

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 God's people the conditions of their identity, as well as the laws and promises (blessings and curses) of their covenant relationship (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. (vv13-16; conditional identity) DISCUSSED

7. Jesus preserves the entirety of the Old Testament Scriptures as authoritative for God's people under the New Covenant¹:7.1. The OT Scriptures are not to be destroyed but rather observed and obeyed (17)²

"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 books³ (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)⁴.

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 3:31⁵; consider also Isa 40:6-8 w/1Pe 1:22-25)⁶

7.3. People wb 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 others⁷; "will be considered least in (sb trans. "by" = same as 26:52 – "by the sword") the kingdom of heaven" = Their lives wb 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)⁸; "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;

¹ "The way to test the greatness and incisiveness of any truly evangelical theology is to ask how it relates biblical law to God's gospel of grace. The history of the Church's achievement on this issue has not been remarkable or convincing." – Walter Kaiser

² 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.

³ The scope Jesus establishes here is vital to the commands find 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).

⁴ 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 wb perceived as having no bearing on their own, 3) the verses immediately following v17 are directly addressed to others (18-20).

⁵ 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).

⁶ "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*)

⁷ 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)?

⁸ 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.

“will be called great in (again, sb trans. “by”) **the kingdom of heaven**” = Their lives w/ 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).⁹

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. justified¹⁰ 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 (i.e. obedience to the Law nice but not necessary) hypocrites (i.e. posers). To exceed them would therefore require faithful obedience not 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/ eternally closed to you.¹¹

8. Those who think that the obligation to obey the Old Testament Scriptures has been removed (in part or whole) as essential to salvation for the New Covenant Christian¹² not only fail to consider the content, clarity and consequences of Jesus’ teaching in Mat 5:17-20, but also:

8.1. Its consistency w/:

8.1.1. How God views His Old Testament Scriptures (Deu 6:4, 12:34, 29:18-20 w/29 w/Exo 24:3; Isa 40:1-8 w/42:18-24 w/1Pe 1:23-25 w/2Ti 3:15; Psa 119:89, 96, 160, 138:2)

8.1.2. The Old Testament’s prophecies about the New Covenant or Messiah (Deu 18:15-18; Isa 2:1-5, 8:11-9:7; 42:1-4, 21; Jer 31:31-34; Eze 36:25-27; Mic 4:1-2; Mal 4:1-4 = All speak of the Law as part of the NC)

8.1.3. The identity of a false teacher/prophet (Deu 12:34-13:3 w/2Pe 2:1-3 w/Jud 1:3-4; Eph 5:1-7; 1Jo 2:1-7 w/24-3:8)

8.1.4. The identity of those who go to Hell (Isa 51:7-8 w/Mar 9:48 w/Luk 16:19-31; Pro 28:4 w/Rom 1:18, 31-32; Rev 21:8 – “faithless” = unfaithful to God’s OT commands/law – see Psa 119:158)

8.1.5. The doctrine of apostasy (Act 21:21, 28; Heb 10:26-29)

⁹ 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).

¹⁰ 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).

¹¹ Many -if not most Evangelicals, view Jesus’ words in Mat 5:20 as deliberate absurdity. IOW: Jesus is creating a scenario He expects His listeners to see as impossible or wildly unreasonable, as the means to dissuading them from any attempts at meriting their salvation and instead simply looking in faith to Him as their vicarious “merit-champion”(cf. Mat 19:16-17). Such a view however suffers on several fronts: 1) It means that God has been setting people up to fail from the beginning since what Jesus preaches is the message of the OT (obey and live), 2) There is absolutely no indication of this as Jesus’ approach/agenda in the text. It is therefore an argument not from only silence but reckless presumption, 3) This view requires that the Pharisees/Scribes be merit-based in their soteriology. Yet no-one in all of Scripture, holds to such a ridiculous belief -including the Pharisees/Scribes! (Luk 5:21), 4) Never is Jesus said to merit righteousness/salvation for His people. Even Christ’s payment for our sin debt does not qualify. According to the Bible, merit cannot be attributed to those who merely do what is expected (Luk 17:10; ἀχρεῖοί = unworthy/unmeritorious). Justice – or the payment of a debt therefore is not meritorious, 5) The Protestant view of merit-based salvation is largely due to the former Roman Catholic monk and reformer Martin Luther, who projected his Catholic soteriology onto the Scriptures, failed to understand the biblical view of gain and maintain, the bi-partite distinction w/in the Law (clean/moral) and pitted Paul against Jesus (and James) in his interpretation (e.g. Rom 10:4; Gal 3:10-12). Luther’s heretical doctrine (of getting there vs. staying there) was not held prior to him or the Roman Catholic Church (11th cent). The Bible (and early Church Fathers) teach faithful obedience as necessary and possible for all people as the way to maintain (not merit) our righteous state (granted by grace thru Christ) and receive the reward (or be counted worthy) of heaven (Deu 30:11; Rom 2:6-11; Gal 6:6-10; Eph 4:1; Phi 1:27; Col 1:10; 1Th 2:12; Rev 3:14; Ignatius, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine).

¹² As discussed this is the majority position today. It has many supporting scholars/theologians including some from the Reformation: “The Law and the Decalogue has no right to accuse and terrify the conscience in which Christ reigns through grace, for Christ has made this right obsolete.” -Martin Luther; “In the new era the...good news of salvation/restoration in Christ has displaced the ...law as the foundational guide to community life.” – Roy Ciampa; “Believers in Christ do not find God’s will through the law; are not instructed through the law; and are not obliged to obey the law” – Brian Rosner. It is relevant to note that Dr. Rosner’s very recent work on the Law (*Paul and the Law*, 2013) also makes no mention of Mat 5:17-20.