

Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 5, Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus and the Law Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 5, Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus and the Law, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This excerpt from a lecture by Dr. Bill Mounce on Matthew 5:17-20 of the Sermon on the Mount explores **Jesus's relationship with the Old Testament law**. Mounce explains that Jesus stated he came not to abolish the law but to **fulfill it**, a concept Mounce unpacks through various examples like prophecy, the sacrificial system, and food laws. The lecture highlights the **ongoing relevance and transformation of Old Testament principles** in light of Christ, while also acknowledging the complexities in understanding this fulfillment, particularly concerning theocratic rules and land promises. Ultimately, Mounce emphasizes Jesus's assertion that **true righteousness must exceed that of the religious leaders** of his time.

**2. 22 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 5 – Double click
icon to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Gospels → Sermon on the Mount).**



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3. Briefing Document: Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 5, Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus and the Law

Briefing Document: Dr. Bill Mounce on Matthew 5:17-20 - Jesus and the Law

Overview: This briefing document summarizes Dr. Bill Mounce's lecture on Matthew 5:17-20, focusing on Jesus's statement regarding the Law and the Prophets. Mounce delves into the complexities of understanding how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament, addresses potential misunderstandings, and highlights the radical implications of Jesus's demands for righteousness.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The Central Question: Jesus and the Old Testament:

- Mounce posits that the primary concern of the Jewish leaders at the beginning of Jesus's ministry was his stance on the Old Testament and their interpretations of it.
- Jesus directly addresses this in Matthew 5:17: **"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."**
- This statement sets the stage for understanding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, a topic Mounce identifies as **"the most difficult theological issue in the Bible."**

2. The Meaning of "Fulfill":

- Mounce explores various facets of how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament, offering several key points he feels comfortable with:
- **Fulfillment of Prophecies:** Jesus directly fulfills specific Old Testament prophecies (e.g., birth in Bethlehem, suffering servant in Isaiah 53).
- **Fulfillment of the Sacrificial System:** Jesus's sacrifice on the cross fulfills and does away with the need for the Old Testament sacrificial system. Mounce emphasizes the significance of Leviticus in demonstrating the holiness of God, the horror of sin, and God's mercy through substitutionary atonement. He strongly critiques the concept of altars and repeated sacrifices in the church, stating, **"If a church has an altar, it is completely and totally unbiblical. Amen."**

- **Fulfillment of Food Laws:** The kosher laws, establishing the concept of clean and unclean, are fulfilled in Christ. The focus shifts from external observances to the internal state of the heart (Mark 7). The original purpose of these laws was likely to avoid adopting Canaanite religious practices.
- **Perfect Obedience to the Law:** Jesus fulfilled the true intent of the law by perfectly obeying it – loving God and loving neighbor. His righteousness was "earned" through this obedience. He also satisfied the demands of the law through his death.
- **Fullest Revelation of God's Character:** The Old Testament reveals God's character and activities, but Christ is the **"most perfect, clearest revelation of the character and the will of God."** He brings the understanding of God to its pinnacle.

3. Thorny Theological Issues:

- Mounce touches on areas where understanding fulfillment is more challenging:
- **Single vs. Double Fulfillment of Prophecy:** He disagrees with the idea of single fulfillment (as advocated by Professor Kaiser) and leans towards double fulfillment, citing Hosea 11:1 ("Out of Egypt, I have called my son") as an example where a prophecy has an initial fulfillment in Israel and a fuller one in Jesus. He also discusses the complexities of interpreting Isaiah 7:14 ("virgin shall conceive") in light of its historical context and Matthew's usage.
- **Promises of Land:** Mounce expresses his belief in a form of "replacement theology" (though he acknowledges it's not the best term) and suggests that the land promised in the Old Testament ultimately finds its fulfillment in heaven.
- **Theocratic Rules:** He finds it particularly difficult to understand how the theocratic rules of Israel (e.g., stoning a disobedient son) are fulfilled in Christ. While he speculates about the underlying attitudes, he admits, **"I don't know how to take the theocratic rules and have them fulfilled in Christ. So, for me, that's the big sticking point."** He emphasizes that despite this, Jesus's statement implies that all of the Old Testament finds its point in Christ.

4. Implication of Jesus's Statement on the Law's Authority:

- Jesus emphasizes the enduring nature of the Law and the Prophets, stating: **"For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter [iota], not the least stroke of a pen [curiae/dot] will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished."**

- Mounce clarifies that "until everything is accomplished" signifies that some aspects were fulfilled at the cross, some at judgment, and some in the new heavens and new earth.
- Verse 19 carries a strong application: **"Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands [relaxes] and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."** This highlights the importance of even the seemingly minor commandments.

5. Jesus's Challenge to Pharisaical Righteousness:

- Verse 20 delivers a powerful and challenging statement: **"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses [exceeds] that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."**
- Mounce underscores the radical nature of this claim, as the Pharisees were considered the most meticulously religious people of their time.
- Jesus's demand sets the stage for the remainder of chapter 5, where he unpacks what this surpassing righteousness entails.

Quotes:

- "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." (Matthew 5:17)
- "This issue is the most difficult theological issue in the Bible. The relationship of the Old and New Testament. In what sense does Jesus fulfill? In what sense is the Old Testament still valid? In what sense is the Old Testament not valid?"
- "Jesus fulfills the Old Testament in that all of it points to him, and all of it finds its fullest and most complete meaning in him."
- "If a church has an altar, it is completely and totally unbiblical. Amen."
- "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished." (Matthew 5:18)
- "Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:19)

- "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:20)

Conclusion:

Dr. Mounce's lecture provides a valuable framework for understanding Jesus's relationship to the Law and the Prophets. He emphasizes that fulfillment is a multifaceted concept encompassing prophecy, the sacrificial system, ceremonial laws, obedience, and the ultimate revelation of God's character. While acknowledging the complexity and ongoing debates surrounding certain aspects of fulfillment, particularly the theocratic laws and land promises, Mounce underscores the enduring authority of Scripture and the radical demand for a righteousness that exceeds even the most stringent religious observance. Jesus's statement in Matthew 5:17-20 serves as a foundational point for comprehending the continuity and transformation between the Old and New Covenants.

4. Study Guide: Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 5, Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus and the Law

Study Guide: Jesus and the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

Key Themes:

- Jesus's relationship to the Old Testament Law and the Prophets.
- The meaning of Jesus's statement that he came to "fulfill" the Law.
- The enduring authority and relevance of the Old Testament.
- The standard of righteousness required for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.
- The concept of verbal plenary inspiration in relation to Jesus's view of Scripture.

Points to Review:

- Understand the initial context of Jesus's statement in Matthew 5:17-20, particularly the concerns of the Jewish leaders regarding his view of the Old Testament.
- Identify and explain the different ways in which Jesus fulfills the Old Testament according to the lecture:
 - Fulfillment of prophecies.
 - Fulfillment of the sacrificial system.
 - Fulfillment of the food laws (clean and unclean).
 - Fulfillment through perfect obedience to the true intent of the law.
 - Fulfillment as the clearest revelation of God's character and will.
- Consider the theological difficulties and differing viewpoints surrounding the concept of fulfillment, such as single vs. double fulfillment of prophecy and the fulfillment of land promises and theocratic rules.
- Analyze the significance of Jesus's statement about not abolishing the "smallest letter" or "least stroke of a pen" from the Law.
- Grasp the meaning and implications of Jesus's teaching in Matthew 5:19 regarding the importance of even the "least of these commandments."

- Understand the connection between this passage and the doctrine of verbal plenary inspiration.
- Explain the radical nature of Jesus's assertion in Matthew 5:20 that the righteousness of his followers must surpass that of the Pharisees and scribes to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Quiz:

1. What was the primary concern of the Jewish leaders regarding Jesus at the beginning of his ministry, as discussed in the lecture?
2. Explain in your own words what Dr. Mounce means by Jesus "fulfilling" the Old Testament. Provide at least two specific examples from the lecture to support your explanation.
3. According to the lecture, what was the fundamental purpose behind the Old Testament food laws regarding clean and unclean animals? How did Jesus fulfill these laws?
4. In what way does Dr. Mounce argue that Jesus's perfect obedience to the law constitutes a fulfillment of the Old Testament?
5. What does the lecture suggest is the ultimate fulfillment of the Old Testament promises of land? Why does the speaker hold this view?
6. What is the significance of Jesus's statement in Matthew 5:18 about the "smallest letter" (iota) and the "least stroke of a pen"? What Hebrew letter example is given?
7. Explain the meaning of Matthew 5:19 regarding those who "relax" even the least of the commandments and teach others to do so.
8. How does the lecture connect Jesus's words in Matthew 5:18 to the concept of verbal plenary inspiration?
9. According to Matthew 5:20, what standard of righteousness is required to enter the Kingdom of Heaven? Why would this have been shocking to Jesus's audience?
10. What are some of the remaining "murky" areas regarding the fulfillment of the Old Testament in Christ, according to the lecture? Provide at least one example.

Answer Key:

1. The primary concern of the Jewish leaders was Jesus's view of the Old Testament. They wondered if he accepted its authority and their interpretation of it, as he was a new teacher who hadn't come through their established schools.
2. Fulfilling the Old Testament means that all of it points to Jesus and finds its fullest and most complete meaning in him. Examples include Jesus fulfilling prophecies like being born in Bethlehem and dying for sins (Isaiah 53), and fulfilling the sacrificial system through his once-for-all sacrifice on the cross, rendering animal sacrifices obsolete.
3. The fundamental purpose of the food laws was to establish the concept of clean and unclean, symbolizing what separates people from or allows them into God's presence. Jesus fulfilled these laws by teaching that defilement comes from within the heart, not from external things like food.
4. Jesus fulfilled the law by perfectly obeying its true intent (loving God and neighbor), not just the Pharisaical interpretations. He lived in complete compliance, died to satisfy its demands, and earned righteousness, thus fulfilling the law's purpose.
5. The lecture suggests that the ultimate fulfillment of the Old Testament land promises is heaven. The speaker believes this because the blessings and peace promised in connection with the land in the Old Testament find their ultimate realization in the new heavens and the new earth.
6. This statement emphasizes the absolute authority and enduring nature of the entire Old Testament Law, down to the smallest detail. The Hebrew example given is the distinction between the letters shin and sin, which is marked by a single dot.
7. Matthew 5:19 teaches that anyone who disregards even the seemingly least important commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered least in the Kingdom of Heaven. Conversely, those who practice and teach all the commandments will be considered great.
8. This passage is used to support verbal plenary inspiration because Jesus's confidence in the truthfulness and significance of Scripture extends to its smallest components, implying that every word is important and inspired.
9. The required righteousness must surpass that of the Pharisees and scribes, the most meticulously religious people of the time. This was shocking because these leaders were held in high esteem for their strict adherence to the law.

10. Murky areas include how the Old Testament theocratic rules (like stoning a disobedient son) are fulfilled in Christ, and the precise nature of the fulfillment of the Old Testament land promises.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Analyze and evaluate Dr. Mounce's arguments for the various ways in which Jesus fulfills the Old Testament Law and the Prophets in Matthew 5:17-20. Which of his points do you find most convincing and why? Are there any areas where you would offer a different perspective?
2. Discuss the theological implications of Jesus's statement in Matthew 5:18 regarding the enduring nature of the Old Testament Law until "everything is accomplished." How does Dr. Mounce interpret this statement, and what are some of the challenges in applying this verse to contemporary Christian life?
3. Explain the connection between Matthew 5:17-20 and the doctrine of biblical inspiration. How does Jesus's view of the Old Testament in this passage inform different perspectives on the authority and trustworthiness of Scripture?
4. Compare and contrast the righteousness of the Pharisees and scribes with the righteousness that Jesus demands of his followers in Matthew 5:20. What does it mean for one's righteousness to "surpass" that of the most outwardly religious individuals?
5. Explore the ongoing debate within Christian theology regarding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. How does Jesus's teaching in Matthew 5:17-20 contribute to this discussion, and what are some of the different ways theologians have understood the concept of "fulfillment"?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Abolish:** To formally put an end to (a system, practice, or institution). In the context of Matthew 5:17, it refers to getting rid of or nullifying the Law and the Prophets.
- **Fulfill:** To bring to completion or realization; to satisfy the requirements of (a law, prophecy, or promise). In this context, it encompasses various aspects of Jesus's relationship to the Old Testament.
- **Law and the Prophets:** A common Jewish expression referring to the entirety of the Hebrew Scriptures, which Christians know as the Old Testament. "Law" typically refers to the Torah (the first five books), and "Prophets" refers to the prophetic books.
- **Iota:** The ninth and smallest letter of the Greek alphabet. Jesus uses this to emphasize the meticulous detail and importance of the Law.
- **Stroke of a pen (Tittle/Horn/Dot):** A very small mark or detail in Hebrew script that distinguishes between similar-looking letters. This further emphasizes the absolute authority of even the smallest aspects of the Old Testament.
- **Accomplished:** Brought to completion or finished. In Matthew 5:18, this refers to the point at which the purposes of the Law will be fully realized.
- **Least of these commandments:** Refers to commandments considered minor or less significant by some Jewish interpretations, such as the tithing of small herbs. Jesus emphasizes their importance.
- **Verbal Plenary Inspiration:** The theological doctrine that the Bible is fully inspired by God in every word (verbal) and in its entirety (plenary), meaning all of Scripture is true and authoritative.
- **Righteousness:** Moral uprightness and conformity to God's standards. In Matthew 5:20, Jesus speaks of a righteousness exceeding that of the Pharisees and scribes.
- **Pharisees and Scribes:** Jewish religious leaders and experts in the Law during Jesus's time, known for their meticulous observance of religious traditions.
- **Kingdom of Heaven:** A term used in Matthew's Gospel to refer to the reign of God, both present and future. Entrance into this kingdom requires a specific kind of righteousness.

- **Tanakh:** An acronym for the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible: Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings).
- **Kosher Laws:** Jewish dietary laws concerning which foods can be eaten and how they must be prepared, based on Old Testament regulations.
- **Substitutionary Atonement:** The theological concept that Jesus Christ died as a substitute for sinners, taking the punishment that they deserved.
- **Theocratic:** Relating to or denoting a system of government in which priests rule in the name of God or a god. Old Testament Israel was intended to be a theocratic nation.
- **Replacement Theology:** The belief that the Christian Church has replaced the nation of Israel as God's chosen people.
- **Double Fulfillment:** The idea that some Old Testament prophecies have both a historical fulfillment and a later, greater fulfillment in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.
- **Type:** A person, event, or thing in the Old Testament that foreshadows or prefigures a greater reality in the New Testament, particularly related to Jesus Christ.

5. FAQs on Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Session 5, Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus and the Law, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: Jesus and the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)

1. What was the primary concern of the Jewish leaders regarding Jesus's teachings?

The Jewish leaders were primarily concerned with Jesus's view on the Old Testament and their interpretations of it. As a new and charismatic teacher without traditional religious training, they questioned whether he accepted the authority of their scriptures and their understanding of them, which was the defining element of Judaism at the time.

2. How did Jesus initially address the question of his relationship to the Law and the Prophets in Matthew 5:17?

Jesus directly stated, "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." This declaration aimed to assure his listeners that he wasn't rejecting the foundational texts of Judaism but rather intended to bring them to their intended purpose and meaning.

3. What does Jesus mean by "fulfill" the Law and the Prophets? "Fulfill" is a complex theological concept with several key aspects. According to the lecture, it means that the Old Testament:

- * **Points to Jesus:** All of the Old Testament, in various ways, anticipates and directs attention towards Jesus as its central figure and ultimate goal.
- * **Finds its fullest meaning in him:** The deepest and most complete understanding of the Old Testament scriptures is realized through the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- * **Fulfills prophecies:** Specific predictions and prophecies found in the Old Testament are directly realized in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- * **Fulfills the sacrificial system:** The Old Testament system of sacrifices for atonement is completely and finally realized in the single sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, rendering further physical sacrifices unnecessary.
- * **Fulfills the food laws:** The kosher laws and distinctions between clean and unclean were intended to teach about spiritual purity and separation from God. These laws are fulfilled in Christ, where inward purity of heart becomes the focus.
- * **Perfectly obeys the Law:** Jesus, unlike anyone else, perfectly adhered to the true intent of the Law, loving God and loving his neighbor, thus earning righteousness.
- * **Reveals God's character more fully:** Jesus, as the clearest and most perfect revelation of God, brings a deeper understanding of God's character and will than what was initially revealed in the Old Testament.

4. According to Jesus, what is the significance of even the smallest aspects of the Law (iota and stroke of a pen)? Jesus emphasized the enduring importance of every detail of the Law, stating that not even the smallest letter (iota in Greek, similar to the Hebrew 'jot') or the least stroke of a pen would disappear until everything is accomplished. This highlights the complete truthfulness and authority of the Old Testament scriptures in his eyes.

5. What are some examples of how Jesus fulfills specific aspects of the Old Testament?

* **Prophecy:** His birth in Bethlehem and his suffering and death for sins (as prophesied in Isaiah 53) are direct fulfillments of Old Testament predictions. * **Sacrificial System:** His death on the cross serves as the ultimate and final sacrifice for sin, replacing the need for repeated animal sacrifices described in Leviticus. * **Food Laws:** His teachings, particularly in Mark 7 and through Paul, indicate that the focus on external dietary laws is superseded by the importance of inner purity.

6. How does Jesus's teaching in Matthew 5:19 relate to the importance of the Law?

Jesus states that anyone who sets aside even one of the least of the commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Conversely, those who practice and teach these commands will be called great. This underscores that all of God's commands, even those that might seem minor, hold significance and should not be disregarded.

7. How did Jesus's statement in Matthew 5:20 challenge the religious authorities of his time? Jesus declared, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." This was a radical statement because the Pharisees and scribes were considered the most meticulously religious people. Jesus asserted that their understanding and practice of righteousness were insufficient for entering God's kingdom, implying a need for a deeper, more transformative righteousness.

8. What is the ongoing validity of the Old Testament in light of Jesus's fulfillment?

While some aspects of the Old Testament, such as the sacrificial system and certain theocratic laws specific to ancient Israel, are fulfilled and no longer practiced in the same way, the Old Testament as a whole remains significant. It reveals God's character, his actions, and his desire for a relationship with humanity. Its moral principles continue to hold, and its prophecies and themes find their ultimate realization in Christ, making it a vital part of understanding God's redemptive plan. The Psalms, for example, are seen as fulfilled in Christ and still relevant for the New Covenant.