

Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Lecture 5, Matthew 5:17-20 on Jesus and the Law

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This is Dr. Bill Mounce in his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. This is session 5 on Matthew 5:17-20 on Jesus and the Law.

Okay, we went through the first part of chapter five at a snail's pace, but we had to.

It establishes so many basic themes and approaches. So today we're going to speed up and do a whole another half a chapter. This is the whole issue of Jesus and his understanding of the law, and so we're going to go from 5:17 to the end of chapter five.

If we get done really early, we'll look into chapter six. Since Frank's not here, we may get out early, but this talk generally takes all day. There are so many thorny issues in the Acts of Jesus.

Okay, the Jewish leaders, at least we're at the beginning of Jesus's ministry, the Jewish leaders' primary question about Jesus probably was what does he think of the Old Testament? What does he think of our interpretation? Here's this new, unknown, charismatic teacher coming out of the Hicksville. He hadn't gone to any of their schools. Nobody really knew about him.

There had been some weird stuff that went on in Jerusalem, including something about Cana and really good Malbec wine. I'm sure it was Malbec. Okay, no Chardonnay.

It had to have been a Malbec. Anyway, they'll be wondering what he thinks about the Old Testament, which is the central question and the defining document of Judaism.

Does Jesus accept its authority? Does Jesus accept our understanding of it? I mean, all these questions were most certainly going around in their head, and so Jesus anticipated the question right up front. Then he says, so 5:17, do not think that I've come to abolish the law of the prophets. I've not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

So, the Jewish leaders are going, okay, he's not going to try to get rid of it, but they probably, to fulfill them, kind of, hmm, who does he think he is? That's an odd thing to say. For truly, I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, the iota, and not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished. The Pharisees are going, yeah, good, good, good.

And therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commandments, I'm not even talking about the major commandments, I'm talking about the little stuff, the tithing of the mint kind of thing, 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. So, Jesus primes the pump and gets the discussion going by kind of lulling them into what turns out to be false complacency.

So that's what's going on at the beginning of this passage. In other words, he's saying that I and my teachings are going to be in complete continuity with the Hebrew Scriptures, the law, and the prophets. Technically, the Old Testament and the Hebrew Scriptures are the Tanakh, Torah, Nevi'im, and Kethi'bim, so the law and the prophets.

We don't know when the Jews closed the canon on the writings part, you know, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, wherever that goes, you know, some of those questions, probably end of the first century A.D. But by law and prophets, that part of the canon was closed. And by saying the law and prophets, Jesus is, in fact, talking about our entire holy scriptures, all right? So, law and prophets are what we call the Old Testament. The key issue on the verse, though, and the issue that probably would have kind of perked up their ears and go, what does that mean? Is the word fulfill? I'm going to talk about it.

I think 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? We read the Psalms and there's no question, we love them and we quote them and we preach on them, but very few of us have probably stoned disobedient son.

Probably very few of us have killed a gay person, right? Old Testament laws, right? And so what we tend to do is kind of pick and choose what we like, right? Well, this makes sense, so I'm going to follow it. And this other stuff, this doesn't make sense, so I'm not going to preach on stoning a disobedient son. Although, from where I am, you can stone a disobedient son really easily.

I'm going to let this sit for just a second. You just go down to the local store and buy some pot, and you give it to your son because it's all legal now. I was just waiting, waiting, Pacific Northwest, really the avant-garde part of the nation.

That's a big interesting conflict between Washington and Oregon, because Oregon sees itself as this ultra-progressive state and they legalize pot, but the feds don't like it, but they still have to grow it in hidden places. And then Washington beats them to

the punch and legalizes marijuana completely. And Oregon, I'm sure, was chagrined and quickly passed a law that they too will allow this.

By the way, you can also walk naked in Portland if you want. Both Portland and San Francisco have nice laws. Anyway, yeah, when the law passed in San... I'm really getting off-topic in a hurry.

You know, you can literally walk naked according to the city statutes in San Francisco. The only requirement is if you sit down, you have to sit on a towel. Anyway, anyway, fulfill... I don't know how I got into... Oh, stoning a disobedient son.

Okay, all right. This issue is difficult. I've read books, and I've had private times with Tom Schreiner; this is his specialty, and it's still difficult.

So rather than focus on all the things I haven't figured out, there are some things that at least I'm comfortable having settled on as to what fulfills means. So let's walk through that, and then I'll tell you where the questionable issues are. What does it mean when Jesus says he fulfills the Old Testament? What's the relationship of the New and the Old Testament? 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.

So, the Old Testament has this, starting in probably Genesis 11, has this very broad base, and it starts in the story of Abraham, and a little before that, and it's slowly moving to a point, to a pinnacle, and that pinnacle is Jesus. So, all of the Old Testament points to him in one way or another, all of it points to him, and all of it finds its fullest meaning, its deepest meaning in him. Are you familiar with Graham Goldsworthy's material? He is the theological guru behind Moore College in Australia, and he has done a really good job of helping us see Jesus everywhere in the Old Testament.

Now, typical academic qualification, I don't think Jesus is; he's not behind every rock in the Old Testament, and I think you can preach the Old Testament and stay in the Old Testament, but Goldsworthy has given us a new sensitivity to realizing that all of it ultimately, one way or another, is pointing to Jesus, and it makes for effective preaching. Anyway, 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. Okay, let's look at some of the specifics.

Number one, Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies. This is the easiest one, right? The prophecy about where he was born—he was born in Bethlehem. The prophecy in Isaiah 53 that he would die for our sins—he fulfilled that on the cross. He's a suffering servant.

So, number one, obviously, the prophetic passages find their fulfillment in him. Number two is also pretty easy, Jesus fulfills the sacrificial system. This is what was wrong in old dispensationalism that sees the rebuilding of a temple with sacrifices, and I don't know if those ever part of mainstream dispensationalism, but they saw sacrifices for sins.

That was, I think, pretty quickly changed, that they were all thanks sacrifices, but they were still sacrifices in old dispensational theology. Jesus fulfills the sacrificial system, and I believe completely does away with it. So, for example, what was Leviticus about? If you just read broad strokes through the book of Leviticus, you get a couple of basic things.

You get the message that sin is really bad, right? You get the understanding of substitutionary atonement that someone can die in the place of the sinner, and you get the idea of a priesthood that we can come, at least we can come to God, you know, there's going to be a priest there, but we can come to God and deal with our sins relative to God. Maybe that's not as strong a point as I want to make, but certainly, Leviticus teaches the holiness of God, that's a better way to say it, teaches the holiness of God, the horribleness of sin, and the mercy of God in allowing a substitutionary atonement. Let me make those three points easier.

The holiness of God, the horribleness of sin, and its effects, death, and the mercy of God in allowing a substitute. I remember when I preached just one sermon once on Leviticus, and I probably didn't think about it too seriously, but I wanted them to see what Leviticus is about because who kills the animal in a sacrifice? The sinner does. Sinner slits the throat.

You bring it up, there's a thing, hands are placed on them, but the sinner kills the animal, and then the priest takes the blood and sprinkles it. So, I mean, that's such a powerful picture, and I toyed with the idea of bringing in a fluffy and just holding it while I was talking, but I figured I would have gotten fired on the spot for that, so I didn't do that. But it's a different picture because you can't, according to the rules of Leviticus, you can't simply send your surrogate with your goat and say, yeah, whatever.

You go, you kill it, you see the blood, and it's a reminder of the holiness of God, the horribleness of sin, and the mercy of God in allowing a substitutionary atonement. Okay, the whole sacrificial system is fulfilled on Calvary, isn't it? And that's why we don't sacrifice at all anymore. There was one sacrifice, book of Hebrews, there was one sacrifice once for all, don't need to do it again.

So, this entire sacrificial system was fulfilled in Christ. All right. Yeah.

If a church has an altar, it is completely and totally unbiblical. Amen. This whole idea of an altar, of mass, of even calling it an altar in a Protestant church, I think it is, theologically, it's absolutely horrible theology.

Yeah, the altar is the cross; it's non-repeated, and there's nothing; people don't come to the altar. The altar's halfway around the world in the other direction, anyway. Number three, Jesus fulfills the food laws of clean and unclean.

Okay, this is a whole big issue, isn't it? All the kosher laws are fulfilled in Christ. You get the Mark 7 passage, you get Paul's teachings and whatnot. There's some debate as to what was the purpose of food laws.

You know, I remember reading in college that they were really all about health and, you know, you don't eat pork and stuff like that. There may have been some ancillary things going on in God's mind when He set up the kosher laws, but the fundamental purpose of the food laws was to establish the concept of clean and unclean, that there are certain things that remove us from the presence of God, and there are other things that allow us to come into the presence of God. In chapter 7 of Mark, this is where it's really discussed, and it's made clear that now it is not what is outside; it is what is inside.

And I think you can argue that all along, the cultic laws really were meant to help people understand you're clean or unclean based on your heart, and it expresses itself in certain ways, as in do you eat hooved or non-hooved animals, right? So all those food laws and everything they were teaching about is clean and unclean, and unclean people cannot live forever in the presence of God, and all this kind of stuff, all of those kosher laws are fulfilled in Christ. One of the biggest stupid mistakes I've ever made in my life was I was 30, and my brother had gone home for between my first and second year of my PhD. My folks gave us some money because they knew we wanted to go to Israel.

So, David and I, my little brother, went to Israel, and we just basically stayed in youth hostels and whatnot for a month and a half. We had a riot. But we flew into Tel Aviv on Friday night.

Of course, Shabbat starts when you see three stars on Friday night. So, we spent the night sleeping on the baggage things in the Tel Aviv airport, and then early the next morning, we found an Arab taxi driver to take us to Jerusalem. He didn't care about Shabbat.

So, we got into Israel, and we were hungry, and we ordered a pizza. I know we had to wait till three stars came out on Saturday night, and then the party begins in Israel. So we were really hungry, and we went to a pizza place.

Do you know the worst-tasting thing in the world is a Jewish pizza? Do you know why? It's not salty enough on the lips. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's goat. You do not mix dairy and meat.

So, you either have a cheese pizza, or you have a meat pizza with no cheese. They're just terrible. And we're sitting there eating, and I go, what is wrong? And they went, oh, kosher food laws.

They can't mix it. Now, I mean, the original food law was a Canaanite practice of literally boiling a young goat in its mother's milk as a form of worship. And that's the essence.

I mean, that's why the law is there. You do not adopt religious practices that make you look like you're a Canaanite. It has all kinds of implications, by the way, on how we do worship.

Ever walk into a church where you swear you're at a rock concert? Hmm. Adopting the forms of the world. Anyway, I won't go there.

Anyway, so the kosher, the not mixing of the milk products and meat products comes out of the boiling a kid in its mother's milk. Anyway, anyway, all those food laws are gone. It's why I'm perfectly comfortable eating meat, meat, cheese, cheese, pizzas.

Anyway, Jesus fulfills those. Number four, and this is a little more theological. Christ fulfills the Old Testament in that he perfectly obeyed the law.

Jesus's righteousness, remember from your theology, Jesus's righteousness is an earned righteousness, isn't it? Because he perfectly, fully obeyed the true intent of the law. Loving God, loving your neighbor. Now he obviously did not obey, fulfill the Pharisee's interpretation of the law, but he earned righteousness by being fully obedient to the law.

In that sense, it fulfills the law. He lived in perfect compliance with the true intent of the law. He died to satisfy the demands of the law, and the result was that he had earned righteousness, and so fulfilled the law.

So, it is a theological way in which he fulfills the law. Okay, point number five. We're getting to the things I don't understand, but and I don't have a label for this.

It simply asks the question, what's the Old Testament? The Old Testament is the revelation of the character and the activity of God, right? That's what the Hebrew Scriptures are. It's a revelation of God's character. It's a revelation of his actions, what he has done, is doing, and is going to do.

It's a revelation that he is holy and righteous and good. It's a revelation that his deepest desire is to be our God and we be his people. Okay, the Old Testament is a wonderful revelation of the character and the activities of God, and in that sense, Christ fulfilled the law because he is the most perfect, clearest revelation of the character and the will of God.

In other words, the things that the Old Testament starts to help us understand about God come to a point, and Jesus gives us our fullest and clearest understanding of who God is. Now, I don't have a pithy label for that. I'll let you figure that one out.

Okay, those are the things that I'm comfortable with. There are a few other issues that I'm a little less comfortable with, and just to name a couple. Now, you had Professor Kaiser here, my old boss, last year, and Walt is adamant about single fulfillment.

Were any of you in his class? Okay, adamant, isn't he? There's only one fulfillment of prophecy. I respect Dr. Kaiser. I really like him as a person, and I totally disagree with him on that point, but I do so carefully, all right? I am a strong proponent of double fulfillment because I don't know how else to read some of the prophecies in the New Testament.

Out of Egypt, I've called my son. Now, it's Hosea 11.1 is clearly pointing at God calling the nation Israel out of Egypt. I don't know how else to read Hosea 11.1, and yet what is true of Israel as a nation, God's son, is repeated in fuller and in more complete ways with God's single—I don't want to say real, but his single—son.

And so, you see Matthew, especially being willing to look at how God relates to the nation of Israel and say the true fulfillment while acknowledging, yes, Israel is God's son, and God pulled Israel out of Egypt, therefore out of Egypt I've called my son, is in new and in more complete and in more perfect ways true of God's son, Jesus. Okay, and so actions that start—this is how I think you have to handle Isaiah 7.14. When a virgin shall conceive and bear a child. The problem is both the Hebrew word behind virgin and parthenos in Greek, the Greek translation does not primarily mean virgin.

The word means a young woman of marriageable age. The assumption is that most young women of marriageable ages are virgins. The problem is that parthenos is used of temple prostitutes.

Last time I checked, they're not virgins. Checked. Maybe I should use a different word.

The last time I thought through this and read about it, you know, temple prostitutes aren't virgins. And in its historical situation, I think that the virgin, the young woman,

is Isaiah's wife. And the whole point is Isaiah is asking Ahab to ask God for a sign, and Ahab, in total rebellion, says, I'm not going to ask for a sign.

He appears to be very religious. He's actually flat-out sitting because he's not doing what God told him to do. And Isaiah says, fully with you, what I just prophesied is going to come true before my son is of a certain age.

Because they talk about a son being born, I think it's in the next chapter. Okay, so what on earth is Matthew doing? Well, Matthew understands that things that happen in the Old Testament are a type if you want to use that word. They're the first revelation, the first going, you know, event, which is at a deeper, more fundamental level that Isaiah could never understand, going to be fulfilled in God's son, Jesus.

And so, it's really hard because you can't put a footnote like that in the Bible. So, the RSV got slammed for saying young woman, although it really is what's going on in Isaiah, but then it makes no sense in Matthew. So, you have to say virgin in both places, if you're an evangelical.

Otherwise, Matthew doesn't make any sense at all. So, I'm just saying so I can see some of these kinds of connections. Okay, where I am not sure are two areas.

One is the promise of land. There are strong promises of land in the Old Testament, right? I'm reading through Isaiah right now, and there are all kinds of promises of the land that they're going to receive. And I don't like the terminology, but I am, again, the exact opposite of Professor Kaiser.

I believe in replacement theology. It's not a good term, but I think I am a true descendant of Abraham. I think Paul says it so many times, I don't know how we miss this.

It's interesting, in both the ESV and the NIV, this is one of my contributions, because they both had, like in Romans 2, the true Israelite or the true circumcision. The word true doesn't exist in the Greek. Circumcision is not at any level an issue of what we do physically.

There's no true or partially true circumcision. Circumcision, Paul says, is a matter of the heart. And Paul is so radically redefining what a child of Abraham is that people have trouble with that, and so they put these words like true that don't exist in the text.

So, I believe that the land is heaven. Now, I'm not at a point where I'm willing to write an article and go to bat on it, but I'm pretty sure because I look at the blessings

that are promised in the Old Testament of land and the peace that's going to come on the land. And I know some people put it in the millennium.

I put it in heaven. But I'd raise that as kind of a, when you talk about the Old Testament being fulfilled in Christ, you got the land promises. The hardest part of the Old Testament is finding a way to focus on Christ, which is all the theocratic rules.

Israel was designed to be a theocratic, right? God is the head of Israel. And it's under that heading that you get the laws, the social laws about stoning the disobedient son. And I don't know how that law is fulfilled in Christ.

I can see an argument that the attitudes that are behind a son being disobedient or the attitudes of the heart that are behind how a dad and a mom have to raise their children, that in some way they come to fulfillment in Christ and empowered by the Spirit. 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.

But they have to be because Jesus says that the whole Old Testament's fulfilled in him. So there has to be some way this happens. Maybe Shriner knows I don't.

Okay? But the point is, I haven't come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I've not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. All of them come to a point in Christ.

And in coming to a point in him, some of them cease to be. Right? Sacrificial system. In others, they continue.

That's why we read the Psalms. Other parts of it continue into the New Covenant because they are truer in deeper ways and empowered by God's Spirit in the New Covenant. That's why I preach from the Psalms, because they're fulfilled in Christ and they're not relegated to the Old Covenant, that they're part of the New Covenant as well.

Okay? It may not be. I wish I had all the answers wouldn't that be nice? Sign up for a class here and get all the answers, but I don't have them. Any comments on that? I think those are helpful distinctions.

You just have to find a way to say they are fulfilled in Christ. The moral laws are, yeah, depending upon what the moral is. The Jews didn't divide it up that way.

That's part of the problem. So, is stoning a disobedient son part of the moral law or not? I would say not being disobedient is part of the moral law. Yeah.

But stoning, yeah. I would put that other more under a governmental kind of law. Yeah.

See, what you can say is anything that is involved in a theocratic state is abolished because we no longer live in a theocratic state. And also, Israel lived most of their life not in a theocratic state. Everything still applies to that.

Yeah, there's no indication that when they were under the control of any other country, they weren't still supposed to stone a disobedient son. I mean, it is phenomenally complicated, yeah. The Jews said, no, these are the laws, and it didn't divide them up.

We do the dividing up to try to come to terms with some of the laws. I do have to say, you mentioned another teacher we had whose class I was in about preaching the Old Testament. And I thought, you don't do type in any type.

I don't understand. I don't understand why you would ever not want to see that because Paul saw it all over the place. Peter saw it.

So why wouldn't we see it? And Dr. Kaiser will have an answer for that. I don't know what it is. But this was, I mean, he has really put a stake in the ground when it comes to no type, and I type, no double fulfillment.

And he's a phenomenal scholar. So, there are reasons behind it. I just, yeah, if Paul sees type and I type.

I mean, even the discussion in the commentaries on that Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is presenting himself as the new Moses, as the prophet that Moses prophesied, one like me is going to come. Well, that's not a double fulfillment. But you have a type and a type.

You have Moses, and you have a Moses figure in Jesus. So, yeah. Dr. Kaiser's power is as good as he is, but he has not convinced evangelicalism of that position.

In fact, I'm sure there are people, but I don't know of major players that have agreed. Anyway, all things to struggle with. Can you translate the Greek word to fulfill as to fully realize? Right, right.

High praise indeed. This is not a bad idea. But see, there are specific prophecies, suffering servant prophecies that are fulfilled.

But I think when most of the church hears the word fulfilled, they're looking for, you know, Bethlehem of, you know, Ephrath or whatever it is. You know, the ruler is going to come out of you. They think of very specific, overt prophecies.

Your idea of using to more fully realize is, I think, actually what the bulk of the Old Testament is doing. The sacrificial system is a great example. It is more fully, completely realizing Christ.

Well, and that actually is the problem. People will look at Matthew and go, that's nuts. That's nuts.

So, I don't know, I'll mull that one over. That might be, it'd be interesting to put a different translation of pleirao in Matthew, and not elsewhere. I think it's because Matthew is the only one you really have to worry about.

Well, on the NIV, I wouldn't get credit for it either. Oh really? Wow, I'm better than I thought. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah, I'll take a look at it. Yes, sir.

Hmm. Matt, have you ever heard that? If a prophecy was fulfilled beyond the lifetime of the prophet, did he have to validate it with something that had to validate it within his lifetime? Now, I've never heard that which doesn't mean it's not true. Yeah, yeah, I'm not familiar with a text that says that.

Hmm, I'm not familiar with that part of the passage. The only test for a prophet I know of is that if it didn't come true, you have to stone him. This kind of negates the possibility of fulfillment past the lifetime, right? If it's not fulfilled, you kill him.

You go, no wait, guys. Tomorrow's going to happen tomorrow, so put those rocks down. You know, I don't know. Okay, this is a very, very difficult topic.

And again, it's one that I think a preacher needs to work through because why do you, I mean, there's so many people that say, well, you know, the God of the Old Testament's different from the God of the New Testament, right? And you go, oh, so you believe in two gods? Or do you believe that God changes? I mean, it's a common thing that's said, and it's just horrific. Yeah, but you've got to figure out a way to put those characteristics of God that are revealed in the Old Testament and mesh them with those maybe other characteristics of God in the New Testament. Although I'm not really sure, there's really one characteristic in one that's also not in the other.

God has been a God of wrath in the New Testament as He is in the Old Testament. He's every bit a God of love in the Old Testament. As a mother hen puts its wings around its chicks, so often have I sought to protect you.

I mean, you have these wonderful pictures of a loving, protective God in the Old Testament that, you know, to some people, are more powerful than the ones we see in the New Testament. But there needs to be a way that you can say, no, I will not

participate in stoning a disobedient son other than getting him to move to Portland. And this is why.

Well, yeah, it'd be interesting to ask if Jesus is reinterpreting that particular law. The problem is, I don't think the woman conundrum story belongs in the Bible. It's not in the original text. It doesn't appear until 150 years later.

So, the commentators are almost unanimous in saying it's a real story, but John just didn't write it, and there are a lot of reasons for that. So, I tend not to go to textually uncertain passages. Yeah, I just use that one because it's one of the strongest ones.

I mean, the other one, that homosexuality is a capital offense, would be another kind of example that would, okay, now, do we really believe that? Are we really going to do that? Okay, this is something for you to work on, but hopefully, some of the questions may have been answered in your mind. So, for the vast majority of the Old Testament, it's pretty easy to see how it's fulfilled in Christ. Some of it is still murky, all right? Do not think that I've come to abolish the law or the prophets.

I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. And then, he's going to clarify what he means by the law and the prophets. He said, I mean every little thing they say.

For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, it's the NIV, not the smallest letter, the King James jot, I guess, right? Jot. There's a jot and tittle. Is that a King James? Okay, not the smallest letter.

It's the iota in the Greek alphabet. It's not the least stroke of a pen. There are multiple Hebrew characters that look almost identical, except one has a little flip or another one, the line connects.

Like the eight sounds, there's one that goes across and down and has a little line. The other one goes across and it connects. Those with a little flip on it.

So, Jesus is looking at the smallest pen stroke that you would make right in Greek and the smallest pen stroke you would make writing Hebrew. What does the ESV say? What did we end up with there? Dot. Why on earth would we say dot? There are no vowels.

There are no vowels written at this time. Where in the Hebrew language do you get a dot that's not a vowel? I do not remember our discussion on this. Oh, shin-sin.

The shin-sin-tav, the last three letters in Hebrew, the shin, and the sin are distinguished by one as a dot over the left and one as a dot over the right. That's where it is. And there's always a reason.

By the way, in translations, there's no random translation. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what any of the major translations, especially the ones done by committees, there's no random translation.

There's always a reason. And it's so easy to look at. Well, that's stupid.

That didn't make any sense at all. Yeah, it did. There was a majority of scholars that are probably better scholars than you and me, and we decided as a group that this is the way we do it.

All right. And sometimes they're not good reasons. Those would be all the votes I lost.

Sometimes there are good reasons. Those are the votes I won. But there's always a reason.

And so don't stop your studying until you can figure out why. All right. So yeah, shin-sin is distinguished by a dot.

That's where it comes from. I don't know. I wonder if the dot was there in Jesus's day.

It must have been. We wouldn't have said dot. Okay.

Well, the letters. Just a second. Let me see what the Greek is.

Um, in the Proverbs, come to fulfill, for I have said to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one curiae will not pass away. Well, the Greek word is actually iota. So, he's actually using the letter.

And the other word is curiae. It means, shoot, it crashed. It means horn.

Okay. That's why we say it looks like a horn is what it is. So yeah, I don't like the translation dot.

If it's a horn, it's different than a he and a tet and whatever those characters are. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. But I don't like using English terms for Hebrew and Greek letters though.

No, there's no dash. And there's no dash in Hebrew. There's, there's later on the mass reach use dash to, to, to build connections between words, but in the actual

continental alphabet, there's not a dash, but yeah, it's a stroke of the pen, but the only stroke of the pen that resembles a horn is that the little decorative thing.

Anyway, anyway, um, I don't think it'd be hyperbolic because a, he's using the actual word iota, which is a Greek letter. And so, the assumption, the other thing, is a description of part of the Hebrew alphabet. So, he just saying absolutely everything is fulfilled in me.

Absolutely. So, in some way, a stoning and disobedient son is fulfilled in Christ. I have no idea how he means every last little thing Moses and the prophets say.

Um, in other words, he's not allowing for some of it to be true and some of it to be ignored. Right. So, when was the last time we preached through numbers? Kent Hughes has a, uh, has Kent ever come here to teach a class? Okay.

I thought he had, uh, this commentary series for which he's the general editor. And I can't imagine how hard it was to find someone who would preach through numbers so he could be a complete series, but he got someone. But every last little bit of his true.

And he says, it's not that it's all, Oh, I'm sorry. My crash took me away. It's not that all of the old covenant law is eternally going to go on and say it's; it's until everything is accomplished.

So, he's, he's doing a terminus, which I guess is how, um, it's, it's how it's, it's at some points that, that why no one's going to say, let me just read it. I'm sorry 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.

And the point I'm trying to make is that some of it was accomplished on the cross. Some of it will be accomplished at judgment. Some of it will be accomplished in the new heavens and the new earth, right? So even the promises of land will have their ultimate final fulfillment, and in the new heavens, the new earth makes sense.

So there, there is a, it doesn't have to all happen at once. Then, what 19 does is that he's driving the point home with an application. Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly, and that person will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever practices and teaches these commands, both the greatest and the least will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. The idea of, I've got relaxes here. What the ESV, you know, I need to pull up the ESV.

So, my notes are still ESV. Yeah. Yeah.

Verse 19 ESV. Therefore, whoever relaxes, it's, it's, it's probably a better translation. Relaxes means to set aside, to ignore in other words.

And so, you have the basic Jewish distinction because there are 613 commandments, and the Jews divided them into the lesser and the greater, right? So greater commandments, love God, love your neighbor, lesser commandments, tithing mint and dill and, and whatnot. Jesus is saying that even those who are considered least important are still tremendously important. Jesus's confidence in the truth of the Old Testament extends even to the least, the most minor, and the commandments of the Jews determined were most minor.

I'm not going to talk a lot about it, but this is one of those passages that is brought up in discussions of inspiration, right? Most evangelicals believe in verbal plenary inspiration. Verbal meaning inspiration extends to the words, not just the ideas conveyed in them. Plenary means that the inspiration is to all of it.

Full plenary means, you know, full, complete. So, most evangelicals believe that everything that scripture says is true. There's a hybrid that says that scripture is true in all that affirms faith and practice, but it's not necessarily true in other areas, such as history and science.

When I was going to seminary, I went to Fuller, and this was more right-smack in the middle of the debate. I remember sitting in the chapel, listening to President Hubbard draw these distinctions out as to what Fuller's position was. True in areas of faith and practice, not necessarily true in other areas of faith and science.

A distinction that I think is impossible to maintain. Jesus Christ died for your sins. Is that inspired or not? Well, is it history or faith? It's both, right? Our faith is grounded in history.

It's just really, really hard to split these things out. And it's in the history of the debate back in the seventies when Jewett, who was, by the way, a phenomenal systematics professor. I enjoyed his class.

A godly, godly man. But his book was the death knell for that area, that slice of evangelicalism. When he said that Paul was wrong about women in ministry, he just was wrong.

He was limited by his rabbinic background. And Jewett argued that Paul was wrong in an area of faith and practice. And that's when the divide between Fuller and their adherents really separated from Trinity and Gordon Conwell and Denver and their adherents.

So that was going on in the seventies. But anyway, Jesus is, as I was trying to make up, I'll tell you the story. When I was in grad school, my two best friends were Daryl Bach and Craig Blomberg.

Daryl taught at Dallas and went to Dallas. Craig teaches at Denver and went to Trinity. And we had Thursday lunches together.

And Daryl would come in from where he lived. And actually, Craig and I lived together for a while. And we would have lunch and then argue all afternoon.

It was the best part of my education. I did not realize that I had been taught a certain way at Fuller, and they had really been taught differently. So, I just went into grad school assuming the Bible had errors.

I wasn't taught that growing up, but I just assumed, based on everything, that there were errors. And that was one of the things that we really challenged me on. And this was one of the passages they go to.

They say, Bill, if Jesus's confidence in the truthfulness of Scripture extends to the jot and tittle, why doesn't yours? Oh, I hadn't thought about that. So, this is a very important passage in the whole debate on inspiration. But Jesus's confidence extends to the smallest possible part of the Old Testament law.

Okay? Okay, so at this point, the Pharisees are going, oh yeah, this guy's not bad. I'm not really sure what this fulfilled business is, but you know, hey, he's one of us. He's one of us.

And then verse 20. And verse 20 would have just decimated them, right? For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses, ESV exceeds that of the absolutely most meticulously religious people the world has ever known. These are the Pharisees and the scribes and teachers of the law.

You will, and in a very emphatic reconstruction, you will certainly not. You will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. Actually, the NIV is a lot better than the ESV in that respect.

ESV is you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. NIV is it makes it more emphatic. You will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Wow, what a zinger that must have been. That all of a sudden, here's this Galilean prophet saying that the most meticulously religious people probably the world has ever seen are not even in the kingdom of God. Much less they're not great, they're not least, they're not even in it.

Jesus's call to the disciples is that your righteousness must surpass and exceed these people. Now, what he's going to do is spend the rest of the chapter unpacking what that means.

This is Dr. Bill Mounds in his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. This is session 5 on Matthew 5:17-20 on Jesus and the Law.