

OPEN YOUR BIBLE

Study Companion

What Did Yeshua Mean by “Fulfill” in Matthew 5:17–20?

Abolish, Jot and Tittle, Least Commandments, Greater Righteousness—and the Paragraph Behind One of Christianity’s Biggest Debates

A printable companion for staying inside Matthew 5:17–20 long enough to trace the paragraph, compare the Greek words, map both “until” statements, follow Yeshua into the rest of the Sermon, test competing readings, and write your own conclusion.

Use this packet with your Bible open. Read the paragraph before the slogan. Record what the text actually establishes, then separate those observations from conclusions that require additional covenant passages.

BEFORE YOU STUDY

PASSAGE-STUDY RULE

Before we build doctrine from one word, read the sentence. Then the paragraph. Then watch what the speaker does next.

What have you usually understood “fulfill” to mean in Matthew 5:17?

Which side of the debate are you most familiar with: “fulfilled = finished” or “not one jot = nothing changed”? Record your starting assumption.

READ THE WHOLE PARAGRAPH

READ: Matthew 5:17–20

Verse 17: What does Yeshua explicitly say He did NOT come to do?

Verse 17: What does He say He DID come to do?

Verse 18: Write the two “until” statements.

Verse 19: What two responses to commandments does Yeshua contrast?

Verse 20: What kind of righteousness does He require?

WORDS IN CONTEXT

Greek	Transliteration	Immediate role
καταλύω	kataluō	Abolish / tear down / dismantle — the mission Yeshua denies
πληρώω	plēroō	Fulfill / bring to fullness / realize — the mission Yeshua affirms
γίνομαι	ginomai	Become / happen / come to pass — used in v.18 for “until all ...”
λύω	lyō	Loosen / release / break — used in v.19 for loosening commandments

Why is “fulfill = abolish” difficult if Yeshua deliberately contrasts *plēroō* with *kataluō*?

LAW AND PROPHETS

READ: Matthew 7:12; Matthew 22:34–40

How does Matthew use “the Law and the Prophets” elsewhere?

What does “the Prophets” add to the claim that fulfill merely means “obey every command perfectly”?

MATTHEW’S FULFILLMENT PATTERN

READ: Matthew 1:22–23; 2:15; 4:14–16; 8:17; 21:4–5; 26:54–56

When Matthew says Scripture is fulfilled, is the earlier text being canceled, or brought to realization? Record the pattern you see.

VERSE 18 — TWO “UNTILS”

What does “until heaven and earth pass away” contribute to Yeshua’s point?

What might “until all comes to pass” refer to? List the major possibilities without deciding too quickly.

Why does it matter that verse 18 uses *ginomai* rather than simply repeating *plēroō*?

VERSE 19 — DO AND TEACH

What does Yeshua say about the person who loosens a least commandment and teaches others likewise?

What does He say about the person who does and teaches?

What are the strongest possibilities for “these commandments”?

VERSE 20 — GREATER RIGHTEOUSNESS

READ: Matthew 5:21–48; Matthew 23:23

How does Yeshua’s “greater righteousness” move beyond outward rule counting?

WATCH WHAT YESHUA DOES NEXT

Passage	Torah / prior teaching	Yeshua’s kingdom emphasis
Matthew 5:21–26	Murder	Anger, contempt, reconciliation
Matthew 5:27–30	Adultery	Lust and the heart
Matthew 5:31–32	Divorce	Covenant faithfulness and the limits of concession
Matthew 5:33–37	Oaths	Radical truthfulness
Matthew 5:38–42	Eye for eye	Refusal of personal retaliation
Matthew 5:43–48	Love neighbor	Love even enemies

Does Yeshua merely repeat Moses, abolish Moses, or authoritatively bring Torah to kingdom fullness? Explain from the examples.

TEST THE CLAIMS

“Fulfill means the Law is no longer relevant.” What evidence in vv.17–20 complicates that?

“Not one jot or tittle means every Sinai command applies identically forever.” What does the passage prove, and what does it leave for other texts?

“Every ‘But I say’ only corrects Pharisaic traditions.” Which examples directly quote Torah?

“Greater righteousness means more rule keeping.” What does the Sermon itself suggest?

EVIDENCE MAP

Evidence	What it supports	What it does NOT prove by itself
“I did not come to abolish”	Yeshua rejects a demolition reading	Every covenant detail remains unchanged
Law and Prophets	The claim concerns the whole scriptural story	Fulfill means only perfect rule keeping
Jot and tittle	Scripture remains weighty and durable	Exact New Covenant application of every statute
Do and teach	Obedience is positively valued	Salvation is earned by command keeping
Greater righteousness	Kingdom righteousness goes deeper	More visible religiosity automatically equals righteousness
“But I say” examples	Yeshua teaches with Messiah-level authority	Moses was evil or irrelevant

YOUR WORKING CONCLUSION

In your own words, what does Yeshua mean by “fulfill” in Matthew 5:17–20?

What does this passage clearly rule out?

What questions still require other passages before you can answer them responsibly?

PRAYER + APPLICATION

Where are you most tempted to make Scripture say what your theological team needs it to say?

What would it look like to remain teachable under Yeshua’s authority when continuity and change are both present?

NOTES
