

## Jesus and the Law, Part 1

Matthew 5:17-30

July 23, 2017

### Intro

In NY there is an area that is surrounded by an unbroken 18 mile length of fishing line. The area inside the enclosure is known as an *eruv*. It is inspected every Thursday by two rabbis. Why? Because Orthodox Jews unable to do certain things outside on the Sabbath – pushing a baby stroller, carrying a book, carrying anything – so in they ran this string to symbolically turn this public space into a private space and they are able to do these tasks.

No doubt sincere and admire their desire for obedience, but this “loophole” that violates the intent of the Sabbath law is the very type of thing that Jesus addresses in the passage we’ll look at today.

Here’s the thing. We might chuckle at this but at the same time be blind to the identical error in our own lives. Jesus will point his finger at two areas that probably hit much closer to home – anger and lust.

First though, Jesus will address His relationship to the law of God – the very law that modern day Orthodox Jews are attempting to follow by remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

#### 1. Jesus came to **fulfill** the law not **abolish** it. (5:17-19)

If “abolish” means “get rid of” in this context, what would the opposite be? “Keep!”

Contrast not between abolish and keep, as if He would merely keep the law, but between abolish and fulfill.

Chapters 1-4 set us up for the concept of fulfillment.

Precise and pattern prophecies found their fulfillment in Jesus.

Not the smallest stroke will pass away until accomplished, until they serve the purpose for which they were given.

##### a. What God commanded as **moral** law, Jesus perfectly obeyed.

- i. **1 Peter 2:22** WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;
- ii. **Hebrews 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.
- iii. 10 commandments and others

##### b. What God foreshadowed in the **ceremonial** and **sacrificial** systems, Jesus embodied.

- i. **Colossians 2:16-17** Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- <sup>17</sup> things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.
- ii. The book of Hebrews demonstrates that the sacrificial system was a pattern of Christ. He was the true sacrifice and the true high priest that the OT system merely looked ahead to.
- iii. **Romans 8:3** For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,
  1. There are some parts of the law that we no longer have to follow (prohibitions against eating bacon or performing work on a Sabbath), not because Jesus abolished them but

because they pointed ahead to a greater truth about Christ. The underlying truth remains but it is fulfilled in Him.

~~iv. **Hebrews 8:1-2** Now the main point in what has been said is *this*: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,<sup>2</sup> a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.~~

- c. What God required in ***justice***, Jesus will enact in the kingdom.
  - i. **Matthew 12:18-20** <sup>18</sup> "BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL is WELL-PLEASED; I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES. <sup>19</sup> "HE WILL NOT QUARREL, NOR CRY OUT; NOR WILL ANYONE HEAR HIS VOICE IN THE STREETS. <sup>20</sup> "A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT, UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.
  - ii. Messiah will proclaim justice, will lead out in justice. If you are grieved at injustice – racism, human trafficking, abuse of children, this is good news.
- d. The most significant part of this passage then is not about the message but about the Messenger, Jesus.
  - i. Jewish rabbi – Jacob Neusner “A Rabbi Talks With Jesus.” –prolific author of more than 900 books –
    1. “I am troubled not so much by the message, though I might take exception to this or that, as I am by the messenger.”
    2. He recognized that Jesus was not just claiming to bring a novel interpretation of the law and prophets, but to be the figure they pointed to, the capstone, the point.
    3. And his response is exactly what you would expect of someone who understands what Jesus is saying here but rejects it. He goes on to say that he would have sided with the Pharisees and in fact he still does today.
    4. Why the opposition? His statement about fulfilling the law and his formula, “but I say to you” emphasizes His authority, reflected in the crowds observation at the end of the sermon in 7:29 that He taught as one having authority.
      - a. Even the language of it emphasizes the “I” – in Greek word order is less important than in English. Word order can be used for emphasis, and “I” is the first word in each of His responses.
2. The righteousness of the Pharisees was ***inadequate***. (5:20)
  - a. Their response to the law was inadequate.
  - b. God requires not just external compliance to the letter of the law but internal conformity to the spirit of the law.
  - c. They were content with the appearance of righteousness.
    - i. **Matthew 23:24-26** <sup>24</sup> "You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! <sup>25</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup> "You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.
    - ii. **Matthew 23:27-28** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead

men's bones and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup> "So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

iii. He will demonstrate this in six illustrations. We'll look at two of them today.

d. Jesus caps this section with an even higher bar –

i. **Matthew 5:48** Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

ii. **Romans 3:19-20** Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; <sup>20</sup> because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

1. The exceeding sinfulness of sin

iii. As Jesus uses 6 illustrations of the need for greater righteousness than the Pharisees, a righteousness like God's, keep these two bookends in mind.

3. Illustration #1: Not just murder but **anger** (5:21-26)

a. 6 times Jesus will use the phrase, "you have heard it said", or "the ancients were told" followed by an OT quote and then "but I say to you"

i. Jesus isn't reinterpreting the OT but giving God's original intent, His original interpretation.

b. Murder is wrong, but the heart motives that lead to murder are also wrong as are the other "lesser" expressions of those motives.

i. Murder as the ultimate "attack response" on Ken Sande's slippery slope of conflict.

ii. The first quote is from Exodus 20:13, the follow up is an interpretation of the way the passage is understood.

1. Could either be a statement divine judgment or legal judgment. The reference to "supreme court" indicates it could be a human court that is in mind. He may be referring to the due human justice as a way to show the seriousness with how God views it.

iii. The heart of anger expressing itself in hurtful words, not just murder, are enough to make someone guilty before God.

iv. Remember the bookends – surpass the Pharisees, be like God

1. Common response when sharing the gospel and ask "Why should God let you in to heaven?" is "I'm basically a good person, I've never killed anyone." As if that's the bar.

2. Can picture Jesus asking – who have you yelled at this week? Who did you mock? Who did you harbor bitterness against?

c. Two examples, one in the temple, one in court; one with a brother, one with an adversary (vv. 23-26)

i. Biblical reconciliation is more important than completing a sacrifice. (vv. 23-24)

1. Pictures the worshiper as in the middle of offering a sacrifice at the altar, the animal is prepped, they are ready, but they remember in that moment that someone else is angry at them.

a. Leave – go! Be reconciled. Then, come and finish your offering.

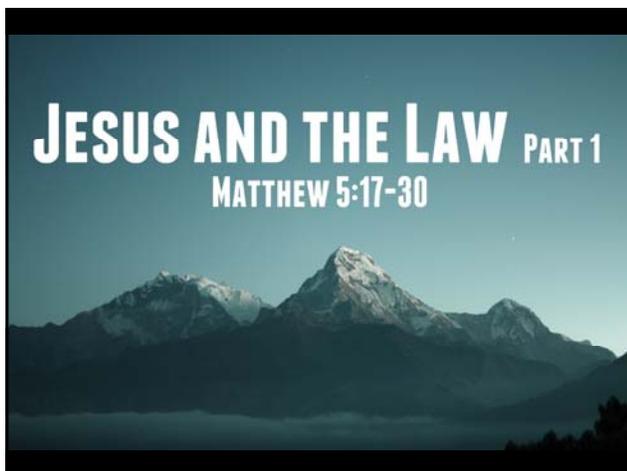
b. Turns from your own anger to someone else's anger at you.

- c. Reconciliation is more important than . . . getting dinner ready on time, finishing the movie I really want to watch, getting this project done in the backyard
    - d. Unresolved problems lead to more problems.
  - ii. Reconciliation may be difficult, but the consequences of not reconciling can be far worse. (vv. 25-26)
    - 1. Gives one human example where a lack of reconciliation leads to court, a guilty conviction, and a lengthy prison sentence.
    - 2. Reconciliation is hard in a difficult marriage, with estranged family, with someone in the body.
      - a. It's seldom simple but often complex – who wronged who? What is assumed vs. what is true? Who else is involved?
      - b. But the consequences even in this life of holding on to bitterness and enmity are worse.
- 4. Illustration #2: Not just adultery but **lust** (5:27-30)
  - a. Again quotes from Exodus 20 but shows that the meaning is more than just physical adultery.
    - i. It has always been that way though.
    - ii. **Job 31:1** "I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?"
  - b. Even a sin of the heart and eyes is so serious that we should take radical action to stop.
 

Hyperbole, not literally commanding us to pluck out our right eye. Problem with trying to follow it exactly is that you are still left with a left eye! And even if you blind yourself you will still have the images of past sin burned into your brain that you can meditate on.

    - i. **Matthew 15:18-19** <sup>18</sup> "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. <sup>19</sup> "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.
    - ii. Radical action – canceling the internet, only allowing computer or cell phone use in the living room, changing jobs, stepping away from a friendship – get counsel on a radical step to make sure it is wise
    - iii. Heath Lambert – 3 things needed for someone to look at images they should not
      - 1. Availability, anonymity, appetite
      - 2. Remove any of those three, and you won't look.
        - a. Take radical steps if necessary to get rid of 1 and 2
        - b. #3 takes heart change, and that is a longer and harder process.
- 5. Key ideas
  - a. Focusing on **external** obedience can deceive us into thinking we are **righteous** on our own.
    - i. Just is not merely giving us lessons on dealing with anger and lust, although there are lessons here. He is showing that if we are focusing on external obedience, we're missing the heart of God's law.

- b. By revealing the ***internal*** application of the law Jesus exposed our need for the ***gospel***.
- i. Ben Ledford – waves on the ocean vs. the depth of the ocean. The differences in little ripples and hurricane churning waves seems very significant on the surface, and it is in terms of the destructive power and effect on ships. But if you took a cross-section of the ocean and dropped it down to the bottom, those waves are a small percentage of the total depth of water.
    1. Jesus is showing how deep the depths are in chapters 5-6.
    2. Murder? How about anger and cutting words
    3. Adultery? How about lust and a lingering glance
    4. “righteous acts” in ch 6 – praying but to be seen; giving, but for the praise of others; fasting but to be seen as fasting
  - ii. **Romans 7:24 - 8:1** <sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ... **Romans 8:1** Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
  - iii. Shows the need for an alien righteousness, a righteousness that is not our own



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