



Jesus said:

- *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to **fulfil** them. (Matthew 5:17)*

## **What Jesus did not come for?**

In this text Jesus says first of all what He did **not** come for. He did **not** come to **abolish** 'the Law or the Prophets'.

### **'Abolish', here is the translation of the Greek 'kataluo':**

Which, according to OLB, means:

- to allow to separate
- to overthrow, to bring down
- to deprive of power, to cancel, to abolish

The Greek dictionary translates it (among other things) as:

- to unclamp, to dissolve, to destroy
- to abrogate, to abolish

'Kataluo' is usually translated as **'to break off'** in other Bible texts.

By **'the Law and the Prophets'** Jesus means the commandments and the doctrine of the Old Testament, as is apparent from His statements:

- *Do to others what you would have them do to you, **for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.** (Matthew 7:12)*
- ***All the Law and the Prophets** hang on these two commandments (to love God and your neighbour as yourself). (Matthew 22:40)*

It is clear, therefore, that Jesus did **not** come to invalidate, to abolish, or to disintegrate the laws God gave in the Old Testament.

He warns:

- *Anyone who **sets aside** one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but **whoever practices and teaches these commands** will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19)*

**'Set aside'** in this verse is the translation of the Greek **'luo'**, which, according to the OLB, is translated as:

- to release someone (or something) that was bound
- to release from laws that have binding force
- to release what was together or built together
- to dissolve into parts, to destroy

Jesus sees 'the Law and the Prophets' as one great whole and declares that no-one may loosen even the smallest part thereof to proceed with that alone. Whoever does so, destroys the law. All these laws and rules are bound to each other inseparably.



## Jesus came to fulfil the law.

Jesus said: *I have not come to abolish them but to **fulfil** them.*

**'Fulfil'** is the translation of the Greek **'plero-oo'**.

The OLB translates this as:

- to make full, to replenish, to ensure that there is abundance
- to make complete

This word is to be found in the following texts and elsewhere:

- *When it (the fishing net) **was full**, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. (Matthew 13:48)*
- *Go ahead, then, and **complete** what your ancestors started! (Matthew 23:32)*
- *Every valley shall **be filled in**, ... (Luke 3:5)*
- *... the disciples **were filled** with joy and with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:52)*
- *I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God **in its fullness**. (Colossians 1:25)*

**Jesus has 'fulfilled', 'given content to' the law, 'made it full', 'caused it to come reach its full force' through His life and teaching.**

## Practically.

For Jesus, the laws whereby God made His will known are **the** norm that must be taught to the people.

To understand what Jesus meant, when He said that He came to cause 'the Law and the Prophets' to achieve their full potential, these laws from the Old Testament could be compared to the Highway Code.

Every road-user is regarded as being acquainted with this code.

Everyone is stimulated to keep to these rules, under pressure of a possible fine each time a traffic rule is broken.

### **But what is the purpose of the Highway Code?**

Not, as some people think, that the Highway Code restricts freedom in traffic, or is a means whereby the government can impose as many traffic fines as possible.

**No, the Highway Code is written as a set of rules to regulate traffic smoothly**, so that every road-user can be as safe as possible in traffic.

Likewise, the laws from the Old Testament are not a restriction of freedom. Neither does God want to punish people as much as possible.

However, as a loving Father, He has given directives - His handbook for a good life in relationship with Him and in a healthy society.



## **'The Law and the Prophets' in the life of a Christian.**

In the study 'Conversion'<sup>1</sup> we explain that the sins of whoever has taken Jesus Christ into his heart, are forgiven.

As a result of conversion, one will therefore no longer live in fear of transgressing the Law.

In terms of the Highway Code this means that one does not have to be frightened of being fined, for whoever believes in Jesus Christ no longer receives a 'traffic fine' when transgressing 'the Highway Code', the Law.

### **Practically.**

The Highway Code states that one must stop at a red light.

Everyone who does not risks being flashed and the fine being delivered to his home automatically.

Suppose someone comes to a red light in the middle of the night. Because there is no other car to be seen on the horizon, the person simply drives on.

The flash does its work automatically and the fine will follow.

This functions in a different manner in spiritual life.

Anyone who is in Jesus Christ realises that this 'red light' is meant to allow traffic to move smoothly. If there is absolutely no traffic, that red light is not applicable and one may simply drive on. No fine will follow, for there is no more flash.

This does not mean, however, that a Christian can simply ignore all God's laws, the whole 'Highway Code', because Jesus Christ wrought forgiveness of sins by His death on the cross of Golgotha, and there are no more fines imposed.

However, when a Christian has understood that the 'Highway Code' is intended to regulate the traffic smoothly, he will keep to the rules and behave in a loving manner towards the other 'road-users'.

Nobody lives alone on an island, but in a society, where there is a lot of 'traffic on the road'.

Whoever has understood the law's intention will realise that it is very sensible to keep the law and to 'stop for a red light'.

Even though he will no longer be fined, a Christian who transgresses the law will nevertheless not experience the fullness in his life that Jesus wants to give him. He also risks causing a 'traffic accident' involving not only himself, but other 'road-users' as well, possibly with a fatal outcome.

### **Back to the teaching of Jesus.**

In the study 'Discipleship'<sup>2</sup> we explain that someone only receives the full life when he grants Jesus authority over his life. At that moment the Holy Spirit pours the **love of God** out into his heart, **as a result of which he receives the laws of God in his heart.**

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1 Study: Conversion.

2 Study: Discipleship (1).



Paul writes that:

- ... *God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5)*

And Peter warns:

- *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been **born again**, ... through the living and enduring word of God. (1 Peter 1:22-23)*

A life driven by the love of and for God goes much deeper than keeping the commandments from the Old Testament.

Jesus teaches that keeping the law is not a question of obeying a number of rules, but of the **attitude of the heart**.

He said:

- *You have heard that it was said to the people **long ago**, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'*  
*But I tell you that anyone who **is angry** with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who **says** to a brother or sister, '**Raca**', is answerable to the court. And anyone who **says**, '**You fool!**' will be in danger of the fire of hell. (Matthew 5:21-22)*
- *You have heard **that it was said**, 'You shall not commit adultery.'*  
*But I tell you that anyone who **looks at a woman** lustfully has already committed adultery with her **in his heart**. (Matthew 5:27-28)*
- ***It has been said**, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her **a certificate of divorce**.'*  
*But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, **makes her the victim of adultery**, and anyone who **marries a divorced woman commits adultery**. (Matthew 5:31-32)*
- *Again, you have heard that **it was said to the people long ago**, 'Do not break your oath, but fulfil to the Lord the vows you have made.'*  
*But I tell you, **do not swear an oath at all** ... (Matthew 5:33-34)*  
***All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'**; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. (Matthew 5:37)*
- *You have heard **that it was said**, 'Love your neighbour and **hate your enemy**.'*  
*But I tell you, **love your enemies** and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:43-45)*

## Conclusion:

Jesus made the law's intention clear, as God Himself had already expressed it in the Old Testament, when He said:

- **Love the LORD your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:5)
- **Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the LORD.** (Leviticus 19:18)



Jesus summarised these declarations as the contents of whole of 'the Law and the Prophets' with:

- **Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.** All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37-40)

The apostle Paul wrote later:

- *Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore **love is the fulfilment (the completion) of the law.*** (Romans 13:10)<sup>3</sup>

Jesus taught His disciples that the power of their testimony in this world would not be determined by the stringent fulfilment of a number of laws and rules, but by the attitude of their heart.

He said:

- *A new command I give you: **Love one another.** As I have loved you, so you must love one another.* (John 13:34)
- ***By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*** (John 13:35)

### **The life of a Christians is thus distinguished by love.**

The norm in God's Kingdom, the Kingdom of heaven, is love.

This love is expressed by **agape** in Greek, this is **servicing love**, or, in other words, **service in love**.

Since Jesus' death and resurrection from the dead, man is no longer judged on the basis of the law, but on the basis of **a life of service in love**, which, after all, is the deeper significance of the law and the undertone in the whole of the history of the Bible, the Handbook for Life.

During His life Jesus illustrated clearly what this life involves in practice.

He said:

- *For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But **I am among you as one who serves.*** (Luke 22:27)
- *(After He had washed His disciples' feet) Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. **I have set you an example** that you should do as I have done for you.* (John 13:14-15)

Jesus said of Himself:

- *I am the way and the truth and the life.* (John 14:6)

A disciple of Jesus will only fully understand what this means if he:

- **consciously lives** as a servant, on the basis of love for God and the neighbour,
- **desires** to stand in life according to Jesus' teaching,
- **trusts** that he will not be condemned if he nevertheless makes a mistake according to that teaching.

Then he will receive the Life, as Jesus promised, when He said:

- *I have come that they may have **life**, and have it **to the full.*** (John 10:10)

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<sup>3</sup> Study: Romans 13:10 - love is the fulfilment of the law.