

Authentic Christians

Lesson 5 – Matthew 5:14-20

1. The Second Metaphor – Light (5:14-16)

- The teaching about “light” is very similar to the teaching about “salt” – Christians are the light of the world to preserve a righteous testimony against the blackness of unrighteousness.
 - The two sources of light (city and candle) are both symbols of light’s property and function: no matter how intense (city) or how dim (candle), in both cases light is appreciated or else the darkness would be absolute.

“... when Christ was in the world, he was a bit like the sun, which is here by day and gone by night. The sun gives light, but when the sun goes down, the moon comes up. The moon is a bit like the church. The moon shines too, but it only shines because it reflects the sun’s light. Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world’ (John 8:12 & 9:5). But when he was thinking that he would soon be taken out of the world, he told his disciples, ‘You are the light of the world’” (Boice, The Gospel of Matthew, Vol. 1, pg. 77)

- The expressions “cannot be hidden” and “gives light to all” are synonymous, signifying the extent of a believer’s influence – they are to be a beacon to the source of their blessedness and a fitting instrument/tool of God’s work in the world.
- Vs. 16 helps clarify the content, method and purpose of disciples as lights (See Titus 3:8):
 - Good Works – the content of our light should be a righteousness that is both acceptable to others (Rom. 13:3) and attractive (1 Pt. 2:12)
 - Before Men – we are to exhibit a morality “in the presence of”, not just “for the benefit of”
 - Glorify God – our morality is not for our praise or advancement, but for the glory of God

“Such Christians refuse to rob their employers by being lazy on the job, or to rob their employees by succumbing to greed and stinginess. They are first to help a colleague in difficulty, last to return a barbed reply. They honestly desire the advancement of the other’s interests, and honestly dislike smutty humor. Transparent in their honesty and genuine in their concern, they reject both the easy answer of the doctrinaire politician and laissez-faire stance of the selfish secular man. Meek in personal demeanor, they are bold in righteous pursuits.” (Carson, The Sermon on the Mount, pg. 33)

2. Applicational Questions

- What is “lifestyle evangelism” and should that type be the main mode of evangelism by Christians?
- Should Christians be engaged in community events and issues? If so, how much?

- If you believe that Christians should take a more active role for righteousness in their community, what are the ways believers can become involved?
- What role should the local church take in promoting righteous living within their community?
- What are the threats to a person's saltiness and intensity as a light?
- How would you define "worldliness"?

"What is the use of evangelicalism seeming to get larger and larger if sufficient numbers of those under the name evangelical no longer hold to that which makes evangelicalism evangelical? If this continues, we are not faithful to what the Bible claims for itself, and we are not faithful to what Jesus Christ claims for the Scriptures. But also — let us not ever forget — if this continues, we and our children will not be ready for difficult days ahead.

Furthermore, if we acquiesce, we will no longer be the redeeming salt for our culture — a culture which is committed to the concept that both morals and laws are only a matter of cultural orientation, of statistical averages. That is the hallmark — the mark of our age. And if we are marked with the same mark, how can we be the redeeming salt to this broken, fragmented generation in which we live?

Here then is the watershed of the evangelical world. We must say most lovingly but clearly: evangelicalism is not consistently evangelical unless there is a line drawn between those who take a full view of Scripture and those who do not. But remember that we are not just talking about an abstract theological doctrine. It makes little difference in the end if Scripture is compromised by theological infiltration or by infiltration from the surrounding culture. It is the obeying of Scripture which is the watershed — obeying the Bible equally in doctrine and in the way we live in the full spectrum of life." (Schaeffer, The Great Evangelical Disaster)

3. Jesus & the Fulfillment of the Old Testament (vv. 17-20)

- The structure of the SOTM
 - Introduction (5:1-16) – theme established (kingdom of heaven) and the implication of self-examination (use of *inclusio*).
 - Main Body (5:17-7:12) – an explanation of the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees (use of another *inclusio* – "Law and the Prophets" in 5:17 & 7:12).
 - Conclusion (7:13-27) – Jesus demands a choice (two paths, two trees, two claims, two foundations).
- We want to wrestle a bit with Jesus claim that He didn't come to abolish the "Law and the Prophets" but to fulfill them – what about the abolishment of the food laws and the sacrificial system, and why don't we follow the OT Law as believers?
- Several interpretations of this passage have been given:
 - Three divisions to the Law – moral, civil, and ceremonial
 - a. **Civil Law** has disappeared because God's people no longer constitute a nation

- b. **Ceremonial Law** has disappeared because Jesus “fulfilled” it by dying on the cross, rendering them obsolete.
- c. **Moral Law** never changes and is never made obsolete; therefore, this is what Jesus is referring to.

What are some problems with this interpretation? (phrasing of what will not pass away, the three-fold distinction is not found anywhere in Scripture, what is meant by “moral” – were not all Jews “morally bound” to obey both ceremonial & civil law?)

- “Fulfill” actually means something like “to confirm” – we are again back to the meaning of vs. 18 (what did Christ mean by the smallest part of a letter not passing away)
- Two-fold fulfillment by Christ
 - a. Jesus fulfills the Prophets in a predictive way – what they predicted about Him came to pass and they were thus “fulfilled”.
 - b. Jesus fulfilled the Law by dying on the cross, thus He satisfied the righteous demands of the Law.

What are some problems with this interpretation? (vs. 18)

- Matt. 11:11-15 – the Prophets and the Law “prophesied” until John the Baptist ...
 - Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament scriptures *in their entirety* ...
 - The OT both predicted the coming of the Messiah (e.g. Micah 5:2) and recorded events that pointed to the life and teaching of the Messiah (e.g. Deut. 8:1-5).
 - Lk. 24:44-45 – It is the entirety of the OT that pointed to Christ (see Jn. 5:39)!
- Jesus was saying that his life and ministry did not signal the abolishment of the OT, but it was the fruit of all the OT predicted, taught, and modeled.

“Jesus came not to abolish the Old Testament but to fulfill it – fulfill it in the sense that he himself was the object toward which it pointed. Therefore it is the height of folly not to listen to his commands, the commands of the kingdom.” (Carson, The Sermon on the Mount, pg. 40)

Notice in Lk. 16:16 that the OT prophesied until John the Baptist ... then the “kingdom of God” advances – why? (Christ the Messiah is on the scene)

If Matt. 5:17-18 refers to Christ’s fulfillment of the OT “prophesying”, what is meant in vv. 19-20 by the expression “these commands”? (the commands of the kingdom that are about to be expressed in the rest of the SOTM)

4. Application

- The main theme throughout the rest of the SOTM is obedience to the commands of Christ (even the Great Commission emphasizes obedience – see Matt. 28:18-20)

- Rom. 3:21 bridges the gap between justification and sanctification ... *“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.”*
- The SOTM ends up demanding a kind of righteousness that can only come through God’s grace in salvation (justification) and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (sanctification).

Is there any place for the teaching of standards of righteousness?

In what way are all our righteous works “rubbish”? (See Philippians 3:7-11)