

Jesus and the Law

Matthew 5:17-26

His Proclamation 5-7

Crowds follow Jesus;

they watch & listen to His words.

Logical question: *If the King has come and the kingdom is about to begin, will they be included?*

What are requirements for entrance to the kingdom?

Jesus takes His followers up the mountain to speak to them.

Message reveals answer from several perspectives.

Description of the accepted 5:1-16

Their godly character 1-12

Beatitudes describe the kind of people who will participate in the kingdom—people who are content.

It's not people who follow prescribed ritual & put on a religious show who will enter the kingdom.

Entrance based on godly character.

Their permeating influence 13-16

Those who enter the kingdom have permeating influence for God in place where He places them.

Relation with the religious 5:17-7:6

Having completed description of those who enter the kingdom, Jesus deals with those everyone *assumes* are included: their religious leaders.

Jesus and the law 5:17-20

Fulfillment, not replacement 5:17-19

Jesus is NOT presenting a competing system to replace OT law & prophets.

His message *fulfills* what the Law & Prophets call for.

He has come to fulfill what God promised to His people. He *IS* their promised King who came to establish God's kingdom on earth.

He isn't out to destroy what God established.

¹⁷*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."*

God will fulfill His promises through Jesus.

Not the smallest letter = jot = yod

Nor the slightest stroke of the pen to make a letter = tittle

...will pass away until everything God promises is fulfilled.

¹⁸*For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*

Therefore it's important to teach the whole truth God has spoken.

Don't tamper with it.

That's the game the Pharisees have been playing.

They're tampering with what God has said.

That's the central issue in his conflict with them!

¹⁹*Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments & teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them & teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

Those who have listened to God's law realize we could never fulfill all that He requires.

So the Pharisees came up with their own code, 365 prohibitions & 248 commands.

To hear them, you'd think they have a higher code.

It did impose a legalistic yoke on the people.

Actually all their legalism *relaxes* God's demands.

To be acceptable to God requires more than they do!

Greater righteousness required 5:20

To enter the kingdom will require a greater level of righteousness than their traditions require.

His followers are held to a higher, internal, standard.

God requires a different *heart* attitude.

²⁰*For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

Rejection of their tradition 5:21-48

Jesus is about to demonstrate how their traditions "relax" what God requires.

How they don't get it—come up with less

Jesus points to 6 areas where their traditions weaken what God desires from His people.

These 6 show their rules don't fulfill God's expectations.

To enter the kingdom will take more than that!

Jesus points to this conflict in Matt 15

=> they substitute their standards to replace God's.

Matt 15:1-9

Then Pharisees & scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem & said, ²"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." ³He answered them, "& why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, 'Honor your father & your mother,' & 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' ⁵But you say, 'If anyone tells his father or his mother, "What you would have gained from me is given to God," ⁶he need not honor his father.' So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. ⁷You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he

said: ⁸“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁹in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

Concerning murder 21-26

²¹“**You have heard that it was said** to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; & whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²² **But I say to you** that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; & whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

They’re clinging literally to the letter: “Thou shalt not kill!”

They make a big deal of that, while missing the spirit.

There’s a lot more than just not killing someone.

It’s about how we treat other people.

God’s people ought to be marked by love for others.

Anger toward another, mocking, making fun of others, calling them by a derogatory name, are all offensive acts, equivalent, in God’s sight to destroying them.

These sinful attitudes of the heart mark people who deserve human judgment (before Sanhedrin/ Council) & are headed for divine judgment.

It isn’t the sin itself, but the attitude of the heart that demonstrates their destiny.

Such attitudes need to be dealt with & reconciliation sought before we come to the altar to go through motions of the religious.

²³So if you are offering your gift at the altar & there remember that your brother has some-thing against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar & go. First be reconciled to your brother, & then come & offer your gift.

If you’re going to a human court because of that kind of offense, work it out before you get there, lest the judge require full price for your offense.

²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, & the judge to the guard, & you be put in prison. ²⁶Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Summary: Pharisaic, legalistic interpretation of the law of murder is not sufficient to establish righteousness.

It requires genuine love for others.