

119

MINISTRIES

“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”

The Sermon on the Mount

During his sermon on the mount, Jesus, or his Hebrew name being Yeshua, could not have been clearer concerning His intentions regarding the Torah—that is, the Law of God. He said He did not come to abolish the Torah, but to fulfill it. He said that nothing from the Torah would pass away until heaven and earth passed away. He even said that His followers would be known by their observance of the least of God’s commandments in the Torah.

Here is what He said:

Matthew 5:17-19

“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.”

Again, Yeshua said, “Do not think.” He didn’t want there to be the slightest misunderstanding—He did *not* abolish or disparage *any* part of God’s Law. Not even the least of the commandments, such as the command to wear *tzitziyot*, is to be neglected by Yeshua’s followers.

(This passage is unpacked in greater depth in our teaching, [Heaven and Earth and the Law of God](#), if you’re interested.)

However, despite this very clear statement, some still suggest that certain parts of Yeshua’s Sermon on the Mount do exactly the opposite of what Yeshua just said! That is to say, it’s suggested that Yeshua disregards certain commandments and/or replaces them with new ones, *immediately after he said that he would do no such thing!*

Before we dive into some of the verses that this suggestion is based on, let’s review what Yeshua meant when He said He came to “fulfill” the Torah. This will give us the correct perspective with which to

approach the later verses in this Sermon.

First, the Greek word for “fulfill” is *pleroo*. While this word is often used in reference to the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, most of the time it actually doesn’t have to do with the traditional understanding of prophecy fulfillment—that is, completing a prediction. The Greek is much more broad than that narrow definition of “fulfill.” Much of the time it actually means to “perfect” or to “embody.”

We actually cover this in much more depth in our teaching, [Pleroo the Law](#), if you’re interested in learning more.

But for now, in short, Yeshua didn’t merely come to complete predictions contained in the Torah and Prophets. He came to embody the full extent of the Torah and Prophets. In his commentary on this passage in Matthew, Messianic scholar and teacher, J.K. McKee, puts it well:

When Yeshua came to “fulfill the Law,” it was with the expressed intention to demonstrate how valuable the Torah is for the instruction of the faithful, because His very sermon on the Mount is predicated upon the validity of Moses’ Teaching [...] Yeshua the Messiah, as the Word of God made manifest in the flesh (John 1:1), came to fulfill the Torah for humanity by embodying it to its fullest extent in His teachings, actions, and deeds.

-J.K. McKee, *The New Testament Validates Torah: Does the New Testament Really Do Away With the Law?* p. 91

In essence, to pleroo, or fulfill the Law, means to fully proclaim or fully make known the law of God.

For example, The Newman Greek Dictionary offers an understanding of pleroo to mean to make fully known, proclaim fully. As an example of how pleroo can fit such a definition, please compare the usage of pleroo in Romans 15:19 and Colossians 1:25.

This is to say that the Torah finds its full meaning and expression in Yeshua the Messiah. So for us, that means that the way to properly apply the Torah to our lives is according to Yeshua’s example and teachings.

Another point worth exploring before we go further is verse 20:

Matthew 5:20

“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

That is quite a shocking statement! Remember, this is in the context of even the least of God’s commandments being valid and binding on believers. Yeshua said that our righteousness, in regards to keeping God’s Torah, must surpass the scribes and Pharisees.

But how is that even possible? The Pharisees were known and respected for their righteousness expressed in their scrupulous observance of the Torah in accordance with their traditions. And the scribes were the “scholars” of Second Temple Judaism, formally trained and educated in all the matters of the Torah. Yeshua expects from us a level of righteousness that surpasses the highly respected and pious leaders of Israel? How is that even possible?

It isn't. Not on our own anyway. It's only possible when God writes His Torah on our hearts through the work of the Holy Spirit. It's only possible when we understand the proper application of the Torah as God intended it. That is Yeshua's point. The Pharisees did not interpret and apply the Torah, correctly. However, Yeshua *did* interpret and apply the Torah correctly. That is the basis of Yeshua's ministry and teachings—inaugurating the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34, and beginning the process of transforming God's people inwardly, which is then expressed outwardly:

Jeremiah 31:33

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord (YHWH): I will put my law (Torah) within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

That's how we surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees—by allowing God to transform our hearts, following a correct and deeper interpretation of the Torah exemplified by Yeshua. Throughout Yeshua's sermon, that's why you'll notice His focus is often on the deeper level of the commandment. Here is how scholar and theologian, Dr. Craig Keener, puts it:

The law limited sin, but Jesus' kingdom demands go deeper; the law said, “You shall not murder,” but Jesus demanded, “You shall not *want* to murder.”

-Dr. Craig Keener, NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible

We bring all this up because this is the focus of Yeshua's sermon. He was concerned, most of all, with matters of the heart as the underlying foundation of the Torah. Also, concerning the scribes and Pharisees, while they certainly had a high regard for all the minutia of God's Law, *they often neglected* the very heart of God's Law—that is, mercy, justice, and peace. More than anything else, it's these deeper aspects of God's Torah that Yeshua wishes to emphasize in His sermon.

Therefore, another way we surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is by not neglecting the weightier matters like the scribes and Pharisees did. Love, mercy, justice, and peace ought to be the foundation of our Torah observance, just like it was with Yeshua. That doesn't mean that we are free to neglect the “least” commandments as we focus on the weightier ones. No, Yeshua taught the exact opposite:

Matthew 23:23

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, **without neglecting the others.**”

With this framework set, we can now move forward and explore some specific passages in the Sermon on the Mount. We will address each passage in order. *When reading each passage, it should be noted how they often begin with the phrase “you have heard it said” not “it is written.” When Scripture says “it is written” it is referring to the written Scriptures. When it is said “you have heard it said,” Yeshua is referring to a teaching of the day that is supposed to be based off of the Scriptures.*

That first notable distinction is our first clue that Yeshua is not changing the Law of God, nor the Torah, but speaking out against common teachings of his day.

So, let's begin...

Matthew 5:21-22

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”

Some people might read these verses and think that Yeshua is “changing” the commandment concerning murder and adding an additional commandment. That, of course, would be a problem since, if He’s changing the commandment or adding additional commandments, He would be in violation of the Torah, which says not to add or take away (*Deuteronomy 4:2*).

But that way of thinking about this is much too simplistic. He wasn’t adding to or changing commandments. Just like other Jewish teachers of His day, Yeshua *interpreted* the commandments in the Torah and provided application, and He often brought out deeper principles from the commandments. The difference between Yeshua and other teachers of His day, however, is that Yeshua’s interpretations were always correct and inspired of God, since Yeshua is the Son of God.

That being said, it should be noted that Yeshua’s interpretation of God’s commandment against murder isn’t even new. While Yeshua certainly emphasized it to a great degree in the New Testament, the Old Testament has plenty to say about how we ought not be angry and hateful towards our brothers:

Psalms 37:8

“Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.”

Proverbs 29:22

“A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.”

Leviticus 19:17

“**You shall not hate your brother in your heart**, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him.”

So when it comes to the command not to murder, God’s deeper intention behind the commandment is that we would be the kind of people that would never even *want* to murder. Yeshua wasn’t “adding commandments” to God’s Law. He was drawing out the heart of the commandment so that it could be written on *our* hearts.

When our inward transformation is completed at the end of the age, and God’s Law is fully written on our hearts, we will be the kind of people who wouldn’t even think to insult our brother or harbor anger toward him in our hearts. We ought to strive to be those people even now. That is Yeshua’s point.

Let’s move on...

Matthew 5:27-28

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Again, Yeshua is drawing out God’s deeper intention behind the commandment here. And again, Yeshua’s interpretation of this commandment is not foreign to the Old Testament. Read through the warnings against adultery in Proverbs 6-7 where this same principle is outlined. Here’s a specific

example:

Proverbs 6:25

“Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes.”

So like the command against murder, Yeshua draws out the deeper principle behind the commandment against adultery. God doesn't want us to settle for just the bare minimum. He wants our righteousness to *surpass* the scribes and Pharisees. God wants us to not only be the kind of people who are faithful to our spouse physically, but in our hearts as well.

Moving forward...

Matthew 5:31-32

“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

There is a lot to unpack in this passage, and much of it is simply beyond the scope of this message. We will be releasing a teaching that deals specifically with the topic of divorce and remarriage in the near future.

But for now, we'll just say that Yeshua's statements are completely in line with the Torah's commandments regarding divorce and remarriage found in Deuteronomy 24.

We will also say that Yeshua was addressing a very specific cultural debate of his day, and He took a very strict stance *in response to* that debate. However, the broader questions regarding divorce and remarriage need to be understood holistically. That is to say, this passage in Matthew needs to be studied in light of everything else that the Bible says on this topic in order to get a complete picture of God's instructions regarding this matter.

In other words, we need to understand that Yeshua's statements weren't made in a vacuum. There is a historical and cultural context that needs to be considered in order to fully grasp this passage. Not only that, but the Bible discusses this issue in more detail in other places, and that needs to be considered as well.

For the purposes of our study, Yeshua was not changing or adding anything, and that's clear when we read the commandment in the Torah. Again, just like with the other passages we've explored, Yeshua was giving the interpretation and application of the commandment. The biblical ideal is that we would be the kind of people who wouldn't get divorced. We would be faithful to our spouse, love them, work through our problems, and refuse to discard them as if they were worthless.

This of course is completely in line with the Old Testament where God Himself says He “hates divorce” in Malachi 2:16 even though He allows it in Deuteronomy 24. Yeshua is emphasizing the higher, ideal standard of God expressed throughout the Scriptures.

Moving forward...

Matthew 5:33-37

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall

perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”

Once again, Yeshua’s statements are completely in line with the Torah commandments. If we make a vow or an oath, we are commanded to keep it according to the Torah:

Numbers 30:2

“If a man vows a vow to the Lord (YHWH), or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all the proceeds out of his mouth.”

In other words, we are to be people of integrity. That is really the deeper principle behind this commandment. Yeshua is merely saying that we should be so trustworthy that making an elaborate oath should be unnecessary because even our simple “yes” or “no” is trusted and reliable. That’s what it means to have this commandment written on our hearts.

Let’s continue...

Matthew 5:38-42

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.”

The law Yeshua is referring to here is known as the “law of retaliation,” which is found in a number of places in the Torah, such as Exodus 21:25, Leviticus 24:19, and Deuteronomy 19:21.

To quickly clear up a common misunderstanding, this law in the Torah has nothing to do with mutilation as a means of punishment. The application of the law has always been understood in the sense of equivalence. That is to say, the payment or restitution must be equal to the evaluation of the loss. For more on this, we would recommend our teaching, [Eye for an Eye](#).

In the first century, someone who slaps you could actually be taken to court and fined. So this is in the context of civil justice, which is clear by the next verse, which discusses what to do when someone sues you.

Yeshua doesn’t disregard the value of Torah justice and restitution. But He instructs us to deal with these situations with humility and with mercy. So rather than dragging someone to court and demanding payment, which we are certainly entitled to do if we’ve truly been wronged, Yeshua says that our righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Indeed, we must allow love, mercy, and forgiveness to be our ultimate guide in applying the Torah. That means trusting God and forgiving those who have taken advantage of us. Isn’t that what the Torah commands?

Leviticus 19:18

“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord (YHWH).”

Finally, let’s look at the last passage in this chapter of Matthew:

Matthew 5:43-44

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

For some, this is perhaps the most difficult passage in this chapter since it seems, at face value, that Yeshua is directly contradicting the Torah. He explicitly commands that we are to love our enemies! However, the Torah in fact does *not* command us to hate our enemies. Never. Not once. You won’t find it. So once again, this passage is perfectly in line with the Torah.

Yeshua is citing a passage we read earlier, Leviticus 19:18:

Leviticus 19:18

“...you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord (YHWH).”

So what’s going on? The Pharisees agreed that we ought to love our neighbor, but they applied a narrow definition to the word “neighbor” in order to exclude basically anyone they did not like. And their exclusive definition was the basis for their teaching that we ought to hate our enemies. The Pharisees did not actually teach that we should *hate* our neighbors, just as YHWH did not actually *hate* Esau.

In English, hate is a rather strong word; Hebraically speaking, to love someone incorporates action that demonstrates such love. To hate someone, you just don’t show love or perhaps just ignore them. This still did not make the Pharisees teaching correct, we are to show love to everyone not just to a select few that we narrowly define as our neighbor. Yeshua demands that we must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

In other words, the Pharisees are wrong in their interpretation of Leviticus 19:18. Our neighbor is not only people we like, but also people we don’t like, even our enemies. We are to love them too. And just as we’ve come to expect, this principle is outlined in the Torah:

Exodus 23:4-5

“If you meet **your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the donkey of **one who hates you** lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.**

If *our enemy* loses something, we are commanded to go out of our way to return it to him. If they need help, we are told that we must not ignore them, but stop and help them. Serving and helping are of course expressions of love, and God commands this toward our enemy. This is in the Torah!

Ironically, as much as the Pharisees were known for their strict observance of the Torah, they had neglected the very heart of the Torah thereby breaking the Torah. They twisted Leviticus 19:18 to exclude the very people that the Torah commands us to love. Yeshua just corrected their misinterpretation, and brought out the original intent of the Father. It’s by following Yeshua’s interpretation that our righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees.

In conclusion, it's clear that Yeshua's Sermon on the Mount is not in conflict with the Torah whatsoever. Yeshua's goal was to draw out the deeper spiritual principles behind the commandments of the Torah, which were always intended by God to be written on our hearts. He also corrects the cultural and religious misunderstandings of the Torah of His day. But not once does He contradict or change the Torah.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom!

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries

WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net

TWITTER: [www.twitter.com/119Ministries#](https://twitter.com/119Ministries#)