*Introduction*

A few weeks ago we started to look at the things that Jesus taught in the book of Matthew, within what is called the 'Sermon on the Mount'.

So far we have looked at the Beatitudes and being 'Salt & Light'.

This morning we come to the part entitled "The fulfilment of the Law". It is part of the sermon, yet it marks a new section within the sermon.

The Lord has been describing the Christian, and firstly he described who we are - we are blessed, we are not as the world is. We are told to remember who we are and to act like it, so that we bring glory and honour upon Christ and the Christian family.

He then went on to tell us we are to be like Salt and Light, things that make taste and bring out the flavour in other peoples lives, to be light that drives away the darkness of the world.

Then Jesus comes on to the subject before us this morning - the fulfilment of the law.

For the sake of time I believe we can surmise that these verses are a result of what has been going on around him from the start of his ministry. Jesus has, according to the Pharisees etc. been teaching 'new' things, and people were probably wondering if Jesus was starting a new religion, different from Judaism, different from the Law that the Jews knew.

This probably came about because of the way he was speaking to the crowds, after all, he said things like...."You have heard it said"...."but I tell you.."

He was putting a different spin on things and that worried many.

But he is laying down a couple of statements in these verses that we should take note of.

1. He says that everything he is going to teach is in absolute harmony with the entire teaching of the New Testament, that there is nothing in His teaching that will contradict the Law.

2. That although his teaching is in harmony with the Old Testament it is in complete DIS-harmony with and in contradiction of, the teaching of the Pharisees and Scribes.

We also need to see that Jesus was not content with making positive statements, he made negative ones as well. He didn't just say do it my way, he criticised the Pharisees.

We need to take particular notice of that because we live in an age where everything has to be 'positive teaching'. Lets not criticise other views. But Jesus definitely did.

He often slammed the Pharisees for their teaching and their burdening the people with their made up laws.

Now, having introduced this passage and its background a little, let us come to the crux of the matter.

What is Jesus saying/teaching in these verses?

There has been, in the Church, a lot of misunderstanding about these verses and what Jesus is saying here.

There are those in the church that take the view that Jesus was saying "I have fulfilled the law" and therefore the law, the 10 Commandments and everything in the OT no longer applies to me. He has set me free from the law and they use verses like:

***Rom 8:1-2 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+8:1-3&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-28119a)***] free from the law of sin and death.***

to justify it and now it is all about Grace.

Secondly, there are those that take the position that Jesus is saying that He will fulfil the law and that not even the tiniest part has been done away with, and therefore they become very legalistic.

We must wear hats, we must not work on Sundays, we must rest on the Sabbath etc.

But is that what Jesus is really saying? I think not.

In order to answer the question we have to understand what Jesus meant by "the Law" and "The Propets" and what he meant by "Fulfil".

**The Law.**

It seems that we must agree that "the Law" here means the entire law. This, as given to the Chidren of Israel, consisted of three parts - The moral, the Judicial and the Ceremonial law.

If you read the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers you will find this is how God gave it.

The moral law consisted of the 10 Commandments and the great moral principles that were laid down once and for ever.

The Judicial law, this was legislation given to the Israelites at the time and for that time which told them how they were to behave in relationship to others and the various things they were told not to do.

The Ceremonial law concerned the burnt offerings and sacrifices and all the ritual and ceremonial connections with their worship in the Temple and elsewhere.

So we must agree that 'the law' includes all of this, so that Jesus is here referring to everything it teaches directly about life, conduct and behaviour.

We must also remember that this includes everything that is taught by the various types, the different offerings and all the details that were given about them in the OT.

Many people say they find the OT boring, they ask questions like "Why all this detail?" Why do we need to know about the salt and the meal offerings, what is the relevance?

It is because they are all "Types" and they are all "Prophecy" in the way that they show us how Jesus has completed these things perfectly once and forever.

For example, the Passover, by Jesus' death, he completed fulfiled the Passover that the Jews, even to this day remember.

So Jesus, when talking about the Law, is talking about all of this.

**The Prophets**

This term clearly means all the prophetic books of the OT, again their are two main aspects to this:

The prophets actually taught the law, they applied and interpreted it. They went to the Nation and told them that they were not keeping God's law. Their main purpose was to drag the people back to the right way of living under the law. Secondly they were 'forth-tellers', they foretold the coming of the Lord.

**Fulfil**

In this case, it does not mean to complete, or to finish, it does not mean to add to something that has already begun.

It has been said that the OT began a certain teaching and took it so far, up to a certain point. Then Jesus came and carried it a stage further, rounding it off and fulfilling it, as it were.

But the real meaning of the word "fulfil" is to carry out, to fulfil in the sense of giving full obedience to it. Literally carrying out everything that has been said and stated in the law and the prophets.

So this is what the different terms mean. Now let us look at what Jesus is actually saying.

Let us read the two verses in our reading again

***17‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. 18For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.***

Again there are 2 principles and in order to see what Jesus is saying we are going to take v18 first.

In v18 the principle that we need to understand is this: God's law is absolute. It can never be changed, or modified in any way whatsoever. It is absolute and eternal

***For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.***

Its demands are permanent, and can never be reduced, or set aside UNTIL heaven and earth disappear. Heaven and earth are signs of permanence.

Jesus is saying that not even the smallest letter of stroke of a pen will pass away UNTIL everything is accomplished.

This is monumental! It is vital to our understanding of Jesus to realise this - Gods law and the prophets in their absolute entirety will remain until Heaven and earth disappear. That is until the end of the age, till Christ returns....

In the light of that, our Lord makes His second statement. An obvious one now isn't it? He has not come to destroy the law, or modify it or add to it.

But he has come to fulfil, to carry them out, to give them perfect obedience.

Here we see the central claim that Jesus is making - that all the Law and the Prophets point to HIM and will be fulfilled by HIM down to the smallest detail.

Everything that is in the Law and the Prophets culminates in Christ, and HE is the fulfilment of them.

This is the most amazing, stupendous claim Jesus ever made!

Everything about the Lord Jesus Christ's coming as a baby, his Ministry and his death, his resurrection and ascension are all foretold in the prophets.

So let us see. very quickly, how Christ fulfils the law.

Firstly, he was made under the law

***Galatians 4:4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,***

In heaven, Jesus was above the law, but he had to come under the law in order to fulfil it.

Throughout his life, he carefully obeyed the law in every detail and taught others so that no-one could say anything against him.

***Luke 23:4 Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, ‘I find no basis for a charge against this man.’***

On the cross, Jesus Christ, Gods Son, was enduring in his own body the penalty prescribed by the very law of God for the sin of man.

This punishment was death and that is why he died - the law had to be fulfilled.

***Rom 6:23For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+6:22-23&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-28092a)***] Christ Jesus our Lord.***

Whatever God says, must be done, it cannot be set aside. Sin has to be punished by death.

In the greatest act of grace ever seen, God placed His only Son, Jesus Christ upon that Cross to pay the price, to fulfil the law and the prophets.

But that sin was not his own, it was yours and mine, everyone of us here this morning is guilty of sin in Gods eyes and under His law.

Jesus is our High Priest, He is the offering, He is the sacrifice, and he has presented his blood in heaven, so that the whole of the ceremonial law has been fulfilled in him.

This is what Jesus was saying

***17‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.***

This is summed up in:

***John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.***

BUT......

There HAS to be a personal application.

You cannot rely on religion, God is not into religion. You cannot rely on your family, just because your mum and dad may be believers, that does not make you one.

Its not about money, status, power.

You have to personally accept the gift that God holds out to you - In Christ.

In order to be freed from your sin, to be forgiven, to be cleansed, to have that eternal life, you have to do something simple but sincere.

You have to believe that Christ is the Son of God and that he died for you.

You have to confess that you are a sinner and turn from your sinful ways

You have to ask Jesus to come into your life and be Lord of your life....

and you will be saved...

Will you do that right now.

Let us pray

Amen