

"Jesus and the Old Testament"

Matthew 5:17-20

- B. Things commendable in the Pharisees.
1. They lived separated, or clean, lives outwardly. But they were not so clean inwardly. (Luke 18:9-12; Matthew 19:16-22; 23:25-28.)
 2. They studied the scriptures. But some of them did not have the love of God in their hearts. (John 5:39-42.)
 3. They attended worship. But some of them sought the chief seats, notoriety, etc. (Matthew 23:6; 6:1; 23:6.)
 4. They prayed, at times to be heard of men (Matthew 6:5); and tithed some things, while neglecting weightier matters of the law. (Matthew 23:23.)
 5. They zealously sought to win others (Matthew 23:15); but not to make them citizens of God's kingdom--merely to gain proselytes.
- C. Carroll Ellis listed some things Jesus condemned in the Pharisees: (Gospel Advocate, 9/10/64.)
1. They "sounded trumpets," or "blew horns." (Matthew 6:2.)
 2. They "threw wrenches" (Mark 3:1-6; etc.), but were utterly without a spirit of mercy.
 3. They "twisted phrases" (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13), making void God's word by tradition, or in such matters of "corban."
 4. They strained gnats, while swallowing camels. (Matthew 23:24.)
 5. They had a fault-finding spirit. (Matthew 7:1-4.)

CONCLUSION -

- I. Though one may enter the kingdom now having less righteousness of his own than some Pharisees, he must become superior to them in righteousness to abide in it and to receive its blessed promises now and eternally. (1 Timothy 1:15.)
- II. Much of the sermon on the mount which follows this point is a presentation of the righteousness required in Christ's kingdom in contrast with both the righteousness of the law and the Pharisaic perversions of the law.
- III. When we love and teach as Jesus loved and taught (Romans 13:10), God's law for us is fulfilled.
- IV. Let us "strive to enter in by the narrow door." (Luke 13:24.)

-- Charles Crouch

INTRODUCTION -

I. LESSON LINKS AND CONTEXT.

- A. In the first division of the sermon on the mount Jesus set forth the character and blessedness of citizens in the kingdom of heaven (5:3-12), and their relationship to the world (5:13-16).
- B. Matthew 5:17-20 serves as a preface to the second division of his sermon, which deals with the righteousness of the kingdom. (5:21-7:12.)

II. NATURE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE LESSON.

- A. This lesson defines the vital relationship of the old and new covenants.
- B. In it Jesus teaches the abiding value of the Old Testament and he also establishes the fact that it was to pass away by fulfillment, not by destruction.
- C. Jesus did not come to destroy the purpose of the law, but to clarify and fulfil its purpose. He came to "*fulfil*" the scriptures. (Matthew 26:53,54,56; Luke 24:44-47.)
- D. Jesus actually kept, upheld, and attempted to correct misunderstandings and wrong attitudes toward the law, but did not leave it in force. (Romans 7:4.)
- E. Six times in the sermon on the mount Jesus said, "*Ye have heard it said...but I say unto you...*" In each case he contrasted "the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" with the righteousness required in the kingdom of heaven.
- F. God showed on the mount of transfiguration Jesus came not as Moses' interpreter but as his replacement. (Matt. 17:1-8.)
- G. Jesus gave "the perfect law, the law of liberty," in the place of the law of Moses. (James 1:25.)

DISCUSSION -

I. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH JESUS CAME. (Matthew 5:17)

- A. **To fulfil:** "*Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.*" (17)

- B. The first part of the sermon was in such contrast to the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus felt it necessary to utter this word of explanation to prevent some from misunderstanding what follows.
- C. Jesus came to fulfil the types and prophecies concerning him in the Old Testament scriptures. (Luke 24:44-47; Matthew 26:53,54,56).
- D. He came to fulfil the purpose of the law concerning himself. (Galatians 3:23-25).
- E. "To destroy the law would be more than to abrogate it for it was both a system of statues designed for the ends of government, and a system of types foreshadowing the kingdom of Christ. To destroy it, therefore, would be both to abrogate its statues and to prevent the fulfillment of its types. The former, Jesus eventually did; the latter, he did not. As regards the prophets, the only way to destroy them would be to prevent the fulfillment of the predictions contained in them. Instead of coming to destroy either the law or the prophets, Jesus came to fulfil all the types of the former, and (eventually) all the unfulfilled predictions of the latter." -- J.W. McGarvey, *Commentary on Matthew*, p.52.
- F. Burton Coffman comments that "the difference in *fulfilling* and *destroying* the Law of Moses was about the same as the difference between *paying off* a promissory note and *repudiating* it. In either case it is effectively removed." -- Coffman, *Commentary on Matthew*, p.59.
- G. Jesus took the law out of the way (Colossians 2:14-16), not by violating or repudiating it, but by fulfilling it.

II. THE ENDURING NATURE OF THE LAW. (Verse 18.)

- A. **One jot or tittle:** *"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished."* (18)
 - 1. The "jot" and "tittle" were the smallest character and marking, of letters in the Hebrew alphabet.
 - 2. Jesus upheld the law given through Moses in its entirety--teaching that it would remain in force until "*all things be accomplished.*"
 - 3. He affirmed that no part of the law would pass, or could be disregarded, until God's purpose in giving it had been completed. (cf. Hebrews 2:1-3.)
- B. It is still wise and profitable to study the Old Testament.

(Romans 15:4.)

- 1. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed; the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.
- 2. The Old Testament is inspired history of the creation; etc.
- 3. The Old Testament confirms the divinity and purpose of Jesus Christ.
- 4. The Old Testament shows the wisdom of living a godly life.
- 5. The Old Testament reveals the certain consequences of disobedience. (1 Corinthians 10:1-13.)

III. THE SMALL AND THE GREAT IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. (Verse 19.)

- A. **Break vs. do:** *"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."* (19)
- B. The person who lived under the law and broke what he considered the least commandment, would be equally disrespectful and unloving toward God under the law of his Son, Jesus Christ.
- C. The person who did not feel obligated to keep or teach respect for the law God gave through Moses and the prophets would be considered least in the kingdom of heaven because of the same low regard for the word of God.
- D. Disobedience springs from unbelief and results in condemnation.
- E. Jesus placed "*doing*" before "*teaching*," and showed great respect for the law of God by both doing and teaching it faithfully.

IV. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS REQUIRED IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. (Verse 20.)

- A. **Exceed:** *"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 5:20)
 - 1. The Pharisees and scribes were models of righteousness as far as outward performance was concerned, and in their own estimation. Some of the best of God's children then were among the Pharisees.
 - 2. But citizens of Christ's kingdom must exceed or go beyond them.