



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



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From My Window

Maureen Cleave wrote a fascinating article on John Lennon of the Beatles in The London Evening Standard, March 4, 1966. She wrote that his house was filled with unusual things such as a huge free-standing crucifix, a full-body suit of armor, and an enormous Bible he bought in Chester. His library exposed the fact that he was an avid reader; he devoured such authors as Tennyson, Orwell, Tolstoy, and Wilde. But he also read his Bible! One quote from Lennon caught me: "Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It's them twisting it that ruins it for me." Though we will never know why Lennon expressed these words, the truth of what he said is extremely convicting to my heart. As Jesus' disciples, we are often the only "Bible" others may read. For this reason, Jesus called on his disciples to "Let your light shine so that others may see and glorify your Father." I pray that others see Jesus at work in me today!



The elders and wives of Grace Church in Alexandria, VA

Alumni In Ministry Spotlight

In 2006, Jonathan Matias (2nd from left) graduated from the VBTS MDiv program with a desire to plant a church in the Washington DC area. In November 2007, God led Jonathan and his wife Kristy to start Grace Church of Alexandria (GCA) with VBTS alumni Garrett Lee (MDiv, 2007) and his wife Amanda (MBS, 2005). In 2008, they began meeting in the Samuel Tucker Elementary School, which represents children from 90 nations who speak over 120 languages. GCA's strategic meeting place truly reflects "the neighborhood of the nations." As God has grown their congregation, they have moved from the activity room, to the cafeteria, to the gymnasium as of April this year. During this time of growth, they added Ray Bean (1st from right) and his wife Nancy to their elder's team. This vibrant church loves the Word, pursues community life with each other, and exalts Christ above all else. GCA is a "joy-filled ministry," and for its global vision we praise our God!



VBTS is pleased to welcome Dr. Mark Hassler as Associate Professor of Old Testament. Mark and Michelle moved from CA, where he was a Faculty Associate at The Master's Seminary.



Truth for the Agora: “I did not come to abolish, but fulfill” *Matthew 5:17*

In his first recorded sermon (Mathew 5-7), Jesus makes a remarkable statement that highlights his purpose for entering this world of humanity as the God-Man. He says, “*Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill*” (NASB). The general tenor of this statement cannot be missed, and it is well-captured by Wilkins (p. 229), “Everything that the OT intended to communicate about God’s will . . . finds its fullest meaning in Jesus.” Therefore, we must carefully consider Jesus’s words and their implications for us today.

First, the statement is corrective in nature because it tells us how “not to think” about Jesus. This suggests that there was a danger of his listeners thinking inaccurately about Jesus’s life and preaching. Therefore, Jesus makes clear that whatever one may think about him, it must not be that he is conveniently setting aside the OT Scriptures (“Law and Prophets”) to accomplish his own private agenda.

Second, the statement is instructive because it makes clear Jesus’ understanding of the OT and his commitment to it (Wilkins, p. 227). Jesus uses the antithetical terms “abolish/fulfill” to make his ministry clear. On the one hand, he did not come “to abolish” the OT (i.e., pull to pieces as one does a bridge, wall or house; cf. 24:2; Broadus, p. 98); however, he did come “to fulfill” the OT or “confirm” it by bringing to completion all its prophetic declarations and assertions. As one commentator writes, “Jesus came in order that God’s Word may be fulfilled to its full measure in Him” (TDNT, 6:294). This idea is clearly important to Matthew because he consistently presents Jesus as “fulfilling” the OT in his Gospel (e.g., 12:17-21; 13:34-35; 21:1-5; 26:53-56). In fact, to highlight this reality, Matthew quotes the OT twice as often as the other Gospel writers (Nolland, p. 29).

Third, Jesus punctuates his thought of “abolish/fulfill” with four incisive applications:

- *Jesus views himself* as the focus point of the OT prophecies (v 17). To put it another way, unless one accepts Jesus as the One to whom the OT Scriptures are pointing, he will miss God’s purpose for the OT (cf. 2 Cor 3:14).
- *Jesus affirms* the durability of the OT even down to the smallest elements of a Hebrew term (v. 18). For Jesus, what the ancient writers predicted is permanent and must take place *in him exactly as it was written*.
- *Jesus cautions* those who practice and teach that certain OT commands are inconsequential are actually misrepresenting God’s “unified voice of truth” which speaks *of him*. This has eternal consequence (v 19).
- *Jesus declares* that “fulfillment of the Law” is more than an outward attention to detail – which the religious rulers of Jesus’ day demonstrated (cf. 12:1-8; 15:1-9) – but a personal responsiveness to truth that radiates from “a humble spirit” and “a pure heart” (5:1-12). This inner piety marks *a righteous disciple* and prepares him for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven (v 20). It is to this end that the remainder of Jesus’ sermon is devoted.