

The Red-Letter Words of Yeshua ~ Part 25

Sermon on the Mount ~ Part E

We continue our study of the **Sermon in the Mount**, beginning in Mattityahu 5:17.

Yeshua Came to Fulfill the Law ~ Part 1

17 "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete."

This is an essential verse for us to wrap our minds around. Briefly, **Yeshua** states that He wants to make the meaning of the **Torah** and the **Prophets** complete. David Stern provides some further insight for us:

The Hebrew word "**Torah**," literally "**teaching, doctrine**," is rendered in both the Septuagint and the **Brit Hadashah** by the Greek word "**nomos**," which means "**law**." Greek has had a more direct and pervasive influence on English and other modern languages than Hebrew has, and this is why in most languages, one speaks of the "**Law**" of Moshe rather than the "**Teaching**" of Moshe. It is also part of the reason why the **Torah** has mistakenly come to be thought of by **Christians** as legalistic (see Romans 3:20b, Galatians 3:23b).

In **Judaism**, the word **Torah** may mean:

1. **Chumash** (the Pentateuch, the five books of Moshe); or
2. That plus the Prophets and the Writings, i.e., the **Tanakh** (known by **Christians** as the **Old Testament**; see 4:4–10; or
3. That plus the **Oral Torah**, which includes the **Talmud** and other legal materials; or
4. That plus all religious instruction from the rabbis, including ethical and aggadic (homiletical) materials.

Here it means the first of these, since "**the Prophets**" are mentioned separately.

The word "**Prophets**," capitalized, refers to the second of the three main parts of the **Tanakh** (both Major and Minor). When the **Tanakh** prophets as persons are referred to, the word is not capitalized; "**prophet**" in the singular is never capitalized. By mentioning both the **Torah** and the **Prophets**, **Yeshua** says that He has not come to modify or replace **God's Word**, the **Tanakh**. Compare Luke 24:44–45.

The Greek word for "**to complete**" is "**plêrôsai**," literally, "**to fill**"; the usual rendering here, however, is "**to fulfill**." **Replacement theology**, which wrongly teaches that the **Church** has replaced the **Jews** as **God's** people, misunderstands this verse in two ways.

First, **Yeshua's "fulfilling" the Torah** means that it is unnecessary for people to fulfill it now. But there is no logic to the proposition that **Yeshua's** obeying the **Torah** does away with our need to obey it. In fact, **Sha'ul**, whose object in his letter to the Romans is to foster "**the obedience that comes from trusting**" in **Yeshua**, teaches that such trusting does not abolish **Torah** but confirms it (Romans 1:5, 3:31).

Second, with an identical lack of logic, **Yeshua's "fulfilling" the Prophets** is thought to imply that no prophecies from the **Tanakh** remain for the **Jews**. But the **Hebrew Bible's** promises to the **Jews** are not abolished in the name of being "**fulfilled in Yeshua**." Instead, fulfillment in **Yeshua** is an added assurance that everything **God** has promised the **Jews** will yet come to pass (see 2 Corinthians 1:20).

It is true that **Yeshua** kept the **Torah** perfectly and fulfilled predictions of the **Prophets**, but that is not the point here. **Yeshua** did not come to abolish but "**to make full**" (**plêrôsai**) the meaning of what the **Torah** and the ethical demands of the **Prophets** require. Thus he came **to complete** our understanding of **the Torah and the Prophets** to try more effectively to be and do what they say to be and do.

We will learn in verses 18–20 three ways in which the **Torah and the Prophets** remain necessary, applicable, and in force. The remainder of chapter 5 gives six specific cases in which **Yeshua** explains the fuller spiritual meaning of points in the **Jewish Law**. In fact, this verse states the theme and plan of the entire **Sermon on the Mount**. **Yeshua** completes, makes fuller, the understanding of His **talmidim** concerning the **Torah and the Prophets** so that they can more fully express what being **God's** people is all about. ¹

Well, we didn't get very far in our study of this complete passage, but we'll pick it up next time around.

¹⁸ Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah - not until everything that must happen has happened. ¹⁹ So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the Torah-teachers and P'rushim, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven! ~ Mattityahu 5:17-20.

In our next post, we continue to explore the **Sermon on the Mount** from **Mattityahu's Gospel**.

¹ Stern, D. H. (1996). Jewish New Testament Commentary.