

The Gospel According to Matthew

Study # 8

Chapter 5:17-22

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." (Matt. 5:17)

Christ came not to abolish the Law and the Old Testament but to fulfill. Christ is the fulfillment of all the ceremonial laws in the Old Testament and all the prophecies concerning the Messiah. Everything in the Old Testament points to Christ.

References:

Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." (Luke 24:44)

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." (Col. 2:16-17)

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Rom. 10:4)

"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39)

"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me." (John 5:46)

"For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." (Matt. 5:18)

Christ believed in the literal inspiration of the scriptures of the Old Testament. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). Everything in the Old Testament will be fulfilled. Every part of the Old Testament has significance even what might seem to us as minor unimportant details. The "Jot" is the Greek word "Iota" and it is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The "Tittle" is the smallest stroke in a Hebrew letter. For example, the stroke distinguishes a capital B from a capital P.

References:

"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:17)

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away." (Matt. 24:35)

"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:19)

Christ upheld the law of God and wanted His followers to do the same. On the other hand, the Pharisees were hypocrites in their attempt to keep the law. Christ warned not to follow the Pharisees example.

References:

"“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." (Matt. 23:23)

"He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.’ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God”— then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition." (Matt. 15:3-6)

"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:20)

The scribes and Pharisees were self-righteous and hypocrites. They did not practice what they preached. Jesus did not come for those who were self-righteous but for those who acknowledged their own sinfulness and their need of the righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ. Only the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us can make us enter the kingdom of heaven.

References:

"Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments." (Matt. 23:1-5)

"Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish

clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness." (Luke 11:39-30)

"“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.” (Matt. 23:27)

"When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”” (Mark 2:17)

"Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Rom. 10:1-4)

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference." (Rom. 3:21-22)

"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. 5:21)

Sin Begins in the Mind

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.” (Matt. 5:21-22)

The Sixth Commandment forbids murder. On the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus raises the standard even higher. He says that if we have unrighteous anger and hatred in our hearts towards a brother that we are just as guilty as if we have physically committed murder. Sin begins in the mind. Anger and hatred in our hearts if not suppressed will eventually lead to murder. The Bible says that "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15). In Jesus' day the person who is angry with his brother without a cause is liable to go to court; the person who says to his brother "Raca" is liable to go before the council, that is the Sanhedrin which was the supreme court of the time; and the person who says "You Fool!" shall be in danger of hell fire.

"Raca" is a term which means "empty head" and "you good-for-nothing". The word "Fool" in the Greek means "dull or stupid". Jesus warns against abusive and insulting language towards a brother. These words and terms are sadly often heard in our

generation. The root of murder is a heart full of anger and hatred. Cain's anger toward his brother Abel lead to murder (Gen. 4:1-8).

The word "hell" in verse 22 is the Greek word "Gehenna". In Jesus' time, it was a garbage dump outside Jerusalem that burned continually. The bodies of criminals were often cast there. This place symbolized the eternal fire of hell. In the Old Testament it was the Valley of the Son of Hinnom. Ungodly King Ahaz and Manasseh burned their children in the fire as an offering to the false god Molech.

References:

"He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." (1 John 2:9-11)

"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous." (1 John 3:11-12)

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