

Almont Vineyard Church

Summer Series: The Sandals of Jesus

June 6, 2026

Opening Monologue

Welcome to the AVC App! Whether you've been with us for a while or you're joining us for the first time, we're so glad you're here.

This is the Sermon Section of the app. Here you'll find commentary, spiritual reflections, devotional questions, and more—all designed to help you engage with Sunday's message on a deeper level. As you read and reflect, we pray the Lord will give you fresh insight and fill you with His strength as you continue to grow in Him.

This week, I'm excited to begin a brand-new Summer Series titled "The Sandals of Jesus." Scholars estimate that during Jesus' three-and-a-half-year ministry, He walked roughly 3,500 miles—based just on what's recorded in the Gospels. That's the equivalent of walking from Boston to Los Angeles and then some. Wow!

Jesus proclaimed His mission with these powerful words: "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost... I came to proclaim good news to the poor, give freedom to prisoners... To give sight to the blind and to set the oppressed free" (Luke 4:18, 19:10).

Wherever Jesus' sandals went, people encountered peace, forgiveness, and healing. If I had to choose a motto for His life and ministry, it would be this: "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (John 8:36)

This week, we'll kick off the series by looking at the tension Jesus experienced with the religious leaders and why it existed. We'll discover the importance of holding fast to the Bible rather than man-made traditions or rules.

Throughout this summer series, we'll explore how Jesus used the Old Testament—quoting or alluding to upwards of 300 times (Scholarly conversations)—and how we can better understand and apply it as followers of Christ. This

Sunday, we begin with Jesus' powerful words from the Sermon on the Mount:

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matthew 5:13-15)

Come join us this Sunday as we dive into the Lord's Word together. You will be strengthened, encouraged, and spurred on to live more like Jesus!

In Christ,

Rev. Pastor Brad

To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Summer Series: The Sandals of Jesus" Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:

Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

Key Sermon Text

Luke 4:18

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%204%3A18&version=NIV>

Luke 19:10

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2019%3A10&version=NIV>

John 8:36

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%208%3A36&version=NIV>

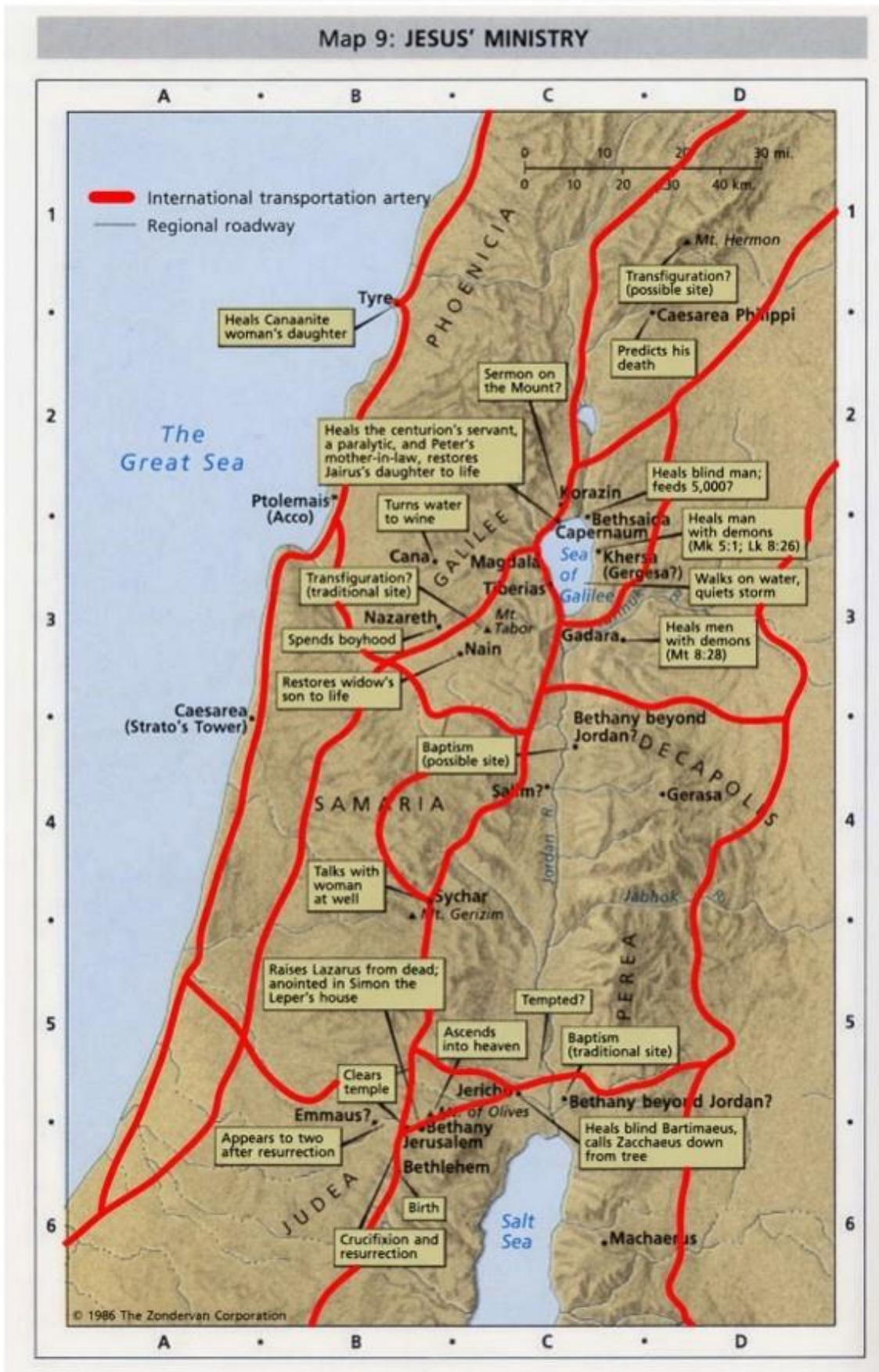
Matthew 5: 13-20

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%205%3A%2013-20&version=NIV>

Matthew 15:1-9

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2015%3A1-9&version=NIV>

Commentary, Spiritual Applications, and Theological Reflections



Jesus Sandals

Jesus' Earthly Ministry: A Walking Witness

Jesus' earthly ministry (roughly 3 years, c. AD 27–30) was primarily a walking ministry across the regions of Galilee, Judea, Samaria, and surrounding areas. He traveled on foot almost exclusively, covering an estimated 3,000–3,500 miles during his public ministry alone.

Jesus's extensive travels embodied his fundamental mission: to seek and save the lost. Every mile walked represented his deliberate commitment to reach people society had abandoned—moving through towns and villages, particularly in the spurned region of Galilee, crossing all sectors of society to minister to the poor and marginalized.

He identified himself as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Law and Prophets, stating that he did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them. Part of that fulfillment involved embodying the mission proclaimed through Isaiah 61:1–2—bringing good news to the poor, binding up the brokenhearted, proclaiming liberty to captives, and opening prisons to those who are bound. These weren't abstract promises; they required his physical presence among suffering people.

Jesus himself applied the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1–2: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

The humble sandal—the primary footwear of ancient Israel—becomes symbolically significant here. Sandals were practical for the warm climate and dusty terrain, yet they wore quickly under constant use. Jesus's worn sandals after walking thousands of miles across the Judean landscape tell a story of relentless, sacrificial ministry. His willingness to traverse difficult terrain on foot, rather than remaining in comfort, demonstrates the incarnational nature of his redemptive work—God meeting humanity where they were, literally walking among them to seek the lost.

Key Statistics

- About 80% of his recorded ministry occurred in a small “Gospel Triangle” in Galilee (roughly 20–30 square miles around Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee).
- He likely walked 20+ miles per day at times, often with crowds or disciples, crisscrossing villages, hills, lakeshores, and roads.
- Main regions: Galilee (north) — heart of teaching, miracles, and disciple-calling; Judea (south, including Jerusalem) — key for festivals and the final week; Samaria and Perea — shorter but significant visits; occasional trips to borders like Tyre/Sidon or the Decapolis.

Galilee Area (Primary Base)

- Nazareth: Hometown; where he grew up, was rejected, and began preaching (Luke 4).
- Capernaum: Headquarters of his Galilean ministry; many healings, teachings, and miracles (e.g., centurion's servant, paralytic lowered through roof). Often called “his own city.”
- Cana: First miracle (water to wine); healing of official's son.
- Bethsaida: Feeding of the 5,000 nearby; healing of blind man; home of Peter, Andrew, Philip.
- Chorazin: Teaching and miracles; later denounced for unbelief.

- Magdala (or Dalmanutha): Associated with Mary Magdalene; teachings near the Sea.
- Tiberias: On the Sea of Galilee (less direct ministry mentioned).
- Nain: Raised the widow's son.
- Sea of Galilee (Lake): Central to many events—walking on water, calming storm, fishing miracles, Sermon on the Mount (nearby).

Judea and Jerusalem Area

- Bethlehem: Birthplace.
- Jerusalem: Multiple visits for Passover and feasts; temple cleansing, teachings, triumphal entry, crucifixion, resurrection appearances. Key sites include the Temple, Pool of Bethesda/Siloam, Mount of Olives,

Gethsemane, and Golgotha.

- Bethany: Home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus (raised from the dead); ascension nearby.
- Bethany Beyond the Jordan (or Perea area): Baptism site.
- Emmaus: Post-resurrection appearance.

Other Notable Places

- Samaria (e.g., Sychar): Encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4).
- Caesarea Philippi: Peter's confession of Jesus as Messiah; near Mount Hermon.
- Decapolis (Gentile region east of Galilee): Healing of demon-possessed man (Legion); feeding of 4,000.
- Tyre and Sidon (Phoenician coast): Healing of Syrophenician woman's daughter.
- Jordan River / Judean Wilderness: Baptism, temptation, and travel routes.
- Mountains (e.g., Sermon on the Mount, Transfiguration).

Jesus' Pattern: He moved between rural villages, lakeside towns, and pilgrimage to Jerusalem, focusing on the "lost sheep of Israel" while occasionally reaching Gentiles. His travels followed Roman roads, trade routes, and footpaths, often avoiding or passing through Samaria.

Additional Thoughts Jesus' sandals remind us that the Christian life is not static but active and incarnational. In a world of digital shortcuts and comfort, his example calls believers to "walk" with purpose—engaging neighbors, crossing cultural divides, and bringing hope to the marginalized. Modern applications could include pilgrimage reflections, "walking prayers," or service projects that mirror his mobility and compassion. Archaeological sites like Capernaum and the Sea of Galilee offer powerful visuals for understanding.

[Sources: 1-5]

Jesus' Fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecies

Jesus Said: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them." (Matthew 5:17)

One of the most powerful ways Jesus honored and revealed the Old Testament was by fulfilling its prophecies. He did not merely reference the Scriptures—He embodied them. Throughout His ministry, Jesus showed that the ancient promises, written hundreds of years earlier, found their complete and perfect fulfillment in Him. Jesus fulfilled at least 300 prophecies in His earthly ministry, though the exact count depends on how

prophecies are categorized. One scholar found as many as 574 verses in the Old Testament pointing to the coming Messiah, while another identified 456 Old Testament verses referring to the Messiah or His times. Jesus fulfills all Old Testament hope, identifying Himself at the beginning of His ministry as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. Rather than contradicting the Old Testament, Jesus brings it to its intended goal.

Here are several key Old Testament prophecies and their fulfillment in the life of Jesus:

1. Born of a Virgin

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

Fulfillment:

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’).” (Matthew 1:22-23)

2. Born in Bethlehem

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” (Micah 5:2)

Fulfillment:

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, just as foretold (Matthew 2:1-6). When religious leaders were later asked where the Messiah would be born, they immediately pointed to this prophecy.

3. Descendant of David

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land.” (Jeremiah 23:5)

Jesus was repeatedly called “Son of David,” and His genealogy in both Matthew and Luke traces His legal and blood lineage back to King David, confirming His right to the throne.

4. The Suffering Servant

“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain... But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:3, 5)

Fulfillment:

This entire chapter beautifully describes Jesus’ suffering and sacrificial death on the cross. Philip used this very passage to explain the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:30-35).

5. Triumphal Entry

“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Zechariah 9:9)

Fulfillment:

“They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, ‘Hosanna!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Blessed is the king of Israel!’ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it...” (John 12:12-15)

6. Betrayal and Crucifixion Details

“They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” (Psalm 22:18)

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1)

Jesus quoted the opening line of Psalm 22 while on the cross, and the soldiers literally cast lots for His clothing—exact details written centuries before crucifixion was even invented as a form of execution.

7. Resurrection

“Because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.”
(Psalm 16:10)

Peter boldly proclaimed on the day of Pentecost that this prophecy was fulfilled when God raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:25-32).

Additional examples include Jesus’ escape to Egypt as a child, fulfilling Hosea 11:1, and His ministry in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, fulfilling Isaiah 9:1–2. He cured the sick, fulfilling Isaiah 53:4 about bearing infirmities and diseases. At His crucifixion, soldiers divided His garments (Psalm 22:18), did not break His legs (Exodus 12:46), and pierced His side (Zechariah 12:10).

Beyond direct prophecies, Jesus also fulfilled Old Testament types—prophetic symbols where persons or events foreshadow New Testament realities. Examples include the Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:1–11), the rock that provided water for Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 17:6), and Boaz as a picture of Christ the Redeemer.

Jesus didn’t just fulfill a few scattered predictions—He fulfilled the entire redemptive story of the Old Testament. As He walked those 3,500 miles in His sandals, every step was soaked in Scripture. He came not to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17). In doing so, He proved that the God who spoke through the prophets is the same God who came in the flesh to seek and save the lost.

What This Means for Us

In a world full of uncertainty and shifting ideas, we can have complete confidence in the Bible. The same Jesus who perfectly fulfilled these ancient prophecies is still at work today. He is faithful, trustworthy, and powerful enough to fulfill every promise He has made to you. As we stand firm on the authority of Scripture—rather than man-made traditions or popular cultural ideologies—we grow stronger in our walk with Him.

[Sources 6-8]

Jesus’ Use of the Old Testament and What It Means for Us

Jesus engaged with the Old Testament in a profound and extensive way. Scholars widely note that He alluded to or quoted it roughly 300 times throughout His ministry. Far from treating Scripture casually, Jesus took the Word of God literally and with utmost seriousness. He refused to allow it to be watered down or twisted, even when the religious leaders of His day had done so through their traditions and man-made rules.

This was not a new approach—Jesus Himself declared:

“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.” (Matthew 5:17)

He brought the Old Testament into the full light of His mission, revealing its true depth and purpose as it pointed to Him.

Jesus’s extensive engagement with Old Testament passages served multiple purposes. His recorded words contain more than 40 direct quotations, about 60 clear verbal allusions or references, and well over 100 other possible allusions. He drew on the Old Testament across every aspect of His teaching, grounding His moral instruction in its legal and ethical requirements.

In His confrontations with the religious establishment, Jesus consistently appealed to the Old Testament as the final authority. He often criticized the leaders for failing to grasp its basic principles and for not aligning their lives with God’s authoritative Word. Yet His use of Scripture went far beyond critique. Jesus taught about His own person and mission through the Old Testament, quoting messianic predictions and showing how they found fulfillment in Him. Remarkably, He also took historical accounts—such as the stories of Jonah, Solomon, Israel’s wilderness journey, and Psalm 118—and revealed them as patterns fulfilled in His life and work. Some of Jesus’ favorite books were Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Leviticus, Psalms, Isaiah, Hosea, and several more prophets

What unified all of Jesus’ uses of the Old Testament was His deep confidence that Scripture settles the matter. His quotations were not primarily argumentative; they were foundational to understanding who He is and what He came to accomplish.

What This Means for Us Today

As followers of Jesus, we are called to follow His example. We must stand strong in the Lord’s Word and resist the temptation to water it down or twist it to fit popular opinion or current cultural ideologies. In a world full of shifting voices and “woke” trends that often contradict biblical truth, we need to anchor ourselves firmly in Scripture—just as Jesus did.

Let us approach God’s Word with the same reverence and seriousness Jesus showed. As we do, we will not only grow in our understanding of Him but also be equipped to live faithfully, speak truthfully, and shine as salt and light in our generation.

[Sources: 9-10]

Commentary Matthew 5:13-20

Salt, Light, and the Greater Righteousness

Introduction: From Character to Influence and Continuity

Following the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), which describe the countercultural character of kingdom citizens—poor in spirit, meek, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and persecuted—Jesus addresses their function in a fallen world and their relationship to God’s ancient revelation. In a hard, decaying society marked by moral corruption (echoing Genesis 6:5, 11-12; Psalm 14; Romans 1:18-32), how do such people exert positive influence? Jesus answers with two vivid metaphors rooted in everyday ancient life, then clarifies His mission regarding the Old Testament. This section forms the bridge to the six antitheses (5:21-48), where Jesus deepens rather than destroys the law’s intent.

The passage counters any temptation toward separatism or monastic withdrawal. Instead, disciples are called to permeate society as agents of redemption and preservation while upholding a heart-level righteousness

that surpasses external Pharisaic observance. This reflects Jesus' role as the fulfillment of Israel's hopes and the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5), extending that light to His followers.

Salt and Light: Permeation and Illumination (Matthew 5:13-16)

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.” (v. 13)

In antiquity, salt's primary function was as a preservative for meat and fish in hot climates without refrigeration—far more critical than its role as a mere spice or flavor enhancer. Sources from the Dead Sea region and salt marshes southwest of it often contained impurities (such as gypsum or other minerals), making the salt susceptible to deterioration. Once “defiled” or mixed with impurities, it became useless as a preservative and was discarded—sometimes literally scattered on flat rooftops in Israel to harden soil and prevent leaks, where it was trampled underfoot by children and gatherings.

Jesus thus calls His disciples (the “you” is emphatic) to act as a preservative force, arresting moral and spiritual decay in society. As salt works invisibly yet effectively, believers are to permeate culture, preventing corruption and bringing out the best in human life through ethical witness and compassion. This is not achieved by blending in or compromising with the world's values, which renders the salt worthless and impotent. Christianity that makes peace with evil to avoid persecution fails its divine role and risks rejection even by the world it sought to appease.

Historical and religious parallels: Salt symbolized permanence in ancient covenants (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5) and purification rituals across cultures—Hittite, Mesopotamian, and later Jewish and Islamic traditions used it to ward off evil or signify enduring commitments. Jesus elevates this to a missional ethic: the church as an irritant and preservative calling society back to God's standards. Believers must remain “salty” (distinct and useful) to fulfill their calling as agents of renewal and joy, even in humdrum daily work or marketplace settings.

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (vv. 14-16)

Light imagery is profoundly rooted in Jewish Scripture: God as light (Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 60:1-3), the Torah as a lamp to the feet (Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 6:23), and Israel as a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). The Qumran Essenes contrasted “sons of light” with “sons of darkness.” A city on a hill (likely evoking Jerusalem or visible Galilean towns) or a household lamp on its stand cannot be concealed—light exists to illuminate the dark countryside or the room.

Jesus' followers reflect His own light through practical, visible good deeds—fruits of repentance (Matthew 3:8) and works of mercy that echo Christ's ministry. These are not self-glorifying (contrast Matthew 6:1-18) but point others to praise the Father. Hiding the light—through silence, conformity to the crowd, denial of truth, or ignoring needs—dims the witness. Christians must remain active irritants and illuminators, not isolated enclaves, balancing inner humility (Beatitudes) with outward impact. Good works matter as a continuation of

Christ's work (Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-26), directing glory to God rather than self.

This dual metaphor challenges all forms of withdrawal: we do not control secular power or Christianize the world's legislation wholesale, but we must shine as preservative agents in every sphere of life.

The Thesis of Greater Righteousness: Fulfillment, Not Abolition (Matthew 5:17-20)

“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.” (v. 17)

Jesus anticipates misunderstanding. His radical teachings might seem to undermine the Old Testament, especially amid diverse first-century Jewish groups: Pharisees with their oral traditions and scrupulous observance, Sadducees focused on Temple and written Torah, and Essenes pursuing purity in withdrawal. Jesus firmly rejects abolition. “Fulfill” (plērōsai) means to complete, bring to its intended goal, embody, and interpret authoritatively. He is the eschatological climax toward which the Law and Prophets pointed (seen in Matthew's fulfillment formulas in chapters 1–4).

As F.B. Meyer observed, Jesus gathers up, realizes, and makes possible the highest ideals of Scripture. He does not repeal but reinterprets and reapplies the law in light of the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34), bringing aspects like sacrifices to fruition (Hebrews 7–10) while enduring principles like love of God and neighbor. Every Old Testament text must now be read through Christ's person, ministry, and the changes of the new age—neither strict continuity nor total discontinuity, but nuanced fulfillment.

“For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” (v. 18)

Jesus affirms Scripture's absolute authority down to the smallest Hebrew yod and the tiniest stroke (keraia) distinguishing letters. This high view of inspiration aligns with Second Temple Judaism. The dual “until” clauses emphasize both the law's enduring validity and its telos in God's full plan—accomplished supremely in Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Prophecies and types find completion; moral demands find deeper internalization.

“Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (v. 19)

This addresses teachers especially, warning against setting aside commands or leading others astray. Even the “least” matters (though Jesus challenges Pharisaic hierarchies elsewhere, Matthew 23:23). Greatness in the kingdom comes from faithful practice and teaching, reflecting degrees of honor and fruitfulness rather than eternal status hierarchies (cf. Matthew 20:1-16). Disciples, as future teachers, must handle God's Word with care.

“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (v. 20)

This is the unifying thesis of the Sermon on the Mount. Pharisees and scribes represented the pinnacle of Jewish external piety—tithing, fasting, ritual purity, and rigid devotion to hundreds of traditional laws

alongside Scripture. Yet Jesus demands a qualitatively greater righteousness of the heart (1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 31:33; Luke 16:15), not merely intensified rule-keeping. It is God-centered, Spirit-empowered, rooted in relationship with Christ rather than self-glorification or legal technicalities.

True followers rely on God's inner work, not outward compliance alone. This heart righteousness fulfills the law's spirit (love, obedience, reverence) and opens entrance into the kingdom. External piety without heart transformation falls short. Jesus Himself is the way (John 14:6), providing the righteousness we cannot achieve alone.

Broader Historical and Interfaith Context:

This teaching stands in the prophetic tradition (e.g., Micah 6:8; Amos 5:21-24), critiquing hollow ritualism while upholding Torah's authority. It resonates with but transcends Jewish debates on "greater/lesser" commandments and anticipates Christian distinctions (ceremonial laws pointing to Christ, civil laws contextual to ancient Israel, enduring moral law). Across religions, themes of inner purity versus external observance appear—e.g., in prophetic critiques within Judaism, or calls to ethical illumination in other traditions—yet Jesus uniquely centers fulfillment in His messianic person and kingdom ethic.

This synthesis draws the preservative urgency and practical warnings from the Life Application notes, the exegetical depth and hermeneutical balance from Blomberg, and the accessible missional application plus Old Testament continuity from the Bible Speaks Today series. The result is a call to distinctive, influential discipleship grounded in Scripture's full authority and Christ's completing work.

[Sources: 11-13]

Matthew 15:1-20 (Extra Commentary Given for Context)

The King Versus the Hypocrites: Religious Leaders

To this point Jesus had focused on ministry to the Jews. Now he was confronted by the Pharisees and scribes over the controversy of what is clean and unclean. This debate served as one of three or four turning points for Jesus. In the following context (beginning with 15:21) and through the end of Matthew 15, Jesus went directly into Gentile territory. He wanted to prove the point that the hypocrites were wrong in their standards of "cleanness." Perhaps he also went out of exasperation because of the persistent rejection he had received among the Jews. This foreshadows his announcement in 16:18 of the "new wineskin," the church. The "cleanness" debate served as a bridge between Jesus' Jewish ministry and his opening of ministry to the Gentiles.

15:1–2. For some time, Jesus had attracted a following from regions far and near, including Jerusalem. But this was the first time Matthew specifically recorded a confrontation between Jesus and any of the religious leaders from Jerusalem—the spiritual capital of Israel and the authoritative center of Judaism. It is possible that some of the religious leaders in previous encounters had been from Jerusalem, but this was the first time Matthew made specific mention of them and where they were from.

Many of Jesus' previous conflicts had probably been with local synagogue leaders in the various cities he had visited. His notoriety and the Pharisees' frustration with him had grown to the point that Jesus' opponents were now calling in the "big guns."

These men were concerned about the tradition of the elders. This was fitting for both the Pharisees and the scribes. Both held a fascination with the detailed implications of the Old Testament Law in every aspect of life. Through the centuries the Jewish authorities had put into spoken and written form what the law would mean in every possible situation. This oral law was not the Law of Moses but “the tradition of the elders.” The Jewish scholars had gone far outside God’s intended meaning for the Law, creating thousands of man-made regulations that were irrelevant or burdensome. Some of these traditions actually contradicted the original intent of God’s Law.

The specific regulation in question here was the ceremonial washing of one’s hands before eating. Even if Jesus’ disciples had washed with soap and water, but had not used the acceptable procedure, they were not considered ritually clean by the Pharisees.

The New Testament refers to a variety of authoritative man-made traditions as “the tradition of the elders” (Matt. 15:2), “human tradition” (Col. 2:8), and “the traditions of my fathers” (Gal. 1:14). Most often in view, at least with the Jewish opposition, was a body of oral teachings known as the Talmud and Mishnah. These teachings consisted of comment on the Law, interpretation of the Law, and detailed rules of behavior.

Elevating human interpretation or tradition to a place of authority alongside Scripture is a plague that has infected every generation. Jesus’ conflict with man-made tradition was often at the forefront of his ministry. Unfortunately, he might well regard many of our modern “authorities” the same way. What Jesus confronted here was not so different from the unwritten traditions of every denomination. We tend to put great stock in our traditions. Unfortunately, many of them are far removed from the teachings of Scripture.

15:3. Rather than defend his disciples’ handwashing practices, Jesus went on the offensive, showing that the Pharisees’ original question was foolish and did not warrant primary attention. He addressed their question (15:10–11, 15–20), but there was a more important issue that he addressed first. Jesus expressed greater concern over their transgression (a word that literally means “to turn aside from the path”) of the command of God for the sake of your tradition. Note the strong contrast between God’s commandment and your tradition. While the hypocrites claimed to enhance God’s Law through their tradition, Jesus claimed that God’s Law and their tradition were mutually exclusive. When their man-made regulations took precedence, those regulations took a person astray from the straight path of God’s Law (cf. the wide and narrow gates and roads of 7:13–14).

15:4–6. Having leveled the general accusation in verse 3, Jesus gave a specific example of their betrayal of God’s commandment, beginning with a statement of the commandment in verse 4. He then explained their departure from it in verses 5–6.

For indicates that Jesus was about to provide supporting evidence for the accusation of 15:3. Jesus drew on two separate instructions from four passages in the Pentateuch to emphasize the principle that God’s people are to honor their parents. The commandment, Honor your father and mother, is one of the Ten Commandments, found in Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16 Jesus chose a commandment that was central to the Jewish faith, well-known and unmistakable in its intent. Then he reinforced the commandment by referring to additional Mosaic legislation specifying the punishment for anyone who broke this commandment: Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death (Exod. 21:17; Lev. 20:9). By adding this quote, Jesus drove home the gravity of transgressing this particular commandment.

But indicates the contrast between what followed and what preceded between God's Law and the hypocrites' tradition. Note also the contrast between God said (15:3) and you say (15:4 you is emphatic). Jesus was shaming the hypocrites for pitting human words against God's Word.

Jesus was referring to a Jewish practice in which a person gave a gift that was devoted to God so it could be kept for oneself and not used for the good of others. Part of an adult child's obligation in honoring his parents was to care for them financially when they were in need, particularly as they grew older and were no longer able to make an adequate living. Widowed mothers or grandmothers were especially desperate for help. There was little opportunity for them to earn money, and they were unlikely to find a new husband to support them (1 Tim. 5:8). The Pharisees' loophole ("sorry, it is all 'devoted' to God") kept the younger generation from having to take care of their parents in their old age, and thus contradicted the Word of God.

By this means, said Jesus, the hypocrites nullify ("make void, revoke;" only here and Mark 7:13; Gal. 3:17) God's word for the sake of your tradition. Very possibly the ancient Jewish scholars who came up with this regulation had elderly parents they did not want to support. Or perhaps they were concocted by leaders who wanted to keep people's gifts "to God" that would otherwise have gone to the people's parents. Over time the "gifts" were allowed to stay in the hands of the "givers."

15:7–9. Jesus then showed how the Pharisees and scribes had fulfilled Isaiah's eighth-century b.c. prophecy (Isa. 29:13) concerning the hypocrisy of Judah. In fact, Jesus' statement was quite pointed, saying that Isaiah was prophesying about you. There was a clear continuity between the hypocrites then and in Jesus' day. Jesus addressed the Pharisees and scribes here as hypocrites. The English word is transliterated from the earlier classic Greek term for "one who wears a mask" on stage in a Greek drama—an actor or pretender—although by Jesus' day the language used the term exclusively for its present negative meaning. A hypocrite is a person who puts on an outward display that is not representative of what is truly inside. (See comment at 6:2.) As Jesus had demonstrated in 15:3–6, the religious leaders were putting on a show of spirituality and devotion to God and his Word. In reality, they were in rebellion against God and his Word.

Isaiah 29 is the second of four "woe oracles" (Isa. 28–31). In Isaiah 29:1–8, Yahweh describes the punishment he will bring down on Jerusalem. Beginning in Isaiah 29:9, he begins to transition into the reasons why he is judging Jerusalem. It must have been fearsome for these Pharisees to hear the words of condemnation by their great prophet Isaiah leveled at them: "Blind yourselves and be sightless ... [your] worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men" (Isa. 29:9, 13). The language Jesus used heightened the contrast between true, worshipful obedience and false, outward hypocrisy.

15:10–11. Having dealt with the real issue that stood between him and the hypocrites, Jesus returned to their original questions about handwashing (15:2). Instead of addressing the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus summoned the crowd, as though to invite them into the debate and to evaluate who was right about ritual handwashing. He then addressed the crowd.

Listen and understand is essentially the same as, "He who has ears, let him hear" (11:15; 13:9, 43). Only those who would "hear" with a heart of faith and "understand" would accept Jesus' answer to the question of the Pharisees and scribes.

Jesus responded to the question of 15:2 with a "parable" (cf. 15:15) which reversed the assumption underlying the original question. The Pharisees and scribes assumed that ritual defilement came from unclean things

outside the body, entering through the mouth. Jesus said that defilement comes because of unclean things from within a person's body exiting out through the mouth.

Unclean is from a word meaning "to make common," as opposed to ceremonially holy and pure. Jesus was not denying that people can become unacceptable before God. He differed with the religious leaders on how a person becomes defiled before God. They said God evaluated what goes into a person from outside, but Jesus said God evaluated what comes out of a person from inside.

15:12. Some time after this confrontation, the disciples tried to point out to the Lord that the Pharisees were offended at Jesus' words. They were probably referring to the entire sequence, including the confrontation over oral tradition (15:3–9) and Jesus' parabolic defense of his disciples' ceremonial hygiene practices (15:10–11). This began another of Jesus' private conversations for his disciples' ears only, continuing through 15:20 and including Jesus' explanation of the parable.

15:13–14. Of course, Jesus was aware of the Pharisees' offense; he had intended to trip them up. His response. Leave them, did not deny the real danger involved in angering the Jewish leaders. His best course of action was to stand by the truth, not trying to pacify the Pharisees and not trying to convince them further about their faults.

Jesus' calm confidence came out of the assurance that the Pharisees would be judged justly—both by God (15:13) and by the natural consequences of their own blindness (15:14). The plant terminology (15:13) brings to mind the parable of the weeds (13:24–30, 36–43). The hardened hearts of the Pharisees were not products of God's work. Although they claimed to represent God, they were actually some of the "weeds" planted by the Evil One. They were among those who, in rebellion against God, did evil themselves and caused others to do evil as well (13:41). So they would experience God's judgment. We will always have false religion in this world.

Using another illustration, Jesus said that the Pharisees were blind guides (15:14 also 23:16, 24). He may have been referring to a title the Pharisees had given themselves—"guide of the blind" (Rom. 2:19). Any effective guide must know where he is going to guide another person. The foolishness of the situation is self-evident; only seeing people can guide blind people. A blind guide would be both arrogant and in serious denial about his own condition—both of which were true of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees thought they understood the law, but they were really ignorant of the law's meaning and guilty of contradicting it. Thinking they were leading those under them along the right path, they were actually leading themselves and their followers into eternal danger (into a pit). They were unwittingly bringing judgment on themselves.

15:15–16. Peter, acting as the spokesman for the disciples, asked Jesus to explain the parable. The disciples needed the explanations, but their "ears to hear" allowed them to accept the truth of the parable.

Jesus expressed disappointment in the disciples' lack of understanding. The word still compares Peter's lack of understanding with that of the Pharisees. If the disciples had understood the superiority of cleansing of the heart over ritual outward cleansing, they would have understood the parable. It was their inability to understand this principle that prompted Jesus' disappointment more than their inability to understand the parable. Their perspective, like that of many Christians today (more "politically correct" than biblical), was

shaped and influenced more by their culture and peers than by their Lord and his Word. Though loyal and open to being taught, the disciples were often as far off the mark as the Pharisees were.

15:17. Jesus began explaining the parable by showing the things that go into a person's body from outside are harmless to his standing before God. We must distinguish carefully between washing for practical health purposes and the ceremonial washing that was at issue here.

If a person eats food with hands that are not ceremonially washed, the food is, in reality, no more or less clean (spiritually) than if that person had ceremonially washed. The body treats it the same either way. A person's decision one way or the other on ceremonial washing has no bearing on his or her standing before God. Even if the food or a person's hands are physically contaminated, and he becomes ill from the contamination, does not indicate he is unacceptable before God.

15:18–20. Jesus then revealed that it is not the mouth of a person that is the source of defilement, but the heart. The heart represents the invisible, "inner person." The inner person includes the mind and will—those components that determine moral character. The heart (not any external influence) is the source of all evil character, not the physical or spiritual "dirt" on a person's hands. The "renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:2) is critical for every believer. Christ detailed here the principle that a person is as he thinks in his heart. Entry into the heart is through the eye and the ear, not the mouth.

Jesus listed seven defiling sins that begin in a person's heart. Some of these manifest themselves through avenues other than one's mouth (e.g., murder, theft), but Jesus was not inconsistent here. Although the debate began over eating and washing, Jesus now began to broaden the discussion to encompass the whole-person expression of the evil in one's heart. The mouth happened to be one of the most prominent tools for good and for evil (Jas. 3:1–12). Jesus' list of sins was not meant to be comprehensive, but he gave a series of examples.

Jesus mentioned adultery, a sexual sin that defiles a marriage vow. Sexual immorality is a broader category that includes all kinds of sexual sin. Slander includes all abusive speech, whether against God or other people.

[Source: 14]

Resources:

Rev. Brad Standfest, (1) Logos Bible Commentaries: [1] Biblical texts (primarily the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John). [2] Joshua D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross* (Zondervan, 2018). [3] Louis St. Hilaire, *That You Might Have Life* (Emmaus Road Publishing, 2019). [4] Various biblical geography studies (e.g., estimates of travel distance). [5] Recommended: Interactive Bible maps (BibleMapper.com or Accordance/Logos software), *The Sacred Bridge* by Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley, or *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes* by Kenneth E. Bailey for cultural context. Books like *Walking with Jesus* by Pope Francis or resources from the Israel Ministry of Tourism on biblical sites can provide visuals and deeper insights. [6] Got Questions Ministries, *Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered* (Bellingham, WA: Faithlife, 2014–2021). [7] Joshua D. Chatraw and Mark D. Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 40. [8] Louis St. Hilaire, *That You Might Have Life: An Introduction to the Paschal Mystery of Christ*, ed. Emily Stimpson Chapman, *Formed in Christ Series* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road

Publishing, 2019), 56–57. [9] R. T. France, “Jesus Christ, Life and Teaching Of,” in *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood et al. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 571–572. [10] Mark D. Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture*, ed. D. A. Carson, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2006), 21:83. [11] *NIV Bible Speaks Today: Notes*. 2020. London: IVP. [12] Blomberg, Craig. 1992. *Matthew*. Vol. 22. *The New American Commentary*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers. [13] Barton, Bruce B. 1996. *Matthew*. *Life Application Bible Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [14] Weber, Stuart K. 2000. *Matthew*. Vol. 1. *Holman New Testament Commentary*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Sermon Notes:

Good Morning and Happy Sunday to Everyone...

I hope you are enjoying the wonderful weather we have been having all week... The 70's and 80's are back – Thank you Jesus!!

Today is June 7th, 2026... It's a day I will never forget until Christ returns... 35 years ago I married the love of my life. [PP Wedding Pic]

Happy Anniversary, Honey...

Let's Pray.

Welcome everyone joining us online... Here are the AVC Connections:

YouTube, App, Facebook/Website

Today I am excited to announce we are starting our Summer Series titled: “The Sandals of Jesus.” In Jesus’ day... and in the Mediterranean and Middle East, sandals were the most common form of footwear worn for everyday life...

Listen to this... Jesus in just 3–3.5 years of ministry while on earth walked roughly 3,500 miles... [PP Here is a Map of some of Jesus’ Travels as we find in the Gospels...]

3,500 miles... That is like walking from Boston all the way to LA... Then some... That averages to slightly over 20 miles per day...

The ministry and mission of Jesus was made clear by His words:

“The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost... I came to proclaim good news to the poor, give freedom to prisoners... to give sight to the blind and to set the oppressed free.” (Luke 19:10, Luke 4:18)

Literally... Everywhere Jesus’ sandals went people found peace, forgiveness and healing...

If I had to pick a slogan or motto for Jesus... it would be this:

“If the Son sets you free you will be free indeed.” John 8:36

Jesus loved the Word of God and alludes or quotes the Old Testament roughly 300 times in the Gospels... Many times Jesus references the O.T. when He is debating with the religious leaders...

You know who hated Jesus... It wasn't the Romans or the Gentile gang bangers... It was the religious leaders. Let's look at Matthew 15:1-9 — a heated exchange with Jesus and the religious fraudsters... [Read Matthew 15:1-9]

That's brutal. Like saying — You don't even believe in God's Word... You have your own words.

Theologian Web says this about the religious leaders:

“The Jewish Scholars had gone far outside God's intended meaning of the Bible. They created thousands of man-made rules and regulations that were irrelevant or burdensome. Some of the traditions actually contradicted God's Word.”

This summer we are going to look at Old Testament quotes Jesus used or alluded to that will help us become better disciples...

Today as we launch this series I want to spend a short time in the most famous sermon Christ gave... It's called the Sermon on the Mount...

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says 6-7 different times — “You have heard what was said... But I tell you...”

Jesus told the crowd on the Mount this powerful text: [PP Read Matthew 5:17-20 / Read in Bible / Preach (*See note on back to put into Bible)]

Matthew 5:17-20

“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. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

I want to close by answering this question: Jesus, what is my righteousness supposed to look like?

Let's read our closing passage that answers the question: Lord, what do you expect? [PP Read Matthew 5:13-16 / Read in Bible]

Matthew 5:13-16

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Devotional Questions:

These questions are drawn directly from the sermon emphasis on Jesus' walking ministry, His deep reverence for the Old Testament (quoted or alluded to ~300 times), His confrontation with man-made traditions

(Matthew 15:1-9), and the unified commentary on Matthew 5:13-20. They invite personal reflection, historical awareness of ancient Jewish context, and practical discipleship in light of Jesus' footsteps—wherever His sandals went, people encountered peace, forgiveness, healing, and freedom (Luke 4:18; 19:10; John 8:36).

1. Preserving Influence in a Decaying World: In the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, salt primarily preserved food in hot climates without refrigeration (as noted in historical sources like Dead Sea salt practices). Jesus calls you “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). Where in your daily “walk” (work, family, community) is moral or spiritual decay happening around you, and how can you act as a preservative force this week without compromising distinctiveness? What impurities might be diluting your saltiness?

2. Visible Good Deeds That Point to the Father: Jesus links light to practical compassion and “good deeds” that glorify God, not self (Matthew 5:14-16; cf. Matthew 3:8). Drawing from Jewish imagery of the Torah as light (Psalm 119:105) and Israel as a light to nations (Isaiah 42:6), how does hiding your light (through silence, conformity, or fear) contradict Jesus' 3,500-mile walking witness? Identify one specific good work you can do visibly this week that directs praise to the Father.

3. Heart Righteousness vs. External Tradition: Jesus demands a righteousness surpassing the Pharisees' external piety—one of the heart (Matthew 5:20; 1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 31:33). The religious leaders elevated burdensome man-made rules over God's Word (Matthew 15:1-9; Isaiah 29:13). In what areas of your life have you substituted cultural expectations, denominational habits, or personal “traditions” for heartfelt obedience to Scripture? How does Jesus' fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 5:17) invite deeper inner transformation?

4. Honoring the Full Authority of Scripture: Jesus affirmed every yod and stroke of the Old Testament until its purposes are accomplished in Him (Matthew 5:18). Given that He embodied over 300 prophetic fulfillments (e.g., virgin birth in Isaiah 7:14, suffering servant in Isaiah 53), how has your engagement with the Old Testament grown? Choose one Old Testament passage Jesus referenced and journal how it points to Him and applies to your walk today.

5. Fulfilling, Not Abolishing: In first-century Judaism, groups like Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes interpreted Torah differently—often with legalism or withdrawal. Jesus brings the Law to its intended goal through the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 7–10). How does viewing all Scripture through Christ's person and ministry (rather than rigid categories or cultural reinterpretations) change how you read and obey the Bible? Where do you need greater continuity with its enduring moral heart (love of God and neighbor)?

6. Teaching and Practicing Faithfully: Disregarding even the “least” commands or leading others astray results in being called “least” in the kingdom (Matthew 5:19). As Jesus trained disciples who would carry His message after His sandals no longer walked the earth, how are you modeling and teaching Scripture accurately—in your home, church, or online influence? What risk do you see in “setting aside” parts of God's Word to fit modern trends?

7. Permeating Society Without Withdrawal: The salt and light metaphors reject monastic separatism or compromise that renders believers ineffective (historical parallel: Qumran's “sons of light” vs. societal engagement). Jesus crossed boundaries in His travels (Galilee to Gentiles, Samaria). In what ways are you tempted to form isolated “Christian enclaves,” and how can you instead be an active irritant and illuminator in your sphere—arresting decay while reflecting Christ's light?

8. Freedom Through True Righteousness: Jesus' motto of freedom ("If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed," John 8:36) flows from heart-righteousness empowered by relationship with Him, not self-effort (Matthew 5:20; John 14:6). Reflecting on the Pharisees' outward focus versus prophetic calls for inner purity (Micah 6:8; Amos 5:21-24), where do you still rely on performance or rules rather than God's inner work? How will following in Jesus' sandals this week deepen dependence on His Spirit for genuine righteousness?