

Briefing Document: Matthew Lesson 56 Christ and the Law

February 8, 2026

Executive Summary

The primary focus of this analysis is the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Old Testament Law as presented in the Sermon on the Mount. The central argument posits that Jesus did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it through His nature, His life, and His death. This fulfillment is categorized into three distinct areas: the judicial law, the moral law, and the ceremonial law. While the judicial and ceremonial systems were set aside or completed through Christ's work, the moral law remains binding and is fulfilled in the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit. The document further explores the typological relationship between Old Testament symbols—such as the high priesthood of Aaron and the Tabernacle—and the reality found in Christ.

The Source Scripture: Matthew 5:17–20

The foundation of the discourse is found in *Matthew 5:17–20*:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

The Three-Fold Fulfillment of the Law

The analysis identifies three specific ways in which Jesus Christ fulfilled the requirements of the Old Testament.

1. The Judicial Law

The judicial law comprised the legal codes, statutes, and ordinances given specifically to the nation of Israel to distinguish them from other nations (*Psalms 147:19–20*).

- **Rejection and Transition:** The judicial law reached its climax and was effectively set aside when Israel reached a final rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.
- **The Status of the Church:** Following this rejection, the "kingdom of God" was taken from the national entity of Israel and given to a "nation bearing the fruits of it"—the Church, composed of both Jews and Gentiles (*Matthew 21:43*).
- **Clarification on Replacement Theology:** The document clarifies that the Church does not replace Israel. Instead, the judicial law is set aside until a future time when God will redeem the nation of Israel and they will assume their proper position. The foundations of the judicial law remain rooted in eternal moral principles.

2. The Moral Law

The moral law represents the divine principles and rules governing human conduct.

- **Fulfillment through Life:** Jesus fulfilled the moral law by living a life of perfect obedience. He never disobeyed any precept established by God.
- **Fulfillment in the Believer:** Because Christ fulfilled the law, it is now possible for the "righteous requirement of the law" to be fulfilled in believers who "do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (*Romans 8:4*).

3. The Ceremonial Law

The ceremonial law included the Levitical priesthood, the sacrificial system, and the various religious festivals.

- **Fulfillment through Death:** Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial system through His sacrifice on the cross. This was signified by the tearing of the temple veil from top to bottom, indicating that the Holy of Holies is now accessible to all and the Levitical system is complete.
- **End of the Shadow:** The sacrificial system became unnecessary once the "reality"—the final sacrifice of Christ—was established. This was historically punctuated by the destruction of the temple by the Romans.

Typological Comparisons: The Shadow vs. The Reality

The Old Testament ceremonial system served as a "picture" or shadow of Jesus Christ. The following tables contrast the temporary Old Testament symbols with the eternal reality of Christ.

Aaron vs. Jesus Christ

Feature	Aaron (High Priest)	Jesus Christ
Tabernacle	Entered the earthly tabernacle	Entered the heavenly temple
Frequency	Entered once a year	Entered once for all
Access	Entered behind the veil	Rent the veil
Sacrifice	Offered many sacrifices	Offered one sacrifice
Nature of Sin	Offered for his own sin and others	Offered for the sins of all
Blood	Offered the blood of bulls	Offered His own blood
Duration	Temporary and insufficient	Eternal and all-sufficient
Character	Fallible and changeable	Infallible and unchangeable
Efficacy	Continual/Repetitive	Final and all-prevailing

The Tabernacle Elements

Tabernacle Feature Reality in Christ

The Door	Jesus said, "I am the door."
Brazen Altar	Jesus is the altar and the ransom for many.
The Laver	Jesus washes and cleanses the believer.
The Lamps	Jesus is the Light of the World.
The Bread	Jesus is the Bread of Life.
The Incense	Represents the prayers of Christ ascending for believers.
The Veil	Represented His body.
The Mercy Seat	Jesus is the ultimate mercy seat.

The Levitical Offerings

- **Burnt Offering:** Spoke of the perfection of life; fulfilled by Christ's perfect life.
- **Meal Offering:** Spoke of dedication; fulfilled by Christ's total dedication to God.
- **Peace Offering:** Fulfilled by Christ, who is our peace.
- **Sin Offering:** Christ became sin for us, though He knew no sin.
- **Trespass Offering:** Christ provided for the trespasses of humanity.

The Feasts of Israel

Feast	Fulfillment in Christ
Passover	Jesus is the Passover Lamb.
Unleavened Bread	Represents the holy walk of Jesus.
First Fruits	Jesus rose from the dead, the first fruits of those who sleep.
Pentecost	Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit.
Trumpets	Christ will send angels with a trumpet to gather the elect.
Atonement	Christ paid the full price of atonement.
Tabernacles	Represents the future reunion with Christ in a heavenly home.

The New Covenant and the Believer's Responsibility

The transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament is described as the "time of reformation" (*Hebrews 9:10*). This era is marked by a "better hope" and a "new covenant" (*Hebrews 7:19; 8:8*).

The Role of the Holy Spirit

Believers are called to fulfill the moral law not through legalistic effort, but by "walking in the Spirit." The document emphasizes that the Holy Spirit empowers the Christian to maintain a higher level of holiness and purity.

The Challenge of Disillusionment

The text notes a significant trend of disillusionment within the church, citing that over 80% of seminary graduates are no longer in ministry after ten years. This is attributed to a lack of response or spiritual apathy within congregations.

The Call to Action

The synthesis concludes with a call to spiritual diligence. It argues that:

- Salvation is not a stopping point but the beginning of a "race" or "wrestling match."
- The Bible is an "instruction manual," not merely a "suggestion manual."
- The purpose of salvation is to further the kingdom of God and reach others.
- Sanctification is an ongoing process of recognizing one's sinfulness, giving it to the Lord, and becoming more holy.

Phonetic Pronunciation Guide and Definitions

Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
Jot ¹	/dʒɒt/	The smallest letter of the Greek alphabet (iota), used figuratively to refer to the smallest detail of a piece of writing.
Tittle ²	/'tɪt.əl/	A small stroke or point in writing or printing; in the context of the Hebrew script, it refers to the smallest decorative stroke on a letter.

¹ *Matthew 5:18* ² *Matthew 5:18*