

Jesus on the Bible

Text: Matthew 5:17-20

Introduction: Let me ask you a question. Don't answer it out loud. Just think about it for a minute. Who is the authority in your life?

I realize that we all have different authorities in our lives. Kids and teenagers, you are under the authority of your parents. You're about to go back to school where you will be under the authority of your teachers. Many of you will go to work tomorrow where you will have a boss who has authority over you. We all live under the authority of the government to a certain extent. Even in the church, elders exercise shepherding authority under the lordship of the Chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus.

But what I really want you to think about this morning is this: Who is the ultimate authority in your life?

We live in an age and culture of self-autonomy. Our culture says that the highest authority is self. Follow your heart. Live your truth. Do what makes you happy. No one has the right to tell you how to live.

So, when we come to the kinds of questions that Jesus raises in the Sermon on the Mount concerning things like anger, lust, and marriage, we're tempted to think that what matters most is what we think about these things. What works for you may not work for me. Afterall, isn't the most important thing in life whether or not I am happy? Do what makes you happy. That's the wisdom of the age.

But Jesus has something different to say in His Sermon on the Mount. God is our Creator. Therefore, God is our authority. He designed the world, and He made us. He knows how life in this world is supposed to be lived. And He has revealed His design in His Word.

I've titled this sermon series covering the Sermon on the Mount *Jesus on the Christian Life*. What we discover this morning is that the Bible is crucial to our understanding of what Jesus requires of us as His followers. The Bible is not just a book. It is God's Word. The inspired, inerrant, infallible Word of God.

That's what Jesus believed about the Bible. And that's what He calls us to believe as well as His followers. And not only to believe, but to live our lives in light of that truth. In submission to God and His Word.

We see this in Matthew 5:17-20 in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Go ahead and turn there in your Bible. Matthew 5:17-20. You can find it on page 760 in the black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, we invite you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave.

(Read Matthew 5:17-20...Pray)

Jesus is clear that **followers of Jesus believe, obey, and teach the Bible.**

But before Jesus tells us what our relationship to the Bible should be, He first describes His own relationship with the Bible. If we are going to follow Jesus, we must learn to view the Bible the way Jesus viewed the Bible.

And what we see first in Matthew 5:17-20 is that...

I. Jesus fulfilled the Bible (Matthew 5:17).

Look at verse 17. (Read vs. 17)

A. Jesus says, "DO NOT THINK that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets."

- 1. The grammatical construction here essentially means, "Do not even entertain this thought!" (Quarles, 89).**
- 2. There must have been some in Jesus' day who were tempted to think that Jesus had come to abolish the Law and the Prophets.**
- 3. We do know that throughout His earthly ministry, the religious leaders often questioned Jesus about His and His disciples' obedience to the Law.**

- a. We think about the fact that Jesus could often be seen associating and even eating with sinners and tax collectors. In Matthew 9, we see that the Pharisees even asked Jesus' disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Of course, we know that Jesus responded, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.... I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:11-13). Jesus was not rejecting God's Law by eating with sinners and tax collectors. He was actually giving His attention to the weightier matters of the Law.
 - b. I also think about Jesus' relationship to the Sabbath. In Matthew 12, the Pharisees accused the disciples of violating the Sabbath. They said, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." Jesus responded with an example from the life of David and then said, "For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:1-8). Again, He was not rejecting God's Law. It is His Law. He is God.
 - c. Then in Matthew 15, the Pharisees and scribes questioned Jesus, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." Jesus responded, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matt. 15:1-3). It's true that Jesus was not much concerned with the traditions of man. But He was very much concerned with the Law of God.
4. Jesus must have had the religious leaders in mind when He spoke these words in verse 17 because He then mentions them directly in verse 20.
 5. But we also know that there have been those throughout church history who have claimed essentially that Jesus abolished the Law and the prophets.
- a. In fact, the second-century heretic Marcion rewrote the New Testament by eliminating its Old Testament references (Hughes, 96).
 - b. And do you know what else Marcion eliminated from his New Testament? This passage we're looking at this morning where Jesus says, "DO NOT THINK that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets."
 - c. It wasn't convenient for his system of theology, so Marcion just eliminated it.
 - d. Some of Marcion's disciples actually took it a step further. They rearranged the verbs so the verse would read, "I have not come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, but to abolish them!" (Hughes, 96).
6. And truthfully, people today do the same thing. There are some who teach a complete discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments where now that Jesus has come, we are no longer bound by the Old Testament Scriptures.
7. But most are far less sophisticated in their theological reasoning than that. For many, it's not that they have a theological reason for why Christians today are no longer bound by God's Law. It's just that they don't like God's Law and so they choose not to obey it.
8. The problem for those who would seek to abolish God's Law is this verse. Jesus said, "DO NOT THINK that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets."
- B. He said, "I have NOT come to abolish them."**
1. Now, let's be clear about what Jesus is talking about when He refers to "the Law or the Prophets." He's talking specially about the Old Testament Scriptures. "Law and the Prophets" was a way of referring to the Hebrew Scripture. The Old Testament.
 2. And as Danny Akin writes in his commentary on this passage, "What Jesus affirmed about the Old Testament he also promised concerning the New Testament."

3. **Jesus is talking about the Bible. The Bible is one book. Yes, 66 books, divided between two testaments. But it is ultimately all one book. One story. The story of God and His work in the world. The New Testament doesn't make any sense without the Old Testament. And the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in the New Testament.**

C. In fact, that's exactly what Jesus said, isn't it? "I have not come to abolish them but to FULFILL them."

1. **Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets.**
2. **This is a staggering claim! In fact, it's difficult for us as 21st century Christians to fully appreciate how staggering this claim would have been to a first century Jew sitting on a hillside in Galilee hearing Jesus make this claim for the very first time.**
3. **Jesus is talking to people who knew the Old Testament Scriptures. He's talking to people who loved the Old Testament Scriptures. And He says, "Yeah, it's all about me."**
4. **And Jesus isn't bluffing. Just consider for a moment how every book of the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, is about Jesus (J.D. Greear, Sermon at Cross Conference 2019). This list isn't original to me, but I think it will help you see how the whole Bible is about Jesus.**
 - a. **In Genesis, Jesus is the word of God creating the heavens and the earth. He's the promised seed of the woman who would destroy the serpent.**
 - b. **In Exodus, Jesus is the Passover lamb who will take away the sins of the whole world. He's the tabernacle, the place where God's glory dwells.**
 - c. **In Leviticus, Jesus is the high priest whose blood alone can atone for our sin.**
 - d. **In Numbers, Jesus is the guide who leads us through the wilderness as a cloud by day and fire by night.**
 - e. **In Deuteronomy, Jesus is the greater prophet that Moses promised.**

- f. **In Joshua, Jesus is the victorious conqueror who leads us into the promised land.**
- g. **In Judges, Jesus is the ultimate rescuer from our sinful rebellion.**
- h. **In Ruth, Jesus is the kinsman redeemer who pays the price to bring us into His family.**
- i. **In 1 and 2 Samuel, Jesus is the shepherd king who fights giants on our behalf.**
- j. **In 1 and 2 Kings, Jesus is the righteous ruler we long for with whom no leader in any country can ever compare.**
- k. **In 1 and 2 Chronicles, Jesus is the true temple.**
- l. **In Ezra, Jesus is the faithful scribe.**
- m. **In Nehemiah, Jesus is the rebuilders of that which is broken.**
- n. **In Esther, Jesus is the one who risks His life to save His people from destruction.**
- o. **In Job, Jesus is the sovereign ruler over Satan who will deliver us from suffering.**
- p. **In Psalms, Jesus is the one who holds our tears and hears all our cries.**
- q. **In Proverbs, Jesus is wisdom personified.**
- r. **In Ecclesiastes, Jesus is the one who brings true meaning amidst the meaninglessness of life.**
- s. **In Song of Solomon, Jesus is the lover of our souls.**
- t. **In Isaiah, it's Jesus who is Emmanuel. God with us. The child who is born, the son who is given, whose name shall be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father and prince of peace. Jesus is the suffering servant who would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities and, by His stripes, we are healed.**
- u. **In Jeremiah, Jesus is the new covenant keeper.**
- v. **In Lamentations, Jesus is the faithful one who meets you with new mercy every single morning.**
- w. **In Ezekiel, Jesus is the Spirit who gives life to dead, dry bones.**
- x. **In Daniel, Jesus is the ancient of days who is the fourth man in the fire.**

- y. In Hosea, Jesus is the faithful husband who never gives up on His family.
- z. In Joel, Jesus is the only one who can restore the years the locusts have eaten.
- aa. In Amos, Jesus is our burden bearer.
- bb. In Obadiah, Jesus is our perfect judge.
- cc. In Jonah, Jesus is the Savior from the storm.
- dd. In Micah, Jesus is the promised ruler to be born in Bethlehem.
- ee. In Nahum, Jesus is the avenger for all who trust in God.
- ff. In Habakkuk, Jesus is our joy when our fields are empty.
- gg. In Zephaniah, Jesus is the great redeemer.
- hh. In Haggai, Jesus is the cleansing fountain.
- ii. In Zechariah, Jesus is the humble king riding on a donkey and the pierced one whom every eye will eventually behold.
- jj. And in Malachi, Jesus is the son of righteousness risen with healing in His wings.
- kk. In Matthew, Jesus is revealed as the King of the Jews.
- ll. In Mark, Jesus is the Son of God.
- mm. In Luke, Jesus is the Savior who was born to us in the City of David, Christ the Lord.
- nn. In John, Jesus is the Word made flesh, dwelling among us, full of grace and truth.
- oo. In Acts, Jesus is Christ the risen Lord who proclaims salvation to the nations.
- pp. In Romans, Jesus is the justifier.
- qq. In 1 and 2 Corinthians, Jesus is the Spirit at work in the churches.
- rr. In Galatians, Jesus is the righteousness imputed to us by faith.
- ss. In Ephesians, Jesus is our divine armor.
- tt. In Philippians, Jesus is the God who meets our every need.
- uu. In Colossians, Jesus is the firstborn over all creation.

- vv. In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Jesus descends from heaven to meet His people in the clouds with a shout.
- ww. In 1 and 2 Timothy, Jesus is the one mediator between God and man.
- xx. In Titus, Jesus is our faithful pastor.
- yy. In Philemon, Jesus is our redeemer who restores us to service.
- zz. In Hebrews, Jesus is our great High Priest.
- aaa. In James, Jesus is the life in our faith.
- bbb. In 1 and 2 Peter, Jesus is our living cornerstone.
- ccc. In 1, 2, and 3 John, Jesus is our righteous advocate who stands by the Father pleading His righteousness in our place.
- ddd. In Jude, Jesus is God our Savior, the one who presents us faultless in His presence with great joy.
- eee. And in Revelation, Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. The first and the last. The Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world. The King of kings and the Lord of lords.

5. Goshen, the whole Bible is about Jesus. It finds its fulfillment in Him. This is why, no matter where we are in the Bible. Whether in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. Or a cave in Israel where King Saul is trying to kill David in 1 Samuel. Wherever we are. The sermon is about Jesus. Because the Bible is about Jesus.
6. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. He came to fulfill them.

Jesus fulfilled the Bible. We also see in our text that...

II. Jesus affirmed the Bible (Matthew 5:18).

Look at verse 18. (Read vs. 18)

- A. Jesus made clear in these words His affirmation of even the smallest details of Scripture.

1. The first word of verse 18 is the Greek word “amen.” Most English translations say “truly.” The KJV says “verily.” Jesus is saying, “Listen to this. This is the truth. I speak on my authority as the Son of God.”
 2. He says, “Until heaven and earth pass away.” Did you know that heaven and earth are going to pass away? “The end of the age is coming. Heaven and earth are going to pass away,” Jesus says.
 3. But until then, “Not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law.”
 4. The Prophet Isaiah said it this way in our Scripture reading this morning: “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever” (Is. 40: 8).
 5. The ESV says “iota.” Some translations say “the smallest letter.” The iota is the smallest Greek letter. Jesus probably referred to the Hebrew letter yod which is the smallest Hebrew letter. It looks kind of like an apostrophe. Jesus says not the smallest letter. Not even the smallest mark of a letter. Will pass from the Law.
 6. “Law” here refers to the same thing as “Law or the Prophets” in verse 17. In this context, it’s shorthand for the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus is not isolating one part of the Old Testament from the rest. It’s all God’s Word. None of it will pass away. Meaning none of it will lose its force or become invalid.
 7. “Until all is accomplished.” Until all WHAT is accomplished? Everything that the Bible records. Everything that the Bible promises. Until Jesus returns and establishes His eternal kingdom.
- B. One of the advantages of having lived a little bit of life is you learn that change is inevitable.**
1. As a child, it’s hard to understand that the way things are is not the way that they have always been. As a child, I couldn’t have imagined a time when there wasn’t a telephone or TV or indoor bathroom in every house. Now, my kids can’t imagine a time when there were no cell phones or high-speed internet or streaming TV.

2. The clothing and hair styles of the past look really strange when you’re a child looking at your parents’ old yearbook. How could they have ever dressed like that or done their hair like that?
3. But the truth is that life in this world is full of change, isn’t it? Cultural norms and expectations change. Feelings and emotions change. Our desires and affections change. Political leaders change. The economy changes. The weather changes. Our bodies change. Even our lives change. Sometimes it seems like everything changes.
4. But I want you to know this morning that God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And His Word never changes. Heaven and earth will pass away. But the Word of the Lord will stand forever.

Jesus fulfilled the Bible. Jesus affirmed the Bible. And #3...

III. Jesus required obedience to the Bible (Matthew 5:19a).

Look at verse 19: “Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments...will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them...will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

- A. If Jesus did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, who are we to relax any of His commands?**
1. Remember, I asked you at the beginning of the sermon, “Who is the ultimate authority in your life?”
 2. When you take it upon yourself to relax one of God’s commands, you are in effect claiming that you are the ultimate authority in your life.
 3. But Goshen, that isn’t true. You are not the ultimate authority in your life. God is! He is your Creator. He is your God. And He is your authority. Therefore, what He says goes.
 4. Jesus would later say, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (Jn. 14:15).
 5. John the Apostle wrote, “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 Jn. 2:3).

B. Jesus said that greatness in His kingdom requires obeying His commands.

- 1. Jesus turned conventional wisdom on its head. I think of the road to Capernaum in Mark 9 where Jesus' disciples argued over which of them was the greatest. There Jesus said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mk. 9:35). Here Jesus says, "Whoever does [these commandments] ...will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."**
- 2. We have lots of ideas about what it takes to become great, don't we? Good-education. Good job. Lots of money. A good family of origin with the right pedigree and connections. Maybe a little luck added in. Sometimes we even think that greatness requires being willing to break a commandment or two here or there. But Jesus says that true greatness is found in doing the commandments.**
- 3. Parents, think about the kind of greatness you desire for your kids. Most parents want their children to be successful in life. But how is success measured? By what kind of job they get? By how much money they make?**
- 4. Jesus measures success by obedience to Him and His commands. That's the kind of success we should want for our children.**
- 5. Kids, teenagers, what kind of greatness do you desire for yourself? There's nothing wrong with studying and working hard. You should do those things. Pursue your interests. Do the best you can at everything you do. Do it all as to the Lord. But never forget how Jesus measures greatness. Obey Him. Keep His commands. Be unwilling to relax or break even one of His commands.**

Jesus fulfilled the Bible. Jesus affirmed the Bible. Jesus required obedience to the Bible. And #4...

IV. Jesus commanded teaching the Bible (Matthew 5:19b).

This is the other part of verse 19: "Whoever teaches others to [relax one of the least of these commandments] will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever...teaches [these commandments] will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

A. See, Jesus says it's not just about keeping these commandments ourselves. We also have to teach them to others.

- 1. I think here of Jesus' final words in The Great Commission in Matthew 28, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, TEACHING them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).**
- 2. As followers of Jesus, we have the words of life. We have the truth. We know that God is our Creator. We know how life in this world is supposed to be lived. We know that we don't measure up to God's standard. And neither does anyone else. We know that the path that leads to life is repentance of sin and faith in the Lord Jesus. We know that when we turn from our sin and put our faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit of God takes up residence inside of us and enables us to live lives of obedience to God.**
- 3. And Goshen, there's a lost world around us that needs to know these truths as well. In your workplace. In your school. On your sports team. At your gym. Among your friends. And even in your own family. God wants to use you to teach people His commandments. Not ultimately so they can be good but so they can have life and have it more abundantly. See, we sometimes mistakenly think that following Jesus and His commands will hinder our lives. But Jesus says it's the only way to true life. The kind of lives we were created by God to live.**

B. I want you to think about the responsibility God has given you to teach His commandments.

- 1. For some of you, it's in your home and family with your own children and grandchildren.**
- 2. Some of you are doing it here in our church with Sunday School, or AWANA, or Youth Ministry. Oh, how important those ministries are as we teach the next generation to do His commandments.**
- 3. Can I just mention nursery for a minute? The nursery is one of the most crucial ministries of our church, and it's one of the ones that we have the hardest time staffing. When you serve in the nursery, you get the opportunity to minister to our littlest ones and teach them through your love that Jesus loves them. But not only that, you minister to their families by allowing them to be here and sit under the teaching and preaching of God's Word. I wonder if maybe the application this morning for some of you would be simply this. Reach out to our children's director Laura either through email or phone call and volunteer to be added to the nursery rotation. If everyone who is capable of serving in the nursery took their turn in the nursery, no one would have to serve more than once every other month. But as things currently stand, we're constantly scrambling to try to staff the nursery. And I can just tell you that there's nothing more discouraging to those who do serve than that.**
- 4. Goshen, we want everything we do as a church to be focused on the marching orders of the Lord Jesus in The Great Commission. Making disciples. Teaching them to observe all that Jesus has commanded.**

Jesus fulfilled the Bible. Jesus affirmed the Bible. Jesus required obedience to the Bible. Jesus commanded teaching the Bible. And finally...

V. Jesus revealed the heart of the Bible (Matthew 5:20).

We're going to talk more about this in the weeks to come, but look at verse 20. (Read vs. 20)

This was a shocking statement for Jesus to make. We tend to think of the scribes and Pharisees as the bad guys. And for good reason. They opposed Jesus at every turn and ultimately had Him crucified.

But to the average person on the street in Jesus' day, this was shocking. The scribes and Pharisees were passionate about God's Law. The Pharisees had identified 248 regulations and 365 prohibitions in God's Law, and they were committed to keeping every one of them. In fact, they even made extra laws to form a fence around God's laws so they wouldn't even come close to breaking any of God's laws.

And now Jesus says, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Impossible! How could anyone's righteousness ever exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees?

See, the problem with the scribes and the Pharisees is that they were concerned with outward righteousness. The letter of the law. But Jesus says it's about more than that. Jesus is concerned with not just the letter of the law but the heart. And we're going to see that very clearly as we make our way through the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.

Conclusion: Let's make one thing clear as we close. Jesus is not teaching here that we earn our salvation by our righteousness. It's not our obedience to the commandments that gets us into heaven.

The only way for you to spend eternity with God your Creator in heaven is for you to turn from your sin and put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But when you do that, the Spirit of God takes up residence inside of you. And not only does the Spirit enable you to obey the letter of God's Law. The Spirit gives you a love for God's Law and enables you to pursue an inward righteousness that far exceeds the external righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. May God do this good work in each one of us.