

## **“Disciples Love God’s Word”**

Matthew 5:17-20

Around 140 A.D. there was a wealthy shipowner who lived on the coast of the Black Sea who came to the city of Rome. The man’s name was Marcion. Although he had been the son of a bishop, Marcion had been influenced by a gnostic teacher named Cerdo. Cerdo had convinced Marcion that the God of the Old Testament was different than the God of the New Testament. He taught that the God of the Old Testament was unknowable, whereas the God of the New Testament had been revealed. The God of the Old Testament was vengeful, whereas the God of the New Testament was gracious.

Marcion embraced this false teaching and went a step further as a false teacher himself. Marcion rejected the entire Old Testament, as well as those sections in the New Testament that he thought favored the Jews. Marcion began to rewrite the New Testament by eliminating all its Old Testament references.

Marcion was officially excommunicated from the church in 144 A.D. and his heretical teachings were rejected, but not before he had begun to attract a following of people. As Marcionism began to spread, the church father Tertullian wrote a five volume work entitled “Against Marcion” in which he refuted Marcion’s ideas by showing how the Old Testament is just as much God’s Word as is the New.

Marcion especially disliked this passage of Scripture from the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, it is said that his followers later exchanged the verbs in verse 17 to make it read:

*“I have not come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, but to abolish them!”*

Church history has had its fair share of those who reject Scripture and twist it to suit their own ideas.

What did Jesus think about Scripture? These verses are perhaps His most comprehensive answer to that question.

Jesus had a very high view of Scripture, and He intends for His disciples to have a high view of Scripture as well.

### **1. Jesus came to FULFILL the Scriptures**

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law of the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

A major question being debated in our culture today has to do with absolute truth. What basis is there to determine truth, law, morality, and what constitutes right from wrong?

Such a question is the essence of what Jesus teaches here. According to Jesus, the absolute truth is the law of God, which He has laid down and made known to men through Scripture.

Jesus declares without apology that He didn't come to teach or preach anything contrary to God's law in even the slightest way, but that He came to uphold it entirely.

**“Abolish”** - *to destroy; to completely invalidate something which has been in force; to do away with*

**Matthew 26:61** - **“This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.”**

According to Jesus, He did not come to contradict Scripture or do away with Scripture. Nor did He come to ignore Scripture. Jesus came to fulfill Scripture.

Sometimes, someone will say, “I like certain parts of the Bible, but I reject other parts that I don't like.” Some even try to say that they accept Jesus but reject the Bible.

It is impossible to take Jesus seriously while rejecting His Word!

**Luke 6:46** - **“But why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and not do the things which I say?”**

**James Montgomery Boice** - *“...Christ so identified Himself with Scripture and so interpreted His ministry in the light of Scripture that it is impossible to weaken the authority of the one without at the same time weakening the authority of the other.”*

All of Scripture points us to Jesus. In fulfilling the law and the prophets, Jesus shows how all of Scripture finds its fullest meaning in Him. Scripture is nothing but a puzzle at best to the one who reads it without the understanding that it all points us to Christ.

- Old Testament message: “He's coming!”
- Gospels' message: “He's here!”
- New Testament message: “He's coming again!”

Jesus Himself acknowledged that the Scriptures point to Him. God is the main character of Scripture, not man.

**“Fulfill”** - *to accomplish the intended purpose; give true complete meaning of*

The fulfillment that Jesus is speaking of here is not just the external conformity to Old Testament commands, but is speaking instead of a heart that is alive to God. The law itself called for this.

**Deuteronomy 30:6 - “And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.”**

How Jesus Christ has fulfilled the Law and the Prophets:

- By fulfilling their messianic predictions
- By perfectly keeping all the commands of the law
- By means of the Holy Spirit who indwells the believer

**Ezekiel 36:26 - “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to obey My rules.”**

The main way that Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law and Prophets was through His death whereby He canceled the claims of the law against all who would receive Him as their Savior. Thus, Christ fulfilled the law by satisfying its demands.

The law and the lamb always went hand in hand. When God gave His LAW, He also provided a LAMB. In Old Testament Israel, the law and the sacrifices were not separated.

Not only did Jesus fulfill the demands of the law, but He also fulfilled the direct statements of the prophets about who the Messiah would be, where He would be born, what He would do, and the nature of His suffering.

Consider just a handful of these prophetic passages:

**Genesis 3:15 - “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”**

**Genesis 22:14 - “So Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided.”**

**Genesis 22:18 - “In your offspring shall all nations of the earth be blessed.”**

**Genesis 49:10 - “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.”**

David prophetically spoke of the cross:

**Psalms 22:16-18 - “They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.”**

So did the prophet Isaiah:

**Isaiah 53:3-5 - “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”**

In his sermon in Acts 2 at Pentecost, the apostle Peter explains how Jesus fulfilled the prophetic promise of resurrection, showing that this was what David wrote about in Psalm 16.

On and on we could go and study countless examples of how Jesus has fulfilled both the Law and the Prophets.

**John 5:39 - “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.”**

The Bible truly is a “Jesus Book!”

## **2. Jesus had a FUNDAMENTAL approach to Scripture**

*“For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”*

Far from abolishing the Law and the Prophets, Jesus came to fulfill them and to uphold them. He had a very basic and fundamental approach to Scripture in His earthly ministry.

A careful study of Jesus’ ministry will show that He approached Scripture in several ways:

He upheld the AUTHORITY of Scripture

He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. This means that He upheld the authority of God's Word.

**Matthew 4:4 - "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."**

He frequently appealed to the authority of Scripture in His dealings with people. He taught Scripture, He applied Scripture, and He spoke Scripture.

Jesus Christ is the Word made flesh!

He upheld the INSPIRATION of Scripture

Every iota and every dot of Scripture was important to Jesus, or every jot and tittle. This means that He considered each part of Scripture inspired.

*"Iota and Dot" - the ninth letter of the Greek alphabet; corresponds to the Hebrew 'yod' which looks like a tiny apostrophe; dot is even smaller than that; dot refers to the Hebrew 'serif' which is the tiniest stroke to distinguish one letter from another*

There are approximately 66,420 'yods' in the Hebrew Old Testament, and hundreds of thousands of 'serifs!' And Jesus has such a high view of Scripture that He says not one of them will ever pass away!

He upheld the SUFFICIENCY of Scripture

A simple consideration of the way Christ quoted and referred to Scripture shows us that He believed in its sufficiency.

- He referred to Scripture during His wilderness temptation
- He referred to Scripture while teaching and preaching
- He referred to Scripture on the cross
- He referred to Scripture after His resurrection

Many a Christian today will no doubt confess the Bible's authority over his or her life, but will at the same time discount its ability to do what is necessary to draw unbelievers to Christ, enable them to grow more like Christ, provide direction for their life, and to be front and center in corporate worship.

It shows a faulty understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture! In days gone by, the battle in the church was over the authority of Scripture. However, I believe the battle facing today's generation will be about the sufficiency of Scripture.

**Psalm 19:7-9** - **"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."**

I've got a lot of good books in my library, but nothing beats the Good Book! It is God's book, and it is alive and active and sharper than any two-edged sword. It cuts me, convicts me, cleanses me, and conforms me to the image of Jesus.

### **3. Disciples are to be FAITHFUL to the Scriptures**

*"Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."*

It is obvious that Jesus had a high view of Scripture, and He intends for His followers to have a high view of Scripture as well.

How we approach the Word of God says much about how we approach the God of the Word.

**Charles Spurgeon** - *"I would recommend you either believe God up to the hilt, or else not to believe at all. Believe this book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it. There is no logical standing place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of divine revelation; a faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith at best. It is little better than a dry-land faith, and is not good for much."*

Jesus says that His disciples are known for their love and devotion to His Word.

**"Relaxes"** - *to set loose or annul; the failure to conform to a law or regulation, with a possible implication of regarding it as invalid*

Whenever a believer ceases to treasure God's Word and obey God's Word in even the slightest degree, to that degree he or she is being un-Christlike, because this is something that Jesus Himself refused to do.

Whether you realize it or not, you are communicating to others around you how important God's Word is to you.

**“Teaches”** - *to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting*

The idea is that of showing how much we love God’s Word through our words and through our example.

**John MacArthur** - *“Every person teaches. By our example we continually help those around us either to be more obedient or more disobedient. We also teach by what we say. When we speak lovingly and more respectfully of God’s Word, we teach love and respect for it. When we speak disparagingly or slightly of God’s Word, we teach disregard and disrespect for it. When we ignore its demands, we give loud testimony to its unimportance to us.”*

Jesus says that those who respond to His Word with obedience and teaches others to obey, they will be called “great” in the kingdom of heaven.

**“Great”** - *Grk. word is ‘megas’ and refers to important status*

Christ says that those who are truly great in His eyes are those who treasure His Word and teach His Word to others.

#### **4. Righteousness in Christ is the FOCUS of the Scriptures**

*“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

This would have been an extremely shocking statement to those listening to Jesus. In their first century minds, none were more devout and externally righteous than their religious leaders.

Jesus says that a greater righteousness is necessary.

**Martin Luther** - *“The Law must be laid upon those that are to be justified, that they may be shut up in the prison thereof, until the righteousness of faith comes--that, when they are cast down and humbled by the Law, they should fly to Christ. The Law humbles them, not to their destruction, but to their salvation. For God woundeth that He may heal again. He killeth that He may quicken again.”*

**Galatians 3:24** - **“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”**

The law could save nobody. No person was ever saved by the keeping of the law. The law shows us God’s standard of perfection and exposes our sinfulness. It points us to the only hope we have of salvation--the Lord Jesus Christ!

We need Christ's righteousness, for only He is truly righteous.

**Romans 3:20-28 - "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."**

This passage is one of great encouragement and hope for us because it shows us how Jesus Christ did what we could never do--He fulfilled the demands of the Law.

Living, He loved me. Dying, He saved me. Buried, He carried my sins far away. Rising, He justified freely forever. And one day He's coming, O glorious day!

Jesus says that His disciples love God's Word. We need to understand that:

- Jesus came to FULFILL the Scriptures
- Jesus had a FUNDAMENTAL approach to Scripture
- Disciples are FAITHFUL to Scripture
- Righteousness in Christ is the FOCUS of the Scriptures