

## Till All Is Fulfilled

by Hendrik Joubert

In **Matthew 5:17** Jesus makes the statement: "***Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. In the next verse He adds: 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.***"

In these statements there are words, or concepts which place a time limit upon both ***the Law*** and ***the Prophets***. ***Fulfill the Prophets*** this is easily understood; once all the specific details of the foretelling have been met, the prophecy is ***fulfilled***. ***Fulfilled*** prophecy forms a powerful body of *evidence*, thereby *fulfilling* its ultimate purpose – proving that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. conveys the idea of completion, or the accomplishment of a stated goal. In the case of

In **verse 17** there is a clear statement of purpose where two options are contrasted; to ***destroy***, or to ***fulfill***. Both options imply bringing to an end ***the Law*** and ***the Prophets***; however one involves failure, while the other the accomplishment of the stated purpose. Jesus came to accomplish a specific goal, to ***fulfill*** the requirements of both ***the Law*** and ***the Prophets***.

In **verse 18** we find a firm statement of condition introduced by the familiar, solemn introduction: ***...verily I say unto you...*** This is followed by a saying similar to that stated in **Matthew 24:35**: ***Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*** Here in **Matthew 5** it is added as a condition, ***heaven and earth*** will not ***pass away until*** Jesus accomplished the purpose He came for. He came to ***fulfill the Law*** and ***the Prophets***, and absolutely nothing will cause Him to fail.

***Until*** is another term which limits time, and in combination with ***fulfill*** points to the conditions which identifies the *point in time* when the end would come. Again it is easy to understand that once prophecy has been fulfilled one no longer looks for its fulfillment. It is *accomplished*, or *finished*. Notice how many times phrases such as ***so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled*** (**John 17:12**) are used in the New Testament concerning the actions of, and circumstances surrounding the Lord, explaining the purpose for His coming. Once prophecy is ***fulfilled***, it is complete and becomes part of the record of evidence.

What about ***the Law***? Various passages help us understand its purpose, and some explicitly state the time at which it was taken out of the way. (**Colossians 2:16**) God made a promise to Abraham: ***In your seed all the families of the earth would be blessed, because you obeyed My voice.*** (**Genesis 22:18**) Israel thought this meant all others would be blessed through them as a nation, often boasting that they were the ***seed of Abraham***. (**John 8:31ff**) ***Four hundred and thirty years*** after making this promise, God ***added the Law*** to teach them that they were sinners, just as they considered the other nations to be. They too should therefore look forward to the blessing which is fulfilled through the *one* seed, which is Christ. (**Galatians 3:16ff**) In this way the Law was to serve as a *teacher*, leading them to Christ. (**Galatians 3:24**)

Instead they thought ***the Law*** was a confirmation of God's approval of them. (**Romans 2:17ff**) God, through the apostle, asks: ***You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach***

**yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? (Romans 2:21)** In **verse 13** he explained that merely receiving (*hear*) the law does not justify one, you have to **do** it in order to avoid condemnation. In the next chapter he explains: **Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20)**

Paul explains the operation and purpose of the law as *teacher*, using himself as an example. **I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died;... (Romans 7:9)** As an innocent child he was alive **apart from the law**, which came centuries before he was born. When he reached the age where he could understand the law, the commandment came for him (**Nehemiah 8:2**) and he found himself violating it. **Sin became alive and he died**. What they therefore thought justified them, in fact caused their spiritual death. The law was given to help them reach the following state of awareness as stated by the apostle: O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? With the obvious answer: <sup>25</sup> I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (**Romans 7:24-25**)

In the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ **the righteousness of God**, i.e. the way by which a sinner may become righteous, is **revealed** based upon faith in God, and in His Son. (**Romans 1:16-17**) One who is able to deserve salvation by perfection – as Jesus was able to – would have reason to boast. However, no one is able to emulate the example set by Jesus and therefore depends upon the grace of God for second chance. This salvation is not based upon meritorious works (works by which one may earn something) but rather works which require faith. **Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. (Romans 3:27)** The rules to be obeyed in the **law of faith** are rules which have no merit in and of itself, but rather requires faith in God and in what He says.

Just as the Jews confused the instructions concerning the promise and the law, many today apply the statements concerning the law given through Moses to encourage disobedience to **the law of faith**. James deals with this in very candid language. **But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? (James 2:20)** Using Abraham as example he explains that faith is made alive by the acts of obedience which serves one purpose only, and that is to demonstrate faith in God and in what He says. The simple act by which the sinner is to make an appeal to God for a clear conscience (**1Peter 3:21**), similar to Naaman having to ask for the cleansing of his flesh (**2Kings 5:10-15**), is rejected based upon statements made concerning **the Law**.