your disciples eat pork, breaking the Torah?" In the mind of these Pharisees, a Jew could become ritually impure by eating food that had touched something else ritually impure.

Yeshua challenges them by telling them they are the ones disregarding what Moses said in order to keep their tradition, so he upholds the Law of Moses here. He's not going to rebuke them for disregarding Moses and then turn right around and disregard Moses himself.

When Yeshua says (Mk. 7:15), "Nothing that goes into a person from the outside can defile him," he is addressing Jews who might eat without performing the hand-washing. He is NOT talking about drinking blood, snorting cocaine, or eating pork. Verse 15 is thus a response to their concern; defilement (impurities) come from inside (not outside) a person, based on Leviticus 12-15 (blood, semen, leprosy, etc.). If something ritually impure was on a Jewish man's hands when he touched his food, and he ingested it, Yeshua believed it was purified through the stomach; the man did not have to immerse in water and wait until evening to be clean, because the digestive process of the man (vs. 18) purges all foods (vs. 19). While some translations (NIV) read "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean" the Greek text just reads (either) "*katharizōn* [masculine] (or *katharizon* [neuter]) *panta ta bromata*." I lean towards a neuter original, meaning that the stomach purges away impurities, but recent studies have shown how the masculine variant could be read as connected with *tōn anthrōpōn* (the man) in 18b. This was all an intramural debate among Torah-observant Jews. Also... Yeshua criticizes the Pharisees for "swallowing camels" in Mt. 23:24 based on Lev. 11:4, a bad-point if he taught the food laws were abolished. Same with giving something holy to a dog (Mt. 7:6; Ex.22:31).

Mt. 19:16-26, "The Rich, Young Ruler"

Sometimes people read Yeshua's response to the rich young ruler and act like Yeshua was telling him to do something impossible to inherit eternal life, so that the young man would just "look at Yeshua and be saved." This is called reading much later Protestant-development in doctrine back into the text of the Matthew's gospel; it's an anachronism.

The young man asked about inheriting eternal life. Yeshua gave him a point-blank answer: keep the commandments. The understanding is that in order to enter into life (eternal) you must live a faithful life. The word “keep” in “keep the commandments” doesn’t mean sinless perfection, but a guarding, protecting, and loving of the commandments. It’s similar to how a good husband and wife know each other will not be flawless, but they still expect each other to be faithful. There’s a lot of mercy and forgiveness even in a great marriage... but, if both parties are set on doing their duties, the marriage will last. If, however, someone constantly and unrepentantly disrespects their spouse, or decides, “I’m done with this marriage, I want to do my own thing” the marriage ends; there is a tipping point.

The Greek word for a certificate of divorce is apostation, which is related to and where we get the word apostasy (variations are used in Acts 21:21 and 2 Thessalonians 2:3). A person can depart from the faith just like a person can get divorced from a marriage.

So long as we walk with Yahweh in penitent faithfulness, He understands we are but dust (Psalm 103). He forgives us when we approach Him in humility, asking for forgiveness, but He is not obligated to forgive you when you walk away from Him and continue in sin with no remorse. That’s not guarding or loving His commandments, that’s ignoring His commandments.

The rich, young ruler’s problem? He lacked one commandment, Matthew 19:20-21 compared with the parallel in Mark 10:21. He had a problem giving to the poor which is a weighty command in Torah. Yeshua loved this young man (Mk. 10:21), so he told him to sell his possessions and give to the poor (following Yeshua’s *example*). Exodus 22:22-24 says Yahweh’s anger burns against a person who neglects a widow or fatherless child, so much so that Yahweh would turn around and kill a person who did such. Giving to the poor is also seen in Exodus 22:25-27 and Deuteronomy 15:1-18. Contrast this with the response Zaccheus gave to Yeshua in Luke 19:8, “Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have extorted anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” Did Jesus look at him and say, “You legalist, why are you trusting in your own works?” Nope, that’s not what the Messiah said. Yeshua looked at him and said, “Today salvation has come to this house.”

Jer. 31, “The New Covenant”

I’ve often had people respond to my desire to obey the Law Yahweh gave through Moses with something like this: “But Matthew, don’t you realize we are under the New Covenant?” The first time I ever heard that rebuttal it did make me pause, but I was a young commandment-keeper, still a teenager at that time, so I went back to my Bible and did some research.

What I found then, and through my next 28+ years now of studying, is that most people who mention the New Covenant do not have a clue what it actually is. I once had a discussion with a preacher of an actual, local church here in my county where this came up. When I asked him what the Biblical definition of the New Covenant is, he responded, “It’s Jesus.” I asked him to be more specific. He said, “Well, it’s Matthew to Revelation.” It saddens me that some preachers don’t know more than this.

The New Covenant is first mentioned in Jeremiah chapters 31-33 and Ezekiel chapters 36-37. Some of the New Covenant promises are the resurrection from the dead, the restoration of the land Yahweh gave to father Abraham, the throne of David, and the Aaronic Priesthood. It's all there in those prophetic books if we just take the time to read.

Another huge promise of the New Covenant is that the Law of Yahweh will be internalized on the Houses of Israel and Judah. The New Covenant is never said to be made with any other people but Israelites. So if you are a non-Israelite, you have to find a way to join to Israel in order to be a partaker of the New Covenant.

Imagine being an Israelite back in Jeremiah's day and hearing the prophet Jeremiah relay the words of Yahweh to you about His New Covenant. Yahweh says (Jer. 31:33, LSB), "This is the covenant which I will cut with the house of Israel after those days, declares Yahweh. I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their [Mighty One], and they shall be My people." What law would you think about as you stood there listening? There's no other answer than the very Law Yahweh had already given you to obey.

It is important to understand here that the New Covenant promise is that Yahweh's Law will be on a person's mind and heart, NOT that a person's mind and heart will all of a sudden be the law they go by. Many people get this twisted. They think the New Covenant is their current state of believing in Jesus and just following their conscience. No, that's not the New Covenant promise. It's rather that the same Law that was written on stones and in a book (The Ten Commandments and the Book of the Law) is now fully written on your heart and mind.

While believers do possess the down-payment or first-deposit of the Spirit (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22) we do not have the totality of the Spirit in our hearts. This is important to recognize because the giving of Yahweh's Spirit is equal to His writing the Law on our hearts and minds in Ezekiel 36:26-27; it's the same thing. At a person's resurrection from the dead to immortality, the Spirit will be fully in their heart and so will the Law. At that point there will be no need for anyone to teach them anything, because they will know it perfectly, as Jeremiah 31:34 says.

So the New Covenant promise has begun at the first-coming of Christ, but just like we await the second (final) coming of Christ to the earth, we also await the full-deposit of the New Covenant, the remainder of the Spirit that was promised when we received the down-payment from Yahweh. It really is amazing to me that many Christians think the New Covenant means we don't have to keep the Law anymore. It shows me that people do not genuinely read the Scriptures, they often just go by what they think or something they've heard.

Closing Speech

This is my last speech so I want to take a moment here to thank Rob for agreeing to this discussion, being willing to host it LIVE, and for being a cordial opponent. It's all much appreciated. I strongly disagree with Rob, but I still love him with the love of Yeshua.

The law that Yeshua didn't come to abolish is the law of Yahweh given through His servant Moses. It's the law Yahweh's prophets always preached, thus we have "the law or the prophets" in Matthew 5:17. This means Yeshua came to plerosai: actively fulfill the law of Moses, the same way he actively fulfilled righteousness when he was baptized by John.

I stress again, the gospel of Matthew only uses the active verb plerosai twice: Matthew 3:15 and Matthew 5:17. Neither text is about fulfilling a prophecy and it being done and over with. Both texts are about someone performing righteousness. In Matthew 3:15 Yeshua is submitting to the baptism John was sent by Yahweh to offer. In Matthew 5:17 (and following) Yeshua is teaching Torah properly (fulfilling it), in opposition to others in first century Judaism that were teaching Torah improperly (thus abolishing it).

Now... Matthew 5:19 is the sum of Matthew 5:17-18. Because Yeshua came to fulfill the law and the prophets in his teaching (giving the correct understanding), and because not one jot or tittle will pass from this law until heaven and earth pass away (at the end of this age when all is accomplished), it behooves you to live a life that does and teaches the commandments, even the least of them. When you do this your level in the Kingdom will be great. If however you break the least of the commandments, you will be counted least in the Kingdom.

There are some commandments that if broken do not place a person outside the Kingdom of Heaven (like wearing tassels, writing the Shema on your doorpost, not marring the edges of your beard, or tithing). I've talked to people about this before and some respond with an attitude of, "Well that's a relief, I won't worry so much about those then." Yahweh is gracious enough to let such people inside His kingdom, but they are counted *least* because their life wasn't one that reached for the best position they could possibly obtain. At best today, if you do not listen to what I have taught you in this discussion, you could end up with a low rank in the Kingdom. Like a Private in the Army instead of a Sergeant.

At worst... you could break the *greatest* of the commandments and teach others to do so, and you will not even enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Yeshua never says that those who loosen the *greatest* of the commandments will still be in the Kingdom. An unrepentant adulterer or someone who dishonors their parents without care... these people will not be in the Kingdom.

The same goes for a Sabbath-breaker. Sabbath desecration was penalized by death, just like murder or adultery, showing the greatness of this commandment. I recognize we are all at different levels of knowledge, and I do not believe Yahweh judges a beginner as strictly as he does someone who says they've been a Christian for 10 or 20 years. There is mercy while a person is learning and growing, but hasn't reached a complete understanding of something. But if you read about the Sabbath, hear about the Sabbath, understand that it is a commandment, and choose to violate it (without care), you will not be in the Kingdom of Heaven.

I'm sorry you've been told the lie that you can't keep the commandments. You've been told it so much you've started believing it. That voice is the dad that says, "You'll never be good enough. You'll never hit the target. Just give up. You're nothing but a failure." I want to end my time

today by being the dad that stands behind his child and says, “Don’t give up. You’re getting better each day. Hang in there. Good job!” When you strive to obey there is grace even when you fall short, but if you don’t even care and make no effort, you are not Yeshua’s disciple. I love all of you listening today. (*Notes on Website*)