

Bible Study 2022-2023

Class #19

2/14/23

The 10 Commandments

- I. I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me**
- II. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain**
- III. Remember to keep holy the Lord's day**
- IV. Honor thy father and thy mother
- V. Thou shalt not kill
- VI. Thou shalt not commit adultery
- VII. Thou shalt not steal
- VIII. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor
- IX. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife
- X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods

Matthew 5 Background (Cont)

- Jesus shocked those who climbed the mountain to hear him by introducing in the “Beatitudes” an unexpected lineup of those to be “blessed” to include:
 - The poor in spirit
 - The mourners
 - The meek
 - The hungry
 - The merciful
 - The pure of heart
 - The persecuted
 - The peacemakers

The Psalms

- Psalm – a poem sung to music from a stringed instrument you pluck, such as a harp or guitar (Lyre)
- 150 half attributed to David (1050 BC)
 - 12 by Sons of Korah (ancient choir)
 - 12 by Asaph the choir leader appointed by David
 - 2 by Solomon
 - 1 by Moses
- Written between 1000 and 400 BC

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- **Matthew 5:4-5** *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”*
- This means that they will inherit the earth, which is the land “*eretz*”, (not the blue ball in space)
- The poor were those who did not own any land

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- **Matthew 5:6** *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied”*
 - Righteousness was a reference to the keeping of the Torah (Law) * and the Prophets
 - Abiding by the Word of God
 - We will see this in a number of examples in Matthew’s gospel

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- This was a very Semitic way of speaking
- We need to think of **Joseph** who was a “righteous man”
- We saw this in the infancy narrative, as every time God told **Joseph** to do something he did it

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- There was no hesitation as he always obeyed the word of God
- We also saw how fulfilling all righteousness was discussed in the baptism of Jesus which fulfilled the Law and the prophets
- Imagine hearing this in the 1st century

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- You are at the foot of the Mount of the Beatitudes in Galilee as you remember the *Maccabean* image from **1st Maccabees**
 - *Mattathias*, the father of *Judas Maccabeus*, called the people of his village “*anyone who is zealous for the Law follow me*”
 - He organized his rebellion **in the mountains**
 - It was from there that they attacked and freed the cities from Greek control

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Perhaps, at the time of Christ, some thought, that it was **time for another Maccabean revolt!**
- With this background, Father asked that we look at what Jesus was saying here in the Beatitudes
- He was spending a great deal of His time in *Capernaum*, but he also went out into the wilderness where crowds followed Him

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Further, we need to look at His language here.
“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (obedience to the Torah) for they shall be satisfied”
- This was very relevant for a 1st Century Jew since for them the Roman occupation of their land (eretz) was merely an extension of the Greek occupation (the Greco-Roman Empire)

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Both Greeks and Romans were composed of seagoing northern people who attacked them
- Father said that they smelled the same, they acted the same, they talked the same (The Romans maintained Greek as their administrative language)
- Thus, to the 1st Century Jew, the Roman Empire was stage II of the Kingdom of the Greeks (the same basic problem as at the times of the Maccabees)

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- **Matthew 5:7-16** *“Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy...and give glory to your father who is in heaven”*
 - *Father did not discuss many of these familiar passages in any detail*
 - *“Your reward is great in Heaven,”* means that their reward will be from God
 - Again, Father asked that we place ourselves at the foot of this mountain listening to these words
 - The view from that spot made one feel as though they could see the ends of the earth

Headings in the Sermon on the Mount from the Jerusalem Bible

- The Beatitudes – Mt 5: 1-12
- Salt of the earth and light of the world – Mt 5:13-16
- The fulfillment of the Law – Mt 5: 17-19
- The new standard higher than the old – Mt 5: 20-48
- Almsgiving in secret – Mt 6: 1-4
- Prayer in secret – Mt 6: 5-6
- How to pray. The Lord's Prayer – Mt 6: 7-15
- Fasting in secret – Mt 6:16-18
- True treasures – Mt 6: 19-21
- The eye, the lamp of the body – Mt 6: 22-23

Headings in the Sermon on the Mount from the Jerusalem Bible

- God and money – Mt 6: 24
- Trust in Providence – Mt 6: 25-34
- Do not judge – Mt 7: 1-5
- Do not profane sacred things – Mt 7: 6
- Effective prayer – Mt 7: 7-11
- The golden rule – Mt 7: 12
- The two ways – Mt 7:13-14
- False prophets – Mt 7: 15-20
- The true disciple – Mt 7: 21-27
- The amazement of the crowds – Mt 7: 28-29

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- **Matthew 5:17-18** *“Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets;... not an iota nor a dot, will pass from the Law **until** all is accomplished”*
 - Father pointed out that when Jesus said: *“not to abolish them but to fulfill them,”* He was using a Semitic way of speaking
 - We see the same kind of language when we pray in the Our Father: *“lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil”*
 - Americans would say, “Of course God would not lead us into temptation?”

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Why don't we just skip that and say: "*deliver us from evil*" (But that would be like letting the air out of the Semitic tires)
- This is a Judeo-Christian religion in which we must understand this Semitic background
- In the "Lord's Prayer" we say:
 - Our Father who is in heaven
 - Your name be holy
 - Your kingdom come (some will say it has already come)

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- It calls us to pray like the disciples before His death and resurrection
- Today, we continue to pray for the complete fulfilment of His Kingdom
- The prayer is very Semitic
- The rabbis said that a prayer was not worth praying unless it mentioned the **coming of the Kingdom**

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Whenever they prayed, they always asked for the reestablishment of the Kingdom of God
- We see this in the Lord's prayer: "*your kingdom come, your will be done as it is in heaven, on earth*"
- Thus, "*lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil*" is a very Semitic style of speech

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Further, when Jesus was speaking of “heaven and earth,” He was speaking of permanence
 - Isaiah 1 says *“I called heaven and earth to witness against you O Israel”*
 - A man is born, he looks up and sees the blue sky, on his deathbed if he looks up he will still see the sky
 - The heavens and the earth (land beneath his feet) never changes

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that no one had accused Jesus of wanting to abolish the Law
- It sounds in English that Jesus was being defensive here
- But in Matthew's semitic way of writing Jesus was simply saying: *"I have come to fulfill the Law and the prophets"*

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- In this passage Jesus is reiterating that the Law will never pass away
- “Until” must be seen in the sense of “continuous”
- That is from the moment He is speaking and beyond
- This will make sense in the next statement

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- **Matthew 5:19-20** *“Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so,...you will never enter the kingdom of heaven”*
 - The people were waiting for the Kingdom to be reestablished
 - Jesus was telling them that unless they do these things, they will not be a part of the Kingdom He was about to establish

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Father compared this to the beginning stages of our country where the founding fathers stated that if one wanted to be a part of this new nation, you had to live by the rules they were establishing
- Father said that we need to understand the 1st Century Jews as being in a similar situation

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- At the time of Jesus, the Jews had been waiting for the Messiah to appear, they would pick up their swords and get rid of the Romans
- That would establish the Kingdom of God on the earth (after a massive battle which they would win because God was on their side)
- They were waiting for a military revolution backed by God
- They were asking if Jesus could be the guy who would lead this revolution

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Is this it?
 - He is in the hills
 - He calls the crowds
 - He teaches the Law and how they were to inherit the land
- Then, he shocked them by saying: *“you must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees!”*
 - They and the scribes were the most righteous people around
 - They promised to never break the Law (Paul the Pharisee said that he (as a Pharisee) had never broken the Law)

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- This did not mean that they never sinned as this must be understood in a different context
- Thus, if one never violated any of the 10 commandments, he was righteous (to include some of the man made requirements laid on the people by the Pharisees)

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- They were very zealous about the Law
- As there was only about 1% literacy back then, these were the people who could read and write
- The Pharisees memorized the Torah, and the Scribes copied it for use in their synagogues
- Here, Jesus tell his listeners that they must go beyond this if they wanted to enter the Kingdom of God!

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Again, righteousness means observance of the Torah
- Our modern image of a *Pharisee* is unfortunately influenced by select passages in the New Testament, where Jesus chastises them as hypocrites
- As we know, they in fact, were members of a religious movement who believed that the prophetic promises of God had not as yet been fulfilled because the people of Israel were still living in sin (by failing to obey the Commandments)

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Since it was sin that came upon them that led to their situation, then the sin must be removed in order to bring about the restoration
- Thus, they were very keen on the perfect obedience to the Torah
- To become a Pharisee, one was required to take an oath to never break the Torah again
- That meant they were to keep all of the 613 laws perfectly
- Paul said that according to the law, when he was a Pharisee, he was righteous (he kept it perfectly)

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- A *Scribe* was a professional copyist
- Yet, their entire religion was based on a written document (The Torah)
- Father said that he could see the Scribes as ancient tape recorders
- If a person wanted to know what the Law said, they asked a Scribe
- Even the *Pharisees* asked them for the meaning of a text when in a debate

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- The reason the *Scribes* knew everything within the Torah was because they had memorized it and could recite it verbatim
- All day long they made copies of the Law, and therefore knew it better than the *Pharisees*
- Father said that a *Pharisee* could be seen as a theologian while the *Scribe* was an exegete
- Here, Jesus calls his listeners to attain **greater righteousness (obedience to the law) than the Scribes and Pharisees**, or they will not enter into His kingdom!

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Imagine how frustrated this made the Scribes and *Pharisees* in his audience
- The people must have wondered, how this was possible?

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- **Matthew 5:21-26** *“You have heard that it was said to men of old, you shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgement....you will never get out until you have paid the last penny”*
 - The Law told the Jews not to kill, where Jesus was telling them not to even get angry
 - Father pointed out that there is a relationship between the two as a person would normally not kill unless he was angry
 - Thus, if you do not get angry, you most likely would not kill someone
 - This is an example of exceeding the righteousness of the Pharisees as there is nothing in the Law saying one should not get angry (Mt 5:20)

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- This is about the “Holiness Code” found in the **Book of Leviticus** which is the center of the Law (1st five books of the Bible)
- It was seen by the Jews as the heart of the Law, and it was found at **Leviticus 19:2**, which is located at the center of Leviticus
- It says: *“You shall be holy for the Lord your God is holy”* (meaning set apart; distinct, different)
- The Jews were called to be set apart from other nations because they kept the Law

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that they were set apart so that they could “be like God”
- Unfortunately, at that time, the problem was that they had stopped short of this calling
- Even though they were set apart, kept the Holiness code, set themselves apart from other nations, they failed to take it the next step (**to be like God**)
- Only when they became like God could the long-awaited revolution from their heavenly Father begin

Matthew 5 (Cont)

- This calling came from **Genesis 12:3**, which was the seed through which all the nations were to be blessed
- From here, Jesus goes on to give other example