

Lessons From the Sermon on the Mount: Part V

“How do YOU View God’s Commands?”

I. One way to look at the lessons from the “Beatitudes” that we’ve covered so far, is as the introduction to Jesus’ sermon:

- A. It was important to begin by outlining all of the principles and characteristics that would define the citizens of God’s kingdom, the way that these would separate them from the world, as well as the relationship they were to still have with it.
- B. But now that Jesus has laid out the standards that would guide their behavior, much of the rest of the sermon is spent on the actions that these would generate:

II. As we continue reading through chapter five, the Lord makes something of a startling transition: ***Read 5:17-20***

- A. Why is it that Jesus felt the need to take time for this statement: “I did not come to abolish but to fulfill?” After all, if He was teaching the crowds that He was the Messiah that was promised by the writings of the Law, that would seem to be obvious:
- B. The answer to this question is found in v 20, when Jesus states that they must live to a different standard of righteousness than the scribes and the Pharisees:
 - 1. Remember that not every single Pharisee was a menacing, self-serving villain: And as a whole, they were viewed favorably by many, if not most, of the Israelites.
 - 2. Think of our political parties: Some are held up as being staunch defenders of the every day citizen, looking to uphold the law-- others might be considered to do nothing more than play political games:
 - a) Among the Jews these existed as well: Some, like the Sadducees were interested in scheming for position-- But the Pharisees were seen as those who studied to promote the law of Moses: For many there was no difference between the law of Moses and the traditions that the Pharisees taught and lived by:
 - b) And so, think of the commotion that would be caused when the basis of so much teaching is going to be rooted in conflict with the Pharisees-- someone who criticizes them may be equal to criticizing the law itself.

C. **By the time** that Jesus spoke these words the fallout between the Pharisees and Himself was fairly widely known:

1. Most would be familiar with the opinion the Pharisees held about those that Jesus spent His time with: In places like Mark 2 where Jesus would be dining with those He had taught, their most common words were “Why is He eating with these people?”
2. Even before this time, Jesus has already come head to head with the Pharisees on His authority over the Sabbath-- these confrontations had made them so angry that according to Luke 6:11 they had already made up their minds to seek His death-- and those are the ones that we have recorded for us:

D. **But in spite** of how it might appear to the crowds, and despite what the Pharisees might try to do to twist His words against Him, the Lord wanted the crowds to know that everything He said, and was about to say was firmly rooted in a Love and Respect for the Old Testament scriptures:

1. As the Word of God, destroying or changing the Law was the furthest thing from His mind: He said they were not only to be fulfilled, but down to the smallest detail:
2. More importantly, Jesus wanted them to see that He Himself would be that which fulfilled them.

E. **So what does** ‘the fulfillment of the law and prophets’ mean for us?

1. Scripture bears out that he was not speaking about every detail of the Law of Moses being bound on Kingdom citizens: one only has to read a letter from Paul to almost any church to see that
2. What Jesus is speaking of here is in terms of the “big picture”:
 - a) He is speaking about the fulfillment of the Law’s purpose:
 - b) Everything that the Old Law hinted at that was to come, all of those places that where something is be foreshadowed, all of the prophecies that were given, all of these were to find their ultimate fulfillment in Christ:
 - c) Paul would say that the purpose of all of these was to lead us to a Justification through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:24-25)

- d) And after the Law had done its work, it would step aside to make way for a new and better covenant between God and man:
- e) Again, Jesus did not destroy the Law but brought it to completion.

III. Any misunderstanding by the crowds, or any rumors that might have been spread about Jesus' intentions towards the Law have been addressed. In v 19 He further emphasizes that attitude by stressing what my attitude as a kingdom citizen must be towards the commandments that God gives, not just under the Law of Moses, but in any Law that God gives. (*read again v 19*)

A. Although the group that seems to be most targeted by this verse is the Pharisees:

- 1. Recall instances like that of Mark 7, particularly v 8-13:
- 2. Jesus comments on their expertise in neglecting God's commandments, and the particular example He uses is their practiced neglect of helping their father and mother by claiming that their wealth had been promised to God.
- 3. In actions such as these the Pharisees did more than just break the commandment, they were usurping authority from the One who gave them.
 - a) No group provides a better demonstration of "breaking commands and teaching others to do the same"

B. There are other applications as well: There may have been those there as there are today, who were the opposite of the Pharisees. Perhaps then as now, there were those who viewed Jesus as ending law in any form:

- 1. As one preacher excellently summed up, this would have "implications of the most serious kind. Without law sin cannot exist, and without sin grace becomes unnecessary and meaningless"

C. What we have to realize is what Paul stated in Romans chapter 1: We are not under God's laws simply because He writes them out and gives them to us in a tangible form:

- 1. We are under God's Laws because He is the Creator, and we are the creation.
 - a) From the moment that He created man, man was required to meet God's expectations:

- b) An example of this is in what Jesus would identify as the two greatest Commands. Love the Lord with everything you've got and then turn that love towards your neighbors:
- (1) When did these laws come into effect? Was it not until the moment that Israel was at Mt. Sinai?
 - (2) Obviously these were what God expected all the way back when Cain killed his brother Abel and was condemned for those actions:
- c) We are not under God's laws because He is in a covenant with us, whether that be old or new: We are under God's laws because He is God, and we are Man.

IV. Our attitude towards the commandments of God is of the utmost importance. It is what will be behind much of Jesus' teaching through the sermon:

- A. The attitude that the Jews were to have towards God's commandments under the Old Law is the same that citizens of the Kingdom must have.
1. The emphasis of His point is not about which covenant someone is under, but is that we must have complete and devoted obedience towards God in everything.
 2. We cannot have a casual attitude towards God's word. Whoever disregards the parts of God's will they deem less important is not fit for the Kingdom.
- B. There may be some commandments that seem to play a bigger role in our obedience to God. But there is nothing that God has commanded that does not have eternal wisdom behind it:
1. As James would say in James 2, it is not about whether the command was small or great, it is important because you are disregarding God:

Conclusion:

1. Before Jesus went further in addressing the crowds, He paused to emphasize that He had nothing short of the greatest respect for the Authority of God's commandments:
2. In doing so He demonstrated the same attitude the must have towards them no matter what age we live in.
3. Those who have a different view than this of God's Word are called least in the Kingdom

- a. This is not least in the sense that we might use it: One who is least in the kingdom is not in the Kingdom at all.
 - b. Anyone who is in the Kingdom is great or greatest: Jesus uses this expression in other passages to refer to all citizens of God's kingdom.
 - c. Least means on the outside looking in:
4. The opportunity is yours to be a great citizen of a great kingdom: By having the same view of God as Jesus did: Subjecting yourself to Him and obeying His every command.