

The Relationship of Christ to the Old Testament

Matthew 5:17-18

NKJ Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."

Question #1: Why might some think that Jesus had come to destroy the Law or the Prophets?

Jesus seems to be anticipating the reaction to the six *antitheses* beginning in verse 21 and continuing throughout chapter five, each of which has a statement like, "You have heard it said ... but I say to you." Jesus is preparing to teach about and contradict a number of scribal and Pharisaic distortions of the Law, but they will see it as an attack on the Law itself.

Question #2: How does Jesus fulfill the Law and the Prophets? Three examples:

1. An Old Testament prophecy that foretold an aspect of the Messiah's coming which was fulfilled in Jesus: Matt. 1:22-23 fulfills Isa. 7:14.
2. An Old Testament event that foreshadowed an event in Jesus' life in which it finds its fulfillment: Matt. 2:14-15 fulfills Hos. 11:1.
3. The necessity of perfect obedience to God is fulfilled on our behalf by Jesus, as seen in His submission to John's baptism: Matt. 3:13-15 Jesus fulfills "all righteousness."

NKJ Matthew 5:18 "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled."

The *jot* (Greek *iota*) refers to the Hebrew *yod*, which is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet and "looks something like an apostrophe" (Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 94). The *tittle* (Greek *keraiá*) appears to refer to "the Hebrew *serif*, a tiny extension on some letters that distinguishes them from similar letters" (Hughes, p. 94). For example, ד (*dalet*) and כ (*kaf*).

A couple of example of things yet to be fulfilled:

1. Daniel's prophecy of the coming resurrection resurrection of the righteous and the wicked (Dan. 12:2; see also Acts 24:14-15 and 1 Thess. 4:15-18).
2. Isaiah's prophecy of a new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 66:2; see also 2 Pet. 3:13-14 and Rev. 21:1f).

As Kent Hughes rightly says:

We need to be people of both Testaments! Relying on the New Testament alone makes us one-legged believers. We need to spend time in the Old Testament and the New. That is one of the practical implications of Christ's attitude toward the Law and the Prophets. (*The sermon on the Mount*, p. 95)