

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 5:17-18 | What Jesus Says About The Bible
September 18, 2022

WELCOME:

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 5.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

REVIEW:

Last Sunday, we learned what it means for Christians to be salt and light.

We learned about our identity as children of God.

Jesus said, “You are... salt and light.”

He stated a fact and summarized our function, purpose, and role as Disciples.

And we learned that we are not to go against our identity—

We are not to lose our saltiness.

We are not to hide our light.

LW Keypoints:

1. We are not only to enjoy God but to proclaim God!
2. You can't have God's truth without God's people.

INTRODUCTION:

Well, in today's Scripture passage Jesus makes a transition in His preaching.

After He tells the Disciples who they are—He now tells them who He is.

But He doesn't do it directly.

Jesus chooses to reveal His identity through the Scriptures.

Jesus uses the very Book that has always been questioned and attacked in some form or fashion.

Some of the most common questions today are,

- “How can we trust the Bible?”
- “Isn’t it full of contradictions and errors?”
- “Why would we take this ancient book seriously anyway?”
- “We don’t have any original manuscripts!”
- “It was written by men and not God!”

Well, if you’re also asking those kinds of questions—good news—those are the things that Jesus addresses today.

He doesn’t address them directly but indirectly.

So the over-arching question is this: “What does Jesus have to say about the Bible?”

And how does that impact you today?

Why do you care what Jesus has to say about the Bible?

Well, dear friends, let’s find out because it touches on something that we hear about nearly every day in the news or on social media.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God’s Word.

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:17-20 CSB

Matthew 5:17— “Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”

Matthew 5:18— For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.

Matthew 5:19— Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:20— For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

***This is the Word of the Lord for River Bible Church.*

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 5:17— “Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”

Why would Jesus say, “Don't think, don't suppose, don't misunderstand why I'm here.”

Is it possible that Jesus says this because he knows that people are talking about Him?

And they're making their own assumptions about Him and His work.

Why are people speculating?

Why are people drawing specific conclusions about Jesus' personality and work?

Well, Jesus doesn't act like the other Rabbi's.

Jesus hangs out with women.

Jesus spends time with sinners.

He also doesn't teach like the other rabbis.

He has an authority that they don't have.

He performs miracles and forgives sinners.

Jesus also stands up to the Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees.

Have you noticed that Jesus never identifies Himself with any sect of Judaism—Pharisee, Scribe, Sadducee, or Zealot?

He doesn't associate with any of those groups.

In other words, He doesn't choose a denomination—baptist, methodist, Lutheran.

Jesus also has the audacity to correct each one of these groups in their theological misinterpretations of Scripture.

So people know that Jesus is different, there's no doubt about that—but they really don't know why.

In their estimation, Jesus seems to be this rogue Rabbi that is ignoring thousands of years of law and tradition.

He appears to be a rule breaker with His own agenda.

And it's this context that Jesus says, "*don't think.*"

Remember when you were a kid, and someone said, "*Don't even think about it!*"

That's the tone in which Jesus speaks.

Jesus is going to set the record straight right here an right now.

Matthew 5:17— "Don't think that I came."

Came from where?

Where did Jesus come from?

If you asked Jesus' mother, Mary, she would say that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, and now lives in Capernaum.

But is Jesus referring to his earthly lineage and heritage?

Or is this "coming" language hinting at something much more profound?

Is Jesus giving us a clue about His preexistence? It could be.

John 1:1—*In the beginning was the Word (Jesus), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

John 1:2—*He (Jesus) was with God in the beginning.*

So Jesus' preexistence is a possibility.

But our Gospel writer, Matthew, also writes this kind of "coming" language later in the Gospel for both John the Baptizer and Jesus.

Matthew 11:18—*For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!'*

Matthew 11:19—*The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'*

So which one is it?

Is Matt referring to Jesus' earthly existence or His preexistence?

Well, when we look at Matthew's original audience, which were Jewish Christians. *Jews*

And we look at Matthew's theme for the Gospel itself—Jesus is the King/Messiah...

There's a good chance that this phrase hints at Jesus' preexistence.

Regardless, Jesus begins this section of his sermon with a warning:

Matthew 5:17— "Don't think that I came to abolish..."

Here we have the first instance of a significant word—*abolish*.

It's the same word used for the destruction of the Temple (Matt. 24:2; 26:61)

Your translation may say, "*Set aside, destroy, do away with, or throw down.*"

The word picture here is that Jesus didn't come to overthrow or destroy what was

previously written in Scripture ~~from the very beginning.~~

Matthew 5:17— "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law..."

The Jews had a lot of laws.

613 of them in the OT. *Ten Commandments summarize them.*

Within those 600-plus laws, there are three categories of OT Law. *ceremonial*

The moral, the judicial, and the ceremonial law.

So what law or set of laws is Jesus talking about?

Notice that Jesus says, "*The Law.*"

He includes a definite article (**the**) along with a capital L for Law.

The Law represents the Mosaic Law— The law of Moses found in the first five books of the Bible.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The Jews called these five books *the Torah*.

The Hebrew word Torah means to guide and instruct.

Matthew 5:17— “Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets.”

A-ha! Another clue.

The Prophets include the rest of the OT—Joshua all the way through Malachi.

And when you combine *The Law with the Prophets*, that equals the entire Old Testament—the disciples would have immediately understood what Jesus was saying. (Matt. 11:13; Luke 16:16.)

Pause... We know that God's Law is fundamental.

But what's the deal with the prophets?

Why does Jesus, along with the rest of Scripture, combine them together?

To find that answer, it's important to look at the role of the Prophet.

A great definition of a prophet comes from the book of Exodus when ~~the Lord~~ tells Moses that He has chosen Moses to set the Israelites free from slavery.

Moses makes a ton of excuses—one of those excuses is that he can't speak well.

God says, no problem, your Brother Aaron speaks well....

+ **Exodus 4:16**— *He (Aaron) will speak to the people for you. He will serve as a mouth for you, and you will serve as God to him.*

So, in other words, God has purposed that The Prophets correctly interpret the Law.

Now, remember, the prophets were not popular men.

They gave warnings, rebuked, and called out people to repent of their sins.

They also notified, advised, and even reprimanded the kings regarding their own sin.

Many of the prophets were killed because of the truth that was proclaimed from their lips.

Verse seventeen continues...

+ **Matthew 5:17**— *Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish— but to fulfill.*

What does Jesus mean by fulfilling the law?

We have several options.

It could mean that Jesus was perfectly obedient to the law—and He ~~did that~~ ^{was}.

Jesus kept every part of the law perfectly.

Jesus is the perfect model of always doing the right thing at the right time.

Jesus did what you and I could not do.

He kept not just the Ten Commandments—but Jesus says that he came to fulfill
 The Law.

How did Jesus fulfill all 613 commandments found in the OT?

Did He do that through the Gospels? He did—but not the way we normally think.
 Yes, obedience was a part of the filling. — But here's the deal.
 Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament Law by being the fulfillment Himself.

So, in other words, Jesus didn't only preach, teach and interpret the law—

He is The (definite article) Law (capital L).
 ↳ singular — there is only one.

And this is where it gets really fun!

From the first page of Genesis 1:1, all the way to Malachi 4:6— the Old Testament points to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The people, places and things in the OT or a mere shadow or type of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Let's take a look and see how Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT Law!

If you would please turn your Bibles to the front where the Table of Contents is located.

What I would like to do is give you a big picture of how the OT points to Jesus.

In Genesis, Jesus is the seed of the woman.

In Exodus, Jesus is the Passover Lamb.

In Leviticus, Jesus is the High Priest.

In Numbers, Jesus is the One who tests the Israelites.

In Deuteronomy, Jesus is the Prophet, Moses.

In Joshua, Jesus is the Divine Warrior.

In Judges, Jesus is the Judge Himself.

In Ruth, Jesus is the Kinsman Redeemer.

In 1 and 2 Samuel, Jesus is the Davidic Covenant.

In Kings and Chronicles, Jesus is the preeminent King.

In Ezra, Jesus is the scribe.

In Nehemiah, Jesus is the builder of the broken wall.

In Esther, Jesus is Mordecai.

In Job, Jesus is the Redeemer.

In Psalms, Jesus is the Shepherd.

In Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, Jesus is wisdom.

In Song of Solomon, Jesus is Bridegroom.

In Isaiah, Jesus is the Prince of Peace.

In Jeremiah and Lamentations, Jesus is the weeping Prophet.

In Ezekiel, Jesus is the four-faced man.

In Daniel, Jesus is the fourth man in the fiery furnace.

In Hosea, Jesus is the husband.

In Joel, Jesus is “The Day of the Lord.”

In Amos, Jesus is the burden-bearer.

In Obadiah, Jesus is the Savior.

In Jonah, Jesus is Compassion.

In Micah, Jesus is The Requirement.

In Nahum, Jesus is the avenger.

In Habakkuk, Jesus is The Judgment.

In Zephaniah, Jesus is mighty to save.

In Haggai, Jesus is the Restorer.

In Zechariah, Jesus is the rider on a red horse.

And finally, in Malachi, Jesus is the Lord of Armies.

Dear friends, Jesus fulfills the OT Law because He is THE theme of the Old Testament.

Somehow and some way—Jesus is on every page of the OT.

—So that's the big picture

But let's drill down—just a little bit more.

Jesus is the scarlet thread that ties the OT to the New.

And there is one particular item that helps us understand this truth.

That item is the Tabernacle— which eventually turns into the Temple.

+ We have a picture of the Tabernacle on the screen and if you have notes, the graphic is also in there.

The Tabernacle is the place where God's presence dwelt among the Israelites.

The Tabernacle was the most significant feature of the Israelites' religious system and society.

And yet, every element of the Tabernacle points to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's take a quick tour of the Tabernacle—starting from the outside.

The Tabernacle only had one door.

- very ~~left~~ on graphic right

The Israelites had to enter through this one door which always faced east into the courtyard—

Fast forward to the Gospels...

+ **John 10:7 ESV**—So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep."

+ Next, as you walk to the center of the Tabernacle, you'll see that blue circle in the middle—that's called a laver.

The laver was a water basin where priests washed their hands and feet daily.

They could not enter the Tabernacle without washing in the laver.

Fast forward to the Gospels... Peter told Jesus on Passover night

+ **John 13:8**— "You will never wash my feet," Peter said.
Jesus replied, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me."

+ Next as we walk into the covered portion of the Tabernacle, we would notice the light that is coming from the inside of the covered area.

It's #5 on your graphic— the golden lampstand.

This lampstand was the only light in the Tabernacle.

Without this light, they could not see God's presence.

Fast forward to the Gospels...

+ In **John 8:12**— "I am the light of the world.

Everybody can now see God's presence!

+ Next, when the priests walked into the Tabernacle, there was a table with twelve loaves of bread.

It's #7 on your graphic—the bread is called *showbread*.

The table represented a place of communion and fellowship between God and His people.

Fast forward to the Gospels...

+ **John 6:35**— "I am the bread of life," Jesus told them. ~~"No one who comes to me will ever be hungry, and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again."~~

+ As we continue our tour around the Tabernacle we'll start to smell something.

#4 on your graphic is the Altar of Incense / Golden Alter.

It was used to burn incense.

The incense represented the prayers and intercession of God's people, *going up to Heaven.*

Fast forward to the Epistles...

+ **Hebrews 7:25**—~~Therefore~~, he (Jesus) is able to save completely those who come to God through him, since he always lives to intercede for them.

In other words, the incense represented Jesus prayer for His Disciples.

+ Next, we would see a a thick curtain that separated the Tabernacle from another room called, The Holy of Holies.

It's #3 on your graphic— is the veil.

The Holy of Holies is where the Ark of the Covenant lived—A wooden chest overlaid with gold that contained the Ten Commandments.

Here's the thing, if the high priest barged through that veil being disrespectful or without being sacrificially clean—God would strike him dead. Why?

Because God will not have sin in His presence.

And yet, Fast forward to the Epistles...

+ **Hebrews 10:19**— we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus— *of how Jess is the fulfillment of every detail of the Tabernacle*

Now that's the tour, but I also want to point out a few other details.

I mentioned the Ark of the Covenant...

This Ark I was the centerpiece of the entire Tabernacle.

On the top of the ark was a lid called the Mercy Seat.

One time a year, on the Day of Atonement, the blood of a goat was placed on the mercy seat to cover the sins of the people.

And yet, Fast forward to the Epistles...

Romans 3:25— *God presented him as the mercy seat by his blood,*

I mentioned the priests working in Tabernacle—in the OT, priests were the mediators between God and man.

And yet, Fast forward to the Epistles... and we find out that Jesus is the once and for all High Priest.

Hebrews 7:26—*For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.*

Hebrews 7:27—*He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do—first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all time when he offered himself.*

And finally, that brings us to sacrifice.

Priests were not what we think of today—in the OT, they were more like butchers, always making sacrifices for sin.

Regardless, an unblemished lamb was slaughtered once a year for the covering of sins.

The priests would place their hands on the lamb.

This symbolized the transfer of human sins to the lamb.

The lamb was then slaughtered because of that person's sins.

Why?

Hebrews 9:22—According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

And yet, Fast forward to the Epistles...

Hebrews 10:11—Every priest stands day after day ministering and offering the same sacrifices time after time, which can never take away sins.

the OT. Sacrificial system
~~It could never take away sins.~~ It only temporarily covered sin like a bandaid.

Hebrews 10:12—But this man (Jesus), after offering one sacrifice for sins forever (Himself), sat down at the right hand of God.

All that detail this morning to show us that Jesus Christ came to fulfill The Law by being the Law!

In other words, Jesus is the OT!

Jesus didn't come only to teach righteousness—He IS righteousness.

What He said and what He did is a reflection of who He is, which is revealed throughout the Scriptures.

KEYPOINT: #2
The OT was inspired by Christ, points to Christ, and is fulfilled by Christ.

Jesus presses in to present His point.

Matthew 5:18— For truly I tell you...

“Truly” is *Amen*— comes from the Aramaic is rendered *amēn*. (Ah-mein)

Meaning—this statement is absolutely true.

And it’s right here where the application of this text applies to you directly and personally.

In a world of relativism today, what Jesus is saying— is true truth / holy truth.

Jesus’ truth is not from this world—His words come from outside and above.

Now, we say *amen* after prayer.

Or someone might say *amen* in the middle of a sermon—what they're saying is—
“That is true.”

Jesus, however, does something unique.

He doesn’t end His statement with *amen*, He begins with it.

Matthew 5:18— For truly I tell you,

“I tell you.” —speaks of Jesus’ authority.

What Jesus is saying is this: This truth I am about to tell you is absolutely certain and true. It is undeniable and indisputable.

Pause...No true prophet in the OT would dare say that.

False prophets say stuff like that all the time—and we’ll deal with them next week.

But true prophets in the OT said things like, “This is what the Lord says, Thus saith the Lord, this is the declaration of the Lord.”

Matthew 5:18— For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away,

When are Heaven and Earth going to pass away?

Jesus gives us a taste of the End Times here in verse eighteen.

Heaven and Earth won't pass away until after the millennium—the one thousand years where Jesus Himself rules the Earth—where He is King.

This phrase represents the end of time as we know it, the end of earthly history.

So what Jesus is saying is this—The Bible will outlast the universe.

The Prophet Isaiah says this...

Isaiah 51:6—Look up to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and its inhabitants will die like gnats.
But my salvation will last forever,
and my righteousness will never be shattered.

How is that possible that the Bible will outlast all of creation as we know it?

Jesus presses in and provides more detail...

Matthew 5:18— For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law...

A stroke of a letter (*keraia*) literally means “little horn.”

It refers to the small marks that help distinguish one Hebrew letter from another.

In other words, not even the tiniest letter is insignificant in God's Word.

V. 18 ESV—*not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*

The smallest letter in the Greek alphabet translates into the word *iōta*

V. 18 NKVJ—*one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

Think of a jot as a lowercase l vs. and i.

Or the the difference between a capital E and an F.

It's that one little stroke that changes the letter into another.

The Disciples would have thought of the *yodh*, which is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

~~It kind of looks like an apostrophe.~~

So what's Jesus saying with his analogy?

He already told us that he's not abolishing or canceling the OT.

He's doing the opposite. He came to fulfill because no one else can.

Jesus is affirming the absolute authority of Scripture down to the smallest parts and pieces of individual words.

In other words, Jesus is pro Bible—and if He is pro Bible, so are we!

And because Jesus affirms Scripture in this way, we as a church have Bible as our middle name.

In our statement of faith, we say this about the Bible:

We believe and teach that the Bible is a perfect treasure of divine instruction.

It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.

Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy.

+ **2 Timothy 3:16**—All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,

Jesus always corrected inerrant teaching—whether it was intentional or not.

+ **Matthew 22:29**—You are mistaken, because you don't know the Scriptures or the power of God.

And the reason that Jesus always used Scripture to correct people's misinterpretations is that there is only one proper interpretation of the passage itself.

"It means this to me."

Scripture can't mean one thing to one person and something different to another.

Now, there may be several applications of Scripture, but there is but one proper interpretation.

Jesus continues here in verse eighteen.

Matthew 5:18— *For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.*

Jesus is not only talking about His death, burial, and resurrection, but he says “all things” — which include the rest of what’s written in His amazing Book!

PREACH

This passage has a crucial lesson for us today.

especially from a judicial perspective

Because we live in an age where people claim that there is no truth.

And if there is no truth, then there is no law.

If there is no law, there is no Lawgiver.

And yet, in Exodus 20:1, before God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, Scripture says, “

Exodus 20:1—*Then God spoke all these words:*

In other words, God is the author of these commands— not man.

But, if the world doesn’t believe that God has given us a set of laws to live by, then we live in a state of law-less-ness.

We get to do whatever we want, believing there are no consequences to our life decisions.

The reason God gave us The Law is because God and Law go hand in hand.

God and Law are two sides of the same coin.

You cannot have one without the other.

When you subtract law from God, you subtract authority from the standard.

And when you subtract authority from the standard, you have no authoritative system where laws have substance and meaning.

All you have left is a never-ending philosophy of who's right and who's wrong. The world becomes one big experiment of trial and error.

But whether the world believes it or not, God is the Lawgiver.

3 Jesus is the fulfillment

So And there are consequences to life choices.

Dear friends, the Law was not given to get us into Heaven.

It was given to show us how hard our hearts are towards a holy God.

It was given for the sole purpose of coming to the end of ourselves so that we may repent of our sins and see our desperate need for Jesus as our Savior.

from the Law that condemns us

1 Peter 1:20— He (Jesus) was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was revealed in these last times for you.

Band

Jesus is many things. Today we learned that He is The Law.

And that means Jesus is the Judge.

But Jesus is also grace—He is The Lamb of God who came to take away your sin.

That's the Good News!

And the way to develop a relationship with God is done in two ways:

1. through the reading, studying and praying of the Law.
2. Allowing yourself to be loved in a community called the church to learn and apply God's Word to your life.

Real Bible 1:119

Dear friends, there are only two things that are eternal:
God's Word and God's People.

And next Sunday, we'll see what Jesus has to say about the false teachers who handle His Law incorrectly.

PRAYER - Fall in love w/ Your Word!

BAPTISM

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