

JESUS IS THE FULFILLMENT

(15-20 minutes, easy set up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical truths with students.

Introduction: Have you worked on learning a foreign language yet? If you have, you've noticed the difficulty of copying the pronunciation, much less learning the rules for verb tenses and masculine and feminine nouns. But no matter how well you know the rules of the language, or even how perfectly you pronounce the words, the proof of what you have learned is found in your ability to communicate in that language with others, especially those who have always spoken that language. In the Scripture passage for today, Jesus addressed those who had grown up learning about and living under the Law and the Prophets. His message for them was that they still had much to learn.

1. Jesus confirmed the validity of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:17-18).

Biblical Background: Jesus knew that His ministry was going to challenge the understanding the Jews had of the Law and the Prophets. Instead, early in His ministry, He emphasized that He would not abolish anything within the Law, but would fulfill the Law completely (v. 17). Since the Law had come from God, not a single letter or stroke of the pen for emphasis would be changed through Jesus' ministry (v. 18). Rather, because **The Bible is God's Word**, everything presented in the Law and the Prophets would be fulfilled through Him.

Illustration: Jesus' story as God's Son and as our Messiah unfolds from the beginning of the book of Genesis through the end of the book of Revelation. And every page of both Testaments leads us to Jesus' redemptive act on the cross as God's Son and our Savior.

Application: Jesus came as the fulfillment of the entire Bible, not just the New Testament. And it is through Him that we can understand both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

2. Jesus confirmed the value of the Old Testament (Matthew 5:19-20).

Biblical Background: Not only did Jesus come to fulfill or complete the Law and the Prophets, He came to confirm their importance. Jesus emphasized that those who kept the Law and taught others to do the same would be called great in heaven while those who annulled or cancelled even the least of the commandments and taught others to do the same would be called least in heaven (v. 19). The scribes and the Pharisees, Jewish religious leaders, were honored for their personal devotion to keeping the Law. Imagine the surprise Jesus' hearers felt when Jesus told them that they would have to be even more righteous (more holy) than these highly-esteemed leaders in order to enter heaven (v. 20).

Illustration: How many times have you seen someone who seems to have all the answers make a huge mistake that negates everything else in his or her life? A pastor who is caught in an adulterous affair? A deacon who is found guilty of embezzlement? A Sunday School teacher who is guilty of child neglect? If we're not careful, the mistakes of people who loudly proclaim their faith can make us question whether our own journeys of faith have value.

Application: Jesus' words remind us that our faith journey is based only on our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Only Jesus can secure our salvation because He alone can fulfill all the requirements of the Law.

Conclusion: God never intended for us to obey the Law in order to be holy. Rather, He intended the Law to demonstrate our need for a Savior. Since Jesus is the only person who could fulfill the demands of Law, when we trust in His life, death, and resurrection, we can receive the righteousness that surpasses the external obedience of the Pharisees.