

Lesson 5

Jesus, the Fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets

Group Icebreakers:

Ask the group the following questions.

- Name some of the various types of law. (Laws of nature, principles, parental, governmental, and God’s laws)
- Who makes the laws? (Those who are in authority)
- Why do you think we have laws? (To establish boundaries, provide guidelines, social acceptance, safety of citizens, and promote godliness)
- Have you ever broken a law and if so what was the outcome?
- Why are there consequences to breaking laws? (To punish or to discipline inappropriate behavior)

Introduction:

Most people are not raised in the Jewish faith. To understand what Jesus is talking about and how the disciples heard Him requires some background information. Jesus introduces His next subject in the Sermon on Mount by talking about the Law and the Prophets. Let’s begin there.

The Bible as we know it today contains sixty-six books which are divided into two parts. The two parts are known as the Old and New Testaments. The New Testament consists of twenty-seven books. It was developed from a collection of various writings occurring within the seventy-year period after Jesus’ death. In 397 AD, the Council of Carthage approved the New Testament as Scripture.

The Old Testament consists of thirty-nine books. It was developed from a collection of various writings occurring within an eleven hundred-year period beginning with Moses. These thirty-nine books were the Scriptures at the time of Jesus. When any New Testament writer speaks of Scripture he is referring to only to the Old Testament.

Jews divide the Scriptures into three parts. The Scriptures are called the **TaNaKh**, which is an acronym formed from the first letters of the three parts.

1. **T**orah is the first part and means “The Law” or “Teaching”. The Torah consists of the Five Books of Moses or Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy).
2. **N**’vi’im is the second part and means “The Prophets”. This part contains the Historical Books (Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings), the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) and the Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).
3. **K**’tuvim is the third division and means “The Writings”. Included in The Writings are the Five Scrolls (Ecclesiastes, Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs, and Lamentations) and the Other Writings (1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, and Daniel).

The Torah¹ (“The Law” or “Teaching”) contains six hundred thirteen laws. There are three hundred sixty-five negative ones. According to Jewish rabbis these supposedly correspond to the

¹ **The Torah.** See article on page 87 (“[Law is Hitting the Mark while Sin is Missing the Mark](#)”) for a full explanation.

number of veins in the body or days in a year. There are two hundred forty-eight positive laws, which correspond to the number of bones in the body. The purpose of bones is to provide structure for the body. The veins carry blood and “*life is in the blood.*” Together God’s laws provide life and structure for the body or the way a person should live daily or 365 days a year. These laws fall into two broad categories: ceremonial (laws towards God) and civil (laws towards one another). The Ten Commandments summarize all these laws and are found in Exodus 20:1-17.

When Moses descended from Mount Sinai he delivered The Ten Commandments written on two tablets of stone. Five commandments were written on each tablet. **(See two tablet layout at the end of this lesson)** The first five laws deal with man’s relationship to God and the second five with man’s relationship to one another. Each set of five is listed in descending order from the greatest to the least. The idea being that if a person broke the least of the commandments he was on a path that would lead to the breaking of the greatest commandment.

In the first set of five, the fifth commandment is “Honor your father and mother.” If a person breaks that commandment it leads to breaking the first commandment, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” The thought goes like this. If a person will not honor his parents whom God has placed over him, then he will not honor God either because he is self-willed and consider himself to be god.

In the second set of five, the tenth commandment is “You shall not covet anything that belongs to another

If a person breaks that commandment it leads to breaking the sixth commandment, “You shall not murder”. The thought goes like this. When a person covets he will stop at nothing to get it. A current example of this concept would be a bank robber, who kills someone during a holdup. He starts by coveting something that is not his, and then steals what he wants and finally winds up murdering someone to get it.

The Ten Commandments can be further summarized by just two commandments. When Jesus was confronted with the question as to which was the great commandment in the Law, Jesus replied by quoting two Scriptures: Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. “*And He said to him, 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.*”

Reading the Scripture:

Jesus, the Fulfillment of the Law and Prophets
The Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 5:17-20

Scripture excerpts from “Follow Me: A Message from God”

Do not think that I came to abolish **the Law or the Prophets**²; I did not come to **abolish**,³ but

² **the Law or the Prophets** – Jesus was referring to everything that His Father had established (the Law) and everything that His Father wanted brought to pass (the Prophets). The Law simply defined is the *teaching and instruction* of G-d, but more than a divinely ordained behavior pattern for life on earth: it also describes G-d’s own “behavior pattern,” the manner in which He chooses to relate to His creation. When we order our lives after Torah’s directives, we are not only fulfilling G-d’s will—we are also emulating His “behavior,” translating the

to **fulfill**.⁴ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then **annuls**⁵ one of the least of these **commandments**,⁶ and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever **keeps**⁷ and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your **righteousness**⁸ surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

divine relationship with creation into human/physical terms. In the words of the *rabbis*, “G-d’s manner is not like the manner of flesh and blood. The manner of flesh and blood is that he instructs others to do, but does not do himself; G-d, however, what He Himself does, that is what He tells *his people* to do and observe.” (ex. 1 John 1:3-6, “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”)

³ **Abolish** – (*I did not*) loosen thoroughly, (*I did not*) break up, (*I did not*) overthrow, (*I did not*) destroy (both literally and metaphorically), (*I did not*) unyoke, unharness a carriage horse or pack animal. Nor did I metaphorically **overthrow, render vain, deprive of success, bring to naught** God’s institutions, forms of government, laws. (*Synonyms: deprive of force, annul, abrogate, discard.*)

⁴ **Fulfill** – to be obeyed (*walked out*) as it should be (ex. Matthew 3:13-15, “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’ ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, ‘Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he consented.” (ex. Ezekiel 36:25-27, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And **I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules,**” and Galatians 5:25, “*If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*”)

⁵ **Annul (abrogate, relaxes)** – declare invalid (an official agreement, decision, or result), to “loosen” (literally or figuratively). (*Synonyms: subvert (undermine the power and authority of (an established system or institution) – i.e. declare (a marriage) to have had no legal existence.*). (**Abrogate**) repeal or do away with (a law, right, or formal agreement) or evade (a responsibility or duty). (*Synonyms: repudiate, revoke, repeal, rescind, overturn, overrule, override, do away with, annul, break off, invalidate, nullify, void, negate, dissolve, veto, declare null and void, discontinue*) (ex. Romans 3:31, “*Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law,*” Romans 2:12, “. . . *all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law,*” Romans 2:13, “*For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.*”)

⁶ **Parallel Biblical Law definitions** – ex. Matthew 28:20, “teaching them to **observe** all the **I have commanded** you,” **observe**: I keep, guard, observe, keep watch over, continue keeping guard over, preserve, and **I have commanded**: to order, command to be done, enjoin (to direct or impose by authoritative order or with urgent admonition (gentle or friendly reproof, counsel or warning against fault or oversight)); ex. Deuteronomy 30:11-20, “If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his **statutes** and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you,” **statutes**: Divine law was first given to us encapsulated in the Ten Commandments, which were etched by the hand of God in two tablets of stone . . . When something is written, the substance of the letters that express it – the ink – remains a separate entity from the substance upon which they have been set – the parchment. On the other hand, letters engraved in stone are forged in it: the words are stone and the stone is words . . . By the same token, there is an aspect of Torah that is “inked” on our soul; we understand it, our emotions are roused by it; it becomes our “lifestyle” or even our “personality”; but it remains something additional to ourselves. But there is a dimension of Torah that is **statutes**, engrave in our being. There is a dimension of Torah which expresses a bond with G-d that is the very essence of a believers soul (ex. Exodus 31:18, Exodus 32:16, Jeremiah 31:33, 2 Corinthians 3:3-9).

⁷ **Keeps (does, to do)** – to make or do (I make, manufacture, construct; I do, act, cause.). (**To Do**) to follow some method in expressing by deeds the feelings and thoughts of the mind; universally, describing the mode of action: to act rightly, to do the law, meet its demands, (to do) the things which the law commands. (*Synonyms: abide, agree, appoint, be, bear, cause, commit without any delay, exercise, fulfil, gain, hold, keep, observe, perform, provide, purpose, secure, tarry, work, yield.*)

⁸ **Righteousness** – properly, *judicial approval (the verdict of approval)*; in the NT, *the approval of God* (“divine approval”); refers to *what is deemed right by the Lord* (after His examination), i.e. what is *approved in His eyes*; **the state of him who is such as he ought to be, righteousness; the condition acceptable to God; walking in**

The Command:

- ❖ Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.

Group Discussion:

1. Many in the Church today are saying that Christians are no longer under law but grace. What do you understand this statement to mean?

The Lesson:

Jesus doesn't want His disciples to think that He is doing away with everything they have been taught in order to establish His own religion. He isn't doing that! But like parents towards their children He wants them to gain in wisdom and understanding.

When Jesus spoke concerning the Law and the Prophets He was talking about more than just a few laws and prophecies. He was talking about the sum total of all that was written in Scripture. Jesus was referring to everything that His father had established (the Law) and everything that His father wanted brought to pass (the Prophets). And Jesus declared that He alone would fulfill them!

After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to two of His disciples while they were on the road to Emmaus. *“And beginning with Moses (“Torah” or “The Law” or “Teaching”) and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures”*.⁹ No ordinary man could perfectly fulfill all that was written, only the one of whom the Scriptures testified, the Word of God, Himself, Jesus.

The gospel according to the Apostle John opens with this testimony of Jesus. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being”*.¹⁰ John's words are pregnant with meaning, but difficult to comprehend. Let's try to get a grip on them.

Do you remember how the Bible starts? *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* Do you remember how they were created? God spoke them into existence. By His word everything came into existence. According to John, Jesus is God's Word. You might say that Jesus is the creative force behind every one of God's thoughts and plans. He brings things to pass! God created everything through His Son, the Word of God.

The Scriptures are the revealed ideas and plans of our Father in heaven; it is up to the Word of God to bring them to pass. For nothing was created apart from Him. We know the Word of God by the name He was given at birth, Jesus or Yashua or Joshua. The meaning of the name is “I Am Salvation” or “God's Salvation”. The people of God were also to refer to the Word of God as

the way of righteousness equivalent to an upright, righteous, man (ex. 2 Timothy 3:16, *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for **training in righteousness**.”*); **to do righteousness, to live uprightly** (ex. 1 John 2:29, *“If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who **practices righteousness** has been born of him,”* 1 John 3:7, *“Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever **practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous,**”* 1 John 3:10, *“By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: **whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God,** nor is the one who does not love his brother,”* 1 Peter 2:24, *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and **live to righteousness.**”*).

⁹ Luke 24:27

¹⁰ John 1:1-3

Immanuel or “God With Us”. However, the Word of God is more than just Jesus or Immanuel. He is the Son of God, the creator of all things and one with God, His Father. He is the expression of all that God is.

Since the Word of God and the Father are one, how can they be divided? They can’t. The Word of God is always in harmony with the Father and can do nothing except His will. In John 4:34 Jesus tells His disciples, *“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.”*

This concept of oneness, unity and harmony was passed on to man as we were created in the image of God. And since we were created in His image, God does not want us to lie. A lie destroys harmony, unity and oneness. Jesus cautioned His disciples to do what they said they were going to do when He told them, *“Let your yes be yes, and your no be no”*.¹¹ When a person does not do what he says he is going to do it tarnishes the image of God. There is no oneness, unity or harmony in that person because His words are not in line with his actions.

As Jesus continues speaking He assures His disciples that the Law will not pass away until everything in it is fulfilled. All the commandments in The Law are spiritual, holy and good. Think of it this way, “Which of the laws are not good for people?” If the laws are good, then God, who is good and gave them, will not remove them.

Jesus goes on to say, *“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”* Did you notice something interesting in His statement? A person can be in the kingdom of heaven and not keep the commandments and even teach others to do the same thing. The keeping or not keeping of the commandments is not the requirement of remaining in the kingdom of heaven. The observance of them only determines a person’s stature within the kingdom of heaven.¹²

Jesus’ next statement is a blockbuster! *“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.* Entrance into the kingdom of heaven cannot be gained by keeping the laws and commandments. Jesus said righteousness greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees, who tried to keep, each law perfectly, was required. What is this righteousness?

The Apostle Paul in Romans 4:3 and 9 answers the question. *“For what does the Scripture say? ‘AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.’”* Abraham not only believed that God existed but in what God said. Abraham believed the Word of God. Jesus is the Word of God. Abraham trusted God and His Word, the Father and the Son. This trust, belief or confidence is called faith. *“Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.”*

The Point of the Lesson:

¹¹ Matthew 5:37

¹² The term “kingdom of heaven” is used throughout Matthew’s gospel and means the “kingdom of God.” Many Jewish people as a pious observance will not use the name “God” so use an evasive synonym in its place. The kingdom of God simply means the rule of God or God ruling over His people.

Jesus Christ, fulfills all the requirements of the Law and the Prophets. An individual does not gain entrance into the kingdom of heaven by fulfilling those requirements, but by a belief in and dependence on Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

Application:

At the next group meeting report any occasion when you were motivated by love to do something for God or another.

The Ten Commandments

Tablet 1 - Love of God

1

“You shall have no other gods before Me.”

2

“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing loving kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

3

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.”

4

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

5

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.”

Tablet 2 - Love of Neighbor

6

“You shall not murder.”

7

“You shall not commit adultery.”

8

“You shall not steal.”

9

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

10

“You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”