



SESSION 5 - THE GOSPELS

GOAL OF CLASS

To understand how the Law of Moses points to Christ and how it is relevant to us today.

Session 5 - Goal

Understanding Jesus's relationship to the Law and how he fulfills what it foreshadowed.

Session 5 - Assignment Questions

- How do you see Jesus using the Law in Matthew 4? What are each of the 3 temptations about and how does Jesus' response answer each one?
- How does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5 correspond to some of the themes and topics we saw in the Pentateuch? Write down a few observations and come ready to discuss them.

STOP & PRAY: Pray Ephesians 1:15-22



CLASS ROADMAP

Where we went

In our previous sessions, we did a broad overview of the theme of Law in the Pentateuch, the Prophets and Writings (the 3 categories of OT books). We looked at themes such as Covenants, different types of Law (sacrifices, temple instructions, priests, clean/unclean, etc), and different ways of categorizing the Law (Civil, Ceremonial & Moral). We also looked at the story of the Prophets - looking at Israel as the nation in decline into sin, the escalating prophecies of Israel's prophets who promised a time when God himself will teach them His law, write it on their hearts, establish a new covenant and place His

Spirit within them! Then we saw how the OT ended with dashed hopes and letdowns. Those promises and prophecies were still left unfulfilled.

It is important to remember the organization of the Jewish OT - called the **TaNaK** - to understand the flow of redemptive history. In the TaNaK - Chronicles is the last book. And it ends with an incomplete sentence... because **the story isn't over**. All the hopes and promises of the prophets and torah, everything they pointed to hasn't been fulfilled... so the author of the last book of the OT **leaves us hanging**, because that's where the people of God were at that point. Left hanging... will God fulfill His promises?

Where we are

Today, we are launching off into the New Testament - and what better and more fitting way than to take a look at the central figure of the New Testament writings (and the figure to which the OT pointed toward) - Jesus Christ.

Where we're going

In this session, we'll primarily be using the Gospel of Matthew to guide us through this look at Jesus and His relationship to the Law of Moses. The four Gospels would be too much to cover in one session - so we'll be taking a specific look through Matthew's lens using bits from the other Gospels to help round out the picture. Each Gospel is written with a different focus in mind - this is why their material is often arranged differently. Matthew's Gospel is written primarily to a Jewish audience, and one of its main goals is to show Jesus's fulfillment of the Old Testament. In looking at Matthew, **I hope that we see both what Jesus taught on the law, and how He fulfills it** - and thus, how it is so relevant to us today!

Session Outline

This session's outline will be based on the structure of Matthew's Gospel. It is divided up roughly in a way that mirrors the structure of the Old Testament:

1. **Matthew 1-7** - The Greater Moses - Jesus fulfills the Pentateuch
2. **Matthew 8-10** - The Greater Joshua - Jesus fulfills the Conquest of the Land
3. **Matthew 11-13** - The Greater Wisdom - Jesus fulfills the Writings
4. **Matthew 14-18** - The Greater King - Jesus fulfills the Kingdom of God
5. **Matthew 19-25** - The Greater Prophet - Jesus fulfills the Prophets
6. **Matthew 26-27** - The Passion - Jesus fulfills everything
7. **Matthew 28** - The Resurrection & The Great Commission

As you can see - the theme of **fulfillment** is really important to Matthew!

At the end of each narrative section, there are 5 large blocks of Jesus' teaching. So, we find:

1. **Matthew 5-7** - Sermon on the Mount
2. **Matthew 10** - instructions on sending the 12 disciples
3. **Matthew 13** - parables about the mysteries of the Kingdom
4. **Matthew 18** - shepherding and caring for one another in the community
5. **Matthew 22-25** - prophetic denunciations and warnings including rewards & judgments

In case you're wondering how we recognize these sections of narrative and teaching blocks in Matthew's Gospel - at the end of every division is the repeated phrase, "When Jesus had finished saying [these things]." (see 7:28, 11:1, 13:553; 19:1 and 26:1)

The teaching and narrative blocks are brought to a climactic fulfillment in the Passion Narrative which fulfills both His life and His teaching.

So, from the very structure of this gospel - we see that Matthew is intent on showing us how Jesus fulfills everything!

So, because this class is focused on the Law, we'll spend a bit more time in the first section and be moving fairly quickly through the rest of the sections. Our goal here today is closely related to what we opened off our first class with from the ending of Luke's Gospel where Jesus was walking down the Emmaus Road with the two disciples, and "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:26)

This theme of FULFILLMENT is what this session is all about!

Truly the whole of scripture is about Christ - Christ is the key - and today we will see a little bit of how he unlocks the scriptures!

1. THE GREATER MOSES - JESUS FULFILLS THE PENTATEUCH (Matthew 1-7)

The first seven chapters of Matthew's Gospel generally follow the motifs of the Pentateuch - picking up on major themes from Genesis to Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. In doing this, **Matthew is demonstrating Jesus' identification with Israel** - but even more significantly, showing how **Jesus is the 'True Israel' of God**. The narrative block (chapters 1-4) show the parallels with the narratives of the Mosaic times. The teaching block (chapters 5-7) shows parallels with the teaching of Moses.

Let's look at the movement through these books:

A. Parallels to the Patriarchs

i. A NEW GENESIS

If the whole Pentateuch points to Jesus, then the logical place to start is Genesis. And that is exactly what Matthew does. The first words in the book are:

Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ.
(pronounced: *Biblos geneseōs Iēsou Christou huiou David huiou Abraam*)

Literally it reads: "the Book of Genesis of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Matthew in no uncertain terms is bringing his readers attention to Genesis - this is a 'new book of Genesis' (so to speak) - of Jesus Christ. Then **just as the OT book of Genesis begins by telling us of the genealogy of God's OT people (Israel), here in Matthew, we find a genealogy of Jesus Christ.**

ii. THE FULLNESS OF TIME

The genealogy highlights the facts that Jesus is indeed a true Israelite - descended from Abraham and David - thus a rightful heir to the throne.

"Jesus' genealogy selects just enough ancestors ("begat" can mean "was the ancestor of") to create three series of fourteen names, probably employing gematria (the numerical value of the sum of the Hebrew consonants of a given word) on the name דָּוִד ("David"), which equaled fourteen (4 = ד, 6 = ו, 4 = ד). "
(Craig Blomberg, "Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 3)

These series of 14 names of ancestors is meant to show a series of completed time frames. 14 is twice 7. Therefore, by the end of the 3 series of 14s, we have 6 sevens. Thus, **the coming of the seventh seven is meant to signal an ultimate completion.** Hence, "when the fullness of time had come, God sends His Son." (see Gal. 4:4)

iii. SECOND ADAM - THE PROMISED SEED

Chapter 1, verse 23 quotes from Isaiah 7:14, and Matthew uses it to explain Jesus's virgin birth as a fulfillment of prophecy. This one called Jesus, is also the one who shall be called Immanuel - that is, God with us. Jesus is God in the flesh come to dwell among us. His birth is also **reminiscent of the story of Isaac's birth.** God had promised to miraculously provide a *seed* to Abraham - which was fulfilled in the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah when they were in their old age. However, **Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise of miraculous provision of a seed to Abraham through whom blessing to all nations would come!**

B. Parallels to the Exodus

i. THE GREATER MOSES - THE TRUE EXODUS

The angel of the Lord who speaks to Joseph tells him that Mary “will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (1:21) This promised one, whose name means “Yahweh is salvation” will save his people. However, not as Moses did - from slavery to a tyrannical Pharaoh in a pagan land - **Christ was not to save his people from Roman oppression, but rather from their true slavery - their sins.**

Herod - the evil ruler - tries to destroy Him, just as Pharaoh attempted to destroy the baby Moses (2:16-17). This too is interpreted by Matthew as fulfillment of prophecy in **Jeremiah 31:15**. But beyond just this verse reference, if we look to the context of the OT citation, our understanding of the connections expands even more (and you should do this every time you see an OT citation!).

Jeremiah 31:15 occurs in the context of a prophecy the Lord speaks to His people to turn their mourning to joy - it is where we find one of the escalating prophecies we looked at last week:

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.** And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”
(31:31a & 33)

ii. TRUE ISRAEL

Next we see that Joseph takes the child Jesus down to Egypt due to a warning in a dream (2:13-14). **One cannot miss the allusions here to the story of Joseph in Genesis** - who was a dreamer also - and who led God's people to Egypt to seek temporary refuge. In fact, Matthew himself acknowledges the connection by quoting Hosea 11:1 in verse 15, “out of Egypt I called my son.” In the context of Hosea's time, he was speaking of God's past deliverance of Israel (God's son) from Egypt. But here, **Matthew is showing us that Israel's deliverance through the Passover and Red Sea symbolizes a greater deliverance now being inaugurated.**

Furthermore, in connection to the Exodus story - we find next that Jesus is baptized, just as Israel was 'baptized' (so to speak) in the Red Sea. So far, the movements through the patriarchal narratives and the exodus narrative finds several connecting points to Matthew's account of Jesus' life. From here, they skip on to Numbers with some allusions to Leviticus later on together with Deuteronomy as we shall see shortly.

iii. THE TRUE PASSOVER LAMB

John's Gospel tells us at Jesus' baptism, John the Baptist said of him:

"The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus being portrayed as the true Passover Lamb - down to His examination at the mock trial by the priests (as OT priests would inspect the lamb for blemishes) and His execution which was at the time when the lambs would have been slain for Passover. Every detail of His death points back to the OT Passover.

C. Parallels to the Wilderness Narratives of Numbers

i. THE WILDERNESS

Chapter 3 starts off with the appearance of John the Baptist as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness..." a quotation of Isaiah 40:3.

"Isaiah in its context is speaking of a second Exodus, that is, the coming of God to save Israel in a deliverance greater than but parallel to the original exodus from Egypt (Isaiah 51:9-11)."

(Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses*, pg 253)

John appears on the scene from **the wilderness**, calling the people to repent - which reminds us of the **unrepentance of the Numbers generation in the wilderness** and their hardness of heart on the way to Canaan.

Note the message of John as he baptizes - he calls people to repentance and confession of sins and confronts the Pharisees (the religious elite) that true inclusion into the people of God is *not on the basis of their genetic descendants*. He says that he baptized with water for repentance, but the greater one coming after him (Jesus) will baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire. This phrase is often misinterpreted, but its meaning is clear in context. The baptism that Jesus will bring is one of salvation and judgment - the Holy Spirit being the seal of His salvation and fire being the typical biblical language for God's judgment. This is made plain in the next verse's parable where he gathers the wheat into the barn (a picture of salvation) and the chaff to burn in unquenchable fire (a picture of damnation). This is what it means that Jesus will baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire - there are some who will receive salvation because of Christ, and some who will receive judgment because of him.

ii. IDENTIFICATION WITH SINNERS

Jesus's baptism is explained by himself as fitting "to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15). How is it fitting that Jesus, the sinless one, should need to take part in the baptism of John for repentance? If he has no sin, there is no need of repentance. Even John realizes this quandary (see verse 14).

Jesus, by being baptized like the faithful Jews who were coming repentant to John, was identifying with His fellow repentant Israelites. This anticipates His complete identification with sinners when He bears our sins on the cross. This is how it fulfills all

righteousness - **for Christ to be our righteousness, he must fully identify with us, and fully accomplish all for us.**

iii. FAITHFUL THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

Next, **Jesus is led into the wilderness to be tempted.** Here again the parallel with Numbers are readily apparent. He experiences temptations which are parallel to Israel's wilderness temptations. However, **whereas Israel was unfaithful and succumbed to temptation again and again, Jesus - the true obedient Son - successfully resists temptation.** And He does so by quoting three times from the book of Deuteronomy.

D. Parallels to Deuteronomy & Leviticus

i. THE TRUE LAWGIVER

We saw in previous sessions that Deuteronomy was the 'second giving of the Law' and the Book of the Covenant where Moses retells the story of God's salvation of Israel and the giving of His Covenant and Law to them on Mount Sinai.

Here, in the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 5-7, we see Jesus, going up on the mountain and giving His disciples His teachings. The parallels to Exodus and Deuteronomy are unmistakable. **This is a new giving of the law from a new Mount Sinai.**

"At Mount Sinai the voice of God spoke directly from heaven, and further revelations were mediated through Moses. In Matthew 5 the revelation comes through the voice of Jesus who is both God and the final Moses."
(Vern Poythress, p.256)

Jesus opens off this 'new giving of the law' with a series of extravagant and paradoxical blessings, corresponding to the blessings and curses from the old covenant at Sinai. In contrast to Sinai, there are only blessings, but paradoxically, they upset the existing order of things by being given to those who are weak, poor and needy.

ii. JESUS FULFILLS THE LAW

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

Matthew 5:17-20 contains a clear statement by Jesus that he does not come to abolish the Law and Prophets, but rather to fulfill them and a reaffirmation of their

continuing validity “until all is accomplished.” (v.18) This is what Jesus comes to do - to accomplish what the Law had set out.

Notice the dilemma it sets up for his hearers - he just told them that in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, their righteousness had to exceed that of the spiritual professionals of their time!

“It substitutes for what is in principle a 100% achievable righteousness (the avoidance of breaking a definable set of regulations) a totally open-ended ideal (being “perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”) which will always remain beyond the grasp of the most committed disciple.” (R.T. France, The Gospel of Matthew, pg 197)

This sort of righteousness is in a whole other league to that of the Scribes and Pharisees! **How would this be possible? The answer is in the first part of his statement - that he came to fulfill the law - to accomplish it on their behalf.**

However, Jesus is not just simply teaching that he will simply confirm the law or establish it or even just that he was correcting the distortions of the law by the Pharisees (as we'll see later). Notice also how Jesus escalates the penalties of the law from the OT. It is no longer just physical death which is the punishment - but eternal fire and hell!

“Jesus’ teaching represents not simply the reiteration of the law but a step forward, bringing the purpose of the law into realization.” (Vern Poythress)

He's saying, this is the reality that the law pointed towards - a day when it would not be a matter of imperfect external observance and effort, but rather a day when God's law is perfectly accomplished by His Representative and internalized in the heart of His people so that obedience flows from the inside out.

There are other words Jesus could have used instead of the one he did in this verse. He could have used βεβαιόω (bebaiōō) - confirm - or ἱστημι (histēmi) - establish. But he instead uses πληρόω (plērōō) - which has the sense of “to make full, to complete”.

“Hence what Jesus means is that he came to realize the full measure of the intent and purpose of the law and the prophets. He came to complete, to consummate, to bring to full fruition and perfect fulfilment the law and the prophets. Jesus refers to the function of validating and confirming the law and the prophets and includes much more than the fulfilment of the predictions of the Old Testament regarding himself. He means that the whole process of revelation deposited in the Old Testament finds in him its completion, its fulfilment, its confirmation, its validation. Still more, it finds in him its embodiment. To use John's terms, ‘grace and truth came by Jesus Christ’ (John 1:17).”
(John Murray)

Jesus brings to full realization what the Old Testament Law pointed forward to.

Note though the timeframe that Jesus gives in his affirmation of the continuing validity of the Law - 'until all is accomplished'. Until all these things have taken place as they were prophesied, until the entirety of God's divine purposes which He prophesied have taken place, not one tiniest part will pass away. That means that it stands until what was intended has been accomplished - this is how we know which parts of the Law are done away. We look at what Christ has accomplished.

So, in a very real sense, we take what Jesus says at face value - ALL of the Law has continuing validity - because it is until 'heaven and earth pass away' that they stand. So, they must all be practiced. However, the nature of practicing has been fundamentally affected because the law pointed forward to Jesus. So, some of the laws are observed today in how Christ has fulfilled them completely.

"All the commandments of the law are binding on Christians (7:19), but the way in which they are binding is determined by the authority of Christ and the fulfillment that takes place in His work." (Vern Poythress, 268)

We are to obey all that he has commanded us (cf. Matt. 28:20). But we do so as disciples who have learned how to discern the function of the law of Moses as a pointer to the person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord. "The way in which each law is fulfilled in Christ determines the way in which it is to be observed now." (Vern Poythress)

The ancient Jewish rabbis talked about taking upon oneself the 'yolk' of the law and commandments. But this is why the 'yolk' of Christ is easy and light - because He has come and fulfilled them for us.

Jesus's authority & the Law

Jesus' repeated phrase "you have heard it said, but I say to you" stands in contrast to the teachings of the Rabbis of the day who would quote earlier Rabbis and whose authority was derivative from them and eventually traced back to Moses as the original lawgiver. Jesus speaks from his own authority. He says "I" say to you. Thus, he indirectly claims to have an authority equal to Moses, and even equal to Yahweh himself who gave the Law at Sinai.

Jesus's corrections of the abuses of the Law are given with the very same authority of Yahweh. The One who gave them the Law has now come to correct their abuses of His Law!

The remainder of the Sermon on the Mount can be divided like this:

- 5:21-37 - Teachings related to the Ten Commandments (e.g. Murder, Adultery, Oaths)
- 5:38-47 - Principles of retribution (e.g. balanced recompense - v. 38-42 - cf. Ex. 21:24-25, Lev. 24:20, Deut. 19:21)
- 6:1-18 - Specific practices of worship (e.g. Almsgiving, Prayer, Fasting) - parallels ceremonial laws in Leviticus about Israel's worship
- 6:19-34 - Worldly cares

- 7:1-23 - Discriminating between good and evil - parallels purity laws in Leviticus
- 7:24-27 - Importance of obeying Jesus' words - parallels the blessings & curses in the Deuteronomy Covenant document
- 7:28-29 - The authority of Jesus' teaching - parallels the "I am the LORD" statements in the Sinai Covenant as the basis of authority

"All the sections of the Sermon on the Mount deal in some way with abuses and misunderstandings of the law that had arisen in Jesus' day. In particular, Jesus repeatedly stresses the significance of correct motives. His focus on the heart contrasts with the externality and legalism promoted by Pharisaic religion (see Matt. 15:1-20)."

(Vern Poythress, p.257)

Let's take a quick look at how Jesus addresses some of those abuses.

iii. Jesus corrects abuses of the Law

The legalistic religion of Jesus' day tended to say that people were not guilty of sin if they kept themselves from literal murder and adultery, etc. However, Jesus corrects this misuse by showing the importance of **motives of the heart** to God. It is not just murder that is wrong, but hatred of your brother is murder of the heart. It is not just actual adultery that is wrong, but lust is adultery of the heart.

Even the **abuse of teachings on divorce** of his day are corrected. Whereas some schools of Pharisees would teach that it was ok to divorce by citing Deut. 24:1-4, Jesus clarified that it was given as a restraint on divorce and was never meant as a warrant or approval on divorce. He also goes beyond the direct teaching of Moses and indicates that divorce is morally evil in that it causes one to commit adultery.

On **oaths**, Jesus corrects the misuse which is illustrated in Matthew 23:16-22. This will be our first breakout discussions.

Jesus also corrected abuses in **retribution**. In 5:38-47, Jesus corrects the abuse of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" which was intended as a guide for judges to make fair and equal punishments that fit the crime. In his day, however, it was being used as an excuse for personal vengeance. **Jesus transforms the principle of retribution from "As you have done, it will be done to you" to "Do to others as you would have them do to you."** (cf. Matt. 7:12) This was revolutionary.

Jesus further clarifies, that although they had heard it taught to "love your neighbour and hate your enemy" - the actual Mosaic command was "love your neighbour" (Lev. 19:18) and nowhere in the OT was the phrase 'and hate your enemy' found. It was a distortion of the original. So he tells them, "love your enemies" because in light of the new covenant Christ would bring and the power of the gospel, evil people are no longer only destroyed, but rather renewed and changed into good people. Retribution works differently in light of Christ as our sin bearer.

As heirs of the Kingdom and recipients of lavish grace, we are not merely to operate in terms of earthly patterns of retribution and justice, but rather a gospel-transformed pattern of giving good for evil because Christ did the same for us.

Jesus also provides a corrective for the **misuse of purity laws** in discriminating between what is good and evil, pure and impure, clean and unclean in Matthew 7.

"In 7:1-6 Jesus teaches that His disciples must not regard themselves as lords whose first responsibility is to straighten out others. They must first make discriminate judgments concerning their own failures. Their heavenly Father knows what is good and what is evil and will give them good gifts (7:7-12). They must concentrate first of all on discriminating two ways, the way of life and the way of destruction (7:13-14). These two ways are to be distinguished by the fruit of obedience in life (7:15-27)." (Vern Poythress, 263)

These "two ways" mirror the Jewish "Two Ways" genre already known in Deut. 30:15-20.

TAKEAWAY: All of this shows us how Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the Law (Torah) and all that it pointed to.

READ & DISCUSS - Matthew 5:33-37 & 23:16-22

We'll spend 10 minutes in our groups reading and comparing these two passages:

- What does Matthew 23:16-22 tell you about the way that the Pharisees were abusing the law in regards to oaths?
- How does Jesus correct this abuse according to Matthew 5:33-37?



Video: The Law (6:00)

2. THE GREATER JOSHUA - JESUS FULFILLS THE CONQUEST OF THE LAND (Matthew 8-10)

"...the name "Jesus" is a Grecized form of the Hebrew "Joshua," recalling the successor of Moses and liberator of God's people."

(Craig Blomberg, "Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament, p. 3)

In the second narrative block of Matthew's Gospel (chapters 8-9), we see a focus on the expansion of Jesus' ministry and the Kingdom of God. Just as in Joshua we find the people of God 'expanding' into the Promised Land. In this section, Matthew shows us God's rule extending to:

- the sick (8:14-17; 9:1-8)
- the unclean (8:1-4)
- the Gentiles (8:5-13)
- the demonized (8:28-34; 9:32-33)
- the dead (9:18-26)
- the physical elements (8:23-27)
- sinners (9:9-13)
- beyond the bounds of the OT order (9:14-17)
- the great harvest at the end of the age (9:35-38)

The teaching block in chapter 10 - where Jesus commissions the 12 apostles to participate in this expansion - connects to and shows the fulfillments of this great period of expansion of God's kingdom - corresponding to and fulfilling the theme from the conquest under Joshua in the OT.

TAKEAWAY: This section shows us how Jesus fulfills the conquest and expansion of God's Kingdom.

3. THE GREATER WISDOM - JESUS FULFILLS THE WRITINGS (Matthew 11-13)

The next block of narrative (chapters 11-12) shows the growth of misunderstanding, misinterpretation and opposition to Jesus' ministry and the following teaching block (chapter 13) has to do with parables expounding the mystery of the Kingdom. Thus, **the idea of wisdom verses lack of wisdom become prominent.**

This section of Matthew is related to the theme of wisdom and folly in the OT Wisdom literature in these ways:

- It has been given to Jesus' disciples to know the mysteries, whereas it has been concealed from others (13:11).
- The genre of parables (which we find many in this block) is similar to the essence of an OT proverb.

- Matthew 13:34-35 explains Jesus' teaching in parables by quoting from Psalm 78:2 - which is a sort of wisdom psalm telling Israel to learn wisdom from the lessons of history.

TAKEAWAY: This section shows how Jesus is truly the Wisdom of God. He is wisdom personified.

4. THE GREATER KING - JESUS FULFILLS THE KINGDOM OF GOD (Matthew 14-18)

The fourth block of narrative is chapters 14-17, and the teaching block is chapter 18. Both of these have something to do with the idea of shepherding or caring properly for God's people. This idea of shepherd is invoked in 18:10-14. This was what OT Israel's Kings were supposed to be - shepherds of God's people (see 2 Sam 5:2, 7:7). So, these blocks have a relation to the OT figure of the Davidic King - which Jesus embodies as its fulfillment.

In the narrative it is demonstrated clearly that Jesus, not the official Jewish leaders, is the true King, leader and shepherd of the people of Israel (God's people):

- Jesus feeds them miraculously in 14:13-21 and 15:29-39.
- He also says that he was sent to "the lost sheep of Israel" in 15:24, which is sandwiched between Jesus' criticisms of the Pharisees as false shepherds in 15:1-20 and 16:1-12.
- Peter's confession in 16:13-20 highlights Jesus as the Christ, the Son of David.
- And Jesus highlights that the Son of Man must undergo suffering for the sake of the flock (16:21-28).

TAKEAWAY: This fourth section of Matthew shows us how Jesus fulfills what the OT Kings and kingdom only foreshadowed. Jesus is the True King.

5. THE GREATER PROPHET - JESUS FULFILLS THE PROPHETS (Matthew 19-25)

The fifth narrative (19:1-21:22) and teaching (21-25) block are predominantly prophetic in nature. Jesus speaks of the fall of Jerusalem, final judgment, and criteria for punishments and rewards. The narrative section ends with Jesus' prophetic sign of cursing the fig tree - which is reminiscent of the OT prophetic symbolic actions. So, this section clearly shows Jesus' fulfillment of the prophetic ministry of the OT.

However, **Jesus not only fulfills the prophetic ministry as a prophet, but also as the endpoint itself of what OT prophecy pointed towards!**

Jesus & Fulfilled OT Prophecy

Christian scientist Peter Stoner who was Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College took the following 8 prophecies about Christ and calculated the odds of them all being fulfilled:

1. Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mc 5:2).
2. Messiah will be preceded by a messenger (Mal 3:1).
3. Messiah will come to Jerusalem riding on a colt (Zch 9:9).
4. Messiah will be betrayed by a friend (Zch 13:6).
5. Messiah will be betrayed for thirty silver pieces (Zch 11:2).
6. Messiah's betrayer will try to return the thirty silver pieces but they will be refused. The betrayer will then throw them on the floor of the temple (Zch 11:13).
7. Messiah will not speak in His own defense (Is 53:7).
8. Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced (Ps 22:16).

The numbers Stoner used to calculate the odds were arrived at by himself and over 600 of his students over the course of ten years or so. When Stoner found reason for the numbers to be revised, he made them more conservative. Stoner and his students found that in considering these eight prophecies, the odds that they would be fulfilled by any man who has lived between the writing of the prophecies (no later than 400 BC) and today is **1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000** (or 100 quadrillion, expressed as 10^{17}).

That's a big number, so let's illustrate that:

Suppose that we take 1017 silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote using their own wisdom.

Stoner then calculated the odds of fulfilling forty-eight prophecies. Assuming the forty additional prophecies have similar odds as the first set of prophecies, the chances that any one man would fulfill all forty-eight is 1 in
10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,
,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (or 10^{157}). Stoner tried to convey this staggering number in this way:

Let us make a solid ball of electrons, extending in all directions from the earth to the distance of six billion light-years. Have we used up our 10^{157} electrons? No, we have made such a small hole in the mass that we cannot see it. We can make this solid

ball of electrons, extending in all directions to the distance of six billion light-years 6×10^{28} times.

As incredibly large as this number is, it must be remembered that there are **at least 61 major messianic prophecies**. If the odds of 48 prophecies being fulfilled are statistically close to zero, how much greater are the odds of the 61 prophecies? The improbability is overwhelming.

There are, of course, some prophecies that can be fulfilled intentionally, like entering Jerusalem on a donkey. But it must be understood that most of the prophecies cannot be discounted in such a way. The Messiah could not contrive His place of birth, time of birth, ancestors, the actions of others (such as His betrayer), or manner of death. Also, the intentional fulfillment of some of the prophecies, as mentioned above, would be a tacit declaration that that person fulfilled all of the prophecies—a claim that could be investigated. It must also be understood that these prophecies were not added into the text later to fit the life of Jesus. Remember that Jewish interpreters used the exact same text that these prophecies came from. They never argued against the Christians by saying the prophecies were inserted. Rather, they argued against the interpretation and fulfillment of the prophecies.

(This section taken from Powell, D., 2006. Holman QuickSource Guide to Christian Apologetics, Nashville, TN: Holman Reference.)

TAKEAWAY: Jesus fulfills both the prophetic ministry of the OT and the OT prophecies. Jesus is both the True Prophet of God - speaking God's word to us - and what the Prophets spoke of.

6. THE PASSION - JESUS FULFILLS EVERYTHING (Matthew 26-27)

We've seen so far how Matthew's Gospel to this point has mirrored the structure of the entire OT to show us how Jesus' life fulfills it. However, the Passion Narrative of chapters 26-27 recapitulates this again to show us how Jesus' death also is a fulfillment of the OT! Let's look at that briefly:

- **The Greater Moses** - As the Greater Moses, Jesus inaugurates a new covenant by His blood - parallel to the old covenant inaugurated by Moses through the Passover (26:17-29). Therefore, we see a transition from a symbolic deliverance from Egypt to a real deliverance from sin (v.28) where we enter, not Canaan, but into the Kingdom of the Father (v.29)!
- **The Greater Joshua** - In contrast to Joshua in the OT, Jesus refuses to use the sword (26:51-56). All his 'army' deserts him (v.56), yet still he conquers evil and the devil by steadfast obedience (v.36-46). And through His own completed work (unlike the

unfinished conquest of Joshua), He opens the door to the new Promised Land - not just the land of Canaan, but rather the whole world (28:18-20).

- **The Greater Wisdom** - He fulfills the wisdom of OT poetry as he is mocked and treated like a fool (27:42). The multitude are foolish in their interpretation of one of his utterances (v.47-49). His last utterance quotes from Psalm 22 which is the Psalm of the Cross (go read it and see the connections!). This psalm shows us Jesus' ultimate confidence in God's vindication of His death.
- **The Greater King** - unlike earthly kings, he comes to serve (20:25-28). He is given the title "King of the Jews" in mockery (26:27-31; 27:37) and is given a crown of thorns (26:29).
- **The Greater Prophet** - Jesus is put to death because he is accused of being a false prophet (26:65 & 68). Yet, in dying he fulfills his own prophecies about his death (16:21; 20:17-19; 20:28; 21:33-42) and the OT prophecies (26:31, 54, 56; 27:9-10).

"The whole Old Testament is properly observed by us now, not when we treat it as an abstracted word, dusty legal specifications, or mere ancient history, but as the word that is fulfilled in Christ."

(Vern Poythress, 281)

So, why is it important for us to know the OT law in light of its fulfillment in Christ?

Because part of the new covenant that Christ brings to us is that the Law is written on our hearts. How can you know the content of what is "written on your heart" unless we know both the OT Law's requirements and what its purpose and meaning are? That is why it is vitally important for the Christian today!

THE RESURRECTION & GREAT COMMISSION (Matthew 28)

Only a few days later, the one who died an ignominious death claims that "All authority in heaven and on earth" has been given to him after his triumphal resurrection.

The end of the gospel of Matthew gives us the Great Commission which stresses a teaching component (teaching them to obey everything I have commanded) and a personal presence component (I will be with you always) to Jesus's commission for his disciples to make disciples.

This Commission gives insight into why Matthew structured his Gospel the way he did. **The five teaching blocks expand pointedly on the commandments of the Master, while the narrative blocks expand on the meaning of His personal presence:** His blessings of healing, conquest of spiritual evil (casting out of demons, etc), fellowship with sinners, and friendship with his disciples.

CLASS DISCUSSION: Matthew 5:17-20 in comparison to 28:18-20

At this point in our class - I'd like to make it explicitly clear what Christ calls us to do in light of what we've been learning about His law. We are given a commission by our Lord - not to just hoard the information and knowledge we know about His Word. Rather, we are to share it, teach it, spread it to all! This is not the job of just the few career ministry persons and pastors, but all of Christ's disciples.

I'll guarantee to you - the best way to understand God's Word is to teach it to someone else. All of you now, have grown in your knowledge and understanding of His law. As such, you are called upon by our Lord himself to go and teach others. Discipleship is not only the work of the church leaders and pastors - but of everyone who follows our Lord and looks to Him for salvation.

"The promise of continued presence at all times and places ("all nations") points to the fact that His presence takes a new form - the form defined more precisely by the Pentecostal giving of the Spirit. Such presence of the Spirit, which is also the presence of Jesus Himself, empowers and motivates the proclaiming and discipling... Moreover, it also directly supplies backing for the Commission: "Go therefore,..." that is, 'go on the basis of My universal authority and claim to the allegiance of all the nations.'"

(Vern Poythress, The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses, pgs 270-271)

Note, God's commandments have a continuing role for us according to the Great Commission. The ones who are being evangelized and disciplined are to be taught to "obey all that I have commanded you."

The baptism that Jesus commands goes beyond John's baptism earlier in the gospel. John warned people not to rely merely on their external membership to the Jewish people (God's OT covenant people), but that in light of the coming judgment, they should repent, confess their sin, and be baptized as a symbol of the washing away of those sins. However, now, Jesus adds to this in commanding that they also be baptized into the Name (singular) of the Father, Son and Spirit. They are to be baptized into the Name of the One God - Yahweh - who is Father, Son and Spirit. This is more than just an expression of Trinitarian theology by our Lord, it is also a parallel to Aaron's priestly blessing over the people in the OT law from Numbers 6:22-27.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,

The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

(Numbers 6:22-26)

Note then verse 27, "So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them." Christ now, as the final and perfect High Priest, puts the Name of God upon His people.

If Christ's name is upon us - which it is as Christians (which literally means little Christs) - then we must go make disciples of everyone, by baptizing them likewise into the Name and teaching them to obey all He has commanded us. This is a long term view of discipleship which contrasts much of the short-cut techniques we find in today's evangelism programs.

STOP & PRAY: Pray Matthew 28:18-20

ASSIGNMENTS FOR SESSION 6

READ

For next week's session, please read:

- Acts 15:1-21
- Galatians 5:1-6
- The quote below:

Circumcision is a symbolic act that functions as a powerful image throughout the Bible. It was the sign of the covenant between God and Israel (Gen 17:11) whereby he had chosen them and given them the promise "[I will] be God to you and to your descendants after you" (Gen 17:7 RSV; cf. Deut 7:7-9).

Circumcision as Membership or Covenant. Before the establishment of a central sanctuary, circumcision served as the main symbol of God's covenant with Israel and as a symbol, in turn, of Israel's commitment to keep his covenant. Dire consequences attended those who failed to comply (Ex 4:24-26). It was the sine qua non of membership in the covenant community (Gen 17:14), perhaps even a test of loyalty (Gen 34). It could express a powerful recommitment (Josh 5:2-8). The Philistines alone among Israel's immediate neighbors did not practice circumcision. The automatic equation of foreskins and Philistines lies behind Saul's stipulation that David pay a bride price of one hundred foreskins (1 Sam 18:25). Because of the traditional hostility between them, "uncircumcised" came to be summary term for wicked and godless (e.g., Judg 15:18; 1 Sam 17:26; 2 Sam 1:20). Ezekiel extends the label to most of Israel's enemies in describing them as the dead nations who formerly terrorized the land (Ezek 32:17-32) but who will now be relegated to the recesses of Sheol without honor (Ezek 32:27) among the "uncircumcised."

(Ryken, L., Dictionary of biblical imagery, p. 148-149)

WATCH

- [Overview: Galatians](#)
- [Should we obey Old Testament Law?](#)

ASK

- Given the role of circumcision in the history and life of Israel (see primer on circumcision above), why do you think there was such a heated debate over circumcision in Acts 15?
- In Acts 15:5, how is circumcision related to the law of Moses?
- In Acts 15:7-11, what is the gist of Peter's argument?

Recommended Resource

[The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses](#) by Vern S. Poythress