

# What Jesus Did Not Come To Do – Matt 5:17-20

**Introduction** – As we conclude a season of Advent and Christmas, it is important to remember that, gazing upon the manger scene, we are reminded of the grace of God. But the grace of God and the law of God are not at odds with one another. The grace of God is His kindness to us, and the Word of God is our life. A biblical experience of the grace of God in Jesus Christ only moves one to greater motivation for holiness. We come face to face with the One who gives Himself for us and the One who demands universal obedience from us.

**The Text** – “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.....”

**The Law Confirmed, Not Abrogated** (v17) – While Christ’s coming *fulfilled* the prophecies of His coming, this is not the immediate context of the passage. And while Christ’s perfect obedience of God’s Law was *fulfilled* in His life on earth, this is also not the immediate context. The requirements of God’s laws were not in any way being set aside with regard to God’s dealings with His covenantal people. He has called us in grace to be with Him and His requirements for how we are to live remain the same. The law is *fulfilled*, that is, *confirmed*, in Christ’s coming, as opposed to being destroyed at His coming.

**“Do Not Think”** – This strong statement means, “do not even begin to let it come into you mind” and like his other emphatic statements, “Assuredly (that is, Amen)”, “till heaven and earth pass away”, and “not one jot or tittle”, reveal that Christ is quite insistent to declare that He is not setting aside the law of God.

**The Durability of the Word** (v18) – The Old Testament and the New Testament do not teach that God’s salvation was any different, nor that His Word and law were to be treated differently at any time. Jesus quotes the OT saying that man must live by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God (Matt 4:4). The hope of our salvation is taught to us in the OT (Rom 15:4). The OT stated that the Word was settled forever (Psalm 119:89) and Peter quotes Isaiah 40:8 declaring that the Word will never fade (1 Pet 1:22-25). The OT is the means to equip NT ministers completely (2 Tim 3:15f). The OT was given for our instruction (1 Cor 10:11). The OT is needed to make sense of and confirm the gospel of the NT (Acts 17:10f). Jesus Himself was obedient to the law because it was in His heart (Heb 10:1-10 quoting Psalm 40:6-8).

**Ceremonial Laws?** – The Hebrews passage above brings up a good question. What about all the changes that have taken place in the law? Peter is told to kill and eat unclean animals (Acts 10:13) and to dine with the Gentiles (Gal 2:11ff). Gentiles are admonished not to fall into the sin of thinking they must become Jews in order to be Christians (Galatians) or to think they must return to Jerusalem and the temple sacrifices (Hebrews). Shadowy laws of cleanliness, separation, and sacrifice are set aside because the true Light of these shadows has come. But the ethical, moral, and civil laws stand. How we love God and how we love one another is still defined by the law of God, for the law is the very character of God and of His sanctified people.

**The Language of Sacrifice** – Christ came to confirm, not to destroy. In Christ, we are still by faith a people of sacrifices. We are “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 2:5). Paul describes the activity of the church in Philippi in terms of sacrifice and service (Phil 2:17). And this spiritual sacrifice by faith is the offering of our bodies to God in worship. Our worship remains a *sacrificial* worship.

**Pharisaism, Not Lawkeeping, Condemned** (vv19-20) – Pharisees were the most respected religious people in Christ’s day. Jesus condemns their works-righteousness mentality for they taught that Lawkeeping could save, which it never could, and they were guilty of adding to and subtracting from the law of God. The following verses in Chapter 5 of Matthew are Christ’s correction of their false teaching and interpretation of the law.

**The Noble Desire for Greatness** – Christ taught that it was a great thing to desire greatness, but that it had to come on His terms, not on ours.

**The Incarnation of the Son of God** – The celebration of the birth of Christ does not loosen our standards of righteousness, for THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS has come to us.

**Heightens the Need to Know the Word** – Augustine said, “the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.” The coming of Christ demands a deepened attention to the whole counsel of God, the whole Word of God. How dare we think that, because Jesus Christ came, we can be indifferent to the Word of God. The cycle of celebrating Christmas (not a requirement of the church) is fruitful if it drives us to be men and women who read, study, and meditate on the Word of God – “Mary kept these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19).

**Heightens the Concern for Universal Obedience** – If you are Christian, you have a desire to obey Christ in every way. Christ’s coming in no way lessens such convictions. These were the convictions of the faithful in the OT (Psalm 119:4f) as well as the NT – “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).