

The Relationship of Christians to the Old Testament Matthew 5:19-20

Introduction: The *ESV Study Bible* notes accurately state that, in the first century, “the rabbis recognized a distinction between 'light' commandments (such as tithing garden produce) and 'weighty' commandments (such as those concerning idolatry, murder, etc.)” (BibleWorks). See Matt. 23:23

^{NKJ} **Matthew 5:19** “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.”

Matt. 5:1, 11-16

Jesus is basically saying that there will be greater reward for those who teach and practice the Old Testament as they ought. But this must be done *in light of* the New Testament fulfillment.

Question #1: To what commandments does Jesus refer when He speaks of “these commandments”?

Matt. 5:3-12

Question #2: Given that Jesus began to fulfill the Old Testament Scriptures with His first advent, what effect does that have on “these commandments” for Christians?

First, the Old Testament *ceremonial laws* requiring sacrifices, which pointed to Christ and found their fulfillment in Him, have clearly been set aside as no longer binding on Christians precisely *because they have been fulfilled*.

Hebrews 8:13; 9:11-14.

Second, the Old Testament *civil laws* which were given to the nation of Israel have been set aside as no longer binding on Christians as well.

Leviticus 20:10

John 8:3-11

Matthew 18:15-17

1Corinthians 6:9-10.

Even some laws that appear to have been written specifically for the governing of Israel, are also applied to Christians by means of ascertaining and applying the underlying principles behind them.

1 Corinthians 9:7-11 (Citing Deut. 25:4)

1 Timothy 5:17-18 (Citing Deut. 25:4 and Luke 10:7)

^{NKJ} **Matthew 5:20** “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.”

This verse introduces Jesus' discussion of the *six antitheses* of verses 21-48.