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MINISTRIES

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All That I Have Commanded You: Torah to the Nations (Matthew 28:19-20)

During his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus—or Yeshua, as he is called in Hebrew—instructed his followers to obey the commandments found in the Torah or Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17-20). Later, after his resurrection, he gave the “Great Commission,” an instruction for his disciples to teach all nations the things that he had taught them. This presents a question: did Yeshua expect his disciples to teach *the Law of Moses* to all nations?

In this teaching, we will argue that he did. First, we will demonstrate that Yeshua expected his disciples to observe *and teach* the Torah. Establishing this foundation is important for addressing whether this expectation also applied to the nations. As we will show, Yeshua anticipated that his disciples would obey the Torah and teach his future followers from the nations to do the same.

Do and Teach

As we’ve already mentioned, during his Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua instructed his disciples to obey the Law of Moses. After he says that he did not come to abolish the Law and Prophets but to fulfill them, and that the entire Law of Moses will remain valid as long as heaven and earth exist (Matthew 5:17-18), Yeshua says the following:

Matthew 5:19

Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them **and teaches** them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

So, in Matthew 5:19, Yeshua instructs his disciples not only to obey the commandants of the Torah; he also instructs them to *teach* the commandments to others.

For more on Matthew 5:17-20, see our short teaching [Did Jesus Do Away with the Old Testament Law](#) as well as our longer teaching [Heaven and Earth and the Law of God](#).

Having established that Yeshua expected his disciples to observe the Torah, we can now address the

question of whether he held the same expectation for his future followers from the nations. So, did he expect *them* to observe the Torah too? Matthew 28:19-20 seems to give us an answer to this question. In this passage, the resurrected Messiah appeared to his disciples in Galilee and commissioned them to make disciples of “all nations.” Here’s what he said:

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of **all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you**. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Here we see that Yeshua instructed his disciples to go and make disciples of “all nations.” Hence, Yeshua expected that those from the nations would join his Jewish followers as his disciples. But what’s key here is that, according to Yeshua, making disciples of the nations includes “**teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you**.” So, Yeshua expected his disciples to pass on his teachings to the nations. His disciples were to teach the nations to observe all that Yeshua commanded. This commission to make disciples continues to this very day—those who follow Yeshua are called to make disciples and teach them all that Yeshua commanded.

Why is it significant that Yeshua’s disciples were to teach the nations all that he commanded? Because, as we saw in Matthew 5:19, one of Yeshua’s commandments was to do and teach the Torah. Yeshua’s directive in Matthew 28:20 to “teach” the nations all that he commanded harkens back to his earlier instruction in Matthew 5:19 to “teach” the commandments of the Torah. Thus, in Matthew 28:20, Yeshua instructs his disciples to teach the nations to observe the commands of the Torah.

As the scholar Oliver Marjot writes:

[T]he commands of Jesus referred to at [Matthew] 28:20 are intimately related to the Torah, such that the latter is neither abrogated nor replaced, but rather remains in force. It is simplest, then, to accept that Matthew means precisely what he has Jesus say in these verses: that would-be disciples of Jesus should observe the Torah.

—Oliver Marjot, “Israel, Torah and Christ in Matthew and Romans: A Conversation ‘within Judaism’” (Ph.D. diss., St Catharine’s College, 2022), 82

Significantly, Yeshua’s Great Commission—which includes teaching the nations to observe the Torah—is the same as what we see in the Hebrew Scriptures or “Old Testament.” In Deuteronomy 4:5-8, Israel is called to live out God’s laws in such a way that other nations would recognize their wisdom and be drawn to God. Similarly, Isaiah 2:2-4 envisions a time when all nations will stream to God’s mountain, seeking his ways and learning his Torah. Yeshua’s instruction for his disciples to teach the Torah to the nations is nothing less than a fulfillment of the expectation in the Hebrew Scriptures that the nations would worship God and keep his commandments.

Do the “Commandments” Really Refer to the Torah’s Commandments?

Now, some modern teachers have tried to argue that Yeshua could not have actually meant for his disciples to obey the commandments found in the Law of Moses—let alone that they should teach the nations to obey them. Instead, they say that the Messiah brought the Law of Moses to an end and replaced it with his own distinct commandments.

For example, popular megachurch pastor Andy Stanley writes the following:

Jesus fulfilled—as in *ended*—the necessity of the Jewish law.

—Andy Stanley, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 110

Commenting on Matthew 28:20, Stanley later goes on to argue:

In the old days, Moses was your guy. Those days are over. Something new has come....Jesus wrapped up his final words by instructing his followers to center their teaching on *his* commandments, not those other ones [from the Law of Moses].

—Andy Stanley, *Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed for the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 113-114

R. L. Solberg, an outspoken critic of pro-Torah theology, agrees with Andy Stanley. He believes that the Torah reached its expiration date with the arrival of Christ:

The Mosaic Law was always intended to be temporary; its divine expiration date was the arrival of Jesus.

—R. L. Solberg, *Torahism: Are Christians Required to Keep the Law of Moses?* 2nd ed. (Franklin, TN: Williamson College Press, 2022), 157.

The same as Stanley, Solberg argues that Yeshua did not want his disciples to teach people to obey the Law and Prophets; rather, they were to teach exclusively Yeshua's own distinct commandments. Here's what he says:

When the resurrected Jesus gave his Great Commission, he didn't say, "Go therefore and make disciples, teaching them to observe the Law and the Prophets." No. In fact, he nowhere commands his disciples to teach the Law and the Prophets...He said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that *I* have commanded you." And again, Jesus nowhere commanded his disciples to teach people to observe the Law and the Prophets. He just didn't.

—R. L. Solberg, "5 Reasons we can't follow the Gospel and the Law at the same time," YouTube, Dec. 6, 2023

So, interpreters like Andy Stanley and R. L. Solberg claim that Yeshua brought the Law of Moses to an end and replaced it with entirely different commandments. Thus, in Matthew 28:20, Yeshua does not want his followers to teach anything from the Law of Moses, which has reached its expiration date and is no longer relevant. Instead, according to Stanley and Solberg, Yeshua wants his followers to teach *his own* commandments, which are supposedly different.

Now, Stanley and Solberg are correct that in Matthew 28:19-20, Yeshua instructed his disciples to teach the nations "[all that I have commanded you](#)." But is "all that Yeshua commanded" entirely separate from the Law and the Prophets? As we've already established, that cannot be the case.

It's important to note that the Great Commission comes at the very end of Matthew's Gospel. Skipping to the conclusion and imposing our own interpretations onto these "commandments" without considering the overall context is an irresponsible handling of the Scriptures. Matthew's Gospel, spanning 28 chapters, documents what Yeshua's commandments and teachings are, and this includes his Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. As we've already mentioned, the Sermon on the Mount includes Matthew 5:19, where Yeshua calls his disciples to obey and teach the commandments found in the Law and the Prophets:

Matthew 5:17-19

Do not think that I have come to abolish the **Law or the Prophets**; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but **whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**

So, Yeshua clearly states that he did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, and then in verse 19, he directly instructs his followers to obey *and teach* the commandments found in the Law and Prophets. Therefore, when Solberg claims, "Jesus nowhere commanded his disciples to teach people to observe the Law and the Prophets," he flatly contradicts what Jesus explicitly says in Matthew 5:19.

Now, before we conclude, there is one more potential objection that is worth addressing. Some argue that "these commandments" in Matthew 5:19 do not refer to the commandments found in the Law and Prophets, but rather, they refer exclusively to Yeshua's own distinct commandments. Therefore, the reference to "**all that I commanded you**" in Matthew 28:20 should be understood as Yeshua's different commandments, not the Law of Moses. However, does the context of Matthew 5 support that idea? Is Yeshua introducing new commandments in Matthew 5:19, which are separate from those found in the Torah?

There are a few reasons why that suggestion just doesn't work. First, the antecedent of the word "these" (τούτων) in verse 19 is the term "Law" (νόμος) in verse 18. So, when Yeshua refers to "these commandments," he is talking about the commandments contained in the Law of Moses that he just mentioned one verse earlier.

Second, in Matthew's Gospel, the word "commandment" (ἐντολή) consistently refers to the Law of Moses (e.g., Matt. 15:3; 19:17). Hence, it is reasonable to assume that it means the same thing in Matthew 5:19.

Third, in Greek, the "least" of the commandments refers back to the "iotas and dots" in verse 18, and the term "relaxes" refers back to "abolish" in verse 17. In fact, the Greek word for "relaxes" in verse 19—λύω—is directly related to the Greek word for "abolish" in verse 17—καταλύω. And these terms mean basically the same thing—to do away with, annul, or repeal (See BDAG 4th ed., p. 462, p. 538). So, there is a wordplay going on in this passage. Essentially, Yeshua says that since *he* did not come to abolish the Law or Prophets, neither should his followers. Instead, his followers are to "fulfill" the Law and Prophets, just like Yeshua did. They do that by doing and teaching the commandments contained in the Law and Prophets rather than "relaxing" (abolishing) them.

So, when Yeshua urges his followers to be great in the kingdom by doing and teaching the "commandments," he is clearly referring to the same commandments he mentions in the previous

verses—the commandments found in the Law of Moses.

What does all this mean? Well it means that, according to Matthew, Yeshua's teachings include his exhortation to do and teach the commandments found in the Torah. Thus, at the end of his Gospel account, when Matthew records Yeshua instructing his disciples to pass on his teachings to future disciples from the nations, this includes his exhortation to do and teach the commandments found in the Torah.

To wrap up, most Christians agree that disciples should be taught Yeshua's teachings from his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). For example, few would question the importance of teaching the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), Yeshua's call to trust God (Matthew 6:25-34), and the "golden rule" to treat others as you wish to be treated (Matthew 7:12). So why should Matthew 5:17-20—where Yeshua affirms the ongoing authority of the Hebrew Scriptures and calls his followers to obey and teach them—be excluded? The answer is that it shouldn't. We are called to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe *all* that Yeshua commanded.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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