

# MONDAY 02 May 2022 "Fulfilled & Finished"

## Matthew 5:17, 18

<sup>17</sup> "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. <sup>18</sup> 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.

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Regardless of where you live in the world, we are all familiar with leadership change in business as a new boss takes over, in education as a new teacher takes over. But perhaps the place where leadership change is most acutely felt is politics. Often when a new leader takes over, they feel the expectations of the people to make changes quickly and often they are radical changes. *Can you remember when that has happened where you live and how it affected you?*

Yesterday I left you sitting on a hillside near Capernaum, looking out over Lake Galilee with Matthew. Matthew, one of Jesus' disciples and he's remembering a great message Jesus preached to a huge crowd of people on this very hillside, several months before. Now that Passover/Easter weekend has happened, Matthew is reflecting on what we today call Jesus' "sermon on the mount". He's looking with fresh eyes at what Jesus said, through the lenses of the reality of Jesus' crucifixion, burial and resurrection which he had witnessed only a few weeks ago. *Have you noticed that sometimes profound things spoken take on much larger significance over time?* Today let's consider with Matthew, this remarkable statement Jesus made that day on this hillside: ***"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! I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."*** (Matt. 5:17,18)

Who Jesus was and why He had appeared on the public scene with such dramatic and sudden influence with the words He spoke, the miracles He did which drew such crowds... well, that was always a matter of public debate with great interest. *Who was this man? How could He do such miracles? And WHY? What was His ultimate objective?*

Now the reason this statement Jesus made that day was so significant is that as Jesus was doing His miracles and speaking His fresh perspective on God's truths for our human race, *some people were drawing two very erroneous conclusions.*

1. **First**, *they thought that Jesus was perhaps going to declare himself a king and with His miraculous powers lead a revolution and overthrow Roman authority and re-*

*establish the great kingdom of Israel of centuries past... the glory days of King David and King Solomon!*

As Jesus spoke of the **'kingdom of God'** (Mark 1:15) people *assumed* it would be a glorious kingdom, a powerful kingdom, and a kingdom which God Himself would protect as He did the Hebrew slaves in their exodus from Egypt so many centuries ago. They *assumed* Jerusalem would be the capital of this great kingdom and Jesus would become the sovereign over this kingdom. As they watched the miracles, they imagined in this Jesus kingdom sick people would be regularly healed, and blind people would be given sight, and poor people would be fed, and the fields would yield unbelievable harvests because Jesus could control the rain and sunshine. And of course, the soldiers in a 'Jesus Kingdom' would be invincible, empowered by His miraculous powers! It would be utopia... so people imagined!!

*2. The second great myth people started believing was that Jesus would do away with the Old Testament laws of Moses and the sacrificial system and all the things the Pharisees and other religious leaders kept telling the people to do and not do! People imagined Jesus might bring a whole new era of religious FREEDOM!*

In addition to the 10 Commandments God had given the people in the days of Moses, by the first century there were more than 600 'laws' good Jews were expected to obey! And those laws touched absolutely every aspect of life, including how to dress, what to eat and not eat, how to relate to married people and single people and widows and orphans! The laws gave guidance on business dealings and education of children and how to handle pregnancy and newborn babies and even dying people. In truth, most people felt this huge litany of laws were suffocating the people with restrictions. But, what if?? *People started to imagine that this miracle working Jesus might eliminate all the laws, declaring them to be old fashioned, out of date, irrelevant to their contemporary times!*

But what began as a few whispered 'what if' statements by some people mushroomed, during Jesus' brief time on the public stage, to the point that Matthew could now see these expectations of revolution were a major contributor to why many called for Jesus' death on that Passover weekend, only a few weeks ago. Matthew rubbed his forehead looking out at peaceful Lake Galilee and over there, the bustling, busy Capernaum market. He and Jesus had so many experiences together here. But... **unmet expectations!** Oh my, why is that so often the cause of frustration, anger, hostility and in Jesus' case, His rejection and eventual crucifixion?!

Let's remember my 'Walking with Jesus' friends, these early years of the 1st century were desperate times, especially for Jews living almost anywhere in the Roman Empire. The Caesar was god. His word was irrevocable law, anytime he spoke. His insatiable hunger for fame and power drove the great Roman military, the most powerful force on earth. Jews and their religion irritated Roman authorities. From the beginning, Jesus needed to be very careful that His words and miracles were not misunderstood, either by Roman authorities or Jewish religious leaders or the common people, or even His

own disciples. I'm sure Matthew wondered, how much did 'unmet expectations' contribute to Judas Iscariot, one of his fellow disciples, actually betraying Jesus to the mob and eventual death?

*So, what exactly was Jesus saying here on this hillside those several months ago?* What did Jesus want the people to understand when He said: **"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to FULFILL them!"** For centuries **"the Law"**, as God gave it to Moses and is recorded in Leviticus and Deuteronomy governed all of life for the Jews. Jewish children asked the same questions our kids have asked, and so did we when we were kids... *"WHY?" Why all the laws?* Perhaps parents then answered as parents have in all generations... *'because that's just the way it is!'* But adults in every generation asked the same questions too, and that answer simply wasn't enough.

So, here's the answer as written by the Apostle Paul: **"We know that whatever the law says, it says to those that are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God... through the law we become conscious of sin!"** (Romans 3:19,20) There it is! The purpose of all laws, in every country in the world, is to help us live mutually beneficial lives and to recognize when someone is doing something wrong that could harm us! *Yet for anything to be 'wrong', there must be a perfect standard of 'right'.* The laws of God, given through Moses, were designed to help people see how perfect God is and how imperfect we humans are, no matter how hard we try to be good. Jesus came not to abolish the laws but to BE the living, perfect example of someone who fulfilled all the law all the time! *He could live this way because He is God, He's God the Son, He's God incarnate!*

*But more, Jesus came to BE the way to sin forgiveness.* Every person through all time has had one common, frustrating problem. We all say and do things which are less than perfect and that separates us from Holy God. *God calls it sin. And every day we do more sin, piled on top of yesterday and last weeks' sin. There's no escape!* **Jesus came not only to live a perfect life, but to make a way for us to actually be FORGIVEN by God for the sins we have committed!** Of course, that required perfect Jesus to pay our sin death price, and that's what He accomplished in His crucifixion. That's why Matthew records the veil in the Temple was torn top to bottom when Jesus declared from the cross **"It is Finished"** and gave up His Spirit. **The full sin price was paid.** *The Law was fulfilled! Access directly to God was opened by Jesus for all of us!* In His resurrection Jesus victoriously defeated sin, Satan and death so we can live now, here on earth, with our sin forgiven, restored in relationship with Holy God, through Jesus, and have the assurance of eternal life in His Presence in heaven. *That is what Jesus meant when He said He had come to fulfill all the Law & Prophets!*

Look at Matthew, with a big smile on his face! It makes sense now... Jesus had to die & be resurrected, in order to fulfill it all and make it all possible for us humans mired inescapably in our sin! Perhaps Matthew jumped to his feet and shouted... *'Hallelujah,*

*thank you Jesus, thank you! Without YOU we would all be hopelessly mired in our sin and condemned to eternal separation from God. Thank you, Jesus, for fulfilling it all!*

Are you celebrating that my friends? And here's a song to help us as we celebrate Jesus!

**Today's Scripture is Matthew 5:17, 18.**