

# New Covenant Theology



# Questions Raised by New Covenant Theology



# Are OT Laws Binding on Christians Today? (Review)

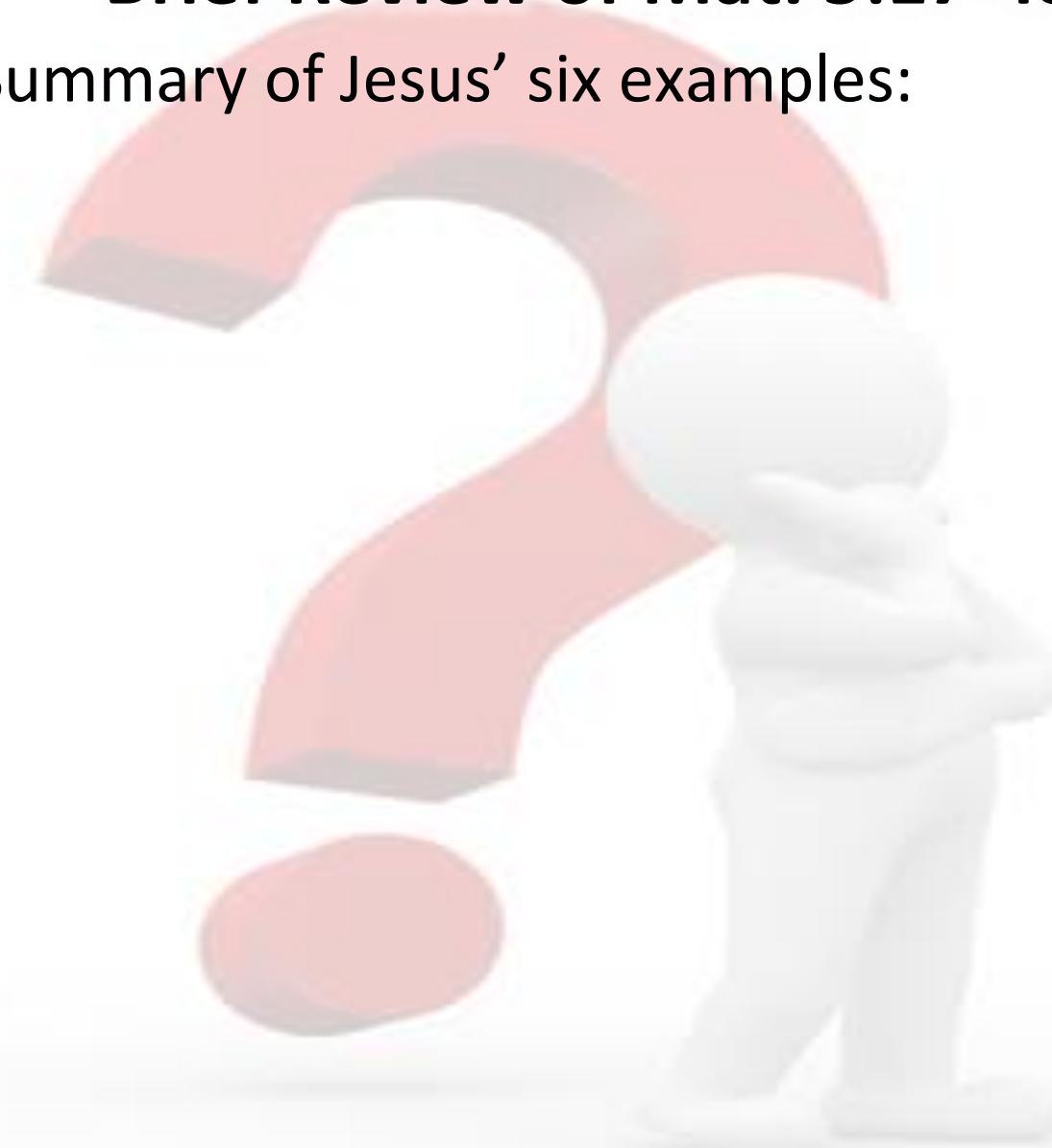
- Where We Are in Our Study:
  - We are still looking at the first question that I raised concerning New Covenant Theology: Are OT laws binding on Christians today?
  - We've spent the past two weeks looking at a passage where Jesus addresses this very issue: the second half of the “Sermon on the Mount” as it is laid out in Matthew 5:17-48.
- This week I would like to do **two** things:
  - I want to begin by giving a **brief review** of what we learned from Matthew 5:17-48 as it relates to New Covenant Theology.
  - After that, I would like to present some comments on Matthew 5:17-48 from a respected Biblical scholar who has an **opposing viewpoint** on this passage.

# Brief Review of Mat. 5:17-48

- In Matthew 5:17-48, we saw that:
  - Jesus tells us that he has **not** come to set aside the OT scriptures as though they were of no value or importance.
  - The purpose of the OT scriptures and the commandments within them was to **point** to Jesus as the one who **fulfills** them.
  - Jesus then, takes us through a series of six examples, where he shows us how to “keep” the OT commandments by listening to **him** and doing what **he** says.
- In each of the six examples Jesus follows the same pattern:
  - He begins by saying: “*You have heard that it was said to those of old...*”
  - Quotes or paraphrases an OT command(s)
  - Then says: “*But I say to you...*” at which point he adds to, upgrades, and, in some cases, even **does away** with the OT command.

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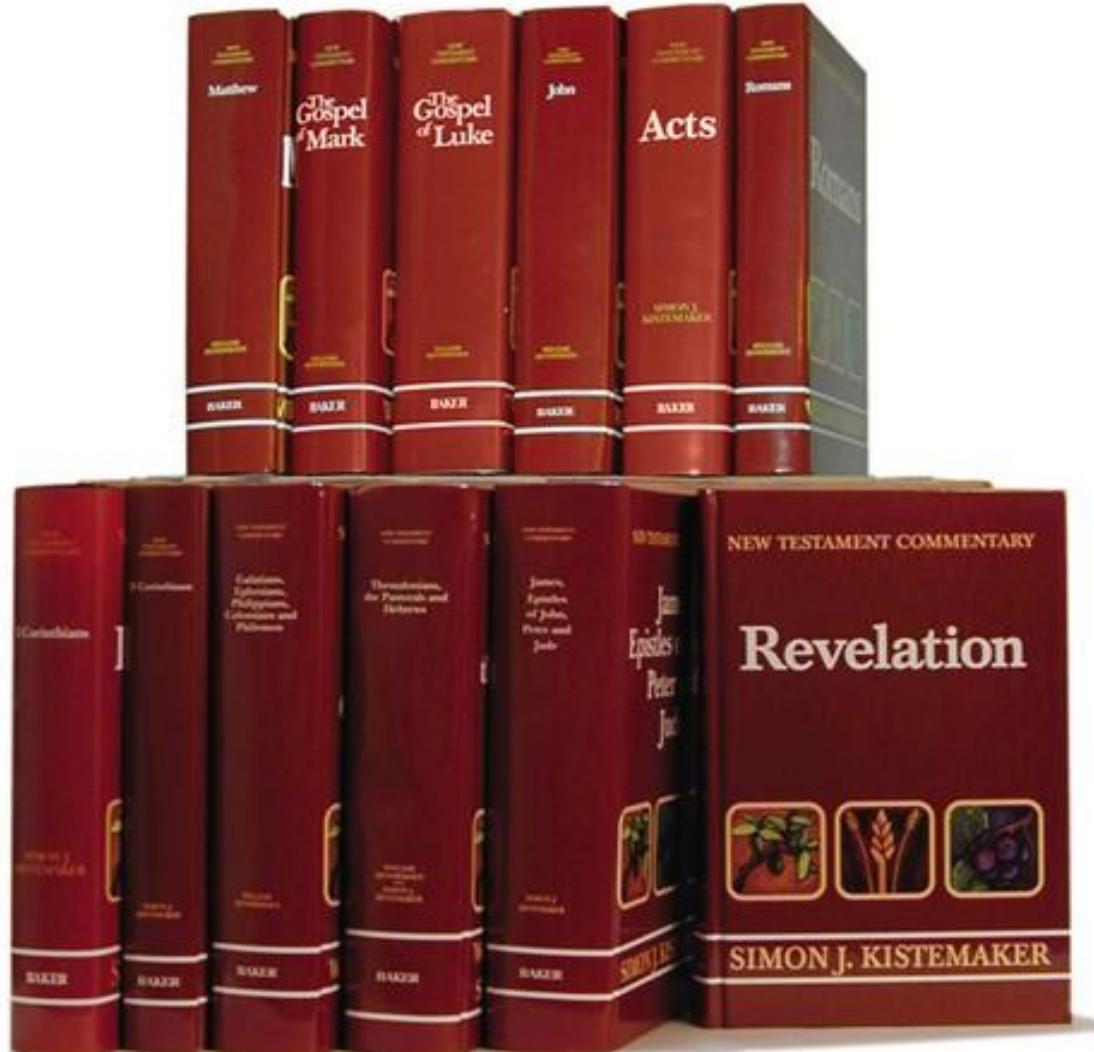
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#6 - Love your Neighbor (Leviticus 19:18) Hate your Enemy (Psalm 139:21-22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Jesus <b>ends</b> the OT practice of hating the enemies of God by <b>extending</b> the command to love your <b>neighbor</b> to a command to love your <b>enemies</b>.</li></ul>

# Comments on Mat. 5:17-48 From an *Opposing Viewpoint*



# Comments on Mat. 5:17-48 From an *Opposing* Viewpoint

- I'm going to give you an example of how a Dutch Reformed (similar to Presbyterian) scholar would approach Mat. 5:17-48.
- The scholar I am using for this example is William Hendriksen, a scholar for whom I have a great deal of respect and with whom I agree in many other areas of Biblical teaching.
- Hendriksen has written some excellent commentaries on a number of NT books, and has authored a number of other books as well.
- Because Hendriksen is Dutch Reformed, he will disagree with a **number** of things that we believe as Baptists.
- As a Reformed writer, Hendriksen would also disagree with many of the things that I have been teaching you about New Covenant Theology (NCT). He would see much more **continuity** between the OT and NT laws than I would.
- So why do I want to present his perspective to you?
- Because a number of you have said that, while the things that I've been teaching you about NCT make sense and seem Biblical, you would like to see how a good Bible scholar who does **not** agree with NCT, would argue against some of the things that I've been saying and then hear me respond to their arguments.

# Comments from William Hendriksen (Mat. 5:17-48)

*<sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

- *Christ's opponents even now had begun to regard him as a destructive revolutionist, an iconoclast who wanted to break every tie with the past... The opponents were wrong. (p.288)*
- *Not until the universe in its present form disappears will even the smallest part of the Old Testament that requires fulfillment fail to be fulfilled. Every type will be exchanged for its antitype, Every prediction will be verified. The law's demand will be fully met. (p.291)*
- *[Christ] insists that every commandment of that which is truly God's **moral** law – the very law which he is about to discuss in greater detail in 5:21ff – must be kept. Nothing must be annulled or cancelled. (p.292 – emphasis added)*

# Comments from William Hendriksen (Mat. 5:17-48)

- Concerning Jesus' six examples of OT commands where I showed that he follows this pattern:
  - He begins by saying: "*You have heard that it was said to those of old...*"
  - Quotes or paraphrases an OT command(s)
  - Then says: "*But I say to you...*" at which point he makes a number of comments concerning that command.
- Hendriksen comments (p.295):
  - *The formula, "You have heard that it was said" presents a difficulty, since the following phrase considered by itself, can be translated either "to the men of long ago" (R.S.V. "to the men of old") or "by the men of long ago." Many translators and commentators prefer to. Several prefer by.*
  - *According to the first view Jesus meant that Moses in the law said something to the fathers, and that Jesus now "assumes a tone of superiority over the Mosaic regulations" (A.T. Robertson, Word Pictures, Vol. I, p. 44)*
  - *According to the second view Jesus meant that by men of long ago, that is by the expositors of the law, the rabbis, an interpretation had been presented with which he disagrees or which he considers as being dangerously incomplete...*
- Can you guess which view Hendriksen favors?

# Comments from William Hendriksen (Mat. 5:17-48)

- And **technically**, Hendriksen is right: grammatically, the Greek *can* be translated either way:
  - *You have heard that it was said to those of old...*
  - *You have heard that it was said by those of old...*
- But, without getting into the technical grammatical details, I can tell you this: the first translation is **by far** the most common way of translating this particular Greek construction.
- This probably explains why the **vast majority** of mainstream English translations go with the first option (e.g. ESV, NAS, NET, NIV, NLT, RSV). The only mainstream translation that I'm aware of that goes with the second option is the KJV.
- Normally, before going with an highly unusual way of translating a Greek phrase, you would probably need to show that something in the context requires us to translate it that way.
- And that is exactly what Hendriksen tries to do.

# Comments from William Hendriksen (Mat. 5:17-48)

- Here are the reasons that Hendriksen gives (p. 296) for going with the less common translation: ***“You have heard that it was said by [rather than to] those of old...”***:
  - *It would be very strange that Jesus, having just affirmed in most emphatic terms that he had not come to set aside the law or the prophets, would now suddenly turn around and do this very thing.*
  - *Had Jesus been referring to what Moses in the law had commanded he would have used different language; for example, “Moses commanded” (Mat. 8:4), or “It is written” (Mat. 4:4, 7, 10; Luke 2:23; 4:4).*
  - *In later Jewish writings such famous rabbans as Hillel and Shammai were called “fathers of antiquity.” The designation “men of long ago” is accordingly an excellent designation for those who had orally interpreted the written Old Testament.*