

Matthew Chapter 5 Continued

Verses 14-16: "Ye are the light of the world" describes the essential mission of the Christian to the world. He is the condition (salt), to meet the world's needs and he has a mission (light), to the world. His light is to clearly shine forth into the darkness of human depravity. He is to set his light upon a candlestick, not hide it "under a bushel," that is, a basket. Darkness is the absence of light; and darkness alone cannot dispel the light, but the smallest light can dispel the greatest darkness.

Matthew 5:14 "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid."

In these Scriptures above, Jesus is explaining that if we are Christians, then we have His Light dwelling within us. This Light of Jesus should be so brightly shining, that no one need ask if we are saved; but they should be quick to see the glow of this Light within us. This Light goes with us and should illuminate wherever we are.

Matthew 5:15 "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."

Sin has a way of being hidden in the darkness, but when we apply the Light, it does away with darkness. In John the first chapter, we read about this Light.

John 1:7-9 "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all [men] through him might believe." "He was not that Light, but [was sent] to bear witness of that Light." "[That] was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (speaking of John the Baptist).

John 8:12: "Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"Let your light so shine" as a godly life gives convincing testimony of the saving power of God. That brings Him glory (1 Peter 2:12).

In (verse 4 of John chapter 1), it tells us who this Light is. John 1:4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men." You see, Jesus has brought the Christians out of the darkness and into His marvelous Light.

First John 1:6-7 tells it all.

1 John 1:6-7 "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:" "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

We are commanded to go out, and let this Light shine brightly, and win the world to Jesus. We should be a Light set on a hill, so that those in darkness (spiritual) might see the Light and be saved. Let people see the good works caused by this great Light being ever present in our lives.

Matthew 5:17 "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."

“Think not ... destroy the law or the prophets”: Jesus was neither giving a new law nor modifying the old, but rather explaining the true significance of the moral content of Moses’ law and the rest of the Old Testament.

Having laid the foundation of the message in the summary statements of the Beatitudes, Jesus now proceeds to show the superiority of His message to that of the Law of Moses. He makes it clear that He had “not ... come to destroy the law.” That is, the New Testament gospel is not contradictory to the Old Testament Law; rather it is the ultimate fulfillment of the spiritual intention of the law.

Where the law had degenerated into legalism among the Pharisees, Jesus now takes the law beyond mere outward observance to the inner spiritual intention of God.

“Fulfill”: This speaks of fulfillment in the same sense that prophecy is fulfilled. Christ was indicating that He is the fulfillment of the law in all its aspects. He fulfilled the moral law by keeping it perfectly. He fulfilled the ceremonial law by being the embodiment of everything the law’s types and symbols pointed to. And He fulfilled the judicial law by personifying God’s perfect justice (12:18, 20).

Matthew 5:18 "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."

Here Christ was affirming the utter inerrancy and absolute authority of the Old Testament as the Word of God, down to the smallest stroke or letter. Again this suggests that the New Testament should not be seen as supplanting and abrogating the Old Testament, but as fulfilling and explicating it.

For example, all the ceremonial requirements of the Mosaic law were fulfilled in Christ and are not longer to be observed by Christians (Col. 2:16-17). Yet not the smallest letter or stroke is thereby erased, the underlying truths of those Scriptures remain and in fact the mysteries behind them are now revealed in the brighter light of the gospel.

“Verily I say” is a unique form used by Jesus throughout His preaching to draw attention to the authority of His message. Verily; (Greek amen) means “truly” or “certainly.” It is used as a designation of authoritative teaching. “One jot or one tittle” refers to the most minute letter and marks of the Hebrew alphabet. He explained that even the smallest statement in the law must be fulfilled.

A jot (yodh), is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It functions as a Y in English and looks similar to an apostrophe. A tittle is a small projection of the edge of certain Hebrew letters to distinguish them from one another.

The law in the Old Testament, and in fact the Old Testament itself, is a type and shadow of Jesus Christ the Lamb of God. The Word of God never changes. God's law (Old), is made more glorious in the (New).

The Old Testament constantly prophesied about Jesus coming to fulfill all prophecy. Jesus was the fulfillment. The law was not bad, just misunderstood. Jesus fulfilled the law and reconciled us to God the Father. Jesus was not, and is not, a destroyer; He is a builder.

Matthew 5:19 "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."

“Shall be called the least ... shall be called great”: The consequence of practicing or teaching disobedience of any of God’s Word is to be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Determining rank in the kingdom of heaven is entirely God’s prerogative (Matt. 20:23), and Jesus declares that He will hold those in lowest esteem who hold His Word in low esteem.

Because of the seriousness of the law, Jesus emphasizes the importance of keeping even its smallest details. However, in the ultimate plan of God, the law was not to become an extra burden on the souls of men. Rather than pointing the way to salvation, the law convinced men of the need of the Savior.

Therefore, whoever “shall teach men so” but shall not live what he teaches, he shall be made “least in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach” the principles and precepts of the law shall be called “great in the kingdom of heaven.” This simply means that God will reward the faithfulness and effectiveness of our lives, and there will be varying degrees of blessing and reward in the kingdom.

There is no impunity for believers who disobey, discredit, or belittle God’s law. That Jesus does not refer to loss of salvation is clear from the fact that, though offenders will be called least, they will still be in the kingdom of heaven. The positive result is that whoever keeps and teaches God’s Word, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Here again Jesus mentions the two aspects of doing and teaching. Kingdom citizens are to uphold every part of God’s law both in their living and in their teaching.

Let Christ live in you. Let Jesus take total control, and then you won't make any mistakes. It is an awesome responsibility to be forming young lives. We must not only teach them of God's love, but also His judgment.

Matthew 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."

Except your righteousness ... exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees": On the one hand, Jesus was calling His disciples to a deeper, more radical holiness than that of the Pharisees. Pharisaism had a tendency to soften the law's demands by focusing only on external obedience.

In the verses that follow, Jesus unpacks the full moral significance of the law, and shows that the righteousness the law calls for actually involves an internal conformity to the spirit of the law, rather than mere external compliance to the letter.

"Shall in no case enter into the kingdom": On the other hand, this sets up an impossible barrier to works salvation. Scripture teaches repeatedly that sinners are capable of nothing but a flawed and imperfect righteousness (Isaiah 64:6). Therefore, the only righteousness by which sinners may be justified is the perfect righteousness of God that is imputed to those who believe (Rom. 4:5).

Because of the necessity of righteousness should "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" they could not enter heaven. The significance of this is seen in the fact that the Jews of Jesus' day considered these people to be the most religious in all Israel. However, their religion was largely an outward show of self-righteousness.

In communicating the depth of His message, Jesus used a series of contrasts between the outward behavior demanded by the law and the inner attitude of the heart desired by God. Here we discover the practical application of genuine Christian character to true spiritual living.

Here is the Law in the first column (O.T.) and the Spirit in the second column (N.T.):

1. No murder, No anger
2. No adultery, No lust
3. No divorce, Commitment
4. No oath taking, Speak the truth
5. No retaliation, Forgiveness
6. Hatred for your enemy, Love for your enemy

Having a form of religion is not what God wants, He wants our hearts. The scribes and Pharisees were well known for keeping the law but God was not pleased with them. They had only a surface belief, a literal religion, not a spiritual belief.

There will be people who never miss a Sunday going to church, who won't make it to heaven. They have a form of religion, but deny the power thereof as it tells us in (2 Tim. Chapter 3). The walk with God that is pleasing to Him is the Spirit walk, being totally submitted to the will of God. To have the righteousness of Christ, it has to be seven days a week and everywhere, not just at church.

They that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in Truth. Some who stand before Jesus to be judged will say: I cast out demons for you, I prayed for the sick for you, I did all these mighty things for you, and Jesus will say that He never knew them. He had their outward worship, but He didn't have their hearts. If it is a chore for you to go to church, please examine yourself. Church should be a joy; and something we look forward to, not a bother.

Verses 21-22: Christ begins this series of contrasts by quoting the statement of the law, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). The reference to killing is clearly understood in its context in both the Old and New Testaments as referring to an act of murder.

Jesus goes beyond this outward demand of the law by stating that "whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause" is in just as great danger of judgment as a murderer, for anger is the emotion and inner intention that leads to murder.

The term "Raca" (meaning vain fellow" or "empty head"), was a Hebrew or Aramaic expression of contempt (2 Sam. 6:20). The "council" is a reference to the Jewish religious council called the Sanhedrin. "Thou fool" (Greek moros), means "stupid." The English word moron comes from this term.

Those using such a malicious expression would be in danger of "hell fire." The idea seems to be that if one makes light of his fellowman, he will be in danger of slander. But if one makes bitter, damning statements with reference to hell toward his fellowman, he shall actually be in danger of hell himself.

The term hell is Gehenna. It refers to the valley of Hinnom at Jerusalem, where fires provided a powerful and graphic picture of the ultimate destruction of hell and the lake of fire (2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3; Jer. 7:31).

"Ye have heard ... but I say unto you": The quotes are from (Exodus 10:13; Deut. 5:17). Jesus was not altering the terms of the law in any of these passages. Rather, He was correcting what they had "heard", the rabbinical understanding of the law.

Matthew 5:21-22 "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:" "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."

Jesus suggested here that the verbal abuse stems from the same sinful motives (anger and hatred), that ultimately lead to murder. The internal attitude is what the law actually prohibits, and therefore an abusive insult carries the same kind of moral guilt as an act of murder.

Here again, Jesus was telling us that the sin takes place in the heart. We have sinned already if we desire to kill, even if we do not carry it out. We should not call people names. First of all, we are not their judge, Jesus is their judge. Notice here, it says do not call your brother "Raca". This is one Christian calling another this name. "Raca" means, "o empty one", or "thou art worthless".

Christians are never empty; they are filled with the Spirit of Jesus. They are never worthless. Jesus thought they were valuable enough that He gave His life for them. You can see, if we were to call a Christian this name, we would be saying that Jesus was in error. You can readily see how dangerous this would be.

The word that was translated "fool" here, has a base meaning of stupid, blockhead, absurd, or dull. It is very important to be more concerned with cleaning up our own lives, than trying to criticize our brothers and sisters in Christ with their walk.

Verses 23-24: Having made a comparison between the command not to murder and the inner motive and heart intention of hatred, Jesus then illustrates the seriousness of this matter by referring to one who would attempt to buy off his conscience by giving something to God without clearing his conscience in regard to his offended brother.

He reminded His listeners that "if thou bring thy gift to the altar" without reconciling with the offended party, God will not receive the intended gift. Bringing a gift to the altar refers to bringing it to the temple in order that it may be consecrated. To be "reconciled" means to be brought back into fellowship or favor with an offended party.

Matthew 5:23-24 "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;" "Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

We must, as Christians, love our brothers and sisters in Christ as we do ourselves. God will not accept offerings made from a heart full of bitterness. If we take communion with bitterness in our hearts, we may drink sickness, and sometimes death unto our bodies.

Quickly forgive everyone and particularly the brothers and sisters in Christ. God desires that we love each other. We do not love the sins in someone lives, but we love the person. Hate the sin and love the sinner.

Verses 25-26: The Savior then went on to say that even if "thine adversary" (an opponent at law), disagrees with you; it is to your advantage to be reconciled to him. Jesus' exhortation here is to urge us to go out of our way to avoid legal conflicts before human judges (verse 40). The payment of debt and the "prison" referred to here, simply mean the normal legal process that one would encounter in a civil suit.

Matthew 5:25 "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles 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."

Jesus calls for reconciliation to be sought eagerly, aggressively, quickly, even if it involves self-sacrifice. It is better to be wronged than to allow a dispute between brethren to be a cause for dishonoring Christ.

I really believe that Jesus told us that if there is any possible way to settle something out of court, do it. People have gotten into a rut, suing everyone for the slightest thing. Most things could be settled out of court, if people would just try. There is no reason for two Christians to fight something out in court. The two should get together, and pray, and each gives a little.

These terribly expensive court cases could be stopped. Give a little if necessary, it will be cheaper than hiring an attorney. Praying together can solve many problems. Learn to forgive and forget. Christians should not subject themselves to the judges of this earth. There is one Judge and His name is Jesus.

Matthew Chapter 5 Continued Questions

1. In verse 14, Christians are called what?
2. When we let our light shine, what does the world see in our lives?
3. Who gets the glory?
4. Who is the Light spoken of by John in the book of John?
5. Besides being called Light, what was He called?
6. If we say we are Christians and walk in darkness, what is said of us?
7. What cleanses us from all sin?
8. Jesus said He did not come to destroy the law, but to do what?
9. The law and the Old Testament are a type and shadow of what?
10. Jesus is not a destroyer, but a what?
11. A teacher and a doer of the law shall be called what in heaven?
12. What, besides God's love, should we teach?
13. What 2 groups must our righteousness exceed?
14. What were these 2 groups well known for?
15. What kind of walk is pleasing unto God?

16. What is wrong if we dread going to church?
17. What are 2 meanings of "Raca"?
18. The word translated "fool" in chapter 5, means what?
19. What kind of offering will God not accept?
20. If we take communion with bitterness in our hearts, what 2 things might happen?
21. In verse 25, we are to agree with adversaries quickly, so this will not happen. What is it?
22. What should 2 Christians, who have a problem, do?
23. Who is really Judge?