



# International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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## **Matthew 5:13-20** **New Revised Standard Version** **July 7, 2019**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, July 7, 2019**, is from **Matthew 5:13-20**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

**(Matthew 5:13) “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.**

Salt will enhance flavor and preserve food when properly prepared. Jesus' followers will make the earth a better place to live by teaching people about Jesus and His message. If salt becomes tasteless or ineffective because of impurities, it has lost its value and will be useless for its

intended purpose. Jesus' followers must maintain a pure, Biblical faith and life based on His teachings to help others come to faith in Jesus and obedience to Him.

**(Matthew 5:14) “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid.**

Light enables us to see where we should go and helps us avoid stumbling and falling. Light enables us to live. The word “light” sometimes means “truth.” Jesus said that He was the light of the world, the truth, and the life (see John 8:12 and John 14:6). God revealed the truth He wants people to live by. Jesus makes His followers into people who can share the truth the world needs in order to live. The light of Jesus and His followers cannot be hidden (see John 3:21).

**(Matthew 5:15) No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.**

Jesus came as the light of the world (see John 12:46). Jesus has given light to His followers and they become “children of light” (see John 12:36). God has not hidden the truth about himself or how He wants us to live, but God has given light or truth to the world through Jesus and His followers in a way for all to see. In the house of God, people can learn the truth about Jesus and how to follow Him as they pray, study, trust, and obey the Bible's teachings in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**(Matthew 5:16) In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.**

This command of Jesus is similar to His statement: “But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God” (John 3:21). Jesus also warned that not everyone will give glory to God when they see the good works of His followers: “And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Indeed, Jesus said that some who followed Him would be persecuted (see Matthew 5:10-12). The motivation of Jesus’ followers for doing good works should be to show their love for and to give glory to God their Father and Jesus, and then to motivate others to love and give glory to God too.

**(Matthew 5:17) “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.**

The moral law (the Law of Love and the Ten Commandments, for example) and the ceremonial law (the laws regarding feasts and sacrifices, for example) revealed through Moses and applied and interpreted through the prophets in the Bible were fulfilled by Jesus (with some

still to be fulfilled after He comes again). When He lived on earth, Jesus perfectly obeyed the laws of the Bible, but not the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. By His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus fulfilled what the prophets foretold; and being without sin, He suffered the consequences that the law demanded upon law breakers and sinners—thus Jesus upheld the Law of God.

**(Matthew 5:18) For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.**

All will be accomplished after Jesus Christ comes again. He fulfilled many of the ceremonial laws. For example, because of His sacrificial death, we no longer need to make ceremonial sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. The Law of Love (the requirement that people love God and others) will never pass away and Jesus' followers will love God and others whether they live on earth or in heaven. Jesus' followers will actually "love, *because* they love," and not because they are "*trying* to love, because they do not love" just because the law commands them to love God and others.

**(Matthew 5:19) Therefore, whoever breaks 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.**

To “break” means to “disobey.” No one should disobey or teach anyone to disobey the moral law (the Law of Love as interpreted by Jesus) or what may seem to be the least of the moral laws. No one should disregard the meaning of the ceremonial laws, because Jesus fulfilled many of the ceremonial laws (as interpreted by Jesus and the New Testament). Some may claim to be followers of Jesus in the kingdom of heaven, but they try to teach people to distrust the teachings of the Bible and Jesus. When His followers teach people to trust in Jesus and His teachings, they are considered great in the kingdom of heaven.

**(Matthew 5:20) For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”**

Many of the scribes and Pharisees did not love God or their neighbors, but they insisted that Jesus, His disciples, and others obey them and their traditions. They sometimes used their traditions to set aside the law of God, to disobey the law of God, and to teach others to do the same (see Matthew 15:1-9). Because the followers of Jesus love God and others, they exceed their righteousness and enter the kingdom of heaven. In John 8:31, “Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you continue

in my word, you are truly my disciples.” Of the religious leaders who lied and wanted to kill him, Jesus said, “You are from your father the devil” (John 8:44).

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. How might you use Jesus’ teaching in these verses to help someone who thinks that if they are a Christian then they do not need to obey the law of God?
2. Why might you say it is important or unimportant to teach Christians about the moral law and the ceremonial law?
3. How might someone exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? Do Christians need to do this?
4. Compare Psalms 119:160 – “The sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever” with Matthew 5:19.
5. Is Psalms 119:124 – “Deal with your servant according to your steadfast love, and teach me your statutes” a prayer the followers of Jesus can still pray today? Give a reason for your answer.

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly  
*International Bible Lesson.*

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