

**Message #12****Matthew 5:17-20**

As we read these verses, it becomes quite evident that the subject matter here deals with the Law and both Christ's and Israel's connection to it. In Hebrews 3:3 we read that Jesus Christ was "counted worthy of more glory than Moses." Jesus Christ is greater than the Law. So the question arises, when Jesus Christ was here on earth presenting Himself as King of Israel, what was Christ's relationship to the Law and what was Israel's connection to the Law? Did Jesus Christ come to abolish the O.T. Law for Israel? Jesus Christ is presenting Himself as King and the Jews were anticipating their King to bring in a "political revolution." They were looking for their King to overthrow everything. The Jews are looking for revolution, whereas God was looking for righteousness.

Now before we look at this passage, let me make a very important point concerning us who live in this Grace Age—we who have believed on Jesus Christ have been delivered from the Law and we are not under the Law. This passage is not aimed at the N.T. Church. Church Age passages are very clear concerning our relationship to the O.T. Law: **Romans 6:14** says, "you are not under law, but under grace." **Romans 7:4** says, "you were made to die to the Law." **Romans 7:6** says, "We have been released from the Law." **Galatians 3:23-25** says, "But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the Law...but now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." We are not under the Law. This passage is not addressed to the N.T. Church; it is Israel's King addressing Israel's legal mandates for the kingdom life.

When Jesus Christ came to this earth, Israel was under the Law and Jesus Christ came to fulfill the Law. In order for an Israelite to get into the righteous kingdom, which featured the reign of a righteous King, not only did the requirements of the Law need to be fully met, but applications of the Law needed to be fully implemented.

**JESUS CHRIST CAME TO FULFILL THE LAW AND THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS NECESSARY TO ENTER THE KINGDOM MUST EXCEED HUMAN ATTEMPTS AND HUMAN INTERPRETATIONS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

We who live in the Age of Grace must realize that the grace of God does not just forgive one who breaks the Law; it totally and completely saves us from the obligations of the Law and actually gives us the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

**THOUGHT #1** – Jesus Christ did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. **5:17**

What immediately jumps out of this verse is that twice the word "abolish" occurs. This word is one that means to destroy, to overthrow, to annul (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 236). It was used to describe the unloosening or unyoking of a horse. Christ is saying, "I did not come to you in order to overthrow or wipe out the Law, I came to fulfill it." The word "fulfill" means to make full, to fill to the full, to complete (*Ibid.*, p. 365).

Jesus Christ came to show Israel how the Law and the prophets were to be lived out fully and completely in a real Jewish existence. How did Christ fulfill the Law? 1) He kept it perfectly; 2) He applied it accurately.

Everything Christ did and taught brought full meaning to the Law. He fulfilled every law requirement, right down to the smallest letter and stroke. Now one thing that seems apparent from this statement is that the Jews sensed a need for something to happen to the Law if they were to get into the kingdom.

**THOUGHT #2** – Nothing will be eliminated from the Law until all of it is accomplished. **5:18**

The word “accomplish” is one that means to come into being, to come to pass, to take place (Smith, p. 92). The verb is middle voice, meaning until everything, in and of itself, pertaining to the Law has taken place, not one letter or stroke will pass away. Here is a great statement concerning the inspiration of the Bible and the infallibility of the Bible.

The word “stroke” is interesting. It is a word that refers to the point which distinguishes one Hebrew letter from another (Smith, p. 245). An easy way to illustrate this in English is by using the letter “E” versus the letter “F.” The only difference between these two letters is a little horizontal line at the bottom of the letter “E.” Jesus is saying not one adjustment will be made in the Law. Any Israelite listening to this should have said, “I cannot measure up to this standard.”

**THOUGHT #3** – One’s status in the kingdom will be determined by one’s association with the commandments in God’s Word. **5:19**

Now the Jews have never kept the Law perfectly; in fact, they graded the Law based on what they thought was important (i.e. Matt. 22:36). Jesus is teaching His disciples that any person who annuls even one of the commandments and then teaches others to do it will be the least in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, any person who keeps the commandments and teaches others shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

**THOUGHT #4** – To get into the kingdom, one needs to have righteousness greater than the most religious people alive. **5:20**

The Pharisees were the most religious people alive when Christ gave this teaching. They taught the Law and they promoted a moral life. If any would have entrance into the kingdom based on their own righteousness, it would have been the Pharisees. But Christ points out here they are not law keepers, they are law breakers and they need righteousness greater than their own. The “I say to you” formula is one that Jesus uses often in this context (v. 18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39) and is one that often emphasizes this is God talking. In fact, several times in this chapter the emphatic pronoun “I” is used stressing the divine “I” (v. 22, 28, 32, 34, 39).

Christ as God and King is showing Israel the utter hopelessness she has in getting into her kingdom on her own merit.