

May 2021

## Christ's View of Scripture: Authoritative and Relevant for All Time

Erik Knight

*Liberty University*, [eknight21@liberty.edu](mailto:eknight21@liberty.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/djrc>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Christianity Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Knight, Erik (2021) "Christ's View of Scripture: Authoritative and Relevant for All Time," *Diligence: Journal of the Liberty University Online Religion Capstone in Research and Scholarship*: Vol. 8 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/djrc/vol8/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Divinity at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in Diligence: Journal of the Liberty University Online Religion Capstone in Research and Scholarship by an authorized editor of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu).

## Introduction

Most Christians affirm the authority of Scripture.<sup>1</sup> Yes, Scripture is authoritative; but how relevant is it today? The fact that research on this topic has been necessary in the past, and continues to be necessary today, demonstrates the authority and relevance of Scripture is constantly in question within all branches of Christianity, particularly within today's cultural context. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the authority and relevance of Scripture, as stated by Jesus in Matthew 5:17-20, and presupposes the legitimate authority of Scripture as the inspired Word of God, given by the Holy Spirit through human authors.

The human authors of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, spent much time recording the things Jesus said. In those passages where Jesus is speaking, a large majority of what is documented shows Jesus quoting or alluding to Old Testament passages. In Matthew alone, over 30% of what Jesus says is from the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup> Moyise summarizes by stating that Jesus “quot[es] from nearly 60 different verses of Scripture and mak[es] at least twice that number of allusions and more general references.”<sup>3</sup> John states that what is recorded is barely a fraction of what Jesus said and did (John 21:25). So, it is easy to see that Jesus understood Scripture, knew how to apply it, and understood its authority and relevance in the lives of those who belong to God. But what about relevance today? Jesus spoke and taught almost exclusively from the Old Testament, giving proper authority to it. Likewise, Jesus' followers must recognize that even in Jesus' fulfillment of the Old Testament, it is and will remain authoritative and relevant as the foundation for which the New Testament was written until Christ returns.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 62, Logos.

<sup>2</sup> Based on a survey of Matthew using the English Standard Version and the New American Standard Bible.

<sup>3</sup> Steve Moyise, *Jesus and Scripture* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2010), 3-4, Logos.

### **Matthew 5:17-20**

“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. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:17-20).<sup>4</sup>

### **Background**

As far back as Christianity can be dated, there have been those who misinterpret, or completely disregarded parts of Scripture. The problem of misinterpretation, or disregard for Scripture, dates back to Israel who, even with prophets speaking truth to them, still found themselves grossly misunderstanding what God has revealed through His word. The problem of misinterpretation or disregard for Scripture continued throughout biblical history, accelerated in the years leading up to the closing of the New Testament canon in AD 397,<sup>5</sup> was fought against in the Protestant Reformation, and persists today.

---

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all passages of Scripture are taken from *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Logos.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Nickens, *Survey of the History of Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Wordsearch Academic, 2018), 27, WORDsearch.

## Historical Problem

When Jesus states that He has not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets (Matt. 5:17), it appears he is addressing three issues in one. First, those who were afraid that Jesus and His teachings would diminish the word of God in any way.<sup>6</sup> Second, to protect against those enemies of God who would have sought to teach that Jesus came to do away with the word of God or the requirements for obedience.<sup>7</sup> Third, to correct those who assumed the coming of the Messiah or the preaching of the gospel would abolish the old form of governance for God's people.<sup>8</sup> These three concerns demonstrate the propensity for God's people throughout salvation history to depart from His word. Moving forward in time reveals the continuation into heretical thought, such as Gnosticism, which is defined as secret, obscure, or mystical knowledge woven together through Christian experience and Greek philosophy.<sup>9</sup> Redemption through Christ is at the center of gnostic belief; from there it branches out into all forms of thought which can be summarized as philosophical syncretism and religious dualism.<sup>10</sup> One man in particular, Marcion, considered a gnostic heretic, taught the god of the Old Testament and the god of the New Testament are different gods.<sup>11</sup> Marcion's belief, centered around the person and work of Christ, led Marcion to remove the entire Old Testament, and only teach from the Gospel of Luke and a portion of Paul's

---

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 1631, Logos.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew Poole, *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, Vol. 3 (New York, NY: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853), 22, Logos.

<sup>8</sup> John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 275-276, Logos.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, "Gnosticism," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 873, Logos.

<sup>10</sup> John Rutherford, "Gnosticism," ed. James Orr et al., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 1240-1241, Logos.

<sup>11</sup> Nickens, *Survey of the History of Christianity*, 24.

letters.<sup>12</sup> Ironically, it was teachings such as this that helped usher in the period in church history which saw the canonization of the New Testament.<sup>13</sup>

### Contemporary Problem

Since the closing of the New Testament canon, the problem of authority and relevance has not diminished. Christians in all areas of life have made statements alluding to the Old Testament no longer holding sway over the Christian, because Jesus has come and fulfilled the law, so only what He explicitly states in the New Testament is relevant.<sup>14</sup> Those same Christians acknowledge all of Scripture as God's word, yet they deny its authority in the same breath. The only difference between what these contemporary Christians are stating, and what Marcion taught, is that these modern Christians have yet to deny the Trinity. To make matters worse for Christians struggling to understand the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, there are church leaders who are making the claim that Christianity needs to do away with the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> Just as clear today as it was almost 2,000 years ago, there is a need to continuously reinforce that if all of Scripture is God's word, then all of it is authoritative, and all of it is relevant. Although there are pastors, professors, students, and lay-persons alike who are more comfortable removing parts of Scripture to only hold to a few of Jesus' teachings, Jesus saw this taking place, and knew it would continue to happen when He issued His Sermon on the Mount and gave the clarification and warning contained in Matthew 5:17-20.

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>14</sup> Based on first-hand accounts given by pastors, professors, students, and lay-persons.

<sup>15</sup> Michael J. Kruger, "Why We Can't Unhitch from the Old Testament," *The Gospel Coalition* (October 22, 2018): <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/irresistible-andy-stanley/>

## Fulfilling the Law and the Prophets

Jesus begins verse 17 by telling His audience “Do not think.” In this verse, Jesus is opening with a command to abstain from a certain way of thinking. Jesus repeats the same command in Matthew 10:34, “*Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword*” (emphasis added). Both accounts show Jesus correcting any potential misunderstandings regarding the purpose of His coming and are not a rebuttal to any accusation about Jesus breaking any law.<sup>16</sup> Continuing with his statement regarding abolishment of the Law and the Prophets, Jesus uses the verb *katalysai*<sup>17</sup> (destroy or throw down),<sup>18</sup> which carries the sense of *annul*, which means that Jesus did not come to invalidate the Law or the Prophets. The implication here in what Jesus is saying, means the Law and the Prophets are still valid, even after His coming.

### The Law and The Prophets

Since Jesus declares the Law and the Prophets are not made invalid by His coming, the question becomes: What did He mean by the Law and the Prophets? The words used for *the Law*, is τὸν νόμον (*ton nomon*), which is literally translated to *the Law*. The same stands for *the Prophets*. The words use here are τοὺς προφήτας (*tous prophētas*), which literally translates to *the Prophets*. The usage of these words here are culturally significant; the Jews being addressed understood the Law and the Prophets to be Scripture. The Old Testament, even before the

---

<sup>16</sup> D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, Editor Frank E. Gaebelain, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 141, Logos.

<sup>17</sup> Unless otherwise stated, original Greek texts are taken from Michael W. Holmes, *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Lexham Press; Society of Biblical Literature, 2011–2013), Matt 5:17, Logos.

<sup>18</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all transliterations and translations of the original Greek text are taken from W. Hall Harris III, *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear New Testament: SBL Edition* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010), Logos.

divisions were established, were often referred to as *Law, Prophets, Psalms*...or simply as *Law*.<sup>19</sup> Ryrie makes the same observation regarding the use of *Law* and *Prophets*, "...included all of the Old Testament, our Lord's Bible. 'Law' in verse 18 means the same thing (compare the use of 'Law' in John 10:34, where it includes more than the Mosaic Law)."<sup>20</sup> Taken within the context of the entirety of the sermon given by Jesus (Matt 5-7), Jesus is, in a sense, giving a prelude to his explanation of Mosaic Law, as well as the rest of the Old Testament.<sup>21</sup> The understanding of what Jesus is referring to in this passage becomes clear, then, that all of Scripture (at this time the Old Testament), was not being made invalid, destroyed, changed, or thrown down in any way by His coming. If nothing was changing, then what is Jesus getting at in this passage?

### The Fulfillment

Jesus finishes verse 17 by saying that He has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. The statement here is echoed later by Paul when he writes the letter to the Romans, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rom 10:4). The word for fulfill, πληρῶσαι (plērōsai), is used in this sense to satisfy.<sup>22</sup> The same word and usage are seen when Jesus speaks to John the Baptist regarding the necessity of His baptism, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15). In this sense, Jesus perfectly lives

---

<sup>19</sup> Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 142.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 99, Logos.

<sup>21</sup> John MacArthur, "Matthew," in *The MacArthur Bible Commentary: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at A Time* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 1130.

<sup>22</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003), 362, Logos.

up to every aspect of all the laws, satisfying all requirements, and being who those laws point to, and the prophets spoke of.<sup>23</sup> Calvin puts it more succinctly by stating the old covenant is validated in the new covenant, and that Christ put on full display in real life everything that is contained in the Old Testament.<sup>24</sup> Just as Jesus' coming does not invalidate the Law and Prophets, neither does His fulfillment of them. In the sense given here by Matthew in his Gospel, Jesus' fulfillment of the Law and Prophets plays out through His perfect understanding and explanation of them, and in His perfect obedience to them.<sup>25</sup> Fulfilling the Law and Prophets, taking into account the manner in which Jesus explains certain parts of the moral law in the following passages (Matt 5:21-7:27), implies there were serious misunderstandings of Scripture, and that Christ came in part to show the true meaning of it.

### **Relevance and Authority for All Time**

In verse 18, Jesus once again begins with language that He will repeat several times to emphasize His ultimate authority,<sup>26</sup> which is commented on by Matthew, "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Matt. 7:28-29). In this verse, Jesus is continuing with the previous verses by giving the reason for the command given in verse 17. The language used here by Christ is the same or like that which is repeated throughout Jesus' teachings.

---

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, 277.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel M. Doriani, *Matthew*, Vol. 1 in *Reformed Expository Commentary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 140, Logos.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 310.



### Nothing Passes from The Law...

Jesus states “until heaven and earth pass away” (Matt 5:18). The translation provided here is literal. Until, ἕως (heōs); heaven, οὐρανός (ouranos); earth, γῆ (gē); pass away, παρέλθῃ (parelthē). Here, Jesus states explicitly what point in time He is referring to. Jesus is not simply referring to any work He will complete during this time He spends on earth; He is referring to the point in time that heaven and earth pass away, which is an eschatological reference. MacArthur and Mayhue make an interesting point regarding this verse, which is the connection between what Jesus is saying, and what has already been promised by God...which are the promises He made to preserve His Word.<sup>27</sup> The Scripture referenced here is, “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever” (Isa 40:8).

Most have heard the phrase, “dot all the i’s and cross all the t’s.” Whether someone believes this phrase traces its roots to Matthew 5:18 or not is irrelevant; the similarity between the two is striking. *Cambridge Dictionary* defines this phrase as meaning “to pay a great deal of attention to the details of something, especially when you are trying to complete a task.”<sup>28</sup> In verse 18, Jesus uses two words which establish how much of Scripture will live on. The first word is ἰῶτα (iōtaē or iōta), which translates to iota, or tiny letter. The reference here is to the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, which is י (yod).<sup>29</sup> The second word is κεραία (keraia), which translates to projection, hook, or serif stroke of a letter. The reference here is to “the small stroke that distinguishes several pairs of Hebrew letters.”<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 114, Logos.

<sup>28</sup> *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/dot-the-i-s-and-cross-the-t-s>

<sup>29</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 145.

The point Jesus is making here is that as long as the earth continues on, all of Scripture will continue on. Why does Jesus make this remark? Because the task is not yet complete. The argument could be made the task being referred to is Jesus' work on the cross, but remember what Jesus is explicitly saying, "until heaven and earth pass away" (Matt 5:18) and "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets" (Matt 5:17), which has already been established previously. Jesus does not stop there in making His point; He continues to clarify His meaning regarding how long every part of Scripture will remain valid.

### ...Until All is Accomplished

Jesus continues His explanation regarding the validity of Scripture, specifically its longevity, with the statement, "until all is accomplished" (Matt 5:18). What did Jesus mean by this statement? The translation from the Greek text is until, ἕως (heōs); all, πάντα (panta); is accomplished, γένηται (genētai). A more accurate translation for *is accomplished* is *takes place*. To understand what Jesus means by "until all is accomplished," or takes place, Jesus' followers must understand the context. Previously in this passage, Jesus stated, "until heaven and earth pass away," and the connection Jesus makes between verses 17 and 18 with the language at the start of verse 18, "For truly I say to you..." The statement made here at the end of verse 18 then is eschatological in nature. This is not a matter of simply the end of the world, nor is it simply a matter of things being accomplished. All of prophesy must be fulfilled; all of God's promises and plans must come to fruition.<sup>31</sup> The promises of God did not end with Christ...the story continues, and Christ will one day come back for His bride, and to crush His enemies. These last

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 1 in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 120-121, Logos.

things have yet to be accomplished. Therefore, the task is not complete, so Scripture, in its entirety, endures.

### **Relaxing the Commandments**

Beginning verse 19 with “Therefore,” Jesus indicates that He is moving from the command to abstain from a certain thought (v. 17), and the reason for the abstention (v. 18), to the results for both disobedience and obedience. There appears to be a stark warning contained here in verse 19, which continues into verse 20, for anyone who would consider that any part of God’s Word should be diminished and teaches others to follow such a doctrine.<sup>32</sup> In the translation here, *relaxes* has many different translations given. In the NASB, it is *annuls*,<sup>33</sup> in the CSB, it is *breaks*.<sup>34</sup> The most accurate translation from the Greek, which is λύση (lysē or lyō), is *abolishes*. Therefore, the indication given here is not simply being relaxed with Scripture, for that in and of itself is something that is addressed by Jesus in the rest of this sermon.

### **Whoever Teaches**

Jesus is pointing out anyone who would eliminate any portion of God’s Word or teaches against any portion of God’s Word. Henry states, “It is a dangerous thing, in doctrine or practice, to disannul the least of God’s commands; to break them, that is, to go about either to contract the extent, or weaken the obligation of them; whoever does so, will find it is at his peril.”<sup>35</sup> There

---

<sup>32</sup> France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, 121.

<sup>33</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Matt 5:19, Logos.

<sup>34</sup> *Christian Standard Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2020), Matt 5:19, Logos.

<sup>35</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1631.

seems to be a transition here from the entirety of the Law and Prophets, to the Ten Commandments, according to Calvin.<sup>36</sup> However, context dictates the meaning here, and restricting the use of *commandments* to that of the Ten Commandments would be a departure from the context. Carson agrees, but also notes that Jesus' comment regarding commandments does not point strictly to Jesus' teachings in the New Testament, but to all of Scripture.<sup>37</sup> Carson's statement, and the context in which Jesus uses the word *commandments*, is echoed later in verses like Matthew 28:20, and John 14:15. Consider the point made by Carson, compared to some statements as noted previously when discussing the contemporary problem which states that Christians only need to follow what Jesus explicitly states in the New Testament. The *commandments* being referred to here, then, must be made up of the entirety of the Old Testament. Those who teach, then, face even greater peril, as Jesus makes a point to include this group with the word teaches, διδάξῃ (didaxē), which is the same language used by James, "Not many of you should become *teachers*, my brothers, for you know that we who *teach* will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1, emphasis added). Teachers is from the Greek διδάσκαλοι (didaskaloi), with *teach* later in the verse being implied by the context (it was not part of the original text because it would not have been necessary; the audience would have understood the clear meaning behind James' words as indicating those who teach). James speaks of a greater judgment for those who teach, and Jesus warns those who teach others to abolish any part of the Old Testament of the consequences, while encouraging those who hold to the teachings in Scripture in every part of their life, and teach others to follow such doctrine.

---

<sup>36</sup> Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, 279.

<sup>37</sup> Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 146.

## The Least and The Greatest

If there is a warning, then there must be a consequence for such a warning, and a reward for doing what is right considering that warning. Jesus uses the same language here, “whoever relaxes,” which is translated again as abolish. Whoever eliminates any portion of Scripture is at risk of the warning given by Christ, to be considered “least in the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus here repeats *least* (ἐλάχιστων, elachistōn) twice, which France states is a rhetorical device, and does not indicate a ranking system in the kingdom of Heaven.<sup>38</sup> Carson remarks on the probability that Jesus is referring to a ranking system in the kingdom of Heaven.<sup>39</sup> However, When looking ahead to verse 20, “you will never enter the kingdom of heaven,” it becomes clear that Jesus is stating anyone who falls under this warning is at risk of “being rejected as the lowest of men.”<sup>40</sup> The meaning is clear, those who abolish any portion of Scripture will not see the kingdom.<sup>41</sup>

Understanding the meaning behind “least in the kingdom” makes clear the meaning behind “greatest in the kingdom.” Again, this is not a matter of ranking or reward since the reward here is made simple: the kingdom of God. “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22), and “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15) help in bringing about a well-rounded understanding of what is indicated here in Jesus’ teaching, along with what Jesus states in verse 20. Those who not only hear the Word, but do what is contained in the Word, and then teach others to do the same from

---

<sup>38</sup> France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, 121.

<sup>39</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 146.

<sup>40</sup> Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, 279.

<sup>41</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1631.

the Word, are fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20) by rightly handling the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15), and will be blessed in the church and welcomed into the eternal kingdom of God.<sup>42</sup>

### **Exceeding the Scribes and Pharisees**

Jesus begins verse 20 with familiar language, “For I tell you,” indicating once again His ultimate authority. Here Jesus gives the condition for His followers to meet, and the implication for failure to do so. Carson states, “[Jesus’] teaching, toward which the OT pointed, must be obeyed.”<sup>43</sup> The authority Jesus speaks with in this passage, as well as the ones to follow in this sermon, demonstrate what Jesus is referring to. Historically, the Pharisees were known for their devotion and adherence to Scripture, while the Scribes were known to be among the best interpreters of Scripture.<sup>44</sup> Doriani makes a modern connection to what Jesus is saying here, “Today, Jesus might say, ‘Unless your righteousness is greater than that of pastors, missionaries, and seminary professors...’”<sup>45</sup> With this understanding, it is no longer a matter of being legalistic in the approach to rightly handling the Word.

The words Jesus use are righteousness, δικαιοσύνη (*dikaïosynē*) and exceeds, περισσεύση (*perisseusē*), more accurately translated as surpasses or to be over and above. Surpassing the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees is not necessarily a matter of living in perfect accord with every teaching in the Old Testament from a legalistic standpoint. The Pharisees could obey every part of the Law perfectly, and still not be declared righteous before

---

<sup>42</sup> Poole, *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, 23.

<sup>43</sup> Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 146.

<sup>44</sup> Doriani, *Reformed Expository Commentary*, 141.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

God;<sup>46</sup> for Abram (God had not changed his name at this point) was declared righteous before the Law was written, through his faith in God (Gen 15:6). This righteousness, then, does not depend strictly on adherence to every letter of the Law, and Jesus here is combatting any hint of legalism that may have been surfacing.<sup>47</sup> This righteousness that exceeds that of the Scribes and the Pharisees is that which comes through faith in God's righteousness manifested apart from the Law (Rom 3:21-22)...Jesus, who neither the Scribes nor the Pharisees accepted.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, Jesus also calls here for those who are His to take seriously the teachings in the Old Testament,<sup>49</sup> which keeps with the context provided from verses 17 and 18. The righteousness Jesus calls for here becomes a matter of faith in Christ leading to obedience to the same Law which points to Christ, out of genuine love for Christ. Anything short of this righteousness defined by Christ in this passage means no admittance into the kingdom of Heaven.

### **Conclusion**

To fully understand Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:17-20, there must be more study in the rest of the sermon, spanning the remainder of chapter 5 and culminating at the conclusion of chapter 7. Those who claim to follow Jesus, yet claim the Old Testament is no longer valid or is diminished because of their faith in Him contradicts what a survey of the Sermon on the Mount indicates. Jesus demonstrates a greater depth to what the Old Testament teaches, which reveals a stricter standard than even the Scribes and Pharisees understood. Paul teaches that "all have

---

<sup>46</sup> France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, 121.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1632.

<sup>49</sup> Mark D. Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture*, Ed. D. A. Carson, Vol. 21 in *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 85, Logos.

sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). If one person breaks one part of the Law, then they are condemned under all of it (James 2:10). If all have sinned, therefore being condemned under the Law, what is to be done then? Faith in Christ, loving Him who the Law and Prophets point to, and maintaining a deep love for the Word of God in its entirety. For if Christ, who came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, gives such reverence to the same, then those who follow Him have no authority to use their faith in Him to disregard any portion of it when He calls them to do the opposite. To do so leads to an abuse of Christian liberty, and away from the One they claim to love. Instead, true love for Christ should grow in the follower of Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit, a love for God’s commands. Christ gave ultimate authority to Scripture, demonstrating its relevance and longevity, which is evidenced by His use of Scripture in all His teaching; Jesus’ followers must do the same, and recognize that Scripture will remain authoritative and relevant until Christ returns for His bride.



## Bibliography

- Borchert, Gerald L. "Gnosticism." *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988, Logos.
- Calvin, John and William Pringle. *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Vol. 1. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010, Logos.
- Carson, D. A. "Matthew." *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*. Editor Frank E. Gaebelein, Vol. 8. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984, Logos.
- Doriani, Daniel M. *Matthew*. Vol. 1 in *Reformed Expository Commentary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Editors Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008, Logos.
- France, R. T. *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 1 in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985, Logos.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020, Logos.
- Harris, W. Hall, III. *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear New Testament: SBL Edition*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2010, Logos.
- Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, Logos.
- Kruger, Michael J. "Why We Can't Unhitch from the Old Testament." *The Gospel Coalition* (October 22, 2018): <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/irresistible-andy-stanley/>
- MacArthur, John. "Matthew," in *The MacArthur Bible Commentary: Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at A Time*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005.
- MacArthur, John, and Richard Mayhue. *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017, Logos.
- Moyise, Steve. *Jesus and Scripture*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2010, Logos.
- Nickens, Mark. *Survey of the History of Christianity*. Nashville, TN: Wordsearch Academic, 2018.
- Poole, Matthew. *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible*, Vol. 3. New York, NY: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1853, Logos.

- Rutherford, John. "Gnosticism." Edited by James Orr et al. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915, Logos.
- Ryrie, Charles. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999, Logos.
- Thompson, Mark D. *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture*. Ed. D. A. Carson, Vol. 21 in *New Studies in Biblical Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001, 82-87, Logos.
- Vos, Geerhardus. *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2003, Logos.