

Fulfilled

“Do not think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets.

I DID NOT COME TO DESTROY, BUT TO FULFILL.

Matthew 5:17

There is at the present a rise in anti-Paul sentiment on the internet, specifically, against his teaching that the New Testament does not include keeping the law of Moses. It is good that some people can see that Paul taught his Gentile converts not to submit to Moses' law, but it is not good that they oppose that teaching. To understand Paul, we must understand what it means to fulfill a thing, for Jesus fulfilled the law, as he said. But what does it mean to fulfill something? Considering how the Bible uses the word “fulfill” will help us understand what it means.

Let's begin by looking at the one of the first times the Hebrew word for “fulfill” is used. This has to do with Isaac's wife, Rebekah:

Genesis 25

24. And when her days to deliver were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.

Rebekah's time of pregnancy ended when she gave birth to her twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Their birth fulfilled the purpose of her pregnancy. It did not mean that her pregnancy had been worthless; rather, that fulfillment meant that the purpose for her pregnancy was complete, that its usefulness was ended and the pregnancy was over.

Another example of what it means to fulfill something is from Solomon's prayer of thanksgiving to God concerning His promise to give David a son who would build a temple in Jerusalem:

1Kings 8

14. The King turned his face about, and blessed all the Assembly of Israel, and the whole Assembly of Israel stood up.

15. And he said, “Blessed be Jehovah, God of Israel, who spoke by His mouth to David my father, and by His hand has fulfilled it.”

By “fulfilled it”, Solomon meant that since God's promise to David had come to pass, there was no longer any need for God to keep promising David that it would happen. What would be the point of God continuing to promise that He would give David a son who would build His temple, when it was already done? As Solomon said (v. 20): “Jehovah caused His word to stand which He spoke, for I have risen up in the place of my father David, and I sit on the throne of Israel, as Jehovah said, and I have built the house for the name of Jehovah, God of Israel.”

Jesus' revelation to Paul was that his fulfilling the law meant there was no longer a reason to continue in it. Jesus did not destroy the law or condemn it as worthless. On the contrary, his fulfilling the law proved beyond all question that it was from God. Paul honored the law of Moses by honoring Jesus and receiving his baptism of life, which was the law's entire purpose. “The love of God”, wrote Paul, “is poured out within our hearts by the holy Spirit which is given to us,” and “love is the fulfillment of *the* law, [for] love does not do wrong to a neighbor” (Rom. 5:5b; 13:10).

It is as impossible now for people to continue in the law as it would have been for Rebekah to continue to be pregnant after she gave birth to Jacob and Esau. And what use would there have been for God to continue promising David a son who would build His temple after David was long dead and

Solomon had done it? Just so, it is useless for anyone now to try to keep Moses' law after the law's purpose has been fulfilled.

Dear friends, do not believe those who are saying Paul was wrong. It is my sincere prayer that God will open the eyes of your understanding, as He opened Paul's, to see the surpassing glory of what Jesus accomplished for us all! The law of God is now written on our hearts by the Spirit, and because that is done, Paul rejoiced that

Romans 8

2. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death!
3. For what the law could not do, in that it was powerless because it was of the flesh, God did, after He had sent His Son in the form of sinful flesh to deal with sin. He condemned sin in the flesh
4. so that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk after the flesh but after the Spirit.

Let us rejoice with Paul that because of Jesus, "we are released from the law so that we now serve *God* in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of a document" (Rom. 7:6).