

A Different Righteousness: Matthew 5:17-26

Questions

How are we to live as believers in Jesus? What standards does He set for us?

How does Jesus' expectation of the behaviour of His followers relate to the standards set in the Old Testament?

*Matthew 5:*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.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.¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Why did Jesus' relation to the law become an issue?

Jesus' response

Not to abolish, but to fulfill

*Matthew 5:*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.

The prophets - Matthew 1:22, 2:15, 17, 4:14 [8:17, 12:17], 21:4-5, 26:54, 56

*Matthew 1:*²² *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:*

²³ *"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"*

*Matthew 4:*¹⁴ *so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:*

¹⁵ *"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—*

The Law

[Deut. 6:4-5, Deut. 10:12-22]

*Deuteronomy 10:*¹² *"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and*

with all your soul,¹³ and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?

Lev. 26:40-45, Deuteronomy 30:1-10, Deuteronomy 32:36

Deuteronomy 30: "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you,² and return to the LORD your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul,³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.⁴ If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will take you.⁵ And the LORD your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it. And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers.⁶ And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Jeremiah 31:33-34, Ezekiel 36:24-28

Ezekiel 36:²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.²⁸ You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

What does the Law point forward to?

Jesus' response: The Continuing Role of the Law

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.*

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

The shocking consequence

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

The Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees [Matt. 23, 15:1-20, 12:7]

A different righteousness

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

What does this exceeding righteousness look like?

How do I get this exceeding righteousness I need to enter the Kingdom of heaven?

The First Example vv. 21-26

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and 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; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

The law that forbids murder also forbids the attitude that gives rise to murder – anger against another - and all its expressions

The Priority of Reconciliation

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

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

The Righteousness that exceeds

Good

Challenging

Matthew 5:⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

How do we get this righteousness?

For the poor in Spirit

By relying on the one who fulfills the law [Romans 8:3-8, 3:21-31, Galatians 3:10-14, Hebrews 10:1-18, Acts 2:32-36]

Romans 8:³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Galatians 3:¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—¹⁴ so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Trusting Jesus and embracing righteousness

*Ephesians 4:*³¹ *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.* ³² *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* ⁵ *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.* ² *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

*Matthew 5:*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.*