

## Select New Testament Passages Related to the Status of the Decalogue and the Law

### Matthew 5:17-48

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to fiery Gehenna. <sup>23</sup> Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court with him. Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup> Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

<sup>31</sup> “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup> But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

<sup>33</sup> “Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, ‘Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.’ <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, do not swear at all; not by heaven, for it is God’s throne; <sup>35</sup> nor by the earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> Do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’ Anything more is from the evil one.

<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. When someone strikes you on (your) right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. <sup>40</sup> If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic, hand him your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes

rain to fall on the just and the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brothers only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? <sup>48</sup> So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.

*What does this passage imply about the status of the Law?*

*In what ways does the sermon resemble the Decalogue?*

*Do the things “you have heard that it was said” correspond to the Decalogue? Is all of the Decalogue represented? Only the Decalogue?*

### **Mark 10:17-19**

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>18</sup> Jesus answered him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; you shall not defraud; honor your father and your mother.’”

*How does this summary of the commandments differ from the Decalogue?*

### **Matthew 19:16-19**

Now someone approached him and said, “Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?” <sup>17</sup> He answered him, “Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” <sup>18</sup> He asked him, “Which ones?” And Jesus replied, “‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; <sup>19</sup> honor your father and your mother’; and ‘you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

*How does Matthew’s version differ from Mark’s, and what might those differences imply about the status of the Decalogue and the rest of the law?*

### **Matthew 15:10-11, 17-20 (cf. Mark 7:1-23)**

He summoned the crowd and said to them, “Hear and understand. <sup>11</sup> It is not what enters one’s mouth that defiles that person; but what comes out of the mouth is what defiles one.”

<sup>17</sup> Do you not realize that everything that enters the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled into the latrine? [Mark 7:19 adds, “(Thus he declared all foods clean.)”] <sup>18</sup> But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile. <sup>19</sup> For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy. <sup>20</sup> These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile.”

*According to Matthew, does Jesus reject the purity laws, or interpret them?*

*Does the interpretation given in Mark’s account have the same authoritative status as the words of Jesus?*

### **Mark 2:23—3:5 (cf. Matt 12:1-13; Luke 6:1-10; 13-14; John 5:9-19)**

As he was passing through a field of grain on the sabbath, his disciples began to make a path while picking the heads of grain. <sup>24</sup> At this the Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the sabbath?” <sup>25</sup> He said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions were hungry? <sup>26</sup> How he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the bread of offering that only the priests could lawfully eat, and shared it with his companions?” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to them, “The sabbath

was made for man, not man for the sabbath. <sup>28</sup> That is why the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.”

<sup>1</sup> Again he entered the synagogue. There was a man there who had a withered hand.  
<sup>2</sup> They watched him closely to see if he would cure him on the sabbath so that they might accuse him. <sup>3</sup> He said to the man with the withered hand, “Come up here before us.” <sup>4</sup> Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?” But they remained silent. <sup>5</sup> Looking around at them with anger and grieved at their hardness of heart, he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out and his hand was restored.

*Does Jesus, in this passage, reject part of the Decalogue?  
Is this interpretation of Sabbath law the kind of disagreement that could occur between faithful Jews, or does this teaching constitute a break from Judaism?*

### **Matthew 22:34-40 (cf. Luke 10:25-28)**

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, <sup>35</sup> and one of them (a scholar of the law) tested him by asking, <sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” <sup>37</sup> He said to him, “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup> This is the greatest and the first commandment. <sup>39</sup> The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup> The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

*What does this passage suggest about the status of the other laws?*

### **Galatians 3:13-25**

<sup>13</sup> Christ ransomed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree,” <sup>14</sup> that the blessing of Abraham might be extended to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

<sup>15</sup> Brothers, in human terms I say that no one can annul or amend even a human will once ratified. <sup>16</sup> Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his descendant. It does not say, “And to descendants,” as referring to many, but as referring to one, “And to your descendant,” who is Christ. <sup>17</sup> This is what I mean: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to cancel the promise. <sup>18</sup> For if the inheritance comes from the law, it is no longer from a promise; but God bestowed it on Abraham through a promise.

<sup>19</sup> Why, then, the law? It was added for transgressions, until the descendant came to whom the promise had been made; it was promulgated by angels at the hand of a mediator.

<sup>20</sup> Now there is no mediator when only one party is involved, and God is one.

<sup>21</sup> Is the law then opposed to the promises (of God)? Of course not! For if a law had been given that could bring life, then righteousness would in reality come from the law. <sup>22</sup> But scripture confined all things under the power of sin, that through faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe.

<sup>23</sup> Before faith came, we were held in custody under law, confined for the faith that was to be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Consequently, the law was our disciplinarian for Christ, that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a disciplinarian.

*How does this view of the law differ from the passages in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke)?  
What might account for the differences?*