

# The Gospel According To MATTHEW

## Chapter 5:17-26

### ***“How About Some R & R!”*** ***(Righteousness & Reconciliation)***

#### **> #1 – Let’s Learn the Way of RIGHTEOUSNESS (v17-20)**

(v17) Jesus did not come to “destroy” the LAW – Destroy in Gk. is *kataluo*; to loosen down (disintegrate), i.e. (by implication) to demolish (literally or figuratively). The Pharisees thought Jesus was doing this. To begin with, His authority did not come from any of the recognized leaders or schools. Instead of teaching "from authorities" as did the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus taught with authority.

- Warren Wiersbe writes, “Jesus made it clear that He had come to honor the Law and help God’s people **love it, learn it, and live it**. He would not accept the artificial righteousness of the religious leaders. Their righteousness was only an external masquerade. Their religion was a dead ritual, not a loving relationship. It was artificial; it did not reproduce itself in others in a living way.

It made them proud, not humble; it led to bondage, not liberty. Not only in His authority, but also in His activity, Jesus seemed to defy the Law. He deliberately healed people on the Sabbath Day and paid no attention to the traditions of the Pharisees. Our Lord’s associations also seemed contrary to the Law, for He was the friend of publicans and sinners.”

- ***What is God’s LAW?*** – LAW in Hebrew is *Torah*, “***teaching, instruction***.” A term employed almost 200 times in the Bible and signifying the revealed will of God with respect to human conduct. It includes all the divine commands and precepts for regulating man’s moral life without and within.

The first five books of the Bible are called the **Mosaic Law**, which is *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*; also known as the **Pentateuch**.

- ***The Pentateuch is generally divided into six major sections:***

- (1) the creation of the world and its inhabitants (Gen 1-11);
- (2) the period from Abraham to Joseph (Gen 12-50);
- (3) Moses and the departure of the Israelites from Egypt (Ex 1-18);
- (4) God’s revelation at Sinai (Ex 19-Num 10);
- (5) the wilderness wanderings (Num 11-36); and
- (6) the addresses of Moses (Deuteronomy 1-34).

- **God’s law, unlike those of other nations of the ancient world, also viewed all human life as especially valuable because man is created in God’s image**. Thus, biblical law was more humane. It avoided mutilations and other savage punishments.

Victims could not inflict more injury than they had received. Neither could criminals restore less than they had taken or stolen simply because of a class distinction. Everyone was equal before God’s law. The “eye for eye” requirement of the Mosaic Law was not a harsh statement that required cruel punishment. Instead, it was a mandate for equality before the law (Ex 21:24).

Each criminal had to pay for his own crime (Num 35:31). Under the law codes of some pagan nations, the rich often could buy their way out of punishment. God's law especially protected the defenseless orphan, widow, slave, and stranger from injustice (Ex 21:2,20-21; 22:21-23).

- Some scholars refer to **Leviticus 17-26 as the "holiness code."** Although it does not contain all of God's directions for ceremonial holiness, it does set forth much of what God requires. These chapters contain moral and ritual specifications regarding the tabernacle and public worship as well as the command to love one's neighbor as oneself (19:18).

- **The nation of Israel was to be characterized by separation from other nations.** Several of these laws prohibited pagan worship. Because God is holy (21:8), Israel was to be holy and separated from other nations (20:26).

- *The Book of Deuteronomy* is sometimes called the **Deuteronomic Code**. This book contains the command to love God with all one's heart, soul, and might (Deut 6:5) as well as a second record of the **Ten Commandments** (Deut 5).

- **Biblical law is more than a record of human law.** It is an expression of what God requires of man. It rests on the eternal moral principles that are consistent with the very nature of God Himself. Therefore, biblical law (the Ten Commandments) is the summary of moral law. As such it sets forth fundamental and universal moral principles.

- **What is often called the civil law includes those specific laws that regulate civil and social behavior.** All such laws are fundamentally religious since God is the lawgiver and ruler over everything.

- *There are eight distinct categories of civil law in the Old Testament:*

- (1) laws regulating leaders,
- (2) laws regulating the army,
- (3) criminal laws,
- (4) laws dealing with crimes against property,
- (5) laws relating to humane treatment,
- (6) laws about personal and family rights,
- (7) laws about property rights, and
- (8) laws regulating other social behavior.

God's people were to *preserve and study the Lord's law* (Deut 4:2; 6:6-7), *revere His name* (Deut 8:6; 10:12), *be grateful and thankful* (Deut 8:10), and *obey, love, and serve their redeemer God* (Deut 10:14-16; 6:4-5; 11:1,13-14).<sup>1</sup>

- **In the New Testament we understand the purpose of the LAW - 1 Timothy 1:8-11 - *But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.***

**The LAW cannot save us only Jesus who fulfilled the LAW! We are saved through faith and not by works (Eph. 2:8-9). In Galatians 3:21-25 - *For if there had been a law given***

---

<sup>1</sup> (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

*which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*

> ***Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled Gods Law in every area of His life:***

- **He fulfilled it in His birth** because He was "made under the Law" (Gal 4:4) every prescribed ritual for a Jewish boy was performed on Him by His parents.

- **He certainly fulfilled the Law in His life**, for nobody was ever able to accuse Him of sin. While He did not submit to the traditions of the scribes and Pharisees, He always did what God commanded in the Law. The Father was "well pleased" with His Son (Matt 3:17; 17:5).

- **In His death and resurrection Jesus especially fulfilled the Law.** He bore the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13). He fulfilled the Old Testament types and ceremonies so that they no longer are required of the people of God (see Heb 9-10). He set aside the Old Covenant and brought in the New Covenant.

When Jesus died, He rent the veil of the temple and opened the way into the holiest of holies (Heb 10:19). He broke down the wall that separated the Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:11-13). Because the Law was fulfilled in Christ we no longer need temples made with hands (Acts 7:48 ff) or religious rituals (Col 2:10-13).

- **How can we fulfill the Law?** By yielding to the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to work in our lives (**Romans 8:1-6**).

- **The Holy Spirit enables us to experience the "righteousness of the law" in daily life.**

This does not mean we live sinlessly perfect lives, but it does mean that Christ lives out His life through us by the power of His Spirit (**Galatians 2:20-21 – I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.**).

**Jesus wants us to know more of the righteousness of God, obey it and share it with others.**

The moral law of God has not changed. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament epistles and commanded to believers. (The exception is the Sabbath commandment, which was given as a sign to Israel, see Ex. 31:12-18; Neh 9:14; Col. 2:16).

- **We do not obey an external Law because of fear. Believers today obey an internal Law and live because of love.** The Holy Spirit teaches us the Word and enables us to obey. Sin is still sin, and God still punishes sin. In fact, we in this present age are more responsible because we have been taught and given more!

> ***What about the Prophets?***

**The main role of the prophet was to bear God's word for the purpose of teaching, reproving, correcting, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16).** Whether warning of impending danger or disclosing God's will to the people, they were similar in function to the modern Preacher/Pastor in the church.

Prophets were referred to as **messengers of the Lord** (Isa 44:26; Hag 1:13), **servants of God** (Amos 3:7), **shepherds** (Zech 11:4,7; Jer 17:16), and **watchmen** (Isa 62:6).

Many times, the prophet stood alone and spoke to an unsympathetic or even antagonistic audience. Great courage and independence of spirit was required. The prophet was not a man of routine like the priest; he charted new paths for the people.

For “**PROPHECIES RESPECTING CHRIST**” see supplement.

(v18) *one jot or one tittle* - A “**jot**” refers to the smallest Hebrew letter, which is a meager stroke of the pen, like an accent mark or an apostrophe. The “**tittle**” is a tiny extension on a Hebrew letter, like the serif in modern typefaces. Not one *jot or tittle* is thereby erased; the underlying truths of those Scriptures remain—and in fact the mysteries behind them are now revealed in the brighter light of the gospel.

**The Old Testament is the preparation (Isaiah 40:3).**

**The Gospels are the manifestation (John 1:29).**

**The Book of Acts is the propagation (Acts 1:8).**

**The Epistles give the explanation (Colossians 1:27).**

**The Book of Revelation is the consummation (Revelation 1:7).**

**The Bible is all about JESUS! He bleeds and triumphs from Genesis to Revelation!**

(v19) **Are we least or great in the kingdom of heaven?** To be GREAT we must be doers of God’s Word, not hearers only (James 1:22-25). We are to teach others God’s way, truth, and life through Jesus Christ and the Word of God! (Matt 28:18-20).

(v20) **How can our righteousness exceed the Pharisees and scribes, so we can enter the kingdom of heaven?**

Barnes, the Bible commentator writes, “The Pharisees and scribes righteousness consisted in outward observances of the ceremonial and traditional law. They offered sacrifices, fasted often, prayed much, were punctilious about ablutions (washings), and tithes, and the ceremonies of religion, but neglected justice, truth, purity, and holiness of heart (Matt 23:13-33).”

**The righteousness that Jesus required in his kingdom was purity, chastity, honesty, temperance, the fear of God, and the love of man.** It is pure, eternal, reaching the motives, and making the life holy. The believer’s righteousness is based upon that imputed righteousness of Christ obtained by faith (Rom 3:21-26).

**> #2 – *How about some RECONCILIATION! (v21-26)***

(v21-22) **Jesus CORRECTS** - the evolving interpretations of fallacious religious leaders and defines the Scriptures according to their original intent. Jesus deals with the original “**Thou shalt not kill**” (Hebrew *ratsach* – *to murder*, Ex 20:13). This properly denotes taking the life of another with malice, or with an intention to **murder** him. The Jews understood it as meaning no more.

The comment of our Saviour shows that it was spiritual and was designed to extend to the thoughts and feelings as well as the external act. Most murders are “**crimes of passion**” caused by anger among friends, relatives, and domestic violence. Anger ***without a cause leads*** to murder.

There is a ***righteous anger***, for example, Jesus chasing the moneychangers out of the temple court (Matt 21:12-13). In **Ephesians 4:26-27** it says, “***Be angry, and do not sin***”: ***do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.***”

**(v23-26) From contention to RECONCILIATION** - Pharisees conformed to the external rites of religion, no matter how much envy, malice, or secret hatred they might have, they thought they were doing well.

- **Our Savior taught a different doctrine.** It was of more consequence to have the heart right than to perform the outward act. If, therefore, says he, a man has gone so far as to bring his gift to the very altar, and should remember that anyone had anything against him, it was his duty there to leave his offering and go and be reconciled. "To obey is better than sacrifice," (1 Sam 15:22).

He that comes to worship his Maker filled with malice, and hatred, and envy, and at war with his brethren, is a hypocritical worshipper, and must meet with God's displeasure. God is not deceived, and he will not be mocked.

Is there a brother or sister that you're in conflict or them with you?

- **How to RECONCILE:**

**Jesus tells a story in verses 25-26 that (1) we need to reconcile QUICKLY, don't wait, procrastinate, put off or delay, do it today!**

**(2) Communicate with a spirit of gentleness (Galatians 6:1-5 - *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear his own load.*)**

**(3) Results - James 5:16 - *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.***

- **Unfortunately:**

The world praises pride, not humility.

The world endorses sin, especially if you "get away with it."

The world is at war with God, **while God is seeking to reconcile His enemies and make them His children.**

**In 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 - *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.***

**Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**