

Lesson 239

The Sermon on the Mount: The Conduct of the Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven

Story Elements



- **Text:** Matthew 5:17-7:12
- **Setting:** circa AD 28, atop a mountain somewhere near the sea of Galilee.
- **Characters:** God, Jesus, and many disciples
- **Plot:** Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount, in which he teaches about life in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- **Key word(s):** “*Ye have heard that it hath been said...but I say unto you*” – These two phrases mark the major divisions of this next section of the Sermon on the Mount (though there are slight variations).
- **Climax:** **Matthew 5:20** *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall _____ the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* This startling statement not only piques our interest but helps us understand the teachings of Christ that follow, i.e., he will show us how our righteousness can exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

An Exceptional Righteousness

- (v 17) Jesus transitions from teaching the Beatitudes to setting the record straight regarding the way His enemies misrepresented the law of Moses and the works of Jesus:
 - Though Christ was often accused of breaking the sabbath laws, he emphatically states that he did not come to *destroy the law of the prophets, but to fulfil*. He did this four ways:
 - _____, he fulfilled all the Messianic predictions in the Old Testament.
 - _____, he fulfilled all the types of his redemptive work portrayed in the O.T. law.
 - _____, he faithfully observed every ordinance required by the O.T. law.
 - _____, he perfectly obeyed every moral command in the Old Testament.

APPLICATION → Because of Christ’s redemptive work, the ceremonial and civil laws of the O.T. have been fulfilled (they are set aside as _____, but not as glorifying, because they still point to Christ); the moral law’s power to condemn has been removed from the believer through Christ’s perfect obedience. Through the law of faith (Rom. 3:27) the believer is *not under the law, but under grace*. (Rom. 6:14) The Law of Moses was “do this and live” but for the believer, the Law of Christ is “live and do this.”¹

- (vv 18-19) The Savior emphasizes the _____ nature of the Word of God, *one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law*. Even the smallest letters of God’s Word have more everlasting power than largest burning sun in the entire universe. Those that seek to diminish the Word of God will find that they themselves are diminished by God.
- (v 20) Jesus introduces the next section of his sermon, where he shows not only how the righteousness of the Pharisees is deficient and how ours should surpass theirs.

¹ “The law of Christ, in regard of substance and matter, is all one with the law of works, or covenant of works. Which matter is scattered through the whole Bible, and summed up in the decalogue, or ten commandments, commonly called the moral law, containing such things as are agreeable to the mind and will of God, that is, piety towards God, charity towards our neighbour, and sobriety towards ourselves. And therefore was it given of God to be a true and eternal rule of righteousness, for all men, of all nations, and at all times. So that evangelical grace directs a man to no other obedience than that whereof the law of the ten commandments is to be the rule.”

Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2009) 185.

Examples of True Righteousness

APPLICATION → The righteousness of the Pharisees focused on exterior conformity without interior change – they followed the letter of the law and not the spirit of it. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching that a true understanding of the 10 Commandments involves seeing more than a prohibition of certain sins but seeing a prohibition of _____ that would lead to us towards those sins.

Beware the Angry Heart

3. (vv 21-22) Jesus begins with an example of how the **sixth commandment** is disobeyed in the hearts of everyone – including the Pharisees.
 - (a) *Thou shalt not kill.* Murder is sin, but the citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven has not fully obeyed the sixth commandment by refraining from murder.
 - (b) *But I say unto you...* We may not have murdered a person with our hands, but we are guilty of murdering them in our _____ with causeless² anger and with our tongues by speaking sinful insults.
 - (c) (vv 23-24) The default setting for sinful man is to think that our religious observances make up for our failures in our relationships. Jesus shows how we cannot be right with God if we are not right with _____.
 - (d) (vv 25-26) As an illustration of this truth, Jesus mentions the sage advice (cf. Prov. 25:8) of settling with an adversary before being taken to court. He is making an allusion to being peacemakers with our enemies before _____, hence the sobering sentence, *Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

Beware the Adulterous Heart

4. (vv 27-28) The Savior then preaches about the **seventh commandment** and the abuses and misunderstandings of it.
 - (a) *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* Scripture does indeed confine sexual intimacy within the boundaries of lawful marriage. (Exo 20:14)
 - (b) *But I say unto you...* Jesus warns that adultery, though avoided in practice, can be committed in the _____. “If sin were not allowed in the mind, it would never be manifest in the body: this therefore is a very effectual way of dealing with this evil.”³
 - (c) (vv 29-30) To emphasize the need for a virtuous life, Jesus uses strong language to warn us that “the _____ of sin is to be given up as well as the sin itself.”⁴
 - i. *If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out.* Adultery begins in the eye, when it sees another and inspires lustful thoughts.
 - ii. *If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.* From thoughts come actions, and thus the sinner is led further down the road.

APPLICATION → “...our Lord certainly means that we are to *strike at the* _____ of such unholy dispositions, as well as cut off the occasions which tend to stimulate them.”⁵

Answer Key: Matt. 5:20 “exceed” • 1. a) i) Prophetically; ii) Symbolically; iii) Ceremonially; iv) Practically; → binding • b) eternal • → anything • 3. b) hearts; c) others; d) Judgment Day • 4. b) imagination, c) cause; → root

² The qualifier “without a cause” does not mean that it’s okay to be angry if we think we have a good reason, it means that our reasons must be just and holy and our forgiveness ready to be given. Unrighteous anger gives *place to the devil*. (cf Eph. 4:26, 27)

³ Charles Spurgeon, *An Exposition of Matthew, the Gospel of the Kingdom* (Springfield: Particular Baptist Press, 2015) 27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 23.