

## Matthew 5:17–20

### Jesus, the Fulfiller of All Scripture

#### Saturday, January 6, 2024 • Read Matthew 5:17–20

*Questions from the Scripture text: What does Jesus tell His disciples not to think about His coming (v17)? Which two portions of Scripture (implying also the third) didn't He come to destroy? What, rather, did He come to do? How does He emphasize what He is about to say in v18? What will pass away one day? But what two things won't pass until then? From what part of what had been named in v17? Until Who (v17) has done what (v18)? What might one of these disciples, who has the King in heaven, break on earth (v19)? What else might he do? How will such commandment breakers/deniers compare to other disciples? But what will some disciples do and teach? How will such compare to other disciples? What must occur before they can enter the kingdom to which they belong (v20)? What must their righteousness exceed?*

**How should believers respond to their own hearts' desire to put off the commandments of the law?** Matthew 5:17–20 prepares us for the morning sermon on the Lord's Day. In these four verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **believers, who belong to the kingdom of heaven, must do the commandments of the law by the grace of Christ, and teach others to do the same.**

**Jesus, the Fulfiller of the whole Old Testament,** v17. The Hebrew Bible is arranged into three sections: the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Sometimes, they would abbreviate the title to "Law and the Prophets." Jesus is clearly teaching that what He has come to do is not some new and different thing, but the fulfillment of the Old Testament scriptures.

Whatever else they may think or claim, it is those who oppose Jesus that are against Moses, against Isaiah, etc. Have you ever seen a "New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs"? Psalms and Proverbs are from among the "writings" portion of the Hebrew Bible. Having or printing one is not wrong per se. But there are many who have little time or use for the Old Testament out of those books. Many have done just what the Lord Jesus warned against here!

But the Old Testament is full of truth about Jesus. The Law, which established a people of God through whom blessing would come to the nations, would be fulfilled in Jesus, the Seed of Abraham and the true Israel. The former and latter Prophets, which followed the nation's unfaithfulness and God's faithfulness, would be fulfilled in Jesus, Who would be faithful where Israel hasn't and the One in Whom all blessedness would come. And the Writings, poetry that focuses especially upon the interaction between God and the souls of men, describe a relationship that could only ever be had in Christ. His obedient life, atoning death, and almighty resurrection fulfill much and secure all. His ongoing life and ministry of intercession will fulfill the rest that He has already secured.

**Especially the law (and its commandments),** v18. This heaven and earth will pass away (v18a). There will be a new heaven and earth, just as the Scripture had said (cf. Ps 102:26; Is 34:4, 51:6, 51:16, 65:17, 66:22). But the Word that was all about Jesus will not lose the slightest stroke of a pen (v18b). And that includes, especially, the law and its commandments (v19). Of all the Bible, this is what the Lord Jesus focuses upon here, insisting that it must not pass away.

There are parts that are superseded in Christ, in Whom church and kingdom are now subsumed. With the change to His priesthood, the laws governing the worship have changed (cf. Heb 7:12). This does not mean that there are no laws for worship, but that the worship on earth is ONLY that which is led by Christ from glory! Public worship must consist only in the reading, preaching, singing, praying that He leads; the sacraments that He instituted; and, the covenantal, congregational vows attested by and under His throne. Anything else is just as much strange fire under Jesus's priesthood as what Nadab and Abihu had offered under Aaron's.

When a nation submits to Christ, it must bring all of its laws into a general accord with the civil law that He had given Israel—and absolute submission to the moral law of the decalogue. But it is this last that Christ especially focuses upon here, when He speaks of "commandments." For, we will see Him showing His meaning by way of the moral law in 5:21–48. We may be sure that in every age of the church, there will be those who would renounce (refuse to obey) and denounce (teach against) one or more commandments of the decalogue. But the Lord here teaches us how to think about this.

**Jesus continues fulfilling His commandments in us, now, as He makes us doers and teachers of His commandments,** v19. So in some things, the Lord Jesus fulfills by being and doing what He was predicted to be or to do, or needed to be or to do. This is most clear in those actions by which He has accomplished our justification entirely in Himself. This is why justification is by faith *apart from* works. It is the nature of justifying faith that it does not "do" at all—in fact, justifying faith renounces all doing in order to rest entirely upon Who Jesus is and what Jesus has done.

But the Lord Jesus is not a partial Redeemer. And as v19 continues to teach, neither is He a partial Fulfiller of Scripture. In this world, His disciples already have the kingdom (cf. v3, 10), but they have not yet entered the kingdom (v20). The Scriptures teach and require that those who belong to Him be like Him. "Be holy as the Lord your God is holy," as we have heard many times, for instance, in our Leviticus studies. And now the Lord Jesus fills out that teaching in this section which will conclude "Be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (v48).

Part of growing in grace is growing in this view of Christ, and therefore in this view of a Christian. He is a whole Redeemer. He not only justifies but sanctifies and glorifies. The believer loves God's law, keeps God's law, and teaches others to do the same. We rejoice to walk in its righteous requirements, as this glorifies Christ as the great Fulfiller (cf. Rom 8:1–4).

The Lord's disciples are not all equally worth imitating and listening to. Those who do not have this view of Christ, and this diligence and delight in the Christian life, are not the ones "in the kingdom" whom you should emulate and learn from. They are still the least. They have much growing and maturing to do. The desire to be "great" in the kingdom in v19 is not a desire to be praised by others, but to be useful to them—to serve others, to teach them, to be a good example to them (cf. 20:25–28, 23:1–12; Heb 13:7–17). This Jesus-trusting, Jesus-enjoying, Jesus-devoted keeping of Jesus's undiminished commandments of the law is necessary for the one who wishes to be "great" as an elder, husband, father, mother, brother, sister, etc.

**Jesus will complete this fulfilling in each and every one, whom He brings at last to enter the kingdom that is already theirs,** v20. Finally, v20 is true both with respect to justification and with respect to sanctification/glorification. In justification, it is obvious. Those who are self-impressed with their knowledge of the law (scribes) or with their doing of the law (Pharisees) set themselves up for the greatest possible shock. If they come that way to the judgment, they will be horrified to discover that what they thought was commendable was actually damnable before God. We mustn't come before God that way on that great day, and we certainly must not come to Him that way now.

And therefore, the righteousness of our character and conduct now must also exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. Rather than minutely examining the letter of the law in order to approve our own conduct, we must bring ourselves under the minute examination of the law! Its "letter" communicates the application to our lives of the implications of God's own holy character. It is both exceedingly broad (cf. Ps 119:96) and internally exacting (cf. Heb 4:11–13). Although, by faith, believers already possess the King and the right to the kingdom (v3, 10), they do not yet possess the holiness necessary for entry into that kingdom (v20). We must live, now, as those being sanctified unto that holiness that is required for entry when we depart this world (cf. v9; 2Th 2:13–14, Heb 12:14, 1Jn 3:2–3).

Those who have Jesus, the great Fulfiller of the Scripture, ought to be growing in the keeping of His commandments (including and especially the moral law!). A great part of His fulfilling the Law is His sanctifying work in those who are united to Him.

What parts of the Ten Commandments do you most need to grow in keeping from the heart? How is Jesus's being the One Who works in you the reality that both demands this of you and promises it to you? How are you responding, in your heart and life, to His requirements? By what habits of life, and habits of thought, are you looking to Him to bring about the fulfillment of those requirements?

*Sample prayer: Lord, truly Your Son is the great Fulfiller of all Your holy Word. We thank You and praise You that He has kept the law perfectly in His own life, and even subjected Himself to its righteous condemnation of us in our own law-breaking. Jesus, alone, is all of our right standing before You. Come now, by Your Spirit, we pray, and apply His life and righteousness to our character and our conduct. Conform us to Him, so that we might be able to enter the kingdom of heaven, we ask in His Name, AMEN!*

Suggested songs: ARP119L "Evermore, O Lord" or TPH174 "The Ten Commandments"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))

Matthew 5 verse 17 through 20. These are God's words. Do not think that I came to destroy the law of the prophets, I did not come to destroy. But to fulfill for, surely I say to you. Till heaven and earth pass away. One's out, or one tittle. Well, by no means pass from the law to law is fulfilled.

Whoever therefore breaks, one of the least of these commandments and teaches men. So shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great. In the kingdom of heaven. For, I say to you that unless you're righteousness succeeds. The righteousness to the scribes and Pharisees you will, by no means enter.

The kingdom of heaven. So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent word.

Since Jesus has equated. I've been persecuted for righteousness with being persecuted for his sake. And not only currently at the bottom of the hill where he is. Teaching preaching to is. Disciples up on the hill. There are a festival of Jews gathered, but Uh, coming up in his earthly ministry, he's especially going to be Um, opposed by the scribes and the Pharisees describes who are especially proud.

Of knowing the Hebrew Bible and The Pharisees who are especially proud of doing the Hebrew Bible. The Lord Jesus. Now clarifies for his disciples that when he talks about being persecuted for righteous mistake, meaning being persecuted for his sake. He is not at all. Uh, disagreeing with or opposing the Hebrew Bible.

The Hebrew Bible is. Comes to us. And at that time came to them and Three main sections, the law of the prophets and the writings And sometimes was, Um, referred to by the simple abbreviation. The law on the prophets. So that when he says here, do not think that I came to destroy the law of the prophets.

He's in. I did not come. Uh, to eliminate destroy. Provide an alternative to. Anything in the Hebrew Bible. He says I came to fulfill. It's the same religion. That there has been ever since called began, revealing himself to man ever since God. Um, revealed his will, especially for the redemption of sinners.

Especially in the gathering. Of. Um, The children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to himself. As a church nation. Is the same religion. All the way through. Now, there are things that are promised to happen and needed to happen. And Jesus is the fulfillment to the promises in Jesus. Succeeds and does.

What is necessary? Where? Israel had failed and so there is A superceding or an obsoleting. There. And that's something that the Bible teaches us to expect. Uh, Moses himself, one of the great last things. He said was that the Lord would raise? A profit up from among their brethren.

Uh, profit, like he prophet who had replacing And that when when the Lord did raise, the great prophet to come Up. That they should listen to him. Very similar statement that Moses makes. About. Uh, About the profit to come. And the end of Deuteronomy. As God himself. Announces from heaven, at the amount of transfiguration, which by the way, On the amount of transfiguration.

I think it's um, in the Luke's account. That tells us that Moses. And Elijah were talking to Jesus about his And English translations will say things like, Uh, departure or decease. Uh, but it's literally the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word, exodus. They were talking to him about his exodus, he is the prophet he was to come.

And also Hebrews 7. The scripture says, you know, and there's a change in priesthood, there's changing law The ceremonial law and the civil law with it. Because Israel was a church and state was intimately, tied up with Um, the ironic priesthood. And the line of Aaron and all of the Uh, All of the instructions for how to draw near to God through the provision that was made in the time of that priesthood.

That's why whenever I run into a theonomist, I ask him about the cities of refuge and the high priest's death. Um, just following the instruction in Hebrew 7 says. Whether to change in priesthood, there's a change in law. Uh, the You know, the Levitical priesthood ironic priesthood is done with And the ceremonial law.

That belong to that priesthood is done with, but not because Jesus has destroyed it. But because all of those things look forward to Christ, he is the great, I priest And also the priesthood of Melchizedek taught us about Christ which we also have in the in the book of Hebrews.

But the ascension, Offering coming nearby ascension and definitely looks forward to Christ especially if you just translate it literally And so far, so there are things that are Fulfilled. In terms of, Um, obsoleting them. Because they were the shadows of which Christ is the real thing, but they were the shadows.

They weren't unrelated to Jesus. Jesus is their fulfillment. You're actually celebrating them better by coming to God through faith in Christ and coming through the veil. Uh, by his ones for all sacrifice and And so forth. There are other things that Jesus Fulfilled because they were required and no one else could do them and he did them.

Obedying perfectly in our place. Suffering, the wrath of God to take away the guilt of sin, which the blood of bulls and goats could never take away or else, they would have ceased to be offered. That they were offered year after year. Jesus was Jesus, offered himself once for all, And so, there are things Jesus fulfills by having done them himself.

This, especially ties to our justification, how you are made right with God, is not at all by what you do. It is by faith, and it is by faith alone. Only what Jesus has done and faith itself then is not a work. It is the abandoning of our doing to depend only rest, only hope only.

In who he is and what he has done. So this is what he has come. Jesus is the grateful filler. But there is more, yet that needs to be fulfilled. Because not only do we need to be made right with God. So that we have. Um, we have possession of the kingdom, right to the kingdom, citizenship.

And the kingdom. But we also need to be made right chess in our character and our conduct. If we are going to enter the kingdom, You can see. In this passage verse 17 through 20, as he's teaching the disciples, About life is subjects of the kingdom in this world.

They have the kingdom already. We made that point in verse 3 and verse 10. Uh, both of those use the present tense over against all of the other. The attitudes, which used the future tense for the blessing. Uh, they shall be, they shall inherit. They shall etc obtain. But verse 3 and verse 10.

There's is the kingdom. There's is the kingdom. And so we are all ready. Um, The disciples. Of the Lord Jesus. Those united to him by faith justified, right with God. Through him by faith all already. In possession. They belong to the kingdom, the kingdom, belongs to them. But notice verse 20, they have not yet entered the kingdom.

Justification, gives you a right to the kingdom. But it must always come with sanctification and it will. Because remember, this is a passage, especially about how Jesus is the fulfiller of all. It's not like now that you're justified, you better get sanctified or else you're going to lose your justification.

No. Of course, it's impossible. But the Christ who makes you right with God. Will always make what make each one that he makes right with God. Righteous. In

character and conduct so that they can enter the kingdom. To which they belong in, which belongs to that.

And so he's answering something here. That is very similar to When he said you are salt. So you better be salty. And not only you are light but you are light and your place has been assigned to you by god and so shine in the place where he put you before the men.

Among whom he has selected, the specific men. He has selected for you to shine among them and and now he says And, Don't. Whether it's the pressure that comes externally from others, he who do not like the commandments of god. Or whether it comes internally from that remains in your flesh.

Do not resist the commandments of the law. So, jesus fulfills all the law of the prophets and the writings But here in his wisdom, he teaches us, especially Uh, about the not passing away are the prophets are going to pass away. Of course not are the And before the heavens and earth passed away.

Of course, the prophets went. Well, the writing's pet. No, of course not. But is especially the law and the commandments of the law. Very specifically verse 19. That we are tempted to set aside. Say, oh well, jesus have made them their fulfilled in that way. I'm justified. Yeah, just Wiper hands and we're done.

No. Jesus is not a partial savior, he doesn't justify without sanctifying and glorified and he's not a partial fulfiller. The commandments of the law. Continue to be fulfilled in our Walking according to the righteous requirements of the law. There's a fulfillment that jesus accomplishes in the sanctification of believers that comes through them.

That is ongoing. And it's that ongoing. Fulfillment, then that he's speaking of in verse 18, Because he's gonna live obediently and dietoningly and rise. All mightily. But having an earth have not yet. Passed away. This heaven and this earth. Have not yet passed away. And so, the law continues every yud.

Continues. Yeah, this Tiny little letter. It's a very important. Of course it's the first, Uh, letter in the name, y'all way. There's a letter that changes. Uh, The tense of a verb from perfect to imperfect. Throughout the Um, the entire old testament from a Completed action whether in the present or usually in the past.

An ongoing action. In the present, or Uh, generally or However, it's Is important. A tittle is a very important, tiny little stroke. The terms. It could turn a ration to a dollar. An r sound into a d sound. And of course, you As you can imagine that, that gives words their meaning, but Here, he's not so much talking about what the yode or the tittle does.

He's saying the smallest stroke of his law. There's not going to pass away. You know, we continue to fulfill this ceremonial code and coming to go out through Christ. If we come to god and any other way, then he has commanded now through christ. And his priesthood, it is just too much as much of violation of the religious law of god as native.

And by who offering a fire that the lord did not commanded So, if we come to him, Particularly in the public worship if you're anything other than The reading and preaching and singing. Where jesus sings his father's. Praise in the middle midst of the assembly where he declares his father's name to his brother and we are not to refuse him who speaks from heaven.

And the praying in, which he always lifts to intercede, and he commands us to come to his throne, which is for us, not just a throne of glory, but a throne of grace. And the praying is consecrated by his blood. The supper that and baptism, which he in his authority and heaven and earth.

And as the great high priest. Have instituted and commanded. And those are the only sacraments institute and commanded if we Add any to them. Then we we break his law. But then, especially not just Those fulfillment of. The ceremonial law. Which has been obsolete and yet. Um, by that ceremonial law now, that is in him.

We have a new ceremonial laws that were That, that is. Consists of that which christ himself leads from heaven as our great high priest. He didn't come and cancel, the ironic priesthood with those regulations and make it a free-for-all So now you're gonna A billion priests can do whatever they want.

And god will be happy with whatever we come up with. Which is insane. But then, especially the the moral law. The ten commandments the decalog. As sophia has been telling us these weeks. So whoever, therefore breaks, one of the least of these commandments. And teachers, men's social be called least.

And the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches them shall be called great. And the kingdom of heaven.

And so even among the disciples, there are those who Uh, whom we should not. Imitate and whom we should not listen to. Their least they are immature. They're like babies. They have not grown much in wisdom. Or a favor with god and and favor with men. They're not qualified to be elders.

We certainly hope that they aren't parents. Or that if they are parents, they had better. Mature quickly for the sake of their children. Okay, so there are those who are lesser and those who are greater Greater in in the kingdom. Uh, does not mean. Those who are More valuable, or Um, Or who lord it over others.

Who are more impressive in themselves? No greater than the kingdom. Are those who serve? The lord jesus is going to. To make this point again, and Um,

Chapter 20 and chapter 23. The. Apostle paul makes this point about himself. To imitate him as he imitates christ. Um, hebrews 13 tells us to Uh, remember those in the lord has set over us whom the lord. Who spoke the word of the lord to us? And to imitate their faith, knowing the Uh, the outcome of their conduct.

So, the lord jesus says, Those who are great among you or those who are the servants among you. In chapter 20, in chapter 23. But here. He gives us a another, an additional way of recognizing them. They do and teach to do. The commandments of god. So, if you run into someone who's an antinovian, They said, jesus has obeyed the law in my place and And in your place, and you don't need to Obey the commandments of the law anymore.

Then, you know, jesus told you That those people would be in the, there would be people like that in the kingdom. He just says they're the least. They're not fit to be teachers, don't model what they do, don't listen to what they teach.

However, those whom he is calling to the ministry to service which is what is greatness. They're the ones who Not only rest in the lord jesus. Having come done entirely. What is necessary in our behalf that we would be made right with god, but they are also ones. To by the by the union with christ and the life and mind, and goodness of christ being applied to them by jesus's own spirit.

They love god's commandments and they don't do them. Merely in an outward way like the scribes and the Pharisees. Describes in the Pharisees. They carried about the letter of the law. Why? Because the scribe was proud of how much he knew. And, The Pharisee was proud of how much he did.

And so they would screw denise the law. To get the The borders exactly. Correct. And especially with the ulterior motive of Of thinking of the law in a way that would approve of them and make them great. That's not the right way of the use of god's law. We do not scrutinize the law, the law scrutinizes us.

And that's actually how Jesus is going to proceed and the rest of the chapter. To show the right use of the commandments of God. Showing how they go to our hearts to our motivations. That even as we have his commandments in our interaction with other people, Uh we are remembering that that is an interaction with God himself, who made those people.

And not only does this. Not only is this, an important factor or a Um, Not only is this a reality in the sanctification? Of a believer verse 19. It was speaking especially to this life and Whom to imitate and tend to listen to, as As those. In whom, Uh, Jesus is doing the sort of work that That is a great.

Example to us. There's also necessary to be completed in our glorification verse 20. Numbers 20 is not talking about. Possession of the kingdom. Now belonging to the kingdom. Now, It's talking about entering it at last. For, I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds, The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will, by no means enter.

The kingdom of heaven. How dreadful it'll be? To be stuck in the position of a scribe of Pharisee. To still be in that condition in the last day. To think. Or to be impressed with how much, you know, the Bible is ascribed. Or to be impressed with how much you do the Bible as a Pharisee.

And derive at the judgment and think that that which which you were impressed with. And or that you would be commended for Turns out to be. That for which you are condemned. It was so far short of being worthy of heaven, it was actually worthy of hell. Full of all kinds of error.

And lack of love to God and breaking of his law. So that his wrath burns, hot. Against that which self-impressed men think that they will be praised for It's a, certainly, our righteousness, must exceed the righteousness and scribes in the Pharisees. And the last day, not only the righteousness, that gives us a right standing with God, but if we are going to live in the new heavens and the new earth, In which righteousness dwells.

Then we too have to be righteous in our character and our conduct And so, Hebrews 12 tells us without holiness, you will not see the Lord. First, John 3 tells us. That it is only those who are pure, who will be able to see him as he is and those who helped us purify themselves as he is pure.

A Matthew 5 verse 20 says, unless your righteousness succeeds, the righteousness describes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. And then he goes on to talk about our character and our conduct For the next 27 verses. With which he concludes. Therefore you shall be perfect.

Just as your father in heaven is perfect. And so, yes, our justification. Gives us a citizenship. A belonging to the kingdom. But if we are going to enter it at the last, when we are done, With this life. Then we will have to be perfectly holy on that day.

And how would that happen? Well, Jesus, the grateful filler. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect and holiness. Not if the souls of the believers buy their death have achieved perfection. And yet, if you belong to Jesus, the grateful filler in your justification. Now, And Jesus the grateful filler.

And your glorification, then. Then you must ought out of love to him and expression of your union within Belong to Jesus to grateful filler. Of the commandments of law in your sanctification. Now This is something that just a few months ago. Uh, we came across from Romans 8. There's therefore now no condemnation to those or in Christ Jesus.

Justification. Who do not walk according to the flesh. But according to the spirit sanctification, For the law of the spirit of life in Christ, Jesus. It's the same law as the same commandments. It's just in the believer's life. It is. It is being handled by the spirit. Who is applying Jesus to us?

Who's applying the life of Jesus to us? Has made me free from the law of sin and death. And they're not just. Um, God's commandments, which accused me of sin. And condemn me to death. But in this case, you remember, The law of sin or the law of death.

Um, Is referring to how Uh, the flesh is still always with us. And yet it is not our master. For what the law. Could not do and that it was weak through the flesh. So, the commandments themselves could not do. God did by sending his own son. In the likeness of sinful flesh.

On account of sin. He condemned sin in the flesh that The righteous requirement of the law. Might be fulfilled. It's the same language. Jesus is using here, isn't it? Came to fulfill the law. That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us. Who do not walk, it's not justification, is it?

Because it's talking about us and our walking. According to the flesh. But according to the spirit, And so Jesus is the great fulfiller of law. And one of the big parts of that fulfillment, is his ongoing work right now in your life. Then your sanctification and your growing. And understanding and obeying.

The commandments of his moral law. The ten commandments. And so, let us To continue to rejoice to belong to him. And continue to respond to him. According to his word, as he has told us.

My father in heaven. We thank you that you have given to us. To be yours in your son with right? That your spirit would. We pray that your spirit would continue. Applying to us the life and righteousness of your son. That in him. We might love you with all our hearts, all mind and strength and From our hearts also love our neighbor as ourself.

As defined by. The ten commandments. Thank you for speaking to us. So clearly So that when Those who would confuse us. Arise in the church and say, differently, we would be able to recognize them. Because those who are leased in the kingdom, Give us we pray. Humility. To be servants of all.

Give us, we pray. Love and devotion to you love for your law. We're asking Jesus name, amen.