

Rev. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church  
**Matthew 5:19-20 | What Jesus Says About Heaven**  
September 25, 2022

**WELCOME:**

- Please turn your Bibles to Matthew 5.
- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

**REVIEW:**

We continue our study of Jesus' sermon—*The Sermon on the Mount*.

Last Sunday, we learned what Jesus had to say about the Bible in Matthew 5:17-18.

We addressed the questions that we often hear today:

- “How can we trust the Bible?”
- “Why would we take this ancient book seriously?”
- “It was written by men and not God!”

And we saw how Jesus addressed those questions—indirectly.

Jesus is pro-Bible because He is The Bible!

We learned how Jesus is the theme of all 66 books in the Bible.

He is on nearly every page of Scripture.

Jesus is the scarlet thread that ties Genesis to Revelation.

We went through every OT book and saw how Jesus is the fulfillment of every law, just as he taught us in Matthew's text.

We also looked at the elements in the OT Tabernacle and saw how Jesus fulfilled those OT Elements within Himself in the NT.

I find those kinds of studies fascinating and hope you did too.

Even though it seems like we drank from a firehose, we really only scratched the surface

If you're interested in learning more about how Jesus is the theme of the OT, there's a great book called "Theophany" by Dr. Vern Poythress.

Theo meaning God and *phainein* meaning "to appear."

Theophany is an appearance of God.

### LW KEYPOINTS:

1. The OT was inspired by Christ, points to Christ, and is fulfilled by Christ.
2. Jesus fulfilled the OT Law by being the fulfillment Himself.

We discussed how all of this applies to our individual lives today.

We learned how it was God who gave the Law—not man.

Therefore laws are from outside of us.

**Isaiah 55:9**—For as heaven is higher than earth,  
so my ways are higher than your ways,  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

This means that God's laws are perfect.

It also means that there are consequences when we break God's Laws.

For example, when we separate God from the Law, we lose the standard on which the law was given.

In other words, when you separate the law from The Lawgiver, laws have no weight or meaning because everything becomes relative.

Relative meaning that there is a social acceptance from the world.

But there's also a relevance that comes from searching out the truth  
And yet, nothing could be more relevant to us than God's revelation found in Scripture.

Scripture is the standard of what is relevant and what is not. - Regardless of culture.  
- Regardless of the day: Age in which we live.

~~We live in an age where people have deceived themselves into believing that everything is relative and that there is no absolute truth.~~

~~It seems that everybody's opinion is their form of truth— which does two things:~~

- ~~1. People may believe it but there is no way that a society can live out that kind of philosophy.~~
- ~~2. More importantly, it's a tragedy that has eternal consequences.~~

That's a short review from last Sunday.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

So last week, we learned what Jesus said— about the Bible.

Today we'll learn what Jesus says— about Heaven.

If you asked someone on the street how to get into Heaven, what do you think they would say?

The most common response is something like this— *To be a good person.*

But how *good*?

What do *they* mean by “good?”

Goodness is a relative term.

Are they talking Mother Teresa good or Adolph Hitler good?

There's got to be some kind of standard somewhere for us to know for certainly that we're going to Heaven...right?

That's the question for today.

And it's an important question because it's an eternal question.

So what's Jesus say about Heaven? Let's find out.

*\*Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.\**

**SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:19-20 CSB**

**Matthew 5:17**— "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

**Matthew 5:18**— For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.

**Matthew 5:19**— Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

**Matthew 5:20**— For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

*\*\*This is the Word of the Lord for River Bible Church.*

**EXEGESIS:**

**Matthew 5:19**— *Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

*Therefore*—always go back and see what the “therefore” is there for—otherwise, you will miss the context of the passage.

**Matthew 5:17**— *“Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.*

Jesus is saying, *I'm for you—not against you.*

*I'm not a rogue Rabbi bringing a new doctrine.*

*I'm fulfilling the commands of Scripture that were given from the very beginning.*

**Matthew 5:18**— *For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.*

So the Law is still in effect here in the first century.

Jesus is saying that the Law is not going away.

**Matthew 5:19**— *Therefore, (because the Law is still in place) whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.*

Breaks: *lyō (lou-o)* —If we choose to annul, unbind, or unfasten the OT commands from our life, we will be called the least in Heaven.

Your translation may use the word, *annul*.

*Annul* comes from *nil* = to bring the word of God to nothing.

If we make God's Word void—

If we pick and choose what we obey and treat the Bible like a suggestion box, Jesus says we will be called *the least in Heaven*.

The picture here is loosening God's perfect standards and lowering them because I can't keep them or attain the perfect standard itself.

Breaks: *lyō* (*lou-o*) —It comes from the same Greek root word that Jesus used in verse seventeen—*abolish the law*.

His version, *kataluō* in verse seventeen, is stronger—to destroy or tear down.

We get our English word antinomian from the Greek verb *kataluō*.

And that is not an accident.

Antinomian *or* antinomianism is destroying the church today.

It's also one of the biggest threats to today's true church.

*Anti* means “against”; *nomos*, “law” = anti-law.

Antinomianism literally means “anti-law-ism.”

This person sees himself as under no obligation to follow any type of moral code.

In other words, *No one will tell me what to do.*

*I'm free because of God's grace.*

*Me and Jesus! That's all I need!*

*I don't need the institutional church—I'm not going to be a part of organized religion.*

So in other words, what this person is saying—*"I'm not accountable to anyone for my life."*

These are the same people who want people to follow them and yet submit to no one themselves.

The consequences of antinomianism are apparent.

The complete breakdown of marriage and the home has led to the very redefinition of marriage itself.

The collapse of the entire education system <sup>the</sup> schools,

The chaos of politics and the state.

The complete disintegration of society in general.

Why? We've taken God's law (Ten Commandments) out of these institutions.

When no one wants to be accountable to anyone else, anarchy is the only way to survive.

It's every man for himself.

Antinomianism is not new.

Moses tells the Israelites:

**Deuteronomy 12:8**—"You are not to do as we are doing here today; everyone is doing whatever seems right in his own sight.

How do we know what is right?

The book of Judges is the darkest period in the history of the Israelites:

**Judges 17:6**—*In those days there was no king in Israel; (no leader = no law) everyone did whatever seemed right to him.*

**Proverbs 12:15**—*A fool's way is right in his own eyes,*

**Proverbs 21:2**—*All a person's ways seem right to him,*

So being accountable to no one is antinomianism = anti-law.

Now we also want to address the opposite error—which is legalism.

Legalism says you can get to heaven by your own good deeds.

In other words, a legalist sets up his own rules to keep so that he can feel better about himself.

He also forces and guilts people into following his rules as well.

Legalism says that I can get to Heaven because I try really hard at being a good person.

*I'm nice, try not to cuss...to much.*

*I even <sup>give</sup> spare change to the homeless guy on the corner.*

But is that what Jesus is preaching in this text on the Sermon on the Mount?

Let's find out.

**Matthew 5:19**—*Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands*



What's Jesus mean by "least?"

Evidently, there is some kind of hierarchy with commands themselves.

The rabbis felt that not every command is equal.

They thought that some were more important than others.

They spent hours debating what commands were essential and those that were not.

So the rabbis distinguished between what they considered "light" commandments and "weighty" commandments.

So they divided the 613 commandments of the OT.

They came up with 248 commands that they thought were positive.

Leaving 365 commands negative.

Now, we have a hint of this kind of separation later in Matthew's Gospel. Remember when a Pharisee asked Jesus...

**Matthew 22:36**—*"Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?"*

In other words, what's the one thing I'm to do to get into Heaven?

**Matthew 22:37**—*He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.,"*

**Matthew 22:38**—*This is the greatest and most important command.*

So Jesus affirms some kind of order/hierarchy to the Law.

**Matthew 22:39**—*The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.,*

**+** **Matthew 22:40**— *All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."*

So Jesus gives the Pharisee a command that he wasn't expecting.

The Pharisee was expecting Jesus to give him something to do.

He wanted something to accomplish.

The same thing happens to us today.

It's so easy for us to think that we're spiritual or saved by our good actions, church attendance, Bible studies, and so-called good deeds.

But what Jesus is teaching is that it's much more important to be than to do.

Once your heart is right, the rest of your life is simple—not easy, but simple.

Only when you get your heart right before a holy God can you do anything for Him.

**+** **KEYPOINT #1:**

*Some commands are greater than others, but none are to be ignored.*

You can't rip out certain pages of your Bible—those things you don't like are still there.

Think of God's law as a chain where each link is a command.

Each command is tied to the next.

When you break one command, that link is broken; therefore, the chain is no longer functional—meaning that all the laws have been broken.

**Matthew 5:19**— *Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same*

Notice here that each one of us is accountable for keeping God's commands, but those of us who teach are also accountable for the people under our care.

**James 3:1**— *Not many should become teachers, my brothers, because you know that we will receive a stricter judgment.*

*"Whew, I'm glad I'm not a Bible teacher..."*

And that's fine. Maybe God didn't call you to teach His Word formally...

But, I'm not so sure God is going to let you off the hook that easy.

This is most definitely a warning to those who teach.

However, each one of you also teaches others in some form or fashion.

We all teach by what we say.

We all teach by our attitude toward others.

And all of us teach by what we do.

What we do is a living proof text of what we genuinely believe about God — regardless of what we say.

**Matthew 5:19**— *Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same*

It's one thing to make a mistake or to unintentionally teach something to where the teacher is in error.

But it's another thing to specifically teach false doctrine with the intent for others to do the same.

## **KEYPOINT #2:**

*It matters how people handle the Holy.*

Because of social media, we have seen the indoctrination of false teachings escalate substantially over the past decade.

We have thousands of people with a microphone and nothing to say.

We have false teachers regurgitating what the heretics have taught from the first century—all they have done is repackage the heresy into a new name.

Heresy is one reason church history is so important.

But we also have a new set of 21st-century issues.

There will always be people outside the church who ridicule the Bible—so what.

The bigger problem are the TV evangelists who interpret God's Word to feed their own pocket.

Rather than feed the flock with the true Word of God,—they beat them into submission, with junk food.

Or these false teachers change the definitions of words so that people can stay in their sin and even celebrate their sin—

And even worse, condemn those who disapprove of their sin—~~all because they think they are a Christian.~~

Dear friends, these false teachers are easy to recognize.

False teachers have a certain look to them.

False teachers have a specific sound to their preaching.

Let me give you some general principles that I've noticed regarding false teachers teaching false churches.

1. Is the preaching done in a tone and spirit of reverence, or does it look more like a talk show? Does it look like the world?
2. Is the preaching more about you or Jesus?
3. How often does the preacher teach on things like sin, obedience, repentance, and hell?

Some of these things are pretty obvious.

Others are not.

I would encourage you not to believe everything you hear— And dear friends, that includes what you're hearing from me today.

Search the Bible for yourself—read the Word of God by the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit is your teacher and your church is your sounding board.

*Let's not fall into Antinomianism.*

Write down your questions. Get a good solid Bible commentary.

**Matthew 5:19**— Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

*Will be called*—Who's calling who, names in Heaven?

Is verse 19 talking about what other people will say about us?

Probably not. When we look at what the rest of Scripture says about Heaven, that doesn't fit.

This calling of *being the least* probably refers to what God Himself will say to us if we break His commands and teach others to do the same.

Now, notice that Jesus is not saying that these false teachers will lose their salvation.

They will still be in the kingdom of heaven, but notice that it appears that there is some type of hierarchy when we get there.

Do you see the mercy in that? That's amazing.

**Matthew 5:19**— *Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.*

That phrase, *The Kingdom of Heaven* is used three times in these two verses.

What is the Kingdom of Heaven?

Both John the Baptizer and Jesus started preaching the same thing...

**Matthew 3:2**—*"Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!"*  
(Matthew 4:17)

Jesus started preaching the Beatitudes by saying...

**Matthew 5:3**—*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.*

He also closed the Beatitudes with it...

**Matthew 5:10**—Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Jesus teaches us how to pray in the Lord's prayer and refers to His Kingdom...

**Matthew 6:10**—Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus goes on to teach about the Kingdom of Heaven 161 times in the Gospels.

He refers to it here as a real kingdom.

Jesus also uses it in His ~~teaching~~ teaching in parables.

So the Kingdom of Heaven / Kingdom of God is many things.

### **KEYPOINT 3:**

*The kingdom of ~~God~~ Heaven is wherever Jesus is king! It is the rule and reign of God.*

If Jesus is king in your heart, then the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:21).

*We can say it this way...*

The Kingdom of Heaven on Earth is the Church—it's you and me.

However, because Jesus is king in heaven—the Kingdom of ~~God~~ Heaven is also in heaven (Psalm 103:19).

And that's the context of Jesus' statement here.

**Matthew 5:19**—*But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great...*

This is so cool.

Because Jesus defines greatness for us!

Your spiritual resume does ~~not~~ determine greatness.

In other words, greatness is not defined by how many homeless people you've fed, homes you built, wells you've dug, or the number of people you've brought to Christ.

Greatness is determined by your obedience to the Scriptures.

Greatness is defined by obedience to the Word of God!

And Jesus pressed into this point...

**+** **Matthew 5:20**— *For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.*

*For I tell you*—Jesus is about to turn the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees upside down.

For the next few Sunday's Jesus correctly interrupts the Scriptures that the rabbis have misinterpreted for thousands of years.

**+** **Matthew 5:20**— *For I tell you, unless your righteousness...*

As Jesus' sermon progresses, we realize that Jesus did not expect his disciples to surpass the scribes and Pharisees at their own game.

Instead, Jesus defines righteousness back to its original meaning.

**+** **Matthew 5:20**— *For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees.*

Think of a river that is overflowing.



The river is giving more water than the banks can handle.

That's the word picture here of surpassing.

**Matthew 5:20**— *For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees,*

The disciples thought that Scribes and Pharisees were the godliest people on the planet.

The scribes and Pharisees were looked up to and admired because they were the ones who interpreted the Bible.

They were the religious leaders of the day.

They were the the pastors, priests and ministers like we have today.

“Scribe” in Greek is *grammateús*. We get our English word *grammar* from it.

The scribes were the ones who recorded the law, copied the law, and were authorities on the OT.

They were the religious scholars of the day—the Ph.D's.

Many scribes could recite the entire OT verbatim because they devoted their lives to recopying and interrupting the law.

The Jews had a saying, “If only two people go to heaven, one will be a scribe and the other a Pharisee.”

If I were a betting man, I'd have to guess that no one at RBC has ever studied the scriptures like the Pharisees and the scribes—and yet, Jesus says this:

**Matthew 5:20**— For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

What?

If these guys can't get into heaven, who can?

How is it possible that these men devote their entire lives to knowing the OT, and yet they missed Heaven?

*Now, the oppos. He must also be true — And this is a hard pill to swallow*

Let me say it in the negative. A bit stronger here...

How can these religious leaders of Jesus' day devote their entire lives to knowing the OT, and yet they are going to hell?

Answer: They are unredeemed and unregenerate.

They were not born again and did not have the faith of their father, Abraham.

They are worldly and see their positions as careers.

They were never called into the ministry— it was a job— this is how they made a living.

The scribes and Pharisees were religious businessmen—they were not shepherds.

Although they studied God's divine word, they interpreted it through human means.

When Jesus preached these words, you probably heard audible gasps from the Disciples.

This was probably the most radical thing He had taught yet.

It may seem to us, looking back—that the Pharisees made things harder will all their external rules and traditions.

But in all reality, they made things easier for themselves because their version of holiness, godliness, and righteousness were purely external.

Now please don't misunderstand. Keeping these man-made traditions was hard work, but it could be done.

Not only could it be done, but it could also be done by themselves with no faith in God.

And that's Jesus' point.

Jesus goes into an extended teaching on the scribes and Pharisees...

**Matthew 23:1**— Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples:

**Matthew 23:2**— "The scribes and the Pharisees are seated in the chair of Moses.

In other words, these men have authority.

**Matthew 23:3**— Therefore do whatever they tell you, and observe it. But don't do what they do, because they don't practice what they teach.

**Matthew 23:4**— They tie up heavy loads that are hard to carry and put them on people's shoulders, but they themselves aren't willing to lift a finger to move them.

**Matthew 23:5**— They do everything to be seen by others: They enlarge their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels.,

Jesus is talking about their clothes—we see the same thing with today's false teachers with their skinny jeans or Armani suits.

The insinuation with their clothes is that when you believe in Jesus and follow their teachings, you, too, will be able to dress like them and have a pain free life.

You too, can have your best life now—you don't have to wait for the Kingdom of Heaven—sounds good doesn't it?

Please don't fall for it—they are lying to you.

+ **Matthew 23:6**— *They love the place of honor at banquets, the front seats in the synagogues,*

+ **Matthew 23:7**— *greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called 'Rabbi' by people.*

Everything was external—much like the show we often see today when churches make headline news.

*All that to say this. —*  
The scribes and Pharisees knew they could not be holy in the same way God is holy—~~and had no desire to be~~—so they simply changed the meaning of holiness.

Jesus is teaching that a religion by our own works is a false system.

They lowered the standard of God's holiness and taught others to do the same.

*Matthew 23:2-3*  
Here's the problem—they did not think God would judge them for what they thought (interior motives or ambitions) but only for what they did.

They saw nothing wrong with having evil thoughts... as long as they didn't act on them.

And they thought wrong.

To Jesus, our motives mean everything. Why?

Because if our motives are not restrained—if some sort of self discipline is not applied—those motives will turn to actions ~~and behaviors.~~

So the scribes and Pharisees were constantly going through rituals for forgiveness

**KEYPOINT #4:**

*Man-made ritual is never a substitute for God's righteousness.*

In other words, God wants a relationship with you.

He's not looking for a robot or a golden retriever.

**Matthew 5:20**— *For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.*

So how do you get into Heaven?

This is the best news you will ever hear!

**KEYPOINT #5:**

*The One who demands perfect righteousness gives perfect righteousness.*

The One who tells us how to get into Heaven is Heaven Himself.

**John 14:6**— *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

No church, ritual, works, philosophy, or system can bring a person to God.

Only God brings people to God.

The righteousness and the perfection that God requires, God also gives—freely!

**John 3:16**—For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

It's free! All you have to do is believe.

It certainly isn't deserved, earned, or accomplished, but only accepted.

So Jesus' main point is this—

We are not to act like the scribes and Pharisees— we are to think and act like God instead.

~~And you think to yourself, "well, I can't do that. God is demanding perfection, and I'm not perfect."~~

~~Yes, and that's the whole point.~~

~~God's law was not given for you to keep—it was given to reveal your imperfections.~~

## **PREACH**

So going back to our original question this morning—

If you asked someone on the street how to get into Heaven, what would they say?

To be a good person.

But how *good* are we supposed to be?

How good is good?

Is it Mother Teresa good or Billy Graham good?

Neither—it's Jesus Christ good.

The problem with that answer is that we don't like it.

And we don't like it because our default mode to spiritual things and all things considered religion is superficial.

Dear friends, there are only two religions:

1. Human Striving
2. Divine Accomplishment.

Both are based on works.

Human striving is based on yours.

Self-righteousness—this lie that we're good enough— is the religion of human striving.

But, Divine accomplishment is based on God Himself—the person and works of Jesus Christ.

And it's the work of perfection and the fulfilling of the Law that Jesus gives to you—if you believe.

So what Jesus is saying about Heaven this morning is this—if you want to get to Heaven you must either be perfect, or know someone who is. perfect

↳ because you don't need forgiveness.

## PRAYER

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