

3. The apostles evangelized Gentiles by convicting of sin from the conscience, not the Decalogue.

Also, it's important to remember that true, apostolic evangelism is Christ-centered, not law/sin-centered. The apostles' gospel messages in Acts emphasized Jesus Christ Himself: His Messiahship, miracles, death, resurrection, reign, and return. Conviction of sin was only a means to the end: The person of Christ. That's why it's called "the good news of (about) Jesus Christ."

In summary about the so-called "moral law," the Holy Spirit never says that the Sabbath and the whole Decalogue are the eternal, unchanging, moral law of God. But, He does say that the standard of judgment for all humans, including the Gentiles, is the sin lists.

2. "But Christ Did Not Come to Abolish the Law"

For regulation, or revelation?⁸ As Old Covenant contract, or Old Testament Scripture?

Here's a puzzle for you. Which verses are true: Those on the left or right?

Which Verses Are True: Is the Law Abolished or Not Abolished?	
The Law is Not Abolished	The Law Is Abolished
"Do not think that I have come to abolish (Gk: kataluo) the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish (Gk. kataluo) them but to fulfill them" (Mt. 5:17-18).	"by abolishing (Gk: katargeo) the law of commandments and ordinances..." (Eph. 2:15).
"Do we then abolish (Gk: katargeo) the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law" (Rom. 3:31).	

Of course, they're both true if we believe the Bible is inerrant and inspired by the same sovereign Spirit of God. So, how can we harmonize that the law is abolished, but not abolished?

**The Distinction Between the Law for
Old Covenant Regulation vs. Old Testament Revelation:
How to Harmonize Paul's Negative & Positive Verses on the Law**

One reason why this question of the law in the New Testament may be the most complex issue in theology is Paul's seemingly contradictory praise and criticism for the law of Moses. (No, Paul was not a schizophrenic!)

⁸ Wayne Strickland, "The Inauguration of the Law of Christ With the Gospel," in Gundry, 277-279.

John Owen, the Puritan theologian, had it right when he distinguished 2 important meanings of the word "law."

"The law is taken two ways:

1. For the whole revelation of the mind and will of God in the Old Testament...
2. The covenant rule of perfect obedience: 'Do this, and live.' In this sense men are said to be 'under it, in opposition unto being 'under grace.' They are under its power, rule, conditions, and authority, as a covenant."⁹

Wayne Strickland explains the distinction between regulation vs. revelation...

"...the Mosaic law had a revelatory aspect and regulatory aspect...The revelatory aspect was in mind when Paul discussed the merits of the law...Armed with this understanding of the twofold purpose of the law, the seemingly contradictory assertions of Paul concerning the law may be understood in a harmonious manner."¹⁰

Another way to explain this distinction is Old Covenant vs. Old Testament. However, that distinction may be confusing since Christians often use those 2 terms synonymously. Yet, if we view those terms historically, the distinction is valid, since the Old Testament starts from Creation, while the Old Covenant starts from Sinai. Old Covenant and Old Testament may be distinguished, but not separated, since Genesis is the introduction to the Old Covenant.

Paul's negative statements about the law often refer to regulation (Old Covenant contract). And, his positive statements often refer to revelation (Old Testament Scripture). This is the solution to harmonize many of Paul's seemingly contradictory statements on the law.

⁹ John Owen, *The Works of John Owen*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), VII: 543.

¹⁰ Wayne Strickland, in *Gundry*, 277-279.

So, the word "law" has multiple meanings in Scripture. Two of the most important meanings are:

1. Law regulation (Old Covenant contract).
2. Law revelation (Old Testament Scripture).

Those 2 distinctions in the word "law" are clearly demonstrated in these 3 verses...

"...whatever *the law says* (as Old Testament revelation) it speaks to those who are *under the law* (as Old Covenant regulation)..." (Rom. 3:19).

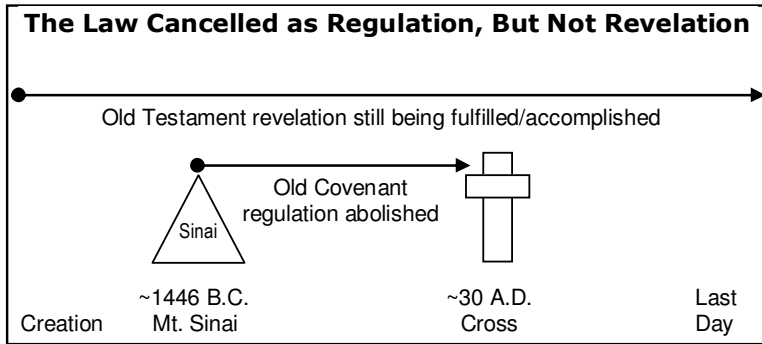
"But, now the righteousness of God has been manifested *apart from the law* (as Old Covenant regulation), although *the Law (Pentateuch) and the Prophets* (as Old Testament revelation) *bear witness* to it." (Rom. 3:21).

"Tell me, you who desire to be *under the law* (as Old Covenant regulation), do you not *listen to the law* (as Old Testament revelation?)" (Gal. 4:21).

There are several other verses demonstrating the Law's revelational function as Old Testament Scripture...

"...What is *written* in the Law? How do you *read* it?" (Lk. 10:26; cf. Mt. 12:5; Lk. 2:23; Jn 8:17, 10:34, 15:25; 2 Cor. 3:14; etc.)

The Law is written, read, heard, and it speaks. That means the law was more than just commands to be obeyed or disobeyed. Do you see the distinction between Old Covenant regulation for obedience vs. Old Testament revelation for doctrine? We use the Old Testament today for doctrine/faith, but not practice.



Now, let's apply that distinction between law as regulation vs. revelation to the most crucial passage for understanding our relationship to Old Testament law: The Sermon on the Mount. Here are 2 different interpretations of this key passage...

2 Different Views of, "I Did Not Come to Abolish the Law, But to Fulfill it"	
*Reformed, Covenant Theology	New Covenant Theology
"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law (the Decalogue alone) or the Prophets.	"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law (Gen. - Deut.) or the Prophets (Josh.-Mal., the whole O.T.)
I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill (confirm) them (for obedience).	I have not come to abolish them (as O.T. revelation), but to fulfill them (prophetically/eschatologically cf. Mt. 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54, 56; 27:9; Lk. 24:44; etc.)
For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law (the Decalogue alone) until all is accomplished.	For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law (whole Old Testament as revelation) until all is accomplished (prophetically/eschatologically).
Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments (the Decalogue alone) and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven..." (Mt. 5:17-19).	Therefore (since I fulfill the law's prophecies) whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments (of Mine, cf. Mt. 7:24-26; Lk. 6:46-47, 7:1) and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven..." (Mt. 5:17-19).

*Covenant theologians have multiple interpretations of this passage. For example, some believe "these commands" refers to Christ's and Moses' commands, since "they must be the same."

**Why "Plerosai" Means "Fulfill" Eschatologically,
Not "Confirm" for Obedience**

In Matthew 5:17, the Greek word "plerosai" is crucial to understanding the whole sermon that Jesus is about to preach. Many earlier Covenant Theologians interpreted "plerosai" as "confirm." They taught that Jesus was confirming/establishing the Decalogue for our obedience.

However, some recent Covenant Theologians have conceded that their forefathers' were wrong because Matthew's normal meaning for "pleroo" refers to eschatological, prophetic, and/or typological fulfillment. (Besides, if Matthew meant "confirm" or "establish" then he should have chosen the Greek words "bebaioo" or "histemi.")

A Parallel Passage to Mt. 5:17-18, Also About Eschatological Fulfillment, Not Confirming the Decalogue for Obedience	
"Do not think I have come to abolish the <i>Law or the Prophets</i> ; I have not come to abolish them but to <i>fulfill them</i> . For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until <i>all is accomplished</i> " (Mt. 5:17-18).	"... <i>everything</i> written about me in the <i>Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled</i> " (Lk. 24:44).

In the 2 passages above, we see 3 parallels:

1. The Law and Prophets
2. All/everything
3. Fulfill/accomplished

So, just as Luke 24:44 refers to fulfilling prophecy instead of confirming the Decalogue for obedience, so does Matthew 5:17-18.

Matthew's normal meaning for "pleroo" is eschatological fulfillment (not obedience) as shown in these 12 examples...

"All this took place to *fulfill* what the Lord had spoken by the prophet" (Mt. 1:22).

"...This was to *fulfill* what the Lord had spoken by the prophet..." (Mt. 2:15).

"Then was *fulfilled* what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah" (Mt. 2:17).

"...that what was spoken by the prophets might be *fulfilled*..." (Mt. 2:23).

"so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be *fulfilled*" (Mt. 4:14).

"This was to *fulfill* what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah..." (Mt. 8:17).

"This was to *fulfill* what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah" (Mt. 12:17).

"This was to *fulfill* what was spoken by the prophet" (Mt. 13:35).

"This took place to *fulfill* what was spoken by the prophet, saying" (Mt. 21:4).

"But how then should the Scriptures be *fulfilled* that it must be so?" (Mt. 26:54).

"But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be *fulfilled*" (Mt. 26:56).

"Then was *fulfilled* what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying" (Mt. 27:9).

Notice that all those uses of "pleroo" refer to revelation (Old Testament), not regulation (Old Covenant). And, it's the same in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament

prophecies and types as revelation, not to confirm the Old Covenant Decalogue alone for regulation.

In the first century, the goal of redemptive history finally started arriving when Messiah fulfilled prophecy as the better Prophet, better Priest, and better King. As the new Prophet, He gave new prophecies and teachings. As the new Priest, He made a new sacrifice. And, as the new King, He gave a new law.

**"Law or Prophets" Means the "Whole Old Testament"
(Not the "Ten Commandments Alone")**

Yes, Christ did not come to destroy the law or prophets. And, what is the meaning of the phrase "law or prophets" (cf. "law and prophets")?

It never once means "Ten Commandments and prophets." It always means the "Pentateuch and prophets," a.k.a. "Genesis - Deuteronomy and the Prophets," a.k.a. the "whole Old Testament."

John MacArthur agrees that "Law or Prophets" refers to the whole Old Testament and its continuing revelation...

"The phrase 'the Law and the Prophets' speaks of the entirety of the OT Scriptures...Here Christ emphasizes both the inspiration and the enduring authority of all Scripture. He specifically affirms the utter inerrancy and absolute authority of the OT as the Word of God - down to the least jot and tittle. Again (see note on v. 17), we should not think that the NT supplants or completely abrogates the OT but instead fulfills and explicates it. For example, all the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic Law are fulfilled in Christ and are no longer to be observed by Christians (Col. 2:16, 17). Yet not one jot or tittle is thereby erased; the underlying truths of those Scriptures remain..."¹¹

And, Don Carson agrees that Christ is speaking of not destroying the Old Testament...

¹¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, (Nashville: Nelson, 2005), 1130.

"In no case does this 'abolish' the Old Testament as canon, any more than the obsolescence of the Levitical sacrificial system abolishes tabernacle ritual as canon."¹²

So, Christ did not come to destroy "Genesis - Deuteronomy or the Prophets." In other words, He did not come to destroy the law as Old Testament revelation. (The error that the Old Testament was abolished as Scripture was popularized later in church history by the heretic Marcion.)

**6 Reasons Why "These Commandments" Refers to
"Christ's Commands," Instead of "Moses' Commands"**

In Matthew 5:19, does the phrase "these commandments" refer to Moses' commands or Christ's commands? (Although, some Covenant Theologians think that Moses' commands = Christ's commands.)

1. Since "Law or Prophets" Means "the Whole Old Testament," Then if "These Commandments" Means "Moses' Laws" it Must Include All of Moses' Laws

Since "Law or Prophets" means "the whole Old Testament," Covenant Theology is trapped in a dilemma...

1. Christ did not come to abolish the Law or Prophets (whole O.T.)
2. We can't relax one of Moses' commands (from the whole O.T.)
3. Therefore, we must obey all of Moses' commands (from the whole O.T.)

Do you see Covenant Theology's problem? Since "Law or Prophets" clearly means the "whole Old Testament," if "these commands" means "Moses commands," then we must obey every jot and tittle of all Old Testament commands, including the Ten Commandments, and so-called "civil and ceremonial laws."

¹² Don Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, Ed., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8:143-144.

But, if "these commands" means Christ's commands, then the dilemma is solved. "Christ's commands" is far less problematic.

2. Both the Sermon on the Mount and its Parallel Sermon on the Plain Emphasize Obeying Christ's Words

In the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:1 – 7:29) and the Sermon on the Plain (Lk. 6:20 - 7:1) Christ tells us to do (obey) His words...

"Everyone then who hears *these words of Mine and does them...* And everyone who hears *these words of Mine and does not do them...*" (Mt. 7:24, 26. The conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount).

"Everyone who comes to Me and hears *My words and does them...* But the one who hears and does not do them..." (Lk. 6:47, 49).

"After he had finished all *His sayings* in the hearing of the people..." (Lk. 7:1).

"teaching them to observe all that *I have commanded* you..." (cf. Mt. 28:20, by the same author).

In these verses above, there is much evidence that Christ is speaking of His commands.

3. The Sermon on the Mount Includes at Least 7 Commands Not in the Decalogue

Another reason that Christ could not have been referring to Moses' commands is that the Sermon on the Mount includes several topics not even in the Decalogue, such as:

1. Retaliation
2. Love your enemies
3. Giving
4. Prayer
5. Money
6. Worry

7. Judging

So, those topics were all Jesus' commands, not Moses' commands.

4. Since the Parallel Passage (Lk. 16:17) Says the Kingdom of God Is After John, Therefore the Commandments of the Kingdom Are After John

The Law and Prophets Were Until ~30 A.D., Then the Kingdom of God Is After ~30 A.D.	
<p><i>"The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law (O.T. prophesy) to become void"</i> (Lk. 16:17).</p>	<p>"Do not think that I have come to abolish <i>the Law or the Prophets</i>; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them For truly, I say to you, <i>until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law</i> (O.T. prophecy) until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of <i>these commandments</i> 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 <i>kingdom of heaven</i> (Mt. 5:17-19).</p>

These 2 parallel passages share 5 ideas:

1. The Law and/or Prophets
2. Not a dot/iota of the Law
3. Will become void/pass away
4. Heaven and earth pass away
5. The Kingdom of God/heaven

In Luke 16:17, notice how "the Law and Prophets" refers to the time before Christ, while "the kingdom of God" refers to the time after Christ. So in Matthew 5:19, "these commands...in the kingdom of

heaven" refers to the time of the kingdom of heaven after Christ, not the Law and Prophets before Christ.

5. The Typology Between the Giving of the Old Law at Sinai vs. the New Law at the Sermon on the Mount

There's another reason why Jesus is likely giving a new law in the Sermon on the Mount. He was the antitype fulfillment of Moses and Israel. Many scholars agree that Matthew portrays several parallel events between Moses/Israel and Christ. (Although, like most types - antitypes, those parallels are only partial, not 100%.) Here are 6 of those parallel events from old to new...

6 Typological Events by Moses/Israel and Jesus	
Moses & Israel (the Types)	Jesus (the Antitype)
<p>Old Baby Hidden From Genocide</p> <p>"Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, 'Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile'...she hid him three months" (Ex. 1:22 – 2:2).</p>	<p>New Baby Hidden From Genocide</p> <p>"Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him" (Mt. 2:13).</p>
<p>Old Return After Persecutor's Death</p> <p>"Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead" (Ex. 4:19).</p>	<p>New Return After Persecutor's Death</p> <p>"...Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead" (Mt. 2:15-20).</p>
<p>Old Exodus</p> <p>"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son" (Hos. 11:1).</p>	<p>New Exodus</p> <p>"This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'"</p>

<p>"...all the host of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:41).</p>	<p>(Mt. 2:15)</p>
<p>Old Baptism</p> <p>"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud...And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left" (Ex. 13:21, 14:22).</p> <p>"...our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea..." (1 Cor. 10:1-2).</p>	<p>New Baptism</p> <p>"...Jesus was baptized..." (Mt. 3:16).</p>
<p>Old Temptations in the Wilderness</p> <p>"Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness...There the LORD...tested them..." (Ex. 15:22, 25).</p> <p>"And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness..." (Ex. 16:2).</p> <p>"And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna...that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by</p>	<p>New Temptations in the Wilderness</p> <p>"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry" (Mt. 3:1-2).</p> <p>"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4).</p>

<p>every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deut. 8:3).</p> <p>"...And Moses said to them, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD? But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses...' (Ex. 17:2-3). "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah" (Deut. 6:16).</p> <p>"It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve..." (Deut. 6:13). "You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him..." (Deut. 10:20).</p>	<p>"You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Mt. 4:7).</p> <p>You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" (Mt. 4:10).</p>
<p>Old Law Given From a Mountain</p> <p>"And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up...And God spoke all these words saying..." (Ex. 19:20 - 20:1ff.)</p>	<p>New Law Given From a Mountain</p> <p>"Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain...these commandments...these words..." (Mt. 5:1, 19, 7:24, 7:26).</p>

6. "These Words" (Ex. 20:1) and "These Commandments" (Mt. 5:19) Are Parallel, and Look Forward, Not Backward

In the chart above, the last parallel is that Moses wrote, "And God spoke all *these words...*" (Ex. 20:1ff.) looking forward to giving His law, not backward. And, Jesus spoke about "*these commandments*" (Mt. 5:19ff.) looking forward to giving His law, not backward to Moses commands in "the Law and the Prophets."

So, there are 6 reasons why "these commandments" more likely refers to "Christ's commandments," than "Moses' commandments." And, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke about not abolishing the whole law as Old Testament Scripture, but fulfilling it prophetically.

Notice in all 6 events above, Jesus did not repeat the exact, same events as Moses and Israel. He accomplished similar, but new events.

Jesus wasn't baptized with Israel's same, old baptism in the cloud and sea, but with a new baptism in the river. Also, He didn't face Israel's same, old temptations, but new ones. And, He didn't restate Israel's same, old law from Mt. Sinai, but gave a new law from a new mountain.