

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

Part Thirteen

“Christ, the Law, And the Christian”

I. Review

- We are working our way through the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest Preacher who ever lived
- And now we arrive at a major new section of the Sermon, which begins with v.17...

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For truly I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law until all is accomplished."

Matthew 5:17 NKJV

- This introduces the next 32 verses of the sermon, which teaches us how we as Christians are to relate to the Old Testament and the commandments of God. In many ways, it's the heart of the Sermon.
- But before we spend the next few weeks on this subject, we need to review what He has said so far....

REVIEW THE SERMON SO FAR...

WHO ARE THE TRUE BELIEVERS? (The Beatitudes) vv. 3-10

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THEM? (Persecution) vv. 10-11

HOW WILL THEY AFFECT THE WORLD? (Salt and Light) vv. 12-16

1. The Sermon begins with the Beatitudes; 8 character traits of those who truly believe in Jesus:

- Those who are poor in spirit

- Who mourn and grieve over their sins
- Those who are meek
- Who hunger and thirst after righteousness

2. Then He concludes the Beatitudes with what will happen to all these true believers; they will suffer persecution for righteousness sake.

3. Finally, He closes this 1st section with 4 verses that describe how these true believers will affect the world: they will be the salt of the earth that preserves it from putrefaction and the light of the world that illuminates it with the Gospel and with good works that will glorify God.

4. We need to pause a moment and realize how different all this was to these Jews from what they had heard from the scribes and the Pharisees!

The Pharisees taught that blessing comes upon what you DO; But Jesus says that blessings come because of who you ARE!

- a. The Beatitudes are the foundation for the rest of the Sermon!
- b. Everything that follows is addressed to Believers!!!
- c. This Sermon is not addressed to the world; it speaks to those who are truly born again!

In the Old Testament, Moses came down from the Mount to tell them what to do; but here in the New Testament, Jesus goes up into the Mount to tell them who they are!

5. His audience is Jewish; there is no way they would have missed His meaning here; He is going to take them to the next level, beyond anything they had ever heard before!

“The Beatitudes immediately take us into a realm beyond the Law of Moses.”

David Martyn-Lloyd Jones

6. I give you all this review of what we have studied to set up what Jesus says next; because His New Testament message was SO new to them that they might start to think that He had come to do away with the Old Testament! So now He says....

Do not think that I came to abolish (or do away with) the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.

Matthew 5:17

II. Unpacking the Passage

A. What is the Subject?

1. What does He mean by “the Law and the Prophets”?

What is meant by ‘the law’ and ‘the prophets’? The answer is, the whole of the Old Testament.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

- a. The Law refers to the Jewish Torah, the Pentateuch, the 1st 5 Books of the Bible, which came through Moses.
- b. The “Prophets” refers to the rest of the Old Testament, those who in one way or another, interpreted and applied God’s law.

2. Every Jew on the Mountain knew that Jesus was rebuking the scribe and the Pharisees and the religious teachers of the day; they knew that what He was teaching them was *new*; *so new* that Jesus had to warn them not think that He had come to do away with the Old! That is why He says this...

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.” For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

Matthew 5:17-18 NASB

3. Has heaven and earth passed away? If not, then the Law is still in effect!
4. History repeats itself; to this day, many Christians hear Jesus’ teachings on grace and the Gospel, and think that the Old Testament has nothing more to say them...But Jesus says, “Don’t think that!”

THE TORAH IS NOT CANCELLED!

5. This new section of Jesus’ teaching on how the Christian is to relate to the Law and the Old Testament is 32 verses long. That means almost 1/3 of the entire

Sermon is about how we as Believers are to embrace the Law and the Old Testament. It's important!

B. An Overview of the Law

1. What does the term mean?

"Law"

A rule or Body of rules for the government of human life, prescribing rights and duties and regulating conduct.

H.B. Clark, Biblical Law

- a. All nations have laws; in America we have federal laws, state laws, and local laws
- b. Some of man's laws are good; some are not; and all the human laws can be repealed, amended, or overturned.

2. But when we think of *God's* law, we refer to the rules or commandments God has given to mankind that set forth how he is to live; God's laws never change because God never changes!

"God's law is a reflection of his character, which never changes. Consequently, His expectations for His people never changes."

Greg Bahnsen, in *By This Standard*

- a. God's OT commandments tell us what He thinks about things: murder, stealing, homosexuality, adultery, covetousness; Jesus tells us He hasn't changed; God still thinks the same things in the New Testament!

3. Remember that all laws are *ethical* in nature; they are written to regulate behavior.

"Ethics is *oughtness*."

Immanuel Kant, German Philosopher

- a. There is a law against murder because men ought not murder.
- b. There is a law against stealing because men ought not steal.

c. There is a law to be kind to strangers because we ought to be kind to strangers!

4. All laws, including the laws of men, are rooted in a system of ethics; they all deal with men *ought* to do.

a. There are tax laws, because all men need to share the burden of the expense to maintain common services.

b. There are zoning laws, because the property rights of men ought to be protected and regulated.

c. There is a 45 mph speed limit on Franklin Road because the authorities that have decided that is the maximum speed men ought safely to drive.

5. Every nation has laws; but no nation but Israel was given the Law of God!

THE LAW OF GOD REVEALS THE NATURE OF GOD!

C. History Lesson on the Theocratic Nation of Israel

1. When God saved His people out of Egypt, they were not a nation. They were just a collection of tribes, united by a common heritage of being the children of Abraham.

2. But after God saved them, He brought them to a mountain and made them a nation by giving them Laws!

3. Israel is unique among all the nations of the world in all human history; a “Theocracy”, which means “God-ruled”.

a. All the other nations had their laws, but they were man-made laws; but only the nation of Israel had *God’s* law! As Moses declared....

"For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?"

Deuteronomy 4:7-8 NASB

4. The Laws God gave Israel are found in the first 5 Books of the Bible and covered every aspect of life.

5. There were 613 Laws in all:

- a. 248 positive commandments: “Thou shalt do...” (this or that)
- b. There were 365 “negative” commandments: “Thou shalt not...” (do this or that)

6. All 613 commandments fall into 3 categories:

- a. The heart of the Law was MORAL law, contained in the 10 commandments, how men ought to behave toward God and toward their fellow men; all the other laws extend from these 10.
- b. Then God gave them CEREMONIAL law; laws that regulated how they ought to worship God; these laws governed the Priesthood and the sacrificial system.
- c. Finally, God gave them detailed CIVIL laws that gave detailed instructions on how they were to treat one another and how to handle their disputes.

7. Jesus says that He did not come to ABOLISH the Law; He came to “fulfill” it.

D. What It Mean To “Fulfill”?

1. Many today think it means that Jesus “fulfilling” the Law means it has nothing to do with us. They think the Old Testament is irrelevant. They think that we who under grace should have nothing to do with the Law. But this is exactly what Jesus told us not to think!!!

2. The problem is knowing what the word “fulfil” means!

The real meaning of the word ‘fulfil’ is to carry out, to fulfil in the sense of giving full obedience to it, literally carrying out everything that has been said and stated in the law and in the prophets.

David Martyn Lloyd Jones

3. Jesus fulfilled ALL parts of the Law: the Moral law; the Civil Law; and by becoming the Lamb of God, fulfilled all the Ceremonial Law, which is why we no longer need sacrifice animals in our services!

4. Christians have no obligation to fulfil the ceremonial law; the civil laws were for the Theocratic nation of Israel, which no longer exists today. But the MORAL law, the 10 commandments, are not abolished or done away for believers.

5. Jesus tells us not to think so; and in our next lesson we'll see how He not only does not take away the Law, He actually makes it stronger! We will clearly see that...

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS ARE STILL RELEVANT TODAY!

III. Concluding Words

A. A Good Rule of Thumb

“We must assume our obligation to obey any Old Testament commandment unless the New Testament indicates otherwise.”

Greg Bahnsen, in By This Standard

1. Let me close by making one thing clear, especially to those of you who may not hear the next set of teachings from this section.

2. Christians are not saved by the Law; they do not stay saved by keeping the Law.

3. God never gave the Law as the way of salvation, neither in the OT or the NT.

4. Remember that Abraham was saved 100 of years before the Law was given; God saved Israel out of slavery before He ever gave them the Law.

5. The Law of God is not how we are to be saved; it is how we are to live after we are saved.

6. It is God's ethical system and it has never changed. And it never will.

There's a famous painting called “Justice Instructing the Judges”, by artist Robert Paul that hangs in the Supreme Court of Switzerland, in the City of Lucerne. It depicts a circle of judges surrounding the Angel of Justice; she has a sword in her hand that points them all to the Word of God.

7. Here in this section of the Sermon, Jesus does the same. Righteous people must live righteous lives; and the only way we know what righteousness means is to let God define it for us by His law.

“Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Matthew 5:20