

## Briefing Document: Matthew Lesson 55: Christ and the Law

February 1, 2026

### Executive Summary

The following briefing analyzes the preeminence of divine law and its ultimate fulfillment through the person and work of Jesus Christ, as outlined in Matthew 5:17-20. The central thesis posits that the Old Testament law is an exhaustive, perfect document authored by God and reaffirmed by the prophets. However, its true completion is found neither in moral lectures nor in simple expansion, but in the arrival of the Messiah. Jesus Christ does not merely supplement the law; He "fills it up" by embodying the righteousness the law predicts. By claiming to be the theme of the entire Old Testament across five distinct New Testament passages, Christ establishes Himself as the central figure of the biblical narrative, fulfilling the judicial, ceremonial, and moral requirements of the law through His identity and His actions.

### The Preeminence of the Divine Law

The authority of the law is established through two primary channels: its divine origin and its historical affirmation by the prophetic tradition.

#### Divine Authorship and Prophetic Affirmation

The law is considered preeminent because it is authored by God. This authority is further reinforced by the prophets, who acted as God's mouthpieces to reiterate and reinforce the legal and moral requirements set before Israel.

The prophetic mission involved sounding alarms regarding three specific categories of the law:

- **Moral Law:** The ethical standards governing human behavior.
- **Judicial Law:** The standards of justice and civil governance (e.g., addressing "unjust judges").
- **Ceremonial Law:** The requirements for worship and sacrifice (e.g., addressing the failure to sacrifice or the worship of false gods).

As illustrated in *Isaiah 1:18-20*: "*Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword"*"

#### Defining the Prophet

A prophet is defined as a "mouth for God." This is exemplified in the relationship between Moses and Aaron. According to *Exodus 4:15-16*, the Lord said to Moses: "*Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do.*"

Similarly, in *Jeremiah 1:7*, the Lord commands: "*Do not say, 'I am a youth,' For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak.*"

## Christ as the Central Theme of Scripture

The document asserts that the Old Testament is an "absolutely wondrous, perfect, complete picture" of the coming King and His kingdom. Jesus Christ is the primary theme of the entire Old Testament, a claim He made personally on five occasions in the New Testament:

1. **Hebrews 10:7**
2. **John 5:39**
3. **Matthew 5:17**
4. **Luke 24:27**
5. **Luke 24:44**

The Apostle Paul reinforced this in 2 *Corinthians* 1:20: "*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us*"

## Christological Typology in the Old Testament

The following table synthesizes how Christ is manifested as the central theme across the Old Testament books:

### **Old Testament Division Manifestation of Christ**

<b>Genesis</b>	The seed of the woman
<b>Exodus</b>	The Passover Lamb
<b>Leviticus</b>	The High Priest
<b>Numbers</b>	The pillar of cloud by day and fire by night
<b>Deuteronomy</b>	The Prophet like Moses
<b>Joshua</b>	The Captain of our salvation
<b>Judges</b>	The Judge and Lawgiver
<b>Ruth</b>	The Kinsman Redeemer
<b>1 &amp; 2 Samuel</b>	The trusted Prophet
<b>Kings &amp; Chronicles</b>	The reigning King
<b>Ezra</b>	The faithful scribe
<b>Nehemiah</b>	The builder of the broken wall
<b>Esther</b>	Mordecai
<b>Job</b>	The ever-living Redeemer

<b>Psalms</b>	The Lord our Shepherd
<b>Proverbs &amp; Eccl.</b>	True wisdom
<b>Song of Solomon</b>	The real lover and Bridegroom
<b>Isaiah</b>	The Prince of Peace
<b>Jeremiah &amp; Lam.</b>	The weeping Prophet
<b>Ezekiel</b>	The wonderful four-faced man
<b>Daniel</b>	The fourth man in the fiery furnace
<b>Hosea</b>	The eternal husband married to the backslider
<b>Joel</b>	The baptizer with the Holy Spirit
<b>Amos</b>	The burden-bearer
<b>Obadiah</b>	The Savior
<b>Jonah</b>	The great foreign missionary
<b>Micah</b>	The messenger with beautiful feet
<b>Nahum</b>	The avenger
<b>Habakkuk</b>	God's evangelist pleading for revival
<b>Zephaniah</b>	The Lord, mighty to save
<b>Haggai</b>	The restorer of the lost heritage
<b>Zechariah</b>	The fountain opened for sin and cleansing
<b>Malachi</b>	The sun of righteousness with healing in His wings

### The Nature of Fulfillment

The term "fulfill" in the context of Matthew 5:17 does not mean to "fill out" (as in adding to a sketch), but rather to "fill up" (to complete what is already there).

### Methods of Fulfillment

There are three primary ways in which Christ interacts with and fulfills the law:

**1. Teaching and Elucidation:** While Jesus expanded and clarified the original meaning of God's law, He did not come merely to provide a moral lecture or add new dimensions to an incomplete code. He rescued the law from rabbinical perversion and used the Holy Spirit to illuminate its depths.

**2. Perfect Obedience:** Christ met every demand of the moral, judicial, and ceremonial laws. He was "flawless in His obedience" and provided a perfect model of righteousness. This is evidenced in *Matthew 3:15*, where Jesus insisted on baptism to "*fulfill all righteousness.*" He also summarized the entirety of the law into two commandments in *Matthew 22:37-39*: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'*"

**3. Ontological Fulfillment (The "Heart of the Matter"):** The primary sense in which Jesus fulfills the law is by **being** its fulfillment. He is the Messiah that the law predicted. His purpose was to bring in everlasting righteousness by virtue of who He is.

### Conclusion

The law remains preeminent, yet its full meaning is only realized in Jesus Christ. Whether through His first coming, His return in the Spirit, or His Second Coming, Christ fulfills the Old Testament in its entirety. He is the end toward which the law and the prophets pointed, moving beyond the letter of the law to the embodiment of everlasting righteousness.