

Study Guide: Matthew Lesson 55: Christ and the Law

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This study guide examines the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Old Testament law as presented in the Sermon on the Mount. It explores the preeminence of the law through its divine authorship, its affirmation by the prophets, and its ultimate fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Part I: Short-Answer Review Quiz

1. According to the document, why is the law considered "preeminent"?
2. What are the two primary ways the law is established as preeminent before the arrival of Jesus Christ?
3. What was the specific role of the prophets in relation to the law of God?
4. The document identifies three specific categories of law that the prophets urged Israel to keep; what are they?
5. According to Isaiah 1:18–20, what are the two possible outcomes for Israel based on their obedience or rebellion?
6. How does the book of Malachi characterize Israel's relationship with God's laws?
7. Based on the analogy of Moses and Aaron in Exodus 4:15–16, how is a "prophet" defined?
8. In what three ways does Jesus Christ fulfill the Old Testament law?
9. How many times in the New Testament does Jesus Christ explicitly claim to be the theme of the entire Old Testament?
10. What is the distinction between "filling out" the law and "filling up" the law as described in the text?

Part II: Answer Key

1. The law is preeminent because it is authored by God. Its divine origin gives it a status that is superior to any human-derived code or instruction.
2. The law is first preeminent because God is its author, and secondly, it is preeminent because it is affirmed throughout the Old Testament by the prophets.
3. The prophets acted as God's mouthpieces to reiterate, reinforce, and reaffirm the law. They sounded the alarm when the people of Israel fell away or broke the commands God had given them.
4. The prophets focused on the moral law, the judicial law (addressing issues like unjust judges), and the ceremonial law (addressing proper sacrifices and the rejection of false gods).
5. Isaiah tells the people that if they are willing and obedient, they shall eat the good of the land. Conversely, if they refuse and rebel, they shall be devoured by the sword.
6. Malachi asserts that Israel violated every aspect of God's law, including the laws of marriage, taxation, morality, and justice, leading to inevitable judgment from God.
7. A prophet is defined as "a mouth for God." Just as Aaron was to be the mouth for Moses, speaking the words put into him, a prophet speaks exactly what God commands him to speak.
8. Jesus Christ fulfills the whole Old Testament law ceremonially, judicially, and morally. This fulfillment occurs through His first coming, His return in the Spirit, and His Second Coming.
9. Jesus Christ claimed to be the theme of the whole Old Testament five times. These claims are found in Hebrews 10:7, John 5:39, Matthew 5:17, and Luke 24:27 and 44.
10. "Filling out" implies adding new dimensions or lecturing on an incomplete code, whereas "filling up" means to complete or fulfill something that is already there. Jesus Christ did not add new laws but completed the original meaning of God's word.

Part III: Essay Format Questions

- 1. The Prophetic Mandate:** Discuss the definition of a prophet provided in the text using the examples of Moses, Aaron, and Jeremiah. How does this definition explain the prophets' constant focus on Israel's failure to keep the moral, judicial, and ceremonial laws?
- 2. The Completeness of the Old Testament:** The text argues that the Old Testament is "wonderfully complete." Explain this perspective in light of the claim that Jesus Christ is the central theme of the entire Old Testament, referencing the various roles He occupies in different books (e.g., Passover Lamb, High Priest, King).

3. The Nature of Fulfillment: Analyze the three ways Jesus Christ is said to have fulfilled the law: through His teaching, through His life/obedience, and through His personhood. Which of these does the author consider the most "major point" and why?

4. The Summary of the Law: Examine Matthew 22:37–39 as a summation of the law. How does Jesus Christ's reduction of the law to two commands (loving God and loving one's neighbor) align with His mission to "fulfill all righteousness"?

5. Divine Author and Preeminence: Explore the connection between the authorship of the law and its authority. How does the fact that God authored the law influence the way the prophets spoke to Israel and the way Jesus Christ interacted with the Law during His earthly ministry?

Part IV: Glossary of Key Terms

- **Ceremonial Law:** Regulations regarding religious rituals and worship, such as sacrifices and the washing in repentance.
- **Fulfill:** To "fill up" or complete something that is already present, rather than adding new information; to bring the law to its intended goal.
- **Judicial Law:** The rules governing civil justice, equity, and the conduct of judges within the nation of Israel.
- **Kinsman Redeemer:** A role attributed to Jesus Christ in the book of Ruth, signifying His work in rescuing and redeeming His people.
- **Messiah:** The promised deliverer whom the law predicted; the bringer of everlasting righteousness.
- **Moral Law:** The ethical standards set by God regarding right and wrong behavior.
- **Passover Lamb:** A theme from Exodus representing Jesus Christ as the sacrificial offering for the salvation of His people.
- **Preeminent:** Surpassing all others; very distinguished in rank or authority.
- **Prophet:** A "mouth for God"; one who speaks the words that God puts into their mouth to reinforce His laws.
- **The Law:** The body of divine commands authored by God, categorized into moral, judicial, and ceremonial requirements.