

NCT Stinks: Common Objections Session 5

Review:

The Early Church (Henry Chadwick): “The central questions of the apostolic age turned on the continuity or discontinuity of the church with Israel.” It is: The church *and* Israel, or the church *is* Israel? NCT is an answer to this question. Its name comes because of its emphasis on the New Covenant—not an implied theological covenant, not a future dispensation regarding Israel. NCT concludes that the Church *is* Israel.

NCT Essentials:

One Plan of God, Centered in Jesus Christ

Col 1:16, Eph 1:13-14

OT Should be Interpreted in light of NT

Heb 11:2, Lk 24:27, 44, Jn 5:39

Promises to Abraham Fulfilled in Xp & Church

Ro 4:9-11 (seed), Heb 11:39 (land), Ga 3:16 (blessing)

Sinai Covenant Temporary by Divine Design

1Co 9:20-21, 2Co 3:5-11, Ga 3:22-25, Heb 8:6-13

The Law of Moses was a Unit, not a Tripartite

Ga 5:3, Jam 2:10 Heb 7:11-12

Xtns Under the Law of Xp, not Moses

Col 2:16-27 Cor 9:21, Ga 6:2, Mt 22:36-40, Jn 13:34-45, Lk 10:27

All Mbrs NC are Fully Forgiven & Indwelt by the HS

Jer 31:34, Ezk 11:19, 36:25-27, Eph 1:13-14

The Church is Eschatological Israel

Ro 2:28-29, 6:6-8, Ga 3:7-9, 29, 6:15-16

1st London Baptist Confession of 1646: “Christ ... hath ... put away sin by ... offering ... Himself a sacrifice for sin, by which He hath fully finished and suffered all things God required for the salvation of His elect, and removed all rites and shadows ...” (**Insight:** the shadows have been removed!).

******What does Matthew 5:17-20 imply about a righteous person’s relationship to the Law of Moses?** On the surface, it certainly seems as if every true citizen of the kingdom of heaven is obligated to keep all of the commandments of Moses, especially since Jesus kept them all.

Based on 5:17, why did Jesus not come? He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.

What does “abolish” (5:17) mean? It is from *kataluo* (2657); “destroy, overthrow” (used with reference to institutions or governmental laws); with reference to travelers it meant to stop halt on a journey.¹

¹ Thayer, *Lexicon*

PPTS: It is the same word used of the destruction of the temple (**Mt 24:2, 26:61**) and of the death of the physical body (**2Co 5:1**).² The idea is thus to render useless, nullify or to bring to nothing.

What did Jesus mean by “the Law and the Prophets” (5:17)? This was an idiom that refers to what we today call the Old Testament (the Hebrew Scriptures).

What else did Jesus say in the Sermon on the Mount that might have prompted someone to erroneously conclude that He was seeking to abolish the Law (5:17)? See 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43, 7:28-29. Jesus said this because of what he was about to say in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. He repeatedly used phrase, “you have heard that it was said” (or something similar) followed by a quotation from Moses. The potential confusion would come in that Jesus then clarified the true intent of the Law. On the surface it might sound to the casual listener that Jesus was discrediting the Law. On the contrary, He gave its true meaning.

Note: The various Laws of Moses that Jesus dealt with in the Sermon on the Mount are all moral in nature (as opposed to civil or ceremonial): murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, justice, hatred for enemies, etc.

According to 5:17, why did Jesus come? Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets.

What does “fulfill” (5:17) mean? It is from *pléroo* (4137); “to make full or to complete.”

Did Jesus fulfill the Law and the Prophets (5:17)? Yes:

ESV **Luke 24:44** Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

According to 5:18, under what conditions would the Law disappear? 1) When the heavens and earth disappear, or 2) when everything in the Law is accomplished (notice that the word “until” is in the sentence twice). This seems to be an either/or condition, not both/and.

What does “accomplished” (5:18) mean? It is from *ginomai* (1096); “to come to pass, to happen, to become.”

Based on what we know of Jesus’ life, did He “fulfill” (5:17) the Law and the Prophets? Yes He did, and perfectly so. Jesus said that He came to fulfill the Law (**5:17**) and He did not fail in His mission. The law has indeed been fulfilled (accomplished).

In what sense did Jesus fulfill or accomplish the law and the prophets (5:17-18)? See *Luke 24:44*. First, Jesus perfectly lived out the righteousness requirements of the Law of Moses, both inwardly and outwardly. Secondly, Jesus fulfilled many of the prophecies concerning the Messiah (at least as regards His first appearing). The Law and the Prophets pointed to Jesus. It is not

² MacArthur, *Matthew*, 253.

merely that Jesus fulfilled some prophecies from the Old Testament. Rather, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. The Hebrew Scriptures portray Jesus in type; it all points to Him.³

PPT:

How does 5:18 illustrate Jesus' belief in the reliability of Scripture? Jesus obviously felt that Scripture was reliable and sure down to the smallest detail.

PPT: To what does the smallest letter refer (5:18)? The smallest Hebrew letter is *yod* (see above **Psalm 119:73**).

To what does the least stroke of a pen refer (5:18)? A "stroke" is the projection of one Hebrew letter that distinguishes it from another letter. The word literally means "little horn."⁴ It is like a serif in modern typefaces. For instance, compare the letter *daleth* (see above **Psalm 119:25**) to *resh* (see Hebrew character above **Psalm 119:153**).

Jesus taught that even the letters in the Bible are significant and unbreakable! Not only are the big ideas in the Bible inspired, but the exactly words and letters that clothe those ideas are also inspired.

As relates to 5:17, why did Jesus say this in 5:18? He said it to show his commitment to the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures.

In 5:19, what did Jesus reveal about the fate of anyone who both broke and taught others to break even the "least" of God's commands?

Application: This is a very serious matter. Obviously no true believer is going to want to risk being guilty of this. Without God's law as our standard, we would soon end up in the position of the Israelites during the time of the Judges when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Jdg 21:25).

PPT: What is antinomianism? *Anti* means against and *nomos* means law, so it refers to someone who is against God's law. One truth we can walk away from this with is the truth that to be against God's law is a bad thing. There are laws for the citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Lawlessness, in the Bible, is associated with bad things:

PPTS:

NAS **Matthew 7:23** And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

NAS **2 Corinthians 6:14** Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

³ MacArthur, *Matthew*, 256.

⁴ MacArthur, *Matthew*, 262

ESV 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3 No concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction ...

NAS 1 John 3:4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

You are antinomian:

Lawlessness is the very definition sin (1Jn 3:4). NCT understands Scripture to declare that believers are “under the Law of Christ”—unlike unbelieving Gentiles who are “outside the law” and unlike unbelieving Jews who are “under the Law” of Moses (1Co 9:20-2). With respect to Moses, although we are “released from law” (Ro 7:6), that which was ethical under Moses is, of course, still ethical in Christ. However, the starting point for ethics should be Jesus, not Moses. Jesus is the pinnacle of God’s revelation to man. It is a matter of emphasis. The law came though Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus (Jn 1:17). Romans 10:4 declares: “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” NCT takes seriously the author of Hebrews when he wrote: “when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also” (Heb 7:12).

What does “breaks” (5:19) mean? It is from *luo*, “to loose.” The NAS has “annuls” and the ESV has “relaxes.” The idea here is of loosing ourselves from God’s law.

If you really want to be great in God’s kingdom, what do you need to do (5:19)? Practice and teach God’s commands.

PPT:

NAS Matthew 28:19-20 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.

What can we learn about the Pharisees and teachers of the law from 5:20? Their names were not written in the will as heir to the kingdom of heaven.

Is the information in 5:20 necessarily a negative statement about the Pharisees and teachers of the law? Actually, some of them (like Saul or Nicodemus) may have outwardly kept the law. The problem is not that such were insincere or hypocrites, but rather that the type of

righteousness required to enter heaven is much more demanding than merely outwardly keeping the Law of Moses.

This fact was driven home by Jesus in the rest of his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. God's law must be kept internally as well as externally. And, the type of law that Jesus dealt with in Matthew 5 is all moral or ethical. This is important to keep in mind as we plough ahead in our study.

PPT: Inquiring Minds Want to Know: Jesus said that the Law would not disappear until everything in it is accomplished. Since Jesus came to fulfill the Law, is it now abolished? (Rhetorical question; do not give definitive answer at this point).

PPT: Taken at face value, Matthew 5:19 (read it) seems absolute. It is critical that we let Scripture interpret Scripture. How does Mark 7:15-19 illustrate that even Jesus began teaching the abolishment of some of the laws of Moses?

ESV **Mark 7:15-19** There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him ... Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus, he declared all foods clean.)

Further Reading:

Lehrer, Steven, *New Covenant Theology: Questions Answered* (2006)

Reisinger, John G., *Abraham's Four Seeds* (Frederick, Maryland: New Covenant Media, 1998).

Wells, Tom & Zaspel, Fred. *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense*

Journal of New Covenant Theology, Steven Lehrer, editor

The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

Long, Gary, *New Covenant Theology*

Schreiner, Thomas *Covenant and God's Purpose for the World*

- You can hear this lesson taught at SermonAudio.com/NTRF ("Covenant Theology").

Stephen E. Atkerson

NTRF.org

Revised 09/10/21