

# Jesus on the Old Testament

## Matthew 5:17-20

I've had many folks say over the years that the OT seems very difficult to read and understand. Besides that, they say, what does it have to do with us today? All the feasts and laws and procedures. How does the Old Testament even fit in for the Christian? Are we still under the Ten Commandments? If so, how do we know which laws we are bound to and which ones we are not? Or, are we to just ignore the Old Testament? Should we even read it?

Most of us are very familiar with the fact that we call ourselves the church of Christ and often a New Testament church? Have you wondered why we pattern our practices after that of the early New Testament church? Today as we continue to examine Jesus' Sermon on The Mount, we will look at what Jesus had to say concerning the Old Testament scriptures, the Law and the Prophets as Jesus puts it. We will start by looking at our text in Matthew 5:17-19 (ESV) ***“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”***

So, as we look at this statement of Jesus, I want to notice 3 main points.

### **1. JESUS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE OLD TESTAMENT.**

During His preaching, some of the religious leaders attacked Jesus because they did not think He was honoring the Law and Prophets. In this short statement on the Law and Prophets Jesus is going to share a couple of thoughts that should help us understand the role of the Old Testament. The first thought for us to consider is the fact that Jesus **endorsed the Old Testament.**

- The Law, first 5 books. The prophets, books that prophets wrote.
- Jesus put His stamp of approval on the Old Testament canon. I find it interesting that the religious leaders tried to accuse Jesus of breaking the Old Testament laws, but in Matthew 8:1-4 when Jesus healed the leper, He told the man to go show himself to the priest to be declared clean and then offer the appropriate sacrifice according to the Law on Moses. This showed that Jesus respected the Law.
- The Law was more than a system of statutes designed for the working of government. It was also a system of types foreshadowing the Kingdom of God.
- Jesus said He did not come to destroy it because not only would that have annulled the statutes, it would also prevent the fulfillment of its types. Jesus had a high view of the Old Testament and the Law.
- Notice that Jesus speaks harshly of those who would try to change what it said. The religious leaders of the day were good at putting varying degrees of importance to the Law. From the Pharisees point of view, the laws that dealt with **actions** were of more importance to follow than the laws that dealt with **attitudes**. Jesus said neither an iota nor a dot would pass from the Law until all is accomplished. An iota or JOT as it is translated in many English versions was the word for the smallest letter in Hebrew alphabet while dot was a little mark that changed the meaning of words. Those things seemed insignificant in the whole scope of the alphabet, but Jesus rejected the notion of putting weight on some aspects of the Law while lightening other aspects.
- Notice that Jesus speaks of not allowing the Law to change **UNTIL** all is accomplished. This leads to the next attitude Jesus had toward the Old Testament. Jesus knew He would replace the Old Testament Law. This would seem to be a bit contradictory, but Jesus knew there would be a New thing coming!

- Galatians 3:24 (ESV) *So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.* There would come a point in which the purpose of the Old Testament would be fulfilled! After the resurrection, Jesus said the following.
- Luke 24:44 (ESV) *Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”*

Obviously, Jesus spoke of the Law and Prophets in the Sermon on The Mount, and He speaks of the Psalms also. This leads to another thought concerning the fulfillment of all things:

## **2. JESUS WAS THE FULFILMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.**

Jesus was the focal point of the Old Testament Scriptures. Here are just a few of the prophecies in the Old Testament that Jesus fulfilled:

David writing about 1000 BC.

- **1. Psalms 16:10 Resurrected.** Luke 24:6, 31, 34; Acts 2:31.
- **2. Psalms 22:7-8. The Words of the Mockers.** Matt 27:31, 39-44
- **3. 22:16. Hands and feet pierced.** Luke 23:33, John 19:18, 20:25
- **4. 22:18. Cast lots for garments.** Matthew 27:35. John 19:23-24
- **5. 41:9. Betrayed by a friend.** Matthew 10:4
- **6. 69:21 Vinegar for thirst.** Matthew 27:34 b.

Isaiah writing in 730 BC.

- **1. 9:1-2 Ministry in Galilee** Matthew 4:12-13 16-17
- **2. 53:5-6 Wounded and spit on.** Matthew 26:63
- **3. 53:9 Buried in a rich mans tomb.** Matthew 27:38

Micah writing in 710 BC.

- 1. 5:2 Birth in Bethlehem. Matthew 2:1

Zechariah writing in 490 BC.

- **1. 9:9 Entered Jerusalem on a donkey as a King.** Matthew 21:5
- **2. 11:12. Sold for 30 pieces of silver.** Matthew 26:15
- **3. 11:13. Money thrown in the temple/purchased potters field.** Matthew 27:7

Daniel writing in 530 BC.

- **7:13-14 Called the Son of Man.** John 12:34

These are just a few of the prophecies that were fulfilled by Jesus. There are over 61 major prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. Peter Stoner in his book “Science Speaks” calculates the odds of any one person fulfilling just 8 of those 61 prophecies. The odds are 10 to the 17th power. If you are a visual person that is like Silver dollars covering every inch of the state of Texas 2 feet deep.

The odds of a person fulfilling 48 of the 61 are 10 to the 157th power. Jesus fulfilled all 61 major and all the others minor ones also. A. Cressy Morrison said of this, “The rays from the light of the Scriptures would burn up an impostor.” Jesus could stand up to the test of Scriptures, even the Pharisees knew this. (John 3:1-5)

In Luke 24:25-27 Jesus met some disciples after His resurrection on the road to Emmaus. Jesus enlightens them. ***“And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.”*** Jesus perfect sacrifice fulfilled the purpose of the Law. The Law required perfect obedience, (James 2:10), and Jesus was sinless. The Law required that a person live without breaking the law, and Jesus is the only person that did this!

Think of a ship anchored at port with an anchor that has 613 links in its chain, representing the 613 commands in the Mosaic Law. If only one link breaks, the ship will be set adrift, so the 612 links that did hold count for nothing if just one is broken. Jesus nailed that flawed Law to the cross! Col 2:13-14 (ESV) *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.*

### 3. JESUS EXPECTS MORE FROM HIS FOLLOWERS.

The way Jesus chastised the religious leaders; I would imagine they were not feeling too comfortable at this point. Jesus taught and lived to show that the heart is more important than the actions.

The religious leaders did all they could to look good on the outside. They were a mess on the inside. Trying to look good while having a heart that is not right is not what God wants from us. When the heart is right, the right actions will follow. The Pharisees were good at telling others what to do but were not too good at doing what they taught. Jesus says that the one who teaches and does what they teach is a step up on the Pharisees. In other words, walk the talk. Jesus was looking for true holiness, not an outward righteousness the religious leaders showed. The new righteousness is greater than that of the Old Covenant.

Our lives are to be God-Centered! The Law tended to lead people to be self-centered, and self-righteous. Because the “greater righteousness” is patterned after God’s character (cf. 5:45), not legal niceties, the practice of it can truly extend to every aspect of one’s life. Contrast that with the Pharisaic model of **legal observance only** which results in a superficial righteousness oriented toward human recognition (cf. 6:1-4), thus leading to hypocritical pride (23:10). We are not here to impress people, but to serve God! When we become concerned with following the letter of the law instead the spirit of the law, we become a people who do less than God wants us to do.

## **CONCLUSION**

Do we need our Old Testament? Yes, we do.

Are we bound to the LAWS and ceremonies contained within it? No, we are not because Jesus freed us from that law.

However, 9 of the 10 commandments are reiterated in the New Testament, along with some of the other teachings in the Old Testament.

Our rule of practice for the work and worship of the church is the New Testament, the Old was meant to be a tutor to lead us Christ! Gal. 3:24