

MATTHEW·DISTILLED (extract the essential elements or most important aspects of)



CHAPTER (5) SYNOPSIS = Jesus' Sermon On The Mount Address.

1. Leading the Jewish crowds to a mountainside sb viewed as a clear sign that Jesus has become Israel's new Moses.

Like Moses, Jesus goes to the mountain for the purpose of teaching the people the laws and promises (blessings and curses) of God's covenant (mtn ascension = 1-2 w/Exo 19:1-3// blessings and curses = 3-12 w/Luk 6:20-26 w/Deu 28// conditional identity = 13-16 w/Exo 19:4-6//giving of the Law = 17-18, 21, 27, 33, 38, 43 w/Exo 20-24).

2.-5. (vv1-12; blessings and curses) DISCUSSED**6. Jesus asserts that the identity we have gained as God's people must be maintained through productivity and public witness (again Exo 19:4-6 = Israel's identity also needed to be maintained – i.e. it was conditional):****6.1. (13)**

In the ancient world, salt was used as fertilizer for the soil/earth ("**earth**" = τῆς γῆς = Earth as in the land, earth as in the soil - e.g. Mat 13:5, 8, 23; see also Luk 14:34-35 = Notice, Jesus speaks of salt in re: to the soil/manure – i.e. as fertilizer). Salt as fertilizer – not as a preservative, is therefore (m-l) Jesus' intended meaning (He did not say, "you are the salt of meat", but again, "**the earth/soil**"). One is about preservation, the other production. Though preservation is important, Jesus' concern (here) is the production of righteous/just behavior¹ as the expected lifestyle of God's people (Consider again - Mat 13:23 – the "good soil... bears/produces fruit...a hundred fold...some sixty, some thirty"; Eph 2:10). Producing such righteousness/justice is to be what characterizes (i.e. is the norm) of our everyday lives (e.g. JUDCO is not the only time/place you implement/enforce God's Law. Your everyday life since becoming a Christian is to be a consistent, ever-increasing pattern of righteous/just judgment and behavior in all things.). The reason for Jesus' concern for productivity? Our identity as the people of God (and its subsequent blessings) are very much dependent on the production of such consistent and constant righteous/just behavior in our lives. (IOW): If we cease to be productive in righteousness/justice as the core characteristic of our life (if we have "**lost**" our "**saltiness**" or more literally, "become foolish" = μωραίνω - verbal form for moron), then we forfeit also our identity as the people of God and His blessings – esp. His mercy ("**It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled...**" = This is the conclusion drawn in similar teachings by Jesus. All such stms are a reference to the loss of justification/apostasy/eternal damnation. No doubt then, this is Jesus' intended meaning here as well - see Mat 8:12, 13:41-42, 47-50, 21:33-43, 24:48-51, 25:14-30; Luk 14:25-35; Joh 15:1-6; see also 2Pe 1:5-11; Rom 11:19-22)².

6.2. (14-16)

As in the prior case, the modification of the direct object ("**light**") by its conjoining prepositional phrase ("**of the world**") is not intended to communicate the disciple's mission or mandate to the planet/humankind. It is instead being used by Jesus as a way to introduce the one thing all light ("**of the world**") holds in common: it makes things visible. Hence why He says, "**A city on a hill cannot be hidden**" (14). (IOW): When the lights are on, its location becomes visible. This is also light's purpose. Hence, Jesus' reason for saying what He does in (15). This too (then) becomes the obligation of the people of God. Maintaining our identity requires that what we produce as consistent righteous/behavior (our "**good works**") be something that the public around us can attest to since what we are in that environment is to be no different. We are not chameleons – hiding our Christianity or acting differently when in public. If we are to continue to be recognized by God as His people/saved, our righteous/just behavior w/ evident/visible even to "others" – i.e. non-Christians (16; see also 1Pe 2:12; "Give glory to your Father" or "give glory to God on the day of His visitation" = your visible actions will have been a true vs. a terrible testimony to the God they will one day meet; e.g. People in the workplace, at school, in the neighborhood, who are around us on a regular basis, would not attest to contradictions between what the Bible teaches and what they have seen us practice). The warning of loss and eternal damnation is implied in (14-16) based on its close connection and similarity to the previous analogy re: salt (i.e. Jesus treats both antitheses: un-salty salt and invisible light the same – as completely unrealistic (i.e. unrealistic in re: to being a Christian). As such, the old saying is confirmed, "What we are before men, is Who we are before God". There are no secret (or invisible) saints.

6.3. The Apostle James echoes Jesus' teaching.

Though as Christians we gained our identity (and justification) through faith (Rom 3:28), we must maintain it through righteous/just behavior that is both public and productive (Jam 2:14-26)³.

¹ This is not only the central focus/core of the chiasm in the previous verses (6-7), but also their common theme throughout. (IOW): it is also why we are persecuted, repent and are obedient (4-5, 8-12).

² It is important to note that scholars have wrestled over the fact that Jesus' analogy is unrealistic (i.e. salt cannot become un-salty). That however is His point: God expects no lack or ceasing of righteous/just behavior in His people. They are expected to maintain "saltiness" the entirety of their lives. Anything less is an unrealistic view of what it means to be a child of God (consider 1Jo 3:4-8).

³ Luther's failure to reconcile Rom 3:28 w/Jam 2:14-26 was due to his ignorance of the gain/maintain principle of salvation taught throughout Bible. He instead embraced the very heretical idea of work-based salvation which made it seem as though James were the true heretic (esp. his words in 2:24). The importance of understanding gain/maintain therefore cannot be overstated. Almost every book in the Bible teaches it. All God's salvific covenants contain it as part of their conditional structure.

7. Jesus preserves the entirety of the Old Testament Scriptures as authoritative for God's people under the New Covenant:

7.1. The OT Scriptures are not to be destroyed but rather observed and obeyed (17)⁴

"abolish" = destroy (Mat 26:61, 27:40; Luk 23:2; Act 6:14; Rom 14:20; 2Co 5:1; Gal 2:18); **"the Law or the Prophets"** = The entire OT not simply its first five books⁵ (Mat 7:12, 11:13, 22:40; Luk 16:29, 24:27, 44; Joh 1:45; Act 13:15, 28:23; Rom 3:21); **"fulfill them"** = To carry out, perform or execute the principles/precepts established by their instruction (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8)⁶.

7.2. Even the smallest detail of the OT Scriptures will remain in effect as long as this world exists (18)

"For truly I say to you" = A phrase meant to emphasize not only the veracity of Jesus' previous statement regarding the Law – i.e. that it is to be faithfully fulfilled by God's people, but also to indicate that it will be reinforced through what is communicated next; **"not an iota, not a dot (yodh) will pass from the Law"** = Smallest characters in the Hebrew alphabet, the language of the OT Scriptures. (IOW): there is absolutely nothing from the OT Scriptures that will fail to be required of God's people in the NC – all will pass over rather than passing away; **"until all is accomplished"** = **"until heaven and earth pass away"** (Luk 16:16-17; Deu 12:32; Act 21:21 – "forsake Moses" = Teaching apostasy in re: to Moses - ἀποστασία; Rom 3:31⁷; consider also Isa 40:6-8 w/1Pe 1:22-25)⁸

7.3. People w/b condemned or rewarded based on their response to the OT Scriptures (19)

"whoever relaxes (allows what it forbids or exempts what it requires) **one of the least** (insignificant to the degree that it would seem as though it would not matter or make a difference – 1Co 4:3, 6:2; Jam 3:4) **of these commandments and teaches others to do the same"** = Any person who decides to ignore, reject or treat as unnecessary any one of those principles/precepts est'd by the OT Scriptures - even those which may seem minor/trivial; or any person who would teach this to others⁹; **"will be considered least in** (sb trans. "by" = same as 26:52 – "by the sword") **the kingdom of heaven"** = Their lives w/b assessed on Judgment Day as having done the very least for God. A judgment which will bring eternal damnation (Mat 25:24-30; Isa 8:20)¹⁰; **"whoever does them and teaches them"** = Referring again to not only the OT Scriptures as a whole, but even those portions of its instructions which may seem minor/trivial. Any person who commits themselves to obey and teach others to obey w/such attention to detail and precision; **"will be called great in** (again, sb trans. "by") **the kingdom of heaven"** = Their lives w/b assessed on Judgment Day as having done great things for the Lord. As such, they will receive a warm welcome into God's blessed eternity (Mat 25:19-21)¹¹

7.4. It is imperative that we be found faithfully obedient to the entirety of the OT Scriptures if we want to go to heaven (20).

"For I tell you" = Similar to the phrase in v18. In this case, it is meant to not only emphasize but also convey serious warning (see Mat 18:10); **"unless your righteousness"** = Practical righteousness is what Jesus has in mind. Again recall His audience: Jews already positionally righteous – i.e. justified¹² and in covenant relationship w/God (see again Jam 2:24; 1Jo 3:7-10); **"exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees"** = These individuals were known for their promotion of the OT Scriptures, but not its practice. They were antinomian hypocrites. To exceed them would therefore require faithful obedience no simply lip service (Mat 15:1-9; 23:1-4, 22-23, 27-28); **"you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"** = (IOW): heaven w/b eternally closed to you.

⁴ Jesus' initial prohibition ("Do not think") implies that there were some among His Jewish audience under the assumption that the Law might one day be removed or such insistence was necessary due to humankind's natural inclination toward antinomianism. Since the OT Scriptures make no reference to their cessation, it is most likely the latter which became the basis for His statement.

⁵ The scope Jesus establishes here is vital to the commands found in the NT since: 1) we know that nothing in the NT can be original (i.e. its principles/precepts must have OT support – 1Co 10:11), 2) Some NT commands found their basis of support in the Prophets (e.g. Rom 13:1-7; 1Pe 2:14-19 w/Jer 27:6-11, 40:9, 43:10; Dan 4:25-27).

⁶ That Jesus' focus in fulfillment is in relation to God's people (and not Himself) sb evident given the fact that: 1) His entire purpose in ascending the mountain is to teach the people about their covenant obligations, not His own (5:2, e.g. 21-26ff), 2) His personal commitment to the OT Scriptures w/b perceived as having no bearing on their own, 3) the verses immediately following v17 are directly addressed to others (18-20).

⁷ Paul was never against the Law. His stmts which seem to speak to this effect, are rather his opposition to still using the OC clean laws for justification (Rom 3:28, 10:4), and the lack of empowerment afforded to those under the OC for fulfilling the Law (Rom 7:7-18).

⁸ "Matthew declares that nothing will pass from the Law 'until all is accomplished', meaning until the consummation of the kingdom, 'when heaven and earth pass away'. The idea that Jesus' death and resurrection is the goal of the world thus allowing the Law to be set aside as fulfilled violates the whole thrust of the passage. Overman rightly calls such hermeneutical gymnastics 'excessive...tortured and contrived.'" – Craig S. Keener (*The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*)

⁹ According to David Dorsey, Dispensationalism – the leading view on the Law today, "holds that God has developed different programs for His people in different ages and that the particulars – including the laws – that belong to the 'dispensation of the law' (Exo – Mal), are not binding upon God's people in the present 'dispensation of grace'". (*The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise*). That Dispensationalism is indeed the majority/popular view today, can be easily discerned by simply asking, how many churches would enforce God's commands regarding the appropriate penalty for stealing (property = Exo 22:1-3; tithe = Lev 27:31)?

¹⁰ Based on Deu 12:32-13:5, one could even go as far as to call such individuals, "false prophets/teachers". It isn't just twisting God's Word that puts you in this camp (2Pe 3:14-16), it applies also to those who simply "relax" it.

¹¹ What Jesus teaches in Mat 5:19 should make it abundantly clear that our obedience to all of God's OT Scriptures is more than just nice, suggestive (or as Brian Rosner puts it, "wisdom"). It is absolutely imperative/necessary to our justification/salvation (Jam 2:24).

¹² That OC Jews were justified is not a contradiction to the teaching of the NT (e.g. Rom 3:28). The problem was not that they were lacking justification, but rather the kind of justification they had received was lacking (i.e. it was pass-over versus payment – Rom 3:25).