

Briefing Document: Matthew-Lesson 57 Christ and the Law

February 15, 2026

Executive Summary

This briefing document examines the theological and practical implications of Matthew 5:18–20, as presented in the "Sermon on the Mount" series. The central thesis asserts that the Word of God is immutable, authoritative, and exhaustive. Christ did not come to set aside the Law but to fulfill it, raising the moral standards of righteousness beyond mere traditionalism.

Key takeaways include:

- **The Absolute Authority of Scripture:** The use of "Amen" (translated as "assuredly" or "truly") signals a solemn, authoritative claim by Jesus regarding the Law's permanence.
- **Precision of Fulfillment:** Using the "jot" and "tittle" as metaphors, the text emphasizes that even the smallest strokes of the Hebrew and Greek scripts in the Law are divinely preserved and will be fulfilled.
- **Separateness of the Church:** A primary critique of the modern church is its lack of "separateness" from the world. True righteousness must be born out of a commitment to God's Word rather than human tradition or cultural relativity.
- **Moral Sufficiency:** The Bible is presented as a sufficient guide for all human problems, including contemporary issues of identity and lawlessness, providing a "moral law" that reflects God's eternal character.

Theological Framework: The Nature of the Law

The analysis of the Sermon on the Mount identifies four primary attributes of the Law as viewed by Jesus Christ. These attributes establish why the Law remains the foundational standard for Christian conduct.

1. The Preeminence of the Law

The Law is preeminent because of its origin and affirmation. It is:

- **Authored by God:** It is not a human invention but a divine revelation.
- **Affirmed by the Prophets:** The Old Testament messengers consistently upheld the Law's requirements.
- **Accomplished in Jesus Christ:** Jesus is the embodiment of the Law, having met every element and requirement perfectly.

2. Categorization of the Law

The text distinguishes between three types of law within the biblical tradition, noting that the "moral law" serves as the foundation for the others:

- **Moral Law:** Represented by the Ten Commandments, it is an expression of God's character and nature. This law is eternal and remains the standard for today.
- **Ceremonial Law:** Developed to help Israel understand God's holy character through ritual.
- **Judicial Law:** Developed to help Israel understand God's nature and justice through societal regulation.

The Permanence and Precision of Scripture

In Matthew 5:18, Jesus provides a definitive statement on the longevity of God's Word: *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.*

Solemn Affirmation

The word "assuredly" (or *Amen*) serves as a "tough-minded statement" and a serious claim. It signifies that what follows is an absolute truth, standing in direct opposition to modern cultural relativity. This affirmation underscores that the Word of God is a "timeless book" because it is authored by an eternal God.

Duration of the Word

The text asserts that the present universe and earth are temporary and will eventually pass away, to be replaced by a new heaven and earth. However, the Law remains in effect until that total consummation.

- *Psalm 102:25–27: Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years have no end.*
- *Matthew 24:35: Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*

The "Jot" and "Tittle"

To emphasize the inherent verbal inspiration of the Bible, Jesus references the smallest components of written language:

- **Jot (Yod/Iota):** The *yod* is the smallest Hebrew letter, resembling an apostrophe. Its Greek equivalent, the *iota*, is also the smallest letter.
- **Tittle (Keraia):** A *tittle* refers to a tiny line or stroke that distinguishes one letter from another (e.g., the difference between an 'E' and an 'F').

The core argument is that every minute detail of Scripture is intentional, inerrant, and destined for fulfillment.

Practical Application and the Call to Righteousness

The discourse transitions from the nature of the Law to the required response of the believer, focusing on Matthew 5:19–20.

The Standard of Greatness

Righteousness is defined by both obedience and instruction. Whoever does and teaches the commandments is called "great in the kingdom of heaven." Conversely, attempting to lessen the weight of the Word or prioritize human thoughts over divine mandates leads to a loss of spiritual standing.

Exceeding the Pharisees

Jesus issues a stark warning: *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.*

- **Pharisaical Law:** The scribes and Pharisees had substituted human tradition for the Law of God.
- **True Righteousness:** Jesus did not lower the standards to make holiness easier to achieve; rather, He lifted the standards higher, demanding a righteousness born of a genuine commitment to the Word rather than outward performance or tradition.

The Testimony of the Church

The church is criticized for failing to live a life "separate" from the world. This lack of distinction results in a "lousy testimony" that fails to attract others to the faith. Believers are called to be "salt and light," showing a visible difference in conduct that stems from internal biblical conviction.

Biblical Sufficiency in a Contemporary Context

The briefing concludes with an assertion of the Bible's sufficiency in addressing modern societal and personal crises.

- **Social and Moral Issues:** Contemporary issues, such as gender identity and lawlessness, are characterized as a departure from biblical teaching. The text argues that failure to teach children the Bible's stance on sexuality leads to confusion and tragic outcomes.
 - **Counseling and Guidance:** The Word of God is presented as the ultimate resource for all life issues—including marriage, parenting, and spiritual turmoil. It is described as "alive and powerful," serving as a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
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Glossary of Terms and Phonetic Guide

Term	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
Amen ^[^1]	ah-MEN	A solemn affirmation of truth; translated as "assuredly," "truly," or "verily."
Iota ^[^2]	eye-OH-tah	The smallest letter in the Greek alphabet; used to signify the smallest detail of the Law.
Keraia (Tittle) ^[^3]	keh-RYE-ah	A tiny stroke or mark in writing that distinguishes one letter from another.
Po ^[^4]	POH	A Greek-derived expression of deep sadness or woe, often used to denote a multiplying sorrow.
Yod ^[^5]	YAHD	The smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, resembling an apostrophe.

[^1]: Used by Jesus to introduce a solemn, authoritative truth. [^2]: Derived from the Phoenician roots, shared with the Hebrew *yod*. [^3]: Referenced to show that even the smallest pen stroke of God's Word will be fulfilled. [^4]: Used in the context of describing the tragic results of lawlessness and moral confusion. [^5]: The Hebrew equivalent of the "jot" mentioned in Matthew 5:18.