

Matthew 05 - Sermon on the Mount: Background, Purpose; The Beatitudes; The Similitudes; The Requirements of the Mosaic Law

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(6) Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1—7:29)

This sermon occurred after intense interest in the person of Jesus was stirred up. By this time, He had gone all over the country proclaiming His Messiahship and authenticating His claims with many miracles, signs, and wonders. That is why Jewish people were there from all over the country and outside the country as well. This sermon occurred after the selection of the 12 Disciples. In fact, it was immediately before this sermon that Jesus selected and closed His apostolic group of 12. Before this sermon, Jesus already had several conflicts with the Pharisees over the authority of Pharisaic Judaism, and after debates between Jesus and the Pharisees over its validity and the Pharisaic interpretation of the Mosaic Law. This sermon came in a period of Jewish history when the Jewish people were looking for redemption. It was a period when they were suffering under Roman oppression, and seeking some type of messianic national redemption from servitude to Rome. They were looking for a Messiah to come and establish His Kingdom in opposition to the kingdom of Rome.

According to the OT prophets, righteousness was the means of entering the Kingdom. Jesus offered men righteousness, but He received opposition from the Pharisees. The Pharisees claimed to offer righteousness through Pharisaism, and by means of this Pharisaic righteousness, men would be able to enter the Messianic Kingdom. So on one hand, the Pharisees offered a form of righteousness; on the other hand, Jesus proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom, and righteousness, according to the OT prophets, was the means of entering the Kingdom. By this time, the question being raised among the Jewish masses was whether Pharisaic righteousness was sufficient for entering into the Kingdom, and if not, what kind of righteousness is necessary for entering the Kingdom. From that perspective, the most important statement by Jesus in the Sermon is Matt 5:20: "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."

The "Constitution of the Kingdom" or "The Messiah's Interpretation of the Righteousness of the Law"?

Some (Missler) take the Sermon on the Mount to be the Manifesto of the King, the platform of the Prince of Peace. It will be the law of this world during the Millennium, when it will find full fruition. Christ will reign on earth in person and will enforce every word of it. The Sermon on the Mount will finally prevail when He whose right it is to rule shall come. Only the Gospel of the grace of God can make men obedient to Christ, and it was given to bring men into *obedience* to God. Don't let the familiarity of this passage lure you into thinking that you have mastered it; it is tough ground:

- It's one of the most misunderstood portions of Scripture
- As The Law of the Kingdom, it is the highest ethical teaching in the Bible. It goes vastly beyond the Law of Moses. It is the Ten Commandments *amplified and expanded*. It raises the Law to the *Nth* degree.
- It is the longest discourse recorded in Scripture
- Who is it addressed to? *Believers*. This would be a source of condemnation to the unsaved.
- No viable path to salvation mentioned; no gospel of salvation discussed
- Presents ethics without supplying the dynamic

Others (Fruchtenbaum) believe that the Sermon on the Mount, taken as a whole, in the Jewish frame of reference in which it was given, is the Messiah's interpretation of the standard of righteousness that the Law demanded, in contrast with the Pharisaic interpretation of the kind of righteousness the Law demanded. The difference is more

between mere external conformity in contrast to internal conformity that naturally lends itself to external conformity.

The Sermon is neither the constitution of the Kingdom nor the Christian ethics for this age, as both would require the believer to keep the entire Law of Moses. There are things mentioned in the Sermon that later become Christian ethics for this age, but as a unit that was not its intent. If it were, all 613 commandments would be obligatory as Christian ethics for this age. We know whether or not something is applicable today based on what is said later in the Gospels or the Epistles. It also does not outline the means of salvation, as that would mean that salvation is by works.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus repudiated Pharisaism on two counts: First, as a proper interpretation of the righteousness that the Law of Moses demanded; and second, as the kind of righteousness necessary for entering the Kingdom. Rom 8:3-4: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Matthew 5

(A) Setting (5:1-2) (Cf. Luke 6:20-26)

1 Now when Jesus saw the **crowds**, He went up on the **mountain**; and after He sat down, His **disciples** came to Him.

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the hill. After taking his seat, his disciples came to him,

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

- "...crowds" - the people mentioned in 4:23-25; a group much larger than just the Twelve who were from all over (Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan, Cf. 4:25).

- "...mountain" - "plain" (Luke) or "mount" (Matthew)? Two different views:

1. Same basic talk, preached on two different occasions
2. Same occasion, recorded from two different perspectives

- The sequence of events below could solve the problem:

1. Jesus went up in "the hills" near Capernaum to pray all night (v12)
2. He called 12 disciples to be His apostles
3. He then went down on a level place to talk and to heal diseases

4. Following that, He went up higher to get away from the crowds and to teach His disciples (Matt 5:1)

5. The multitudes (Matt. 7:28; Luke 7:1) climbed the mountain and heard His sermon, which explains Jesus' words at the end (Matt 7:24; Luke 6:46-47)

- "...disciples" - used here in a generic sense as "followers" (Cf. John 6:60,61,66). Some of these were unsaved "disciples" (compare John. 6:64-65).

— These followers ("disciples") were intrigued by the fact that this Man, Jesus, who claimed to be the Messiah, could inaugurate the kingdom prophesied in the OT. Once He setup this kingdom, Israel would no longer be under the authority of Rome, and Jesus would heal their diseases and provide for their every need.

— But they had not yet heard the "bad news." There was more to the kingdom than just outward, political benefits. Their hearts had to be right with the Lord before the kingdom could come.

— The main purpose of the following Sermon by Jesus was to set forth the righteousness that was necessary for a person to qualify for entrance into the kingdom.

— The whole purpose of this Sermon was to convict and condemn, because by law comes the knowledge of sin (Cf. Rom 3:20). By the Sermon on the Mount is the knowledge of righteousness. After hearing this sermon, these "disciples" would learn how unfit they were for the kingdom. They were spiritually unqualified to enter the kingdom based on their own righteousness.

- To see how condemning the Sermon is, consider the following personal questions:

1. Have you ever been guilty of sinful anger? (5:22)
2. Have you ever looked at a woman to lust after her? (5:28)
3. Have you measured up to God's perfect standard? (5:48)
4. Do you ever worry? (6:25-34)
5. Do you always put God first? (6:33)
6. Are you ever oblivious to your own faults? (7:1-5)
7. Do you always live according to the rule of Matt 7:12?

— After hearing this Sermon, an honest Jew would have to admit that he was completely spiritually unfit to enter the kingdom, and throw himself at the mercy of the Messiah. He would learn that he lacks the righteousness that is required and therefore must seek His righteousness (Cf. 6:33).

— Though the gospel is not revealed in this Sermon, the Lord did make it clear that the solution for those who lack the needed righteousness is found, not in self righteousness, but in His righteousness (Matt 6:33).

- 2 And He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,
- 2 He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,
- 2 and he began to teach them:
- 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

(B) Beatitudes (5:3-12)

The Beatitudes describe the spiritual character of those who are subjects of Christ's kingdom. If I am a part of Christ's kingdom, then what should my conduct and character be like? That question is answered in these verses.

- 3 **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- 3 **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- 3 **"How blessed are those who are destitute in spirit, because the kingdom from heaven belongs to them!**
- 3 **Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

- "Blessed" - *makarios*, "happy"; happy are those who attain these various characteristics. These Beattitudes reveal God's formula for happiness. Inner character is the key, not what a person pretends to be on the outside, but what the person really is on the inside.

— Blessedness is happiness because of divine favor; the other Greek word translated "blessed" (*eulogetos*) connotes the reception of praise, and usually describes God

- "...poor in spirit" - to recognize our natural unworthiness to stand in God's presence, thus I need to depend utterly on Him for His mercy and grace. It means that I do not trust in my own goodness or possessions for God's acceptance.

— "poor" - *ptōchos*, utterly destitute, having nothing to offer. It's the posture of someone who has stopped pretending their spiritually self-sufficient.

— This is the foundation everything else stands on. You can't build genuine faith on self-sufficiency.

— The problem is that we are all spiritually poor, but most people do not recognize or admit their spiritual poverty. Being "poor in spirit" is to recognize how extreme our spiritual poverty actually is, that there is nothing in me which commends itself to God.

— It's the opposite of self-reliance. It doesn't say, "I am rich and in need of nothing" but rather "I am poor and in need of everything" (Cf. Ps 34:6; 40:17; 86:1).

— The Jews regarded material prosperity as an indication of divine approval, since many of the blessings God promised the righteous under the Old Covenant were material. Being "poor in spirit" does not regard material possessions as signs of intrinsic righteousness.

- There is this recognition that one has no righteousness of his own, and whatever righteousness he has is a righteousness received from God
- One who is poor in spirit is totally dependent upon God for mercy and salvation. But this does not mean false humility or cowardice; it means a proper attitude toward self, realizing how weak and sinful we are apart from Christ. Compare the two men in Luke 18:9-14: Proud Pharisee vs. humble tax collector.
- "...for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" - same promise in the first and last beatitude (v10). This *inclusio* shows that all the beatitudes deal with the kingdom of heaven.
- "is" - *eimi*, amillennial scholars point to the present/future tense of "is" in v3 and v10 to argue for an "already/not yet" form of the kingdom. Supposedly v3 and v10 indicate the "already" (current) aspects, while v4-9 emphasize the "not yet" (future) aspects. See [The Coming Kingdom 43_The Kingdom is At Hand \(Matt 3:2; 4:17\); Theirs is the Kingdom \(Matt 5:3,10\)](#) for more details.
- The verb *eimi* is indeed in the present tense in v3,10, but if you look at v19-20, it's clear that Jesus also refers to the kingdom as a future state reality. The overwhelming volume of verses in the NT that refer to the kingdom refer to it in the future tense (see notes on 6:10).
- The few verses that do refer to the kingdom as a present tense reality (Cf. v3,10) use the "futuristic present" tense. Sometimes the Bible will use the past or present tense to describe a future reality in order to communicate that the future event or is certain to take place. It is so certain to come to pass that the Bible describes it as a present tense reality using a present tense verb.
- In these "futuristic present" cases, the Bible is not using the present tense verb to describe a present reality, but rather to describe the *certainty* of something that will come to pass in the future (Cf. "glorified" in Rom 8:29-30; 2 Peter 3:8; 1 John 2:17; Jude 14; Joshua 6:2; see Tag: Futuristic Present Tense).
- So in v3,10, Jesus uses the present tense verb for "is" but He's not saying that we are currently in the kingdom. He's saying that our citizenship in the kingdom is certain, so certain that He can describe it with a present tense verb. Only a God who is omnipotent and omniscient can describe a future event in the present tense.
- Jesus' point is that it is so certain that the poor in spirit (v3) and the persecuted (v10) will be a part of the future kingdom that it can be described as a certainty today. Jesus does the same thing with "eternal life" in John 5:24.

- 4 "Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they will be **comforted**.
- 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- 4 "How blessed are those who mourn, because it is they who will be comforted!
- 4 Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

- "...mourn" - *pentheō*, to lament, grieve strongly. This is the strongest word for mourning in the Greek language.

— Notice that you're not blessed despite mourning, you're blessed in/during mourning. What does Jesus mean by this seeming oxymoron? How can you be happy ("Blessed") if you're mourning?

— It includes grief over loss, but in context, it also points to mourning over sin, brokenness, and the state of the world. Eph 4:30 says Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. What "grieves" the Holy Spirit? Sin. The subjects in Christ's kingdom will mourn over sin. It will grieve our hearts. Sin cannot be practiced and still be happy. If we are not mourning ("grieving strongly") over our sin, we cannot be happy.

— This mourning for sin is not the painful regret of the lawbreaker facing punishment for his transgression (the "sorrow of this world," 2 Cor 7:8-10). It's a genuine mourning over sin because of how it affects our relationship and fellowship with the God who made us.

— This mourning is from a guilt-confessing sinner, fully aware of his disobedience and evil, and the heinousness of his rebellion against God and the malignancy of his motives (Luke 18:13).

— Beware of the sorrow of this world (2 Cor 7:8-10). Peter mourned with godly sorrow and was forgiven; Judas had remorse (the sorrow of this world) and took his own life.

— The godly remnant during Jesus' time, who responded to the call of John the Baptist and Jesus, wept because of Israel's national humiliation, as well as because of personal sin (Cf. Ezra 10:6; Ps 51:4; 119:136; Ezek 9:4; Dan 9:19-20).

- "...comforted" - *parakaleō*, future comfort for those who mourn now for sin. All sorrow over personal and national humiliation because of sin will end when the King sets up His kingdom and the repentant enter into it.

— Believers do all their mourning in this life; they will be comforted in the next life (Luke 16:25). For unbelievers, today's grief is only a foretaste of eternal sorrow.

5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they will inherit the earth.

5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

5 "How blessed are those who are humble, because it is they who will inherit the earth!

5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

- "...gentle" - *praus*, meekness, mildness of disposition; gentleness of spirit. The Greek word was used to describe a powerful warhorse trained to submit its strength to its rider's control.

— Gentleness/meekness is strength under control, power under control. It is a power that has chosen not to dominate. It never refers to a lack of strength, power, or authority, but always refers to these traits under the control of the Holy Spirit.

- A wild horse can throw a skilled rider off numerous times, but at some point, with training, that horse will be brought under the control of the rider. The horse didn't lose its strength, but just brought that strength under control.
- The King wants to control our passions; happy is the person who lets Him do so. Happy/blessed is the person who stops going their own stubborn way, who stops fighting against God, stops insisting his way is best.
- Meekness describes our dealings with others. A person may acknowledge their spiritual bankruptcy and mourn because of sin, but it is something different to respond meekly when others regard us as sinful.
- Meekness is the natural and appropriate expression of genuine humility toward others
- Meekness is not weakness! It does not mean cowardly or mousy; rather, it's a quiet confidence in God; a recognition of and submission to God's authority.
- Jesus was meek (Cf. 11:29), yet He drove the changers from the Temple. Moses was meek (Cf. Num 12:3), yet he judged sinners; even faced Aaron with his sin.
- Meekness means I don't always need to assert my own rights, but rather I live and respond for the glory of God
- A disciplined gentleness, central to the concept of gentleman, whose manliness integrates virility and courtesy, harnessed energy and self-secure humility. Meekness renounces force, domination, anger, violence and revenge (Eph 5:21); a disciple in meekness does not press his own claim or battle for his own interests.
- A meek person is submissive and dependent, secure and content, and in the end gets the most out of life. While anticipating heaven, he enjoys earth to the full (1 Tim 6:17; Cf. Ps 37:11).
- "...inherit" - inheriting the Promised Land was the hope of the godly in Israel during the wilderness wanderings (Deut 4:1; 16:20; Cf. Is 57:13; 60:21)
- Inheriting is a privilege of faithful heirs (Cf. 25:34). We "inherit" because of who we are, and our relationship with the One bestowing the inheritance
- The meek are not inheriting the earth today, but they will when Christ reigns on the earth (Zeph 3:11)
- "...the earth" - what the meek can anticipate inheriting? The OT concept of the kingdom was earthly, that Messiah would rule over Israel and the nations on the earth (Ps 2:8-9; 37:9,11,29).
- This means that Jesus' meek disciples can anticipate receiving possession of some of the earth during His messianic reign (Cf. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27). It is a form of reward during the messianic kingdom, which involves ruling and reigning under Jesus' delegated authority.

6 "Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.**

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

6 "How blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because it is they who will be satisfied!

6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

- "...hunger and thirst" - something that is not satisfied until it is received; it is a passion or strong desire that continues until what is hungered and thirsted for is received. The verbs here describe physical desperation, the kind of hunger and thirst that defines daily survival, not a passing craving. It assumes ongoing appetite.

- "...righteousness" - to live consistently with a divine standard. Those who thirst after living with a divine standard will attain that righteousness.

— Matthew always used the term "righteousness" in the sense of personal fidelity to God and His will (3:15; Cf. Ps 42:2; 63:1; Amos 8:11-14). He never used it of imputed righteousness (justification), therefore the righteousness that the blessed "hunger and thirst for" is not salvation.

— It is personal holiness, and extending it more broadly, the desire that holiness may prevail among all people (Cf. 6:10)

— When believers desire others, and society as a whole, to be cleansed from sin and justified before God, they are demonstrating a hunger and thirst for righteousness

— This person yearns to see God's righteousness ruling both in his own life and everywhere around the world. Their gnawing desire is that human life be marked by conformity to God's will and a holy love. In his frustration, he is satisfied by the assurance that one day this earth will be filled with God's righteousness as the waters fill the sea.

— Thus unsatisfied, yet satisfied, the disciple keeps on longing for the total and triumphant reign of righteousness personally and globally.

- "...they shall be satisfied" - the encouraging promise is that such people will eventually receive the answer to their prayers. Christ will establish righteousness in the world when He sets up His kingdom (Is 45:8; 61:10-11; 62:1-2; Jer 23:16; 33:14-16; Dan 9:24).

Characteristics in Relationship to Man

7 "Blessed are the **merciful, for they will receive mercy.**

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

7 "How blessed are those who are merciful, because it is they who will receive mercy!

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

- "...merciful" - to be compassionate; to be able to respond to the needs of others; to forgive the guilty and have compassion on the needy and suffering. This verse does not say to be merciful so that you earn mercy. It is descriptive, not transactional.

— A meek person acknowledges to others that they are sinful, but a merciful person has compassion on others because they are sinful. Mercy received tends to overflow into mercy given, and a heart that withholds mercy reveals it hasn't truly understood the mercy it's been shown.

— Jesus does not give examples of situations in which the merciful person displays mercy because we are to be characteristically merciful; this applies in many different situations.

— This is again the principle of reciprocity (Cf. Matt 6:12; Luke 6:38), only with a multiplied return when God is the donor.

— This is a reminder for us that just as God's forgiveness enables us to practice forgiveness, so God's mercy enables sinners to exercise mercy.

- "...they shall receive mercy" - those who are compassionate to others will receive compassion themselves, as they need it

— If we show mercy, because Christ has been merciful to us, then mercy will come back to us (Luke 16:1-13; James 2:13; Prov 11:17)

— We cannot earn mercy from God by being merciful to others. Jesus meant that God will deal mercifully with people who have dealt mercifully with others (Cf. 6:12-15; 9:13; 12:7; 18:33-34)

— There are many OT passages that speak of the Messiah dealing mercifully with the merciful (Is 49:10,13; 54:8,10; 60:10; Zech 10:6). The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt 18:21-35) is a good illustration of this beatitude.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

8 "How blessed are those who are pure in heart, because it is they who will see God!

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

- "...pure in heart" - *katharos*, those who are single-minded, undivided, without contamination in their devotion to God; to be morally pure inwardly.

— Not sinlessness or flawless performance, but the truth within (Ps 51:6; 1 John 1:8); to be honest or to operate out of a proper, uncontaminated motivation, with a singular focus on the will of God. It is a heart that isn't split between God and something else competing for first place.

— The actions toward fellow believers are to come from a proper motivation

- No honest man can say that his heart is pure

— How can the heart of man, which is desperately wicked, be made clean? The Lord Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3)

— It is by the washing of regeneration that we are made clean. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse us from all sin (Cf. John 1:7).

- "...they shall see God" - the "pure in heart" can look forward to seeing God in the Person of the Messiah when He reigns on the earth (Ps 24:3-4; Is 33:17; 35:2; 40:5). But before that time, the pure in heart are given a clarity of perception about who God actually is that a divided heart simply cannot access.

9 "Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called **sons of God**.

9 "Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called sons of God.

9 "How blessed are those who make peace, because it is they who will be called God's children!

9 **Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.**

- "...peacemakers" - those who replicate the work of the Prince of Peace. Not peace-lovers, who avoid conflict to stay comfortable. Peacemakers actively pursue reconciliation, even at personal cost.

— This beatitude discloses the social repercussions of discipleship as the citizens of the kingdom battle for peace

— We should function as catalysts for peace and forgiveness, agents of reconciliation

— In playing the role of peacemaker in every level of life, they encounter misunderstanding and frustration (Rom 12:18), but disowned by a violent world, they are owned as His children

— This beatitude has to do with the family of God. Those who attain His righteousness will actively work to bring about a state of unity among the saints.

— Christians have the Gospel of peace on their feet, so that wherever they go, they should bring peace (Eph 6:15)

— This is not "peace at any price," for holiness is more important than a peace based on sin (James 3:17; Heb 12:14)

— Compromise is not peace, but Christians should not be contentious as they contend for the faith

— The Lord loves peace (Rom 14:19; 15:33)

— Things which are *not* of peace (Gal 5:19-21)

- "...sons of God" - people who make peace behave as true "children of God"

— Those who follow Christ faithfully will demonstrate concern for the peace of humanity by leading people to Him

10 "Blessed are those who have been **persecuted** for the sake of righteousness, for **theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

10 "How blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, because the kingdom from heaven belongs to them!

10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- "...persecuted" - persecution is as much a mark of discipleship as peacemaking
- The world does not give up its hates and self-centered living easily, which brings opposition on disciples of Christ

- We should be willingly to live consistently in spite of persecution

- We should only be accused "falsely." We should never be guilty of deliberately inviting persecution (2 Tim 3:12).

- If we live godly lives, suffering will come! Note the rewards: we are in the same company as Christ and the prophets, and we shall be rewarded in heaven.

- "...theirs is the kingdom of heaven" - even though Jesus' disciples suffer as they anticipate the kingdom, they can find joy in knowing that the kingdom will eventually be theirs

- The kingdom will provide release from persecution

- This phrase completes the *inclusio* that began in v3

- "is" - *eimi*, present tense; see notes on v3

11 "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

11 "Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

11 "How blessed are you whenever people insult you, persecute you, and say all sorts of evil things against you falsely because of me!

11 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

- This verse broadens the scope of persecution (v10) by including insult and slander

12 **Rejoice** and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in this same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

12 Rejoice and be extremely glad, because your reward in heaven is great! That's how they persecuted the prophets who came before you."

12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

- "Rejoice" - persecution, including insult and slander, should cause disciples to be happy rather than despair, because by enduring persecution, they would receive "great" rewards

These are characteristics of those who attain true righteousness, characteristics in relationship to God and to man. While those who truly attained the kind of righteousness that the Law demanded would have these characteristics, the Pharisees did not. The Pharisees did not recognize their need for repentance since they felt they were fully righteous. They submitted only to their own authority. They did not exercise mercy to those who needed it. They were concerned only with external elements of religion. They caused strife and discord, and were guilty of persecuting the saints. None of the characteristics of these verses were found in Pharisaism.

(C) Influence of the sons of the kingdom (5:13-16) (Cf. Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34-35)

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by people.

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

13 "You are the salt of the world. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty again? It's good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled on by people.

13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

- With this verse, Jesus begins to deal with the characteristics of those who attain true righteousness in relationship to the world. Those who attain true righteousness become both salt and light.

- "You" - in the emphatic position in the Greek, which stresses the unique calling of His disciples

- "...salt" - used for seasoning and as a preservative; it preserves materials from corruption.

— Salt speaks of inward character that influences a decaying world

— Jesus implied that His disciples could positively affect the world; they could, through their lives and witness, to bring blessing to others and retard the natural decay that sin produces in life

- Salt is also an antiseptic, just as the disciples are to be a moral disinfectant in a sin-infested world

- "...become tasteless" - lost its seasoning; those who attain true righteousness are the ones who "season" the world and make life worth living (Lev 2:13)

14 "You are the **light** of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

14 "You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill can't be hidden.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

- "...light" - a common symbol in Scripture, used to represent purity, truth, knowledge, divine revelation, and God's presence—all in contrast to their opposites

15 nor do *people* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

15 nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

15 People don't light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

16 Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

16 In the same way, let your light shine before people in such a way that they will see your good actions and glorify your good actions and glorify your Father in heaven."

16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

- "...good works" - the outward demonstration or testimony to the righteousness that is within them

— Good works never saved anyone, but those who are saved will show evidence of their salvation by means of these good works. When an unbeliever sees these good works and responds to the light given off by the good works, he will naturally come to the light and become a believer himself.

Jesus will now elaborate on the kinds of good works that enable light to be seen as light. Essentially, faithfully living out the commandments, the righteousness of the Torah as interpreted by Jesus.

In His teaching of righteousness, which is the character and conduct that conforms to the will of God, Jesus went back to the revelation of God's will, the OT. It was natural for Jesus to explain His view of the OT since He would shortly proceed to interpret it to His hearers.

(D) Relationship of the kingdom to the Law (5:17-48)

(a) Christ's ambition to return to the Law's original intent (5:17-20)

17 "Do not presume that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.

17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I didn't come to destroy them, but to fulfill them,

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

- "...to abolish" [2x] - *katalyō*, fail to fulfill it (the Law)

- "...the Law or the Prophets" - the entire OT; not referring exclusively to the Mosaic Law or to the Prophets. This phrase was a common way Jews referred to the OT (Cf. 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 28:23; Rom 3:21)

— In case some of His hearers concluded He was a radical who was discarding the teachings of the OT, Jesus started off by explaining His relationship to the OT.

— Jesus is preparing them for the incongruity between His teaching and their leaders' interpretations of the Law

— With this phrase, Jesus introduced the subject of Scripture interpretation (hermeneutics); in 7:123, He concluded the subject with the same phrase

- "...I" - was Jesus referring to Himself or His teaching? — Both.

— Jesus did not intend that what He taught would replace the teaching of the OT, but that it would "fulfil" (*plerōō*), or "establish it completely"

— Of course, Jesus also fulfilled every OT prophecy about the Messiah, thus He Himself fulfilled what the Law and Prophets predicted, both directly and symbolically

- "...fulfill" - *plerōō*, to bring to an end; to accomplish all that is demanded of it (the Law)

— Jesus did not claim that He came to observe the Law or to keep the Law; rather, He came to fulfill the Law

— This means that Jesus brought the Law “to its intended meaning”; the word is used 17x in Matthew

— Jesus was saying that He did not come to sweep away (destroy) the righteous demands of the Law, but that He came to fulfill its righteous demands

— This does not mean He taught that the Mosaic Law remained in force for His disciples; He clearly taught that it did not (Mark 7:19). Rather, Jesus authenticated the OT as the inspired Word of God. He wanted His hearers to understand that what He taught them in no way contradicted OT revelation.

— Jesus fulfilled the Law in three ways:

1. Obedience to the Law (Is 42:21)
2. Death: He met the claims of the Law for us (Rom 10:4)
3. Spirit: Enables believers (Rom 8:4)

Jesus does not mean taking the written Law as it stands and literally obeying it...in fact, that is what He condemns, not as wrong, but as wholly inadequate. He means rather starting with it as it stands, then bringing it on to completeness; working out the spirit of it; getting at the comprehensive principles which underlie the narrowness of the letter. Jesus was the final Interpreter of and Authority over the Law and its meaning, as other passages in Matthew indicate. Jesus restated some of the OT laws (Matt 19:18-19), but some He modified (Matt 5:31-32). Some He intensified (Matt 5:21-22,27-28), and others He changed significantly (Matt 5:33-37,38-42,43-47). Some laws He abrogated entirely (Mark 7:15-19).

The emphasis of v17-18 is on the entire Law, all 613 commandments (v19, “one of the least of these commandments”). While Jesus did come to fulfill the Law, the Law of Moses did not end at His coming, or during His life, but upon His death. He spoke these verses while He was living. As long as He was living, He was required to obey the Law of Moses in the manner that Moses commanded (not as the rabbis had reinterpreted it).

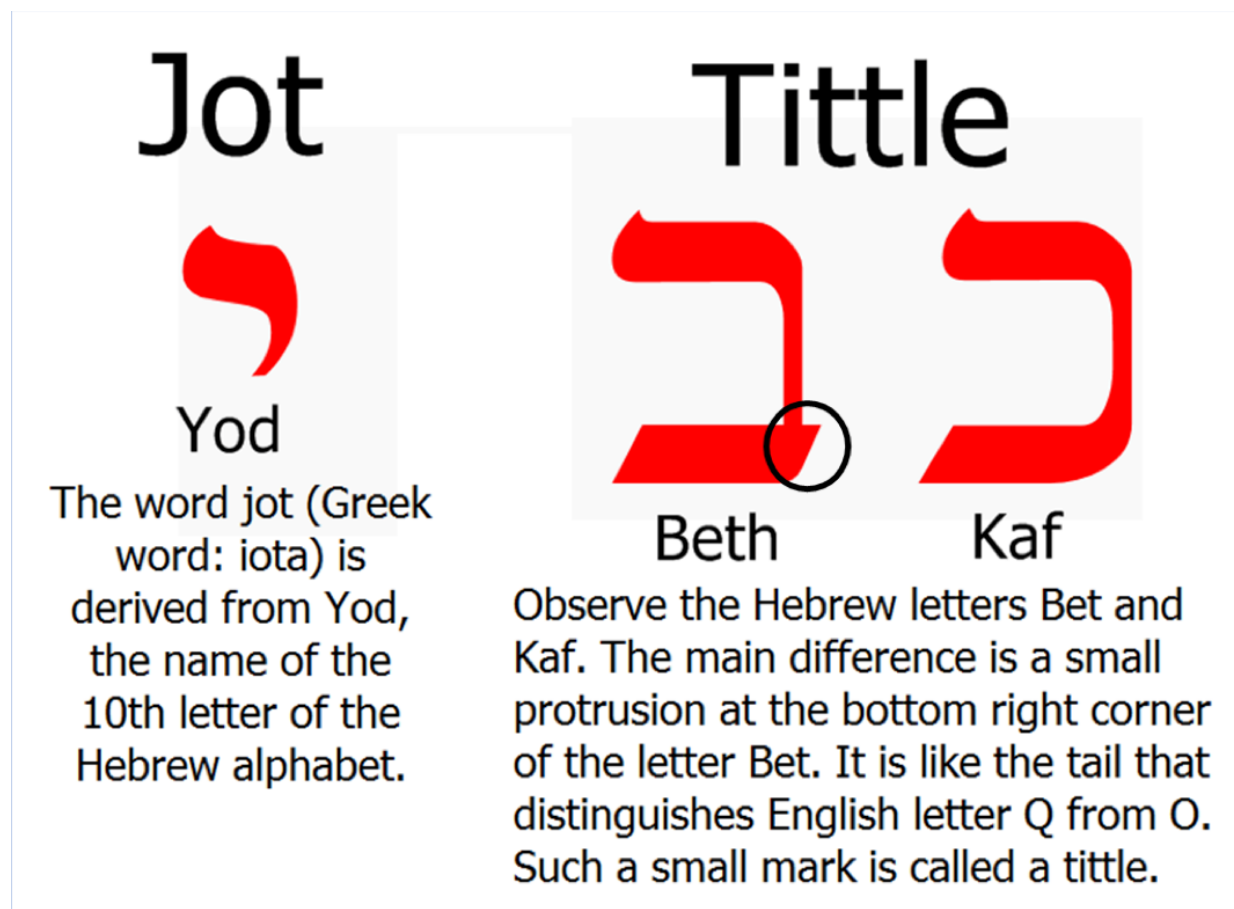
18 **For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter shall pass from the Law, until all is accomplished!**

18 **For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.**

18 **because I tell all of you with certainty that until heaven and earth disappear, not one letter or one stroke of a letter will disappear from the Law until everything has been accomplished.**

18 **For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.**

- "...truly I say unto you" - first occurrence in Matt (30x); 13x in Mark; 6x in Luke; 25x in John
- It always conveys the personal authority of the person who utters it
- "...smallest letter" - *yod*, a "jot" [KJV]; the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet
- "...stroke of a letter" - smallest stroke; serifs that distinguished one letter from a similarly shaped letter
- Jesus is saying that He intended to fulfill the entire Law down to its smallest letter, even down to the smallest part of the letter
- "...pass from the Law" - God will preserve His Law until everything in it has happened as prophesied. It is as permanent as heaven and earth (Cf. 24:35).
- Jesus disregarded the oral tradition of the Pharisees, which they held in equal (or greater) authority as the Mosaic Law. And, Jesus interpreted the written Law according to its spirit, not according to the rigid letter (as the Pharisees did).
- Jesus did not keep the weekly fasts, observe the elaborated distinctions between clean and unclean, and He fellowshiped with outcasts and sinners.



The Mosaic Law was revelatory and regulatory, but not redemptive. It revealed what God wanted people to know, and it regulated the life of the Israelites. But God never intended people to view it as a way to earn salvation, namely, by keeping it perfectly. He gave the Law to a redeemed people...Israelites who had been redeemed from bondage in Egypt

This verse is a strong testimony to the verbal inspiration of Scripture. Divine inspiration does not end with ideas or doctrine; the Holy Spirit's inspiration went all the way down to the words, even down to the very letters the writers used, in the original texts.

19 Therefore, whoever nullifies one of **the least of these commandments**, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called **least in the kingdom of heaven**; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called **great in the kingdom of heaven**.

19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

19 So whoever sets aside one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom from heaven. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom from heaven

19 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.

- "...the least of these commandments" - Jesus is referring to the commandments He will give in the remainder of this Sermon (Matt 5-7)

- Having stated above His purpose for keeping the Law, He goes on to repudiate the Pharisaic interpretation of the Law

— Pharisaism was destroying the Law by means of its many added traditions (v20). Often, these traditions prohibited people from keeping the Law.

— The Jewish rabbis also graded the OT commands according to which ones they believed were more authoritative and which ones less. Here, Jesus corrected this viewpoint.

— Jesus taught that all were equally authoritative, and warned His hearers against following the rabbis' practice

- "...least in the kingdom of heaven...great in the kingdom of heaven" - greatness in the kingdom depended on maintaining a high view of Scripture

— This verse distinguishes different ranks within the kingdom; some individuals will have a higher standing than others...everyone will not be equal

— Notice that there will be people in the kingdom whose view of Scripture will not be the same as before they entered the kingdom. All will be righteous, but their obedience

to and attitude toward Scripture will vary.

20 "For I say to you that unless your **righteousness** far surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not **enter the kingdom of heaven**.

20 "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

20 because I tell you, unless your righteousness greatly exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom from heaven!"

20 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.

- "...righteousness" - *dikaiosynē*, in Matthew, this word always means an individual's conduct of righteous life, not the imputed righteousness of Christ (which is the way Paul typically used the word).

— With this statement, Jesus repudiated Pharisaical righteousness on two counts:

1. He repudiated Pharisaic righteousness as being the kind of righteousness that one needs to enter the Kingdom.
2. He repudiated Pharisaic righteousness as being a proper interpretation of the Mosaic Law, and as being proper interpretation of the kind of righteousness that the Law demanded for entering into the Kingdom.

— What was to become of himself? See note: **Background of the Sermon on the Mount** note above for details on the questions the Jewish people had during this time, and how Jesus' statement clearly answers them. ***This is the key point of the Sermon.***

- "...enter into the kingdom of heaven" - 7x in the NT (Matt 5:20; 7:21; 18:3; 19:23-24; Mark 9:47; John 3:5; Acts 14:22)

— The condition for entering, in every case, is faith alone. Selective obedience does not demonstrate a proper faith attitude toward God, the attitude John the Baptist and Jesus called for when they called their hearers to "Repent."

Pharisaical Error

- The scribes and Pharisees were not insincere: they tried to adhere to the keeping of the Law
 - Although misguided, they were zealous and sincere
 - They were concerned about the minute details of conduct, but they neglected the major matter of character. Conduct flows out of character.
 - Anyone who tries to reconcile himself to God by his works, his rules, his legalism, is pharisaical

- Is there any other way to heaven other than by Jesus Christ?
 - If there is, Jesus Christ's prayers were not answered in Gethsemane: Jesus pleaded with the Father three times for an alternative
 - (b) Six contrasts between pharisaical and Christ's interpretation of the Law (5:21-48)

In this passage, Jesus clarified exactly what the Law required. He selected six subjects: murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and love. Here, Jesus did not contrast His interpretation with Moses' teaching, but rather Moses' and Jesus teaching with the interpretation of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus expounded on the meaning of the text that God had originally intended.

For many generations, the oral law was handed down in the memory of generations of Scribes. In the middle of the 3rd century AD, a summary of it was created called the *Mishnah*. It contains 63 tractates on various subjects of the Law, and in English makes a book of about 800 pages. Later Jewish scholarship busied itself with making commentaries to explain the *Mishnah*, known as the *Talmuds*: the Jerusalem *Talmud* (12 printed volumes), and the Babylonian *Talmud* (60 printed volumes).

(i) Hatred (5:21-26)

21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MURDER,' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be answerable to the court.'

21 "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'

21 "You have heard that it was told those who lived long ago, 'You are not to commit murder,' and, "Whoever murders will be subject to punishment.'

21 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

- Thou shalt not kill: the 6th commandment (Ex 20:13)

- In each of these six cases, Jesus first related the popular understanding of the OT, the view advocated by the religious teachers of His day: "You have heard that it was said," or something similar.

22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be answerable to the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be **answerable to the supreme court**; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go into the fiery hell*.

22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty

before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell.

22 But I say to you, anyone who is angry with his brother **without a cause** will be subject to punishment. And whoever says to his brother 'Raka!' will be subject to the Council. And whoever says, 'You fool!' will be subject to hell fire.

22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother **without a cause** shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, *Raca*, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

- There does not seem to be any progression in these three instances of anger. Jesus simply presented three possible instances of anger and assured His hearers that in all these cases, there was a violation of God's will that could incur severe divine torment.

- Jesus contrasted His interpretation with the false common understanding of this command

— When God gave the 6th commandment, He did not just want people to refrain from murdering one another. He wanted them to refrain from the hatred that leads to murder.

— The law said, "You shalt not kill [murder]" (Ex 20:13); but Jesus said, "Don't be angry with others."

— Anger is murder in the heart, and it can lead to evil words and eventually, if left unchecked, actual murder

- "...answerable to the supreme court" - refers to a local court and "the council" to the Jewish Sanhedrin, the highest court of the land

— Don't wait for your angry brother or sister to take the first step; you do it, and do it quickly before things get worse!

- "...without a cause" [KJV, ISV] - may have been an editorial addition; not found in some manuscripts

— Jesus' demonstrations of anger were appropriate. His anger was always righteous; it is possible for us to be angry and not sin (Eph 4:26)

— Here, Jesus was addressing unjustifiable anger that can lead to murder (Cf. Col 3:8)

23 Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you,

23 Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

23 "So if you are presenting your gift at the altar and remember there that your brother has something against you,

23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

- Jesus gave two illustrations of anger, one involving temple worship (v23-24) and the other, legal action (v25-26)

— Both illustrations deal with situations in which the hearer is the cause of another person's anger rather than the offended party

— Jesus likely constructed the illustrations in this way so that we would be sensitive about not making other people hate us as much as we are careful to not hate others

24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

24 leave your gift there before the altar and first go and be reconciled to your brother. Then come and offer your gift.

24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

- It is more important to lift the load of hate from another brother's heart than to engage in a formal act of worship

— Reconciliation, also, is more important than worship in that it must come first

Should the Sermon on the Mount Apply to Christians Today?

There are a lot of people who believe that we should apply the Sermon on the Mount to the Christian today.

If so, how do you follow Matt 5:23-24...if you didn't bring an animal sacrifice last Sunday (Saturday), you're not following the Sermon on the Mount. What about Matt 5:40-42...if you won't give me an unlimited amount of money just by my asking, you're not following the Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount explains that the kingdom being offered to Israel is not just physical and political, but it is ethical and moral. It's about spiritual truths, and the heart of man and its need for change. This is why Jesus often talked about the human heart. Jesus talks about His sacrifice for sins, but not in the Sermon on the Mount. He talks about that in the Gospel of John. The SotM never mentions the Church, the Holy Spirit, or salvation by faith alone.

So, should we as believers today ignore the SotM? Not necessarily. Lewis Sperry Chafer said this: *All of the things that we today are to comply with have been repackaged into the epistles. For example, the passage about not being anxious or worried has been repackaged into Phil 4:6-7. So it's not that believers today are not under the teaching of the SotM, it's that many of these same ethical and moral principles have been recast into the epistles, applicable to the Church Age. We take our primary queues from the*

epistolary literature, not the SotM. The SotM is presented to a nation who was still functioning under the Law of Moses, giving them a rough teaching that the kingdom is not just politics, but contains moral and ethical standards.

25 Come to good terms with your accuser quickly, while you are with him on the way to court, so that your accuser will not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you will not be thrown into prison.

25 Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

25 Come to terms quickly with your opponent while you are on the way to court, or your opponent may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison.

25 Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

- This illustration stresses the importance of making things right quickly

- Two men walking together to the court where their disagreement would receive judicial arbitration should try to settle their grievance out of court (Cf. 1 Cor 6:1-11)

- The offender should remove the occasion for the other man's anger or hatred quickly; otherwise, the judge may make it difficult on both of them

- "...judge...officer...prison" - pictures the red tape and personal hassles, complications, and inconveniences involved in not settling out of court

26 Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last quadrans.

26 Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

26 I tell you with certainty, you will not get out of there until you pay back the last dollar!"

26 Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

- "Truly I say to you" - He is lifting His teaching above the teaching of Moses. He is lifting Himself to the position of Lawgiver and Interpreter.

- God will make it difficult for haters and those who provoke hate in others, if they come before Him with unresolved interpersonal disagreements

- Malicious anger is evil, and God's judgment is certain, therefore disciples must do everything they can to end inappropriate anger quickly

(ii) Lust (5:27-30)

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY';

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery';

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You are not to commit adultery.'

27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

- Jesus now proceeded to clarify God's intended meaning of the 7th commandment:
Thou shalt not commit adultery (Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18)

28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a **woman** with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

28 But I say to you, anyone who stares at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

- While actual adultery is far worse than inward lustful fantasies, the inner desires can quickly lead to this forbidden sin (Ex 20:14)

— We must deal ruthlessly with ourselves and not encourage the imagination to "feed on" these sins

— The eyes and the hands (seeing and touching) must be kept under control

— For Christ's teachings on marriage and divorce, see Matt 19:1-11

— The rabbis of Jesus' day tended to look at adultery as wrong because it involved stealing another man's wife. They viewed it as an external act.

— Jesus, on the other hand, saw it as wrong because it made the lustful individual morally impure, an internal condition

- "...woman" - *gyn*, can mean either wife or woman

— The spirit of the command prohibited lusting after any woman, not just a married woman

— The fact that fornication that takes place in the brain has fewer bad consequences than fornication in the bed does not mitigate this truth

29 Now if your right **eye** is causing you to sin, tear it out and throw it away from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your *body*, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

29 If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

29 So 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 body parts than to have your whole body thrown into hell.

29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

- Just as in v23-26, Jesus provides two illustrations to aid our understanding

- "...eye" - a member of the body initially responsible for luring us into an immoral thought or deed (Cf. Num 15:39; Prov 21:4; Ezek 6:9; 18:12; 20:8)

- A literal interpretation of this verse would have Jesus crippling every member of the human race

- Furthermore, removing an eye would not remove the real cause of the offense, a lustful heart

- Jesus' point, via hyperbole, was that His disciples must deal radically with sin, and must avoid temptation at all costs

- Clearly this is not a condition for salvation, but for discipleship

30 And if your right hand is causing you to sin, cut it off and throw it away from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your *body*, than for your whole body to go into **hell**.

30 If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away from you. It is better for you to lose one of your body parts than to have your whole body go into hell."

30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

- The point is that the loss of any body part is preferable to the loss of the whole person

- "...hell" - *gehenna*, the final place of punishment for the wicked

- It's mention does not imply that believers can go there. It represents the worst possible destiny.

(iii) Divorce (5:31-32) (Cf. Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18)

31 "Now it was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY IS TO GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';

31 "It was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce';

31 "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce.'

31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

- In Israel, a man could divorce his wife simply by giving her a written statement indicating that he divorced her (Cf. Deut 24:1-4). This was common practice in Israel, and was considered a personal matter not involving the courts.

32 but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

32 but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

32 But I say to you, any man who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

32 But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

- In most cases, a divorced woman would remarry, often for her own security
- Jesus said that divorcing a woman virtually amounted to causing her to commit adultery, since she would normally remarry
- Likewise, any man who married a divorced woman committed adultery with her because in God's eyes she was still married to her first husband
- Jesus' explanation would have helped His hearers realize the ramifications of a decision that many of them viewed as common and insignificant
- Women did not have the right to divorce their husbands
- "...except for *the* reason of sexual immorality" - the exception clause in this case
- Jesus probably did not repeat the exception clause before the second statement so as to not stress the exceptional case, but to focus on the seriousness of the husband's decision to divorce his wife
- Jesus has more to say about divorce in Matt 19:3-9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18

(iv) Oaths (5:33-37)

33 "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.'

33 "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.'

33 "Again, you have heard that it was told those who lived long ago, 'You must not swear an "oath falsely,' but, 'You must fulfill your oaths to the Lord.'

33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

- In this section, Jesus condenses several commands from the OT that prohibited taking an oath, invoking the Lord's name to guarantee it, then breaking it (Ex 20:7; Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; Deut 5:11; 6:3; 23:21-23)

— God has always intended simple truthfulness in speech

— The rabbis had developed an elaborate system of excuses regarding oaths: they taught that swearing by God's name was binding, but swearing by heaven and earth was not. Swearing *toward* Jerusalem was binding, but swearing *by* Jerusalem was not.

— They essentially tried to deceive others by appealing to various authorities in their oaths. They had many ways to get around the law and break oaths, so that a person's promises might mean nothing.

34 But I say to you, take no oath at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God,

34 But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,

34 But I tell you not to swear at all, neither by heaven, because it is God's throne,

34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

- Jesus cuts through the rabbis' sophisticated trickery by saying that if oaths that God intended to guarantee truthfulness become instruments of deceit, His disciples should avoid them

35 nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, nor by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING.

35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

35 nor by the earth, "because it is his footstool, nor by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the Great King.

35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

36 Nor shall you take an oath by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black.

36 Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

36 Nor should you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black.

36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

- Jesus is saying that whatever a person may appeal to in an oath has some connection with God. Therefore any oath is an appeal to God indirectly if not directly

— For example, to say that one could swear by one's own "head," then break his vow because he did not mention God's name, was shortsighted.

37 But make sure your statement is, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil origin.

37 But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.

37 Instead, let your message be 'Yes' for 'Yes' and 'No' for 'No.' Anything more than that comes from the evil one."

37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

- "...Yes, yes; No, no" - better translation: "Let your "Yes" be "yes," and your "No" be "no"

- Jesus does not forbid us to take a legal oath, but He warns us to speak the truth and not embellish our conversation with oaths that are supposed to strengthen our words. Jesus' point was the importance of truthfulness.

— God Himself swore oaths, not because He sometimes lies or could possibly lie, but to impress His truthfulness on people (Gen 9:9-11; Luke 1:73)

— Jesus testified under oath (26:63-64), as did Paul (Rom 1:9; 2 Cor 1:23; 1 Thess 2:5,10)

— Have such integrity that people will believe what you say: "My word is my bond"

(v) Retaliation (5:38-42) (Cf. Luke 6:29-30)

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'EYE FOR EYE, and TOOTH FOR TOOTH.'

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

- Retaliation was common at the time, and it frequently led to vendettas that escalated vengeance that continued for generations

— Israel's "law of retaliation" (*lex talionis*) limited retaliation to no more than equal compensation (Ex 21:24; Lev 24:19-20; Deut 19:21)

— The Jews tended to view the law of retaliation as God's permission to take vengeance, but that was never God's intention (Cf. Lev 19:18). He simply wanted to protect them from excessive vengeance and to curb vendettas.

- Just as God permitted divorce because of the hardness of man's heart, He also permitted a certain amount of retaliation under the Mosaic Law
— His intention was that His people would avoid divorce and retaliation entirely. He wanted us to love one another and to put the welfare of others before our own.

39 But I say to you, do not **show opposition** against an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other toward him also.

39 But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

39 But I tell you not to resist an evildoer. On the contrary, whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other to him as well.

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

- "...show opposition" - *anthistemi*, to defend oneself or to take aggressive action against someone (as the following verses illustrate)

— When evil people do bad things to us, Jesus' disciples should accept the injustice without taking revenge

— Implicit in this instruction are OT promises that God will take care of the righteous. Thus, to accept injustice without retaliating expresses trust that God will faithfully care for His own.

— The OT taught that the Jews were to leave vengeance to God (Lev 19:17-18; Deut 32:35; Ps 94:1; Prov 20:22; 24:29)

— We should stand up for what is right and for the rights of others, but we should trust God to stand up for us.

- Jesus gave four illustrations to clarify what He meant in v38-39a

— In the first (v39b), a disciple suffers an unjustified physical attack; our response should be to not injure the aggressor in return, but absorb the injury and the insult. We should even be ready to accept the same attack again.

40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

40 If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

40 If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat as well.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloke also.

- If someone wanted to take away as much as a disciple's undergarment for some real or imagined offense, the disciple was to part with it willingly

— Moreover, they should be willing to part with their outer garment as well

- Under Mosaic Law, a person's outer garment was something they had an almost inalienable right to retain (Ex 22:26-27; Deut 24:13)
- This is another example of hyperbole: Jesus did not intend for His disciples to walk around naked, but to be generous, even toward enemies, even if it meant parting with essential possessions.

41 **Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.**

41 **Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.**

41 **And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go two with him.**

41 **And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.**

- This illustration requires some background knowledge of customs in NT times to fully understand...

— The Romans sometimes commandeered civilians to carry the luggage of military personnel, but not for more than one Roman mile. This frustrated and infuriated many of the Jews.

— Thus the lesson for disciples is not only to refrain from retaliation, but even to refrain from resisting this personal injustice.

— The disciple is to respond to unjustified demands by giving even more than the adversary ask, and they are to return good for evil.

— Jesus point of application is that if someone, your enemy, compel you to do something, don't go a mile with bitter and obvious resentment; go two miles with cheerfulness and good grace.

We shouldn't always be thinking of our liberty to do as we want; we should always be thinking of our duty and our privilege to be of service to others. When a task is laid on us, even if the task is unreasonable and hateful, don't do it as a grim duty to be resented but rather do it as a service to be gladly rendered.

42 **Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.**

42 **Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.**

42 **Give to the person who asks you for something, and do not turn away from the person who wants to borrow something from you."**

42 **Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.**

- In the final illustration, Jesus told His disciples to give what others request of them, assuming it is within their power to do so (v41). This applies to loans as well as gifts (Cf.

Ex 22:25; Lev 25:37; Deut 23:19).

— A willing and generous spirit is implicit in this command (Cf. Deut 15:7-11; Ps 37:26; 112:5)

(vi) Love toward enemies (5:43-48) (Cf. Luke 6:27-36)

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You must love your neighbor' and hate your enemy.

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

- The first part ("Thou shalt love thy neighbor") is quoted from Lev 19:18; Jesus added a corollary ("and hate thine enemy") that the rabbis provided, not Moses

— Nowhere does the OT advocate hating one's enemies, however this seemed to many of the Jewish religious teachers to be the natural opposite of loving one's neighbors.

44 But I say to you, **love your enemies** and **pray** for those who persecute you,

44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

44 But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

- Jesus answered the popular rabbinic teaching by going back to the OT that commanded love for enemies (Ex 23:4-5)

- "...love" - *agapaō*, includes emotion as well as action in view of Jesus' focus on motives

- "...enemies" - holds a wide meaning, including anyone who elicits anger, hatred and retaliation from the disciple

— Jesus is correcting the common interpretation of the command to love one's neighbor as a license to hate one's enemies

- "...pray" - the surest way of killing bitterness is to pray for the man we are tempted to hate

45 so that you may prove yourselves to be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

45 so that you will become children of your Father in heaven, because he makes his sun rise on both evil and good people, and he lets rain fall on the righteous and the unrighteous.

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if you love those who love you, **what reward do you have?** Even the **tax collectors**, do they not do the same?

46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Even the tax collectors do the same, don't they?

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

- "...what reward do you have?" - loving one's enemies is something God will reward; this is an added inducement to love those who antagonize us

- "...tax collectors" - the most despised characters around. The collaborators, instruments of Rome, hated even more than Gentiles. They were franchised thieves engaged in "legal" theft.

— Even the publicans, the pinnacle of unrighteousness, loved those who loved them

47 And if you greet only your brothers *and sisters*, what more are you doing *than others*? Even the Gentiles, do they not do the same?

47 If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

47 And if you greet only your relatives, that's no great thing you're doing, is it? Even the unbelievers do the same, don't they?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?

- Proper salutations showed courtesy and respect. If Jesus' disciples only gave them to their brethren, they did no more than the Gentiles, most of whom were pagans.

48 Therefore you shall be **perfect**, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

48 Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

48 So be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

- "...perfect" - *teleios*, occurs in a relative sense in the NT; sometimes rendered as "mature" (1 Cor 14:20; Eph 4:13; Heb 5:14; 6:1)
- In this context, it refers to perfect in regards to conformity to God's requirements, which Jesus clarified in this chapter
- The Greek idea of perfection is *functional*...a thing is perfect (*teleios*) if it realizes the purpose for which it was planned; thus, a person is perfect if they realize the purpose for which they were created and sent into the world.