Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Christ and the Law, Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 5:18
Code: 2210

Matthew 5:17-20 is our text for tonight. Again, we come to this intensely rich and magnificent text. I don't know if we've ever had a more wonderful time than we've had studying the Sermon on the Mount. I want you to know that it thrills my heart to see a full church of folks who have come together again to study His Word. In studying Matthew 5, we are looking at this great, first sermon that the Lord gives us in the chronology of the New Testament. It is magnificent, wondrous, all that any sermon could ever be. In fact, I don't know how it would be possible to have stood on that hillside, listening to what He said, and to have taken it in at one sitting.

My wife always says to me, "Honey, you always have so much material. If you cut your material in half, it wouldn't be so hard to absorb." I think about Jesus, who must have stood there and given the whole Sermon on the Mount in one straight shot. It's enough to boggle the mind; it takes me one whole hour to get through one verse of this three-chapter sermon. These incredible statements by our Lord need so much background and filling in. Words cannot express how dynamic and far-reaching this particular text is, Matthew 5:17-20.

Our Lord says, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 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. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men to do so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

We find, for our understanding and interest tonight, that this passage sets forth the absolute base, the rock bed foundation for truth, which is the Word of God. The law of God, as it is stated in verse 17, will not pass away, and cannot be broken even in its least commandment. The absolute base for truth in the world is the Word of God. It is the Scripture, the static, abiding, objective source of all truth.

Obviously, then, this passage becomes a primary one in establishing one of the basic dogmas of the Christian faith, and that is that the Bible is the Word of God. You don't have to be very alert to know that today, the Bible has become a battleground. Liberal theology has for years argued that the Bible is not inspired by God, but that it is man commenting - some kind of a religious man, to be sure - but

a religious man commenting on his experience with God as he sees it, but that we cannot really trust that it is God Himself. That is the front door, open, flagrant, head-on attack on the Bible.

The rear attack on the Bible today comes from those who say that what really defines truth is experience, so they interpret the Bible by their experience. The sideways attack comes along and says, "The Bible isn't enough; we need to add philosophy, psychology, human wisdom," and so forth, so the Bible gets it from the side, the back, and the front. The constant shot at the Scripture, in our day, has deafened the real truth of Scripture in the ears of many, many people who should know better.

In fact, it is amazing how that, when I speak out in certain circles and say that I believe absolutely in the inerrant Word of God, it becomes something that people chuckle about because it's rather antiquated and out-of-date. But this Scripture here tells us the number one reason why I think we should believe the Bible is true. It is the number one reason why we believe it is the rock bed foundation of truth and why we can trust it absolutely, and it is simply because Jesus said that it is absolute truth. Jesus said that it didn't lie, and that not one jot or tittle would ever pass from it until all was fulfilled, and frankly, folks, the word of Christ about the Bible is good enough for me. I don't know of any higher authority than that.

So here, at the very outset of Jesus' ministry, early in His Sermon on the Mount, He gives His view of the Old Testament, the law of God, the Scripture. By inference, incidentally, it even carries on to His view of the New Testament. It is a powerful statement. Let me give you a little review of what we looked at last week.

The historical setting is interesting, and you need to know why He says what He says. He was different than the other teachers in Israel, and He knew it and they knew it. He didn't preach and teach like the scribes and Pharisees did; He was meek and humble and they were proud. He broke with rabbinic traditions, whereas they scrupulously observed the rabbinic traditions. He preached grace and mercy, and all they preached was law and judgment. He didn't identify with any of the sects of His day, not the Pharisees, Sadducees, the scribes, the zealots, the Essenes, not with anyone. He spoke with absolute authority and didn't have to always be quoting some rabbinical source. He befriended publicans and sinners instead of turning His back on them, as the other religious leaders did. He seemingly was never concerned with outward regulations; He was always concerned with the heart.

Because of these very obvious differences, the people's question was this: "Is He truly an Old Testament prophet? Does He really believe the Old Testament? Is He one who is tearing down the old standards to set up some new standard? Is He a radical who wants to overthrow the Old Testament, the old law of God, the traditions?" That's the historical setting in which this text occurs. They wanted to know about this new prophet, and what they wanted to know was, "What is His view

of Scripture? What is His view of the Old Testament? How does He feel about Moses?" In fact, they asked Him that, in His lifetime, many times.

So summing up, at this time, the people were wondering, "Does this teacher believe in the sacred Scripture? Does this teacher believe in the Old Testament? Does He believe in the law of God?" His answer is a ringing, "Yes!" In fact, He takes the law of God from the barnacles of their tradition, which had corrupted it and dragged it down to a human level, and sweeps it clean and lifts it up to an altitude it hadn't been at in centuries. He gave a greater commitment to the Scripture than the most scrupulous, pious scribe or Pharisee ever thought of giving. He held the Old Testament higher than they ever did. So that's the historical setting; He wants them to know that this is no big change which will eliminate God's law. This is in continuity with God's Old Testament.

There is also a Scriptural context here in the chapter that you need to see. Jesus is preaching about His Kingdom here, He is announcing that He is a King, and that is Matthew's purpose in the whole gospel of Matthew. He has told us about the birth of the King, the homage of the King, the lineage of the King, the forerunner of the King, the prophecies fulfilled by the King, and what amounts to the victory of the King over the usurper, Satan, in His temptation. The whole setting has been established, and in chapter 5 comes the manifesto of the King. He declares the character of His Kingdom, and it begins in verses 3-12.

He says, "Here are the characteristics that should be true of people in My Kingdom," and He gives all of the Beatitudes. He is saying, "It is character that causes people to enter My Kingdom. It is what they are inside, before we concern ourselves with what they do on the outside." Consequently, He runs head-on into the legalistic externalism of the Jewish religion of that day.

He wants to establish the character of His Kingdom. First of all, it's internal (verses 3-12). Then it becomes external as the testimony goes out (verses 13-16) and He says that we are salt and light. So this internal character is manifest externally in the world. Then He says that living in His Kingdom is not only a matter of character, of testimony, but a matter of commitment to obedience to God's inviolable law (verses 17-20). So what He is saying is, "A true Kingdom son truly obeys God's laws." He said it this way in another place, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. Whosoever keeps My word loves Me. If you continue in My word, then you are My real disciple."

In other words, Jesus was always affirming that true Kingdom character and true Kingdom testimony will be predicated on a commitment to obedience to the law of God. It is no different in this day. We cannot survive with a Christianity that is not biblical, a quasi-biblical Christianity. We cannot manifest the true virtue of Kingdom sons unless we are committed to the absolute authority of the Word of God. That is the message that needs to be preached.

People in the Kingdom that belongs to Christ have a high, exalted view of Scripture; they hold Scripture above everything else. They would not desire at all to deny it, to disobey it. Even the Apostle Paul, struggling with the old habits of his life, says that, "In my heart, I delight in Thy law." The Psalmist says, "Oh how I love Thy law." That is true of anyone in God's Kingdom that really has Kingdom character and wants to manifest Kingdom testimony - there will have to be a commitment to the absolute, inviolable authority of the Word of God.

This is a message that you've heard at Grace Church a lot. It is no less important now than it has ever been; in fact, if anything, it is more important when the Bible is being attacked in a non-subtle way, and in a very subtle way. People will say, "That's only your interpretation," or, "We take the spirit of the Bible, not the exact words," and on and on. But the Word is the key to our righteousness, beloved. We cannot manifest righteousness unless we know the rules, unless we know the principles and live the life. Let me tell you, if you live a righteous life in the world because you obey the Word of God, then and only then will you have an effective testimony in the world.

As I've said to you before, the problem in the world today is not that the church doesn't articulate very well, it's that the church doesn't live separated from the world very well. We don't have a believable testimony because we don't abide by the righteous standards that God has set forth. If we were the people the Beatitudes talk about, if we were those who were poor in spirit, mourning, if we were meek and constantly hungering and thirsting after righteousness; if we were merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, willing to be persecuted and falsely accused; if we were those kinds of people, we would be the salt and the light of the world. That kind of righteousness is only born out of a commitment to the Word of God.

It says it in II Timothy 3:16, it couldn't say it any more clearly, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for every good work." I'll say it again: righteousness, perfection, maturity, being able to do good works is based upon Scripture and a commitment to the authoritative Word of God.

So our Lord here, in the context, is laying down a basic principle: if you're going to live a Kingdom life and know righteousness that is going to be a testimony to the world, a glory to God, and a blessing to you, then you must predicate it on an absolute commitment to the authority of the Word of God. That's why we say, at Grace Church, that what we want to do is to be obedient, above all things, to the Word of God, no matter what that costs us.

There are four things in these four verses as we break it down into an outline. There are four aspects of the Lord's view of God's law; this is the Lord looking at the law of God, and He sees four things. He sees the preeminence of the law, the permanence of the law, the pertinence of the law, and the purpose of the law. The preeminence, the permanence, the pertinence, and the purpose of the law.

These are all factors of Christ's statements regarding God's word. It is preeminent, permanent, pertinent, and purposeful.

Last time, we looked at the preeminence of God's law. The word 'preeminence' means 'uniqueness,' it is the fact that it is the highest, noblest, best. It is preeminent. In verse 17, I believe, as we saw last time, that Jesus gives three reasons why it is preeminent, why the Bible has no equal, why it stands alone, why it is absolutely authoritative. Reason number one, it is authored by God. "Think not that I have come to destroy the law." He doesn't even need to designate any more than a definite article, He just says, "The law," because the law, everyone knew, was God's law. It was God's law, authored by God, that made it preeminent. When God writes something, it is preeminent. When He says something, it is preeminent. That is the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, implied by what He said, as we saw last time. He really has in mind the law and the prophets, the whole Old Testament, with its moral, judicial, and ceremonial elements.

So He says it is preeminent because it is authored by God. Secondly, it is preeminent because it is affirmed by the prophets. "Think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets." You'll remember how the prophets took the original law of God and repeated it and placed it upon the people as binding and indicted the people when they disobeyed it. They applied it to their lives, reinforced it, reiterated it, preached it. So it is preeminent because God chose His prophets, who were nothing but His mouth in the world, to continue to reiterate and preach and reinforce and apply His law.

Finally, and most marvelous of all, the law of God is preeminent not only because it was authored by God and affirmed by the prophets, but most of all, because it was accomplished in Jesus Christ. At the end of verse 17, Jesus says, "I came not to destroy but to fulfill," and we went into the incredible reality of what that statement means last week. Christ said, "I didn't come to nullify the law, or abrogate the law, or lower the standard, or drop the standard, or set aside God's law. I came to fulfill God's law." We saw last time that that meant every single element of God's law.

You'll remember that in John 5:39, the Lord said, "Search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. They are they which testify of Me." In other words, He says, "I am the fulfillment of the whole Old Testament." He was the fulfillment of all of it, in one way or another.

In Hebrews 10:7, Christ says, "Then said I, 'Lo, I come in the volume of the book. It is written of me.'" People, the whole Old Testament pointed to Christ; He was the moral fulfillment in that He alone kept totally the law of God. He was the judicial fulfillment in that He became the judge of a rejecting Israel. He was the ceremonial fulfillment in that every type, analoogy, symbol and picture found its ultimate fulfillment in Him. He fulfilled the law morally, ceremonially, and judicially. He was also the fulfillment of all the prophets; the prophets spoke of Him, as Peter said, "They spoke of Christ, who was to come." He is the fulfillment of all of it, and that's why it is preeminent.

Let me tell you something, this Book is preeminent because it tells about Jesus Christ, and since He is the preeminent one, the Apostle Paul says, "The book about Him must be the preeminent book." The law and the prophets were not set aside, they were fulfilled. When He fulfilled all righteousness, when He set God's law in perfect order in His own life, when He set Israel aside and called out His church, and all of the judicial features of Israel's identity passed out of existence - "There is no more clean and unclean," Acts 10 says, "No more Sabbath day," Romans 14 says - all of those things that were identified with judicial law in Israel came to an end when He called out His church. That was fulfilled.

He fulfilled the sacrificial law by dying on the cross. The veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom, and the whole sacrificial, ceremonial system came to a screeching halt and was over, the whole thing. Because of what He did, He made it possible for us to fulfill the law through His power, according to Romans 8:4.

There is nothing wrong with God's law. The Bible says it is, "Holy, just, and good." The psalmist was right to say, "Oh, how I love Thy law," but it had to be fulfilled. All of those pictures needed a fulfillment. All of the types needed an anti-type. All of the prophecies needed a Messiah to fulfill them. All the pictures had to have a reality; someone had to be the perfect person and fulfill God's moral law. Someone had to come and be the perfect sacrifice. Someone had to come as the judge, and graft in o the stock of blessing a new branch. Christ did it all and fulfilled it all.

Let me just add this footnote to our review of last week. The moral law was behind everything; behind the judicial law and ceremonial law is the moral law of God. Those are standards of right and wrong in terms of behavior and attitude. Behind the judicial law, even, was the moral law. Behind the ceremonial law was the moral law.

I don't know how I can say this simply so that you'll understand it, but I'll try it this way. The moral law is nothing but the expression of God's character. It is the expression of God's nature. To help people to understand the moral law, God developed, in Israel, the ceremonial law, to help them focus on His character. He developed the judicial law to help them focus on His character, but the judicial part of it and the ceremonial part of it were simply outgrowths of the moral law which is unchanging. The judicial element has passed away since Israel has been set aside for the time. The ceremonial element has passed away since Christ has performed the final sacrifice. But behind all of that was God's moral law, and in no way has God ever changed His moral standards.

In fact, the Jews had lowered them something awful, hadn't they? Jesus lifted them back up where they belonged. You see, the Jews had felt they were going to be alright if they just didn't commit adultery, but Jesus put God's law where it belonged and said, "No, no. God's law says you shouldn't even look on a woman to lust after her or you have committed adultery in your heart." The Jews

thought it would be alright if they didn't murder anyone, but Jesus took God's moral law and put it up there where it was equal to His character. He said, "No, not only should you not murder, but you shouldn't even think a thought of hatred toward someone, or you've committed murder in your heart. Let's get God's law where His character is, back up at His level." So the standard isn't lower.

The ceremonies are gone, the judicial identification of Israel as a separate nation, God's people, is gone for the time as He works through the church. But the moral law stands in the background.

As people learn about this, they say, "What's the basis of the moral law?" We always say the Ten Commandments. So people say, "What about the Sabbath? Is the Sabbath a moral issue? How did the Sabbath get stuck in with all those moral things?" Let me help you with that. The Sabbath was part of the moral law, there is no question about that. So people say, "If it's a part of that original moral law, and God's character is revealed in His moral law, does it still stand?"

Well, let me tell you something interesting. There are elements in all those categories that are still around - ceremonial, judicial, and moral - and there are some elements that have been fulfilled, that are no longer observed. For example, we do not accept today the judicial laws of Israel. We don't wear the kind of clothes they were required to wear for their unique identity. We don't keep kosher; we eat ham and things that would have been forbidden for them, and that's OK, because Acts 10 says, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat. You can have whatever you want." Of course, Peter said, "I can't take this, Lord. I've been kosher all my life; this change is too fast. Now I'm supposed to have a meal with Cornelius? Yikes, I can't handle it!"

Nonetheless, God did change some of the judicial law; He set it aside, it was no longer uniquely identifying Israel in a separate way. So there were elements of the judicial law that were set aside when Christ came and founded the church. Israel's ultimate act of rejection set them aside, and the church was begun, and some of those laws were set aside.

However, there are parts of that judicial law that are still binding. For example, God's high standard for marriage in Israel hasn't changed. God still desires honesty, purity, and wholesomeness among those that are married. God still desires monogamy and not polygamy. God still has the same feeling toward marriage, remarriage, divorce, and those things. In other words, when some factor of Israel's judicial law touched a timeless, diving principle, it still goes on, even today. So there are elements of it; when the Old Testament talks about marriage and divorce in Israel, it touches on God's standards and we find it repeated in the New Testament. So parts of the judicial law have been extended to all believing people.

Take the ceremonial law: we don't kill rams, goats, lambs, and turtledoves, but did you know that we do some of the ceremonies today that Israel did? Israel used to praise God, and we do that. Israel used to pray to God, and we did that tonight. Israel used to sing songs, and we do that. Israel had a

choir and orchestra, and we have all of that. You see, there are still elements of the ceremonial expression of Israel that are still around, so we shouldn't be shocked to see those things. That's why you can't go into the Bible and just whack everything up; you have to be very careful. There are elements of the law that were fulfilled and elements that were binding, and they extend beyond the identity of Israel.

Now, hang on and I'll tell you what I'm trying to get at. Just as there are elements of the judicial law that are still around, and elements of the ceremonial worship of Israel that are still around, why should we be so shocked if there was an element which was part of the moral law which isn't around? If God can leave a part of some, He can also cancel parts of others. What do I mean? I mean I believe the Sabbath has passed away. Why? It is the one of the Ten Commandments never repeated in the New Testament; every other one is repeated in the New Testament. We know that the early church met on the first day of the week. It's in the book of Acts; they started out meeting every day, but it finally got down to a meeting on the first day of the week. Why did this happen? Because the Sabbath had been fulfilled.

Remember, the commandment said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." But people get that messed up. The idea was not to not work, the idea was to be holy. Do you see that? In the Sabbath law, God was not saying, "Please don't work," or else everyone who takes Sunday off is fulfilling God's law. No. The idea wasn't not working, the idea was being holy. The concentration on holiness was aided by not being involved in earthly, gainful pursuits. But the idea was to be holy.

So, the point is this: God wanted people holy. Let me tell you something wonderful; when Jesus died on the cross and you put your faith in Him, instantly, believing in Him, you were made holy. The Spirit of God took up residence in you and something happens in the New Testament that never happened in the Old Testament, and that is that there is the imputed righteousness of Christ given instantly to you. The Spirit of God took up residence in your life and total righteousness was imputed to you, you became holy before God. So in a real sense, the Sabbath concept, the picture of the Sabbath of the Old Testament is fulfilled in the righteousness and holiness that is granted to you in Christ.

Look with me at Hebrews 3:8 and I'll show you how this works. "Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years." He's talking about Israel wandering around from Kadesh-Barnea, traveling around in the wilderness, unable to enter the Promised Land because of unbelief. They hardened their hearts and put God to the test, so He says, "Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My Sabbath.'" It's obvious from this text that the Sabbath God saw is a figure, a representative of Canaan Land. He says, "These unfaithful, unbelieving, disobedient, hard-hearted Israelites are not going to enter My Sabbath. They will not enter My rest."

Remember the spies went into the land, and came back and said, "It's not an easy thing to do in there, but it's a wonderful land, and God can give us the victory," but nobody believed them. So verse 19 says they couldn't enter in because of unbelief. What could they not enter? The fulfillment of rest. Look at chapter 4. "Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it." This is the term 'Sabbath,' the idea of Sabbath.

First, in the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath starts out as a day. During the wandering in the wilderness, Sabbath becomes a land. In the book of Hebrews, Sabbath becomes a relationship. Already, in Hebrews 4:1, entering into Sabbath is entering into Christ, "For unto us was the gospel preached," now we're into the Gospel, "As well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that Sabbath rest." Now do you see the point? The Sabbath was a picture; it became a land, and finally, it becomes a relationship. When you enter into Jesus Christ, you enter into Sabbath. From then on, 24 hours a day, all your life, you are fulfilling the law of the Sabbath; you are made holy. That's why the New Testament never repeats the original picture from Exodus 20, because the reality is fulfilled in Christ.

"There is a rest," says Hebrews 4:9, "For the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His." In other words, there is the spiritual application. For the people of God who have entered into rest, we have ceased. We have fulfilled the Sabbath and its spiritual significance, as God did when He rested. So Hebrews 3-4 indicate that we did enter rest through faith, and Sabbath is fulfilled.

Some say we should worship on Saturday. Look, I worship every day. I don't need one day to remember to keep holy; I don't need just one day to be holy in a week. I can be holy every day because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. I have entered into my rest; there is no longer any need for the symbol because I have the reality. That's why we don't meet on Saturday. So why do we meet on Sunday? Because we celebrate the Resurrection - the Lord rose from the dead on the first day, and that's how the early church did it, so that's how we're doing it. But frankly, it wouldn't make a bit of difference if we met on Tuesday. Or any other day. And if we keep getting the same crowds we've been getting, we may be meeting every day of the week - who knows?

Some say, "Oh, but it isn't Sunday!" Don't worry about it. Listen, you've entered into your rest, so every day is holy unto the Lord. Every day. It's just wonderful to meet on Sunday, because every time we meet, we can commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So Jesus said the law is preeminent because it is authored by God, because it is affirmed by the prophets, because it was accomplished in Him. He has accomplished our Sabbath. So factors in the moral, judicial, and ceremonial law have changed because of Christ; He fulfilled some, but some are

yet to be fulfilled. Some of the prophecies haven't been fulfilled yet, have they? Some are still future. But He says in verse 18, "Not one jot or tittle will pass from the law until every single bit of it is fulfilled."

That brings us to the second point, which is the permanence of the law. I didn't mean to spend so long on the other one, but I hope it was helpful to you. The Jews were looking for a more lax system. They couldn't keep up with the scribes and Pharisees so they were hoping someone would come and drop the standards a little bit so they could make it. Jesus lifts the standard even higher, then He just wipes out the Pharisees and scribes for their hypocritical approach to God's law.

What they were doing was substituting human tradition for the law of God, so Jesus came in and wiped the human tradition away, just cleaned it out. The judicial law was fulfilled for the most part, as was the ceremonial law. Even some of the moral law, like the Sabbath, was fulfilled. But God's righteous standards never changed, so He says, just so they don't ever forget it, "Nothing is going to pass until it's all fulfilled."

As I look at verse 18, it seems to me that it almost bursts its seams. I don't even know where to begin, it's just so rich. I tried 100 different ways to come up with an outline, but finally threw them all in the wastebasket and said, "I'll just say what's in my heart." So if you can't tell where I'm going, hang in there. Let's look at the verse.

"For Amen I say unto you," and the idea of adding the 'amen,' and John usually adds a double amen, it means a solemn, sober, authoritative kind of introduction. It generally refers to the idea of something true, something faithful, so it is frequently translated 'verily,' which means 'truly, absolutely.' I like to use the word 'absolutely' because I like the word absolutes in a day of relatives. So we could say, "For absolutely I say unto you." This is a strong assertion, a very tough-minded statement, an unmitigating claim, a serious claim on the part of Christ, a solemn truth.

He says this, "Till heaven and earth pass." That's another absolute. That's almost a linguistic anachronism, to make something absolute. It's like saying, "I cross my heart and hope to die, stick a needle in my eye," or whatever we say to make something absolute. "Till heaven and earth pass," that is a strong introductory phrase. He is saying, "The word of God will be here until the universe passes out of its present existence." Someday it will, frankly; someday the universe will pass out of its present existence, the Bible is clear about that. At that time, we'll enter the new Heaven and new Earth, and won't need a Bible anymore, because we'll be living righteousness, won't we? We won't need the guidebook anymore, because we'll be like Jesus Christ. But until that time, nothing changes.

Psalm 102:25 says, "Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a

cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end." Do you see that the psalmist is comparing the eternal God with the passing universe? He is saying that the universe will come to an end.

We begin to see it happen in Revelation as we read about the Tribulation and see the stars fall out of Heaven like the untimely shaking of a fig tree - the figs all fall. Then we see the Heavens roll up like a scroll, like a shade rolling back. All of a sudden, blackness covers the universe, and God begins to act in judgment. The final result of all of God's coming in the day of the Lord is the establishing of a new Heaven and a new Earth; the passing away of the whole universe as we understand it today.

Isaiah spoke about it in Isaiah 34:4. "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved," that's the stars. "And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; all their host shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine, and as fruit falling from a fig tree." That's the imagery that John uses in the book of Revelation. In Isaiah 51:6, we find the same idea. "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, the earth will grow old like a garment, and those who dwell in it will die in like manner; but My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will not be abolished."

In Matthew 24:35, the same message is given. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." In II Peter 3:7, it says, "But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. All these things will be dissolved." In other words, there is coming an end to the universe, but until the universe ends and we enter an eternal state, this Word shall abide. What a great statements!

It's a timeless Book. People have the stupid audacity to say, "What does a 2,000-year-old book have to say today?" Everything! It's authored by the eternal, living God. It is His eternal, living Word. These words are alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to divide soul and spirit, joints and marrow. They discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. So until Heaven and Earth pass, this Word will abide; every type will be fulfilled, every prophecy will be realized, every law will be verified.

Jesus can't get more specific than He does in the next statement. "One jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the law." When I was a little kid, I thought, "That's wonderful. But what in the world are those?" Well, I can help a little bit. 'Jot' is really a representation of a Hebrew letter. In Hebrew, there is a letter called 'yodh' and it is similar to an apostrophe. That's all, an apostrophe, but it's a letter that is pronounced as a 'y.' A yodhis the smallest letter. In the Greek language, it's the little tiny iota, obviously coming from the same kind of root. Greek students call it a iotasubscript, where you

take an 'i' out of a word and for certain reasons, in the Greek language, they drop it under another letter, so it appears as a little, tiny apostrophe. So what He's saying is, "Not the tiniest Hebrew letter or Greek letter will pass from this law until it is all fulfilled."

People say, "Well, we don't have to believe in an inerrant, infallible Bible, that every word is inspired by God, do we?" Yes. In fact, every yodhand every iota. When God gave His Word in the original manuscripts, every jot was inspired by Him.

Then He talks about a 'tittle.' This is interesting. I don't know how to tell you what it is other than saying it's a keraia, which is a very small item. I guess the best illustration would be the difference between an 'E' and an 'F.' An 'F' has two lines running perpendicular to each other, and an 'E' has three. That last, little, tiny line makes the difference between an 'E' and an 'F,' and that's what Jesus is saying. That little tiny keraia, that little, tiny serif that is on the tag-end of a letter that separates, if you will, a betfrom a kaf. A kaflooks like a 'C,' and a betlooks the same way, only it has a tiny line on the edge of it. He's saying, "Not one, little, tiny serif that distinguishes a betfrom a kafwill be removed from my law until the whole thing is fulfilled. I didn't come to set it aside; not on your life."

Is this still God's authoritative Word, His holy Word for us? You'd better believe it. Jesus fulfilled part of it, but God's moral law has never been set aside, and it will all be there until it's fulfilled and Heaven and Earth pass away. Conversely, Heaven and Earth won't pass away until every single element in this Book is fulfilled.

It's exciting to know the history of the world, isn't it? To know where it's going and how it's going to end up. Jesus takes His position on the side of verbal, inerrant inspiration, and I don't know how anyone who is a Bible-believing Christian and understands the authority of Jesus Christ could take any other position.

As He was speaking then, some parts of the Old Testament had already been fulfilled, like His incarnation and birth. Other parts were being fulfilled, such as His prophetic ministry. Some parts were yet to be fulfilled, such as His death, resurrection, and final return in glory. But nothing was going to change from this book and its binding character on the heart of man until every single jot and tittle was fulfilled.

By the way, 'fulfilled' here is a different word than in verse 17. Here it means 'come to pass.' It's all going to come to pass. Dr. Arthur Pink writes, "Everything in the law must be fulfilled, not only its prefigurations and prophecies, but its precepts and penalty. Fulfilled first personally and vicariously by and upon the Surety. Fulfilled second and evangelically in and by His people. Fulfilled third in the doom of the wicked who shall experience its awful curse forever and ever. Instead of Christ's being opposed to the law of God, He came here to magnify it, to render it honorable, and rather than His teachings being subversive of the law, they confirmed and enforced it."

This brings up a vital subject with which I'll close tonight, and that is Christ's view of Scripture. To me, this is the only argument about the Bible. I only want to know one thing. You ask me if the Bible is true, just tell me what Jesus believed, because I'll believe what He believed. He's God, the single authority of the universe. All authority was committed to Him; whatever He speaks is absolute truth. You tell me what Jesus believed about the Bible and I'll tell you what I believe about the Bible, because I'm lining up with Him. That's why it's so important to know His view of Scripture, and Jesus gives His view right here. He says not one jot or tittle will pass from the law until all comes to pass.

As you study the Bible, you see how Jesus believed in the Scripture. Sixty-four times, He referred to the Old Testament always as authoritative. He said, "Scripture cannot be broken." The Scripture cannot be broken. Let me show you how much of a commitment He had to Scripture.

Look at Matthew 22:23. The Sadducees came to Him with a question. They didn't believe in the resurrection, so they didn't believe in future life. They said, "Teacher, Moses said that if a man dies, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife and raise up offspring for his brother." In other words, if you make a commitment to a woman and you die, who will take care of the woman? The brother moves in and takes over.

"Now there were with us seven brothers. The first died after he had married, and having no offspring, left his wife to his brother." So there was no son to care for her, so the brother cared for her. The second brother married her, didn't have any children, and he died. So this happens until the seventh brother marries her, and by that time, I'd say, "Let me out of this deal; there is something wrong here if seven men in a row have died!" But anyway, last of all the woman died, which was peace for everyone, I suppose. Verse 28 says, "Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be?" They thought they really had him, and were thinking, "Let's see how He gets out of this one!"

He said, "Jesus answered and said to them, "You err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven." Angels don't marry, and there is no marriage after death. "But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." He quotes to them from the Old Testament; His whole argument is based upon one tense: I am.

What He is saying is, "You must believe in resurrection because God said I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were dead." He was still their God; it was an 'I am' relationship, not an 'I was.' Tell me you can tamper with the language; you can't! Jesus bases His entire argument on just that one tense to show that they're still alive. "I am their God and they're still alive!" That's reason enough to believe in resurrection.

You know, He was divine, He was God. He placed His words and the Old Testament as equals. In our text, He said, "Heaven and Earth will pass away before God's law passes away." In Matthew 24, He said, "Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away." In other words, He equated His words with the Word of God as being absolutely authoritative and divine. As you study the New Testament, you find that Jesus supported the Old Testament. Scholars say the Old Testament is full of myths; I remember reading a book about Jonah, and the author said he wasn't swallowed by a fish. He said there was a dinghy tied to the boat and the name of the dinghy was 'The Great Fish' and all the writer is trying to say is that they put Jonah in the dinghy. Of course, who ever heard of a dinghy that vomited? I don't know how he gets out of that, but that was his story.

You read all that kind of stuff in seminary, but as you read the New Testament, you find that Jesus confirms the Old Testament. The Old Testament isn't a myth. Do you know that Jesus confirmed the Old Testament truths again and again? People say Adam and Eve was a myth, it's just a symbolic story they teach in seminary, yet Jesus confirmed the Old Testament events. He confirmed the identities of Adam and Eve. Jesus confirmed the Creation account and the standard of marriage as God designed it in the Garden in Matthew 19. He confirmed the murder of Abel in Luke 11. He confirmed Noah and the Flood in Matthew 24. He confirmed Abraham and his faith in John 8. He confirmed Sodom and Lot in Luke 17. He confirmed the call and the law of Moses in Mark 12. He confirmed the manna from Heaven in John 6. He confirmed the brazen serpent in John 3, etcetera.

He established in His own mind and in the hearing of those who listened a reaffirmation of the authority and accuracy of the Old Testament. So we believe in the Old Testament because, in His very words, Jesus depended on it. From one whole statement in answer to the Sadducees, He depended on a tense in the Hebrew verb. He placed His own words as divine words, an equivalent of Scripture, thereby guaranteeing their divinity as well. He confirmed the events of the Old Testament.

I'll add another thing; He established that the Scripture was sufficient to save. In fact, you'll remember when He was talking about Lazarus and the rich man. When the rich man asks for someone to be sent back to tell his brothers (Luke 16), God says that if they didn't believe Moses and the prophets, they won't believe someone risen from the dead. In other words, the Old Testament is sufficient to save someone from entering that place of torment. He believed in the sufficiency of the Old Testament.

He also believed that Scripture would free men from error. I read it earlier, He said, "You err, not knowing the Scriptures." In Mark 12:24, the same story is recorded. He said, "Do you not err because you don't know the Scriptures?" In other words, our Lord depended on a tense in the Hebrew language for an interpretation. Jesus said that everything that He saw in the Old Testament was true as it was recorded. He established the sufficiency of Scripture to save, and that it would free men from error. So He established His view of Scripture.

By the way, in Matthew 4, He even used Scripture in His own defense. When Satan came to him three times and tempted Him in three areas, each time, Jesus answered by saying, "It is written." He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, and 6:3. He didn't have to quote the Bible, He could have made up new verses. What was He doing? He was letting us in on a pattern of how to deal with temptation: by Scripture. It is the authoritative, powerful word of God.

I recently heard a preacher say, "One thing I've learned is that when you get in the pulpit, you have to communicate without using the Bible because it turns people off. So I've spent a long time developing the ability to communicate to people without using the Bible. I started out in my ministry saying, 'This verse says this, and this verse says this,' but I realized it wouldn't get me anywhere. Now I say it in my own way, and people accept it." You know, his words are impotent, but God's Word is powerful. He's missed it. When Jesus dealt with Satan, He didn't do it with His own words, which would have been divine. He quoted Scripture.

After His temptation, our Lord went to Nazareth. When He got there and began His formal ministry, He went to the synagogue. The first thing He did when He got there was to open a Bible, an Old Testament text, and this is what He read: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." Then He closed the Book, gave it to the minister, and sat down.

You know what He did the first time He ever gave a sermon in His own town? He didn't do anything but read Isaiah 61:1-2 and sat down, and they were dumbfounded, smitten. The Word of God was powerful. Some time later in His ministry, John the Baptist's disciples came to Him and asked Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" So He quoted Isaiah all over again to them. He depended on the Scriptures. When He went in to cleanse the temple in Mark 11, He did it in the authority of the Old Testament Scripture. When He went to die on the cross, He did it because the Old Testament Scripture said He had to die.

The point is this: if you're going to accept Jesus Christ and believe that He's God, you'd better listen to what He says about the Bible. What He says about it is that it's binding on you and you'd better live according to its principles. If you want to be a Kingdom citizen and have Kingdom character and give a Kingdom testimony, you'll have to obey the manifesto of the King. God hasn't set aside His standards. Our dear Lord is the theme of all the Scripture. His authority is absolute.

One day, the disciples were there with Him and the crowd had left. He asked them if they, too, would go away (John 6). Peter said to Him, "To whom shall we go? Only You have the words of eternal life." Do you believe that? I believe that everything Jesus said is authoritative, and if He said this

Scripture is binding and true, that's enough for me. He is the absolute authority.

People say, "There are errors in the Bible, though." That presents a three-fold possibility. If there are errors in the Old Testament or in the Scripture, then number one, there were errors, but didn't know it. That means He's ignorant, and if He is ignorant, He's not God, right? Or secondly, there are errors and He did know it. What does that mean? He's dishonest. The third possibility is that there are no errors. If He knew it and hid it, He was a hypocrite. If He didn't know it, He wasn't God.

The other day a reporter asked me, "Do you believe the Bible is literally true?" I said, "Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, believed it to be literally true, and that's good enough for me." What did it mean to that audience that day on the hillside in Galilee? It meant there was a King there, and a Kingdom, and those in that Kingdom had a certain kind of character. They were unique in the world, not like the dark, decadent society around them, and they would be characterized by a genuine, internal righteousness. That righteousness would be based on an inviolable, unchanging law of God called the holy Scripture, not the phony righteousness of Pharisaic externalism based on the traditions of men. That's essentially what He was saying.

What does it means to us? It means what Isaiah 1:20 says, "The mouth of the Lord has spoken it." If the mouth of the Lord has spoken it, it's good enough for me. So what do we do about it?

Five things. Number one, if not one jot or tittle is passing, then you should receive it as the Word of God. James 1:21 says, "Receive the ingrafted word." If it is the Word of God, you'd better receive it because of the infinite majesty of the author, because of Christ's authoritative statements about it, because of the price God paid to get it to you, because it's the only standard of truth, joy, salvation, and blessing, because it's the only necessary, essential voice to listen to, and you'd better receive it because not to receive it will bring judgment.

Secondly, honor it. God says, "I have exalted My Word above My Name." Psalm 119:103 says, "How sweet are Thy words." Do you have an attitude of love and honor toward this Book, or do you always chafe under it? Is it always threatening you, or do you lovingly submit to the sweetness of its words?

Spurgeon said, "They called George Fox a Quaker. Why? Because when he spoke, he would quake exceedingly through the force of the truth he so thoroughly apprehended. Martin Luther, who never feared the face of a man, yet declared that when he stood up to preach, he often felt his knees knock together under a sense of great responsibility. It were better to break stones on a road than to be a preacher unless God had given the Holy Spirit to sustain him.

"The heart and soul of a man who speaks for God will know no ease, for he hears in his ears that warning admonition, 'If the watchman warn them not, they perish. But their blood will I require at the

watchman's hands.'" Spurgeon was saying that we had better honor and commit ourselves to this Book if it's true. He went on to say, "Is the infallible revelation of the infallible Jehovah to be moderated, shaped, toned down to the fancies and fashions of the hour? God forbid us if we ever alter His Word!"

You'd better honor it and get it up there where it belongs. Thirdly, study it. II Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to show yourselves approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth." Study the Word. Jeremiah says, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them." Take it in and make it your own, allowing, as Colossians 3:16 says, "The word of Christ to dwell in you richly."

Fourthly, defend it. Jude 3 says, "Earnestly contend for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints." This uses the word epagonizomai, which is an intense kind of agonizing. I go through that all the time, defending the faith, fighting for the integrity of the Word of God and its purity and authority against the onslaughts of those who would undermine it.

Spurgeon says, "The everlasting Gospel is worth preaching. Even if one stood on a burning fagot and addressed the crowd from a pulpit of flames, the truths revealed in Scripture are worth living for and dying for. I count myself thrice happy to bear reproach for the sake of the faith. It is an honor of which I feel myself to be unworthy and yet most truly I can say the words of our hymn, 'Shall I, to soothe the unholy throng, soften thy truths, and smooth my tongue, to gain earth's gilded toys, or flee the cross, endured, my God, by thee? The love of Christ doth me constrain to seek the wandering souls of men; with cries, entreaties, tears to save, to snatch them from the fiery wave. My life, my blood I here present, if for Thy truth they may be spent. Fulfill Thy sovereign counsel, Lord, Thy will be done, Thy Name adored.'"

Lastly, proclaim it. Preach it. II Timothy 4:2 says, "Preach the Word." Spurgeon said, "I cannot speak out my whole heart on this theme which is so dear to me, that I would stir you all up to be instant in season and out of season telling out the Gospel message. Especially repeat such a word as this, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' Whisper it in the ear of the sick, shout it in the corner of the streets, write it on your tablet, send it forth from the press. Everywhere, let this be your great motive and warrant you preach the Gospel because the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. Waft, waft you winds, His story, and you, ye waters roll, till like a sea of glory it spreads from pole to pole."

Beloved, aren't you glad we don't follow cunningly devised fables? Let's pray.

Father, thank You again tonight for Your Word. Help us to be willing to receive it, to honor it, to study it, to defend it, to proclaim it for One who is so worthy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).