

The Gospel of the Kingdom Pt11

This week, we continue with Jesus' first major discourse, "The Sermon on the Mount". We've gone through the Beatitudes and how He wants us to be salt and light to a lost and hopeless world. He now begins to distance Himself from the teachings that are taught by the Rabbi's in the Synagogues. There are several different groups with differing interpretations of the Torah, and they basically quote other Rabbi's as their source of authority.

However, here comes Jesus with authority from on high and His words resonate with the people as coming from God. So now He dives into the topic that is going to separate Him from the other Rabbi's and this is His teaching on the Law.

First, we need to understand that there are three types of laws in the Bible.

- Moral Laws – these are forever binding for all people in all places for all time. The ten commandments are an example of these laws. They are not affected by or dependent on culture, location or specific situations.
- Civil Laws – these were laws for Israel, for that time, in the ancient near east. They address issues that address a specific time, place and culture. While many of them are based on the moral laws, such as laws against theft and murder; many of them address issues that are specific to that time and place.
- Ceremonial Laws – These laws identify the people of Israel as a unique and chosen people and point to Christ. These include not cutting the edge of the beard, or covering of the head, or their dietary laws. It also includes feasts, addressing what is clean or unclean, and how to offer sacrifices. This is also known as Levitical Law.

Jesus understands the difference between these laws and now wants to set the record straight as to what is part of the Old Covenant and what is to be part of the New Covenant.

The Law Matt 5:17-6:1

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

In the first part of His statement, He is letting us know that He is not denying the Law. The Law was necessary because the people were so wicked and depraved that if they were to be a people that represented Jahweh to the rest of the nations of the Near-eastern world, they needed to be different and every facet of their lives governed by laws handed down from God. These laws had their time and their place.

Then He transitions into letting us know that He is going to fulfill that Law by being the first person to ever obey every last bit of it, and thus the need for it will have passed. He then finishes this passage by introducing the concept of righteousness instead of the Law, and He follows this up by the "you have heard" verses that follow. He is now going to define righteousness in a completely different way than the Law.