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Sermon Notes

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Christ, the Christian, and the Old Testament

Matthew 5:17-20

I. Introduction: A Japanese Castle... What is “Permanent?”

Otsuka pharmaceutical company... ceramic tiles that will last over a thousand years

Bernard Ramm: “A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and the committal read. But somehow, the corpse never stays put!” He added: “No other book has been so chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized, and villified. What other book on philosophy or religion or psychology from classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? With such venom and skepticism? With such thoroughness and erudition? Upon every single chapter, line and word? The Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions and studied by millions.

Isaiah wrote, “All men are like grass and all their glory like the flower of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.”

Jesus said “Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter from the Scripture will pass away.”

II. The Sermon on the Mount: Seeing the Big Picture

A. Beatitudes

Poor in spirit = totally humble, a spiritual beggar who knows he needs God for everything

Mourn = passionate response to sinfulness... it should touch our emotions

Meek = humble, self-controlled in dealing with others, because we're so sinful ourselves

Hunger & thirst for righteousness = yearning for total purity and righteousness before God;

Merciful = gentle in dealing with sins and sorrows of others because we're so needy also

Pure in heart = single-mindedness in pursuing God

Peacemakers = yearning to see reconciliation between God & others,

Persecution = world's natural response to peacemakers

B. Salt and Light: The Christian's impact on society

- Salt retards spread of corruption... Christians are to slow effects of sin in world
- Light makes all things visible... Christians are to shine before men to lead people to Father

C. Structure:

1. General: Norms for Christian Life... Who is the Christian? What kind of person is he/she? What effect does the Christian have on the world?
2. Specific case studies... here until 7:12... 7:13-7:24 Decision section... two roads, two trees, two claims, two houses
3. First of section: Christ and the Old Testament

III. Christ and the Old Testament

A. Two main principles:

- 1) **Absolutely everything I teach and live will be in perfect conformity to the Law and the Prophets**
- 2) **Absolutely everything I teach and live will be in total disharmony, in utter contradiction to what the scribes and Pharisees teach and live.**

B. Christ's purpose: Not to abolish but to fulfill

vs. 17 "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."

1. What are the "Law and the Prophets"?
 - a. common way of speaking of written word of God
 - b. Law (10 Commandments) given at Sinai from God to Moses... first written Word
 - c. Moses would add hundreds of other commandments

Illus: Jews of Jesus' day divided laws into two categories: positive and negative; 248 positive, 365 negative commands

- d. Prophets drove the Law home to sinful Israel
- e. Prophets also testified to the person and work of Christ

2. Why “abolish”?

Def'n: word in Greek means “to abolish, utterly overthrow, destroy completely”... tear it down to the ground; **ABSOLUTE OPPOSITE OF WHAT CHRIST CAME TO DO!**

- a. Christ will completely set Himself against Pharisees and scribes

System of human interpretations of the Law... people couldn't read for themselves, so the Scribes and Pharisees interpreted the Law and the Prophets; they would slander Him & say He was abolishing God's Law

- i) their careful work in OT so revered it seemed to be blasphemy to oppose them
- ii) Jesus fearlessly opposes them while totally upholding the Bible itself
- b. OT itself seemed to indicate abolishment

Jeremiah 31:31 “The time is coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”

Hebrews 8:13 “By calling this covenant ‘New’, he has made the old one obsolete. And what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.”

BUT: people thought the Law was too hard... Messiah would come and make everything easier for them... bring the Law down to their level; Jesus is about to do the very opposite!!

- 3. For the rest of the chapter, He will strip away human interpretations of the law from the Law itself... I'll not lower the commandments; I'll intensify them, then fulfill them!
- 4. FULFILL... image of empty cups, waiting to be filled up: division of laws

Moral law = “You shall have no other gods beside me”, “You shall not murder”

Jesus fulfilled by perfect obedience

Judicial law = dress codes, eating regulations

Jesus fulfilled by His mere appearance on earth

Ceremonial law = sacrificial system

Jesus fulfilled by His death

5. Law had two basic functions:

DEMONSTRATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS & IDENTIFICATION OF MESSIAH

6. **Law was NOT given to make us righteous...** the Law uncovers our own sinfulness and makes us spiritual beggars

B. How Christ Fulfilled the Old Testament

John 5:39 “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you have eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.”

John 5:46 “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.”

1. Prophecies controlled his whole life

a. lineage: descended from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jesse, David

b. birthplace: Micah 5:2, Bethlehem Ephrathah

c. manner of ministry: gentleness and power, miracles and parables

2. Totally immersed in Scripture daily: Loved the Scripture with all His heart

a. born under the Law: Galatians 4:4

b. lived and breathed Scripture... controversies, temptations, teachings

c. open statements about Scripture

Matthew 4:4 “It is written, ‘Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

John 10:35 “The Scripture cannot be broken...”

Matthew 24:35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

3. Satisfied the Scripture by his death and resurrection

a. Jesus' attitude:

[to Peter] *Matthew 26:54* ***“But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”***

b. specific details:

Death by piercing: Psalm 22:16 *“They have pierced my hands and my feet.”*

Three of Christ's seven last statements: 1) *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* (Psalm 22:1)

2) John 19:28 *“Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’ A jar of wine vinegar was there...”*
[fulfills Psalm 69:21 *“They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar to drink.”*]

3) “Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit.” (Psalm 31:5)

c. Christ's cross a testimony to God's respect for His own law

d. Christ paid legal penalty for all sins of all saved people of all time

e. the Law put Christ to death... written code fully satisfied

f. Scripture mandated also his resurrection

g. Scripture clearly predicted the advance of the gospel

Luke 24:44 *“Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms... This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*

4. Fulfills the Law in His disciples by His Spirit

Romans 8: 4 *“... in order that the righteous requirements of the Law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.”*

III. The Permanence of the Old Testament: Christ's Comprehensive Declaration (vs. 18)

- A. Comprehensive in time: "Until heaven and earth disappear..."
- B. Comprehensive in scope: "not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen..."
- C. Comprehensive in power: "will by any means disappear"
- D. Comprehensive in purpose: "until everything is accomplished"
- E. BUT some difficulties:

1) Didn't Christ abolish some laws... for example, the eating restrictions?

Mark 7:19 "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean."

2) Didn't Christ's death abolish the sacrificial system?

Hebrews 8:13 "By calling this covenant 'new', he has made the old one obsolete, and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear."

- F. Response: Jesus gave **two qualifications**... "Until heaven and earth disappear..." "Until everything is accomplished..." When the sacrificial system had finished its work, its time had passed... yet **it continues to have a function IN THE SCRIPTURE** until heaven and earth disappear... we keep reading about these sacrifices, and they keep teaching us about Christ

IV. Twin Dangers of the Law: Lawlessness and Self-Righteousness

Illus. Scylla & Charybdis... reaction to Law: lawlessness = "I don't care"; self-righteousness = "I'm okay"

Matthew 5:19 "Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same 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."... LAWLESSNESS

vs. 20 "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."...SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

- A. The Danger of Lawlessness (vs. 19)

1 John 3:4 "Everyone who sins breaks the law... in fact sin is lawlessness."

1. great error of our day... it's all of grace, so it doesn't matter how I live
2. "Not under law" = show no concern for the law whatsoever...CHEAP GRACE
3. America hastening down a path toward lawlessness
4. Danger: self-delusion

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

5. Jesus openly teaches that submission to the Law is part of life in the Kingdom of Heaven
 - a. submission in your own life
 - b. submission as you influence others: PRACTICES AND TEACHES

B. The Danger of Self-righteousness: the righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers (vs. 20)

1. Jesus' stunning statement:
 - a. Pharisees looked up to as "super-holy" men of the day: spent the whole day in careful study of the Law... had elaborate and meticulous series of rules which they followed every day
 - b. common people felt they could never live up to their standards
 - c. Jesus says two shocking things: 1) you must be even more righteous than the Pharisees; 2) the Pharisees as such aren't going to heaven
2. Characteristics of the Pharisees' religion
 - a. external and formal, not a heart righteousness
 - * "whitewashed tombs"
 - * clean outside of cup and dish... but inside
 - * external religionists live for praise of men, so they can boast & be proud
 - b. ceremonial over moral laws

Matt. 23:23 “You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin—but you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness.”

John 5... criticized the paralyzed man for carrying his mat on the Sabbath

- c. man-made rules & regulations made God’s law attainable
- d. focus on self ensured satisfaction... no “hunger and thirst”
- e. ultimately hated others and sought to dominate them

Generally: a heart totally opposite from that seen in Beatitudes... no “spiritual beggars”, never any mourning over sin, certainly not meek... etc.

- 3. Pharisees’ danger: self-delusion... think you’re okay, shocked on Judgment Day

V. The Beauty of Proper Submission to the Law (vs. 19)

A. Practicing & teaching these commands

- 1. “These commands” = the Law, but specifically as Jesus interprets it
- 2. Practice = lives it out... like wise man at the end of the Sermon

Matthew 7:24 “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice...”

- 3. teach = leads others... a deep concern for one’s brother or sister

Genesis 4:9 “Am I my brother’s keeper?” [Shepherd] YES!!!!

- 4. REWARD: called “great in the kingdom of heaven”
 - a. God’s esteem of us directly connected to our esteem of His Word

Isaiah 66:2 “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and who trembles at my word.”

- b. so few American evangelicals meet these criteria... cheap grace, no obedience

B. Improper submission to the law

- 1. The Circumcision controversy: Galatians

Improper submission #1: Obedience to law produces our right standing before God and keeps us in it... [must be circumcised and follow ceremonial laws]

- a. “Freedom” from the law and what it means
- b. legal righteousness a gift by faith
- c. final perfect righteousness also a gift
- d. meanwhile we are led by the Spirit to fulfill Law

2. Faith and the Old covenant fulfillment: Hebrews

Improper submission #2: Faithless lingering outside the Promised Land

- a. faith means courageously entering God’s rest
- b. fulfillment of ceremonial law: curtain of temple rent from top to bottom, Sabbath rest fulfilled, high priest finished one for all time his work

C. Proper submission to the law

- 1. Let the Law make you a spiritual beggar
- 2. Let the Law lead you to Christ who perfectly fulfilled it at Calvary
- 3. Let Christ lead you back to the Law to obey it by His Spirit
- 4. Test yourself:
 - 1) do you lean too much toward lawlessness or self-righteousness?
 - 2) Do you tremble at God’s Word or ignore it?
 - 3) Do you realize that God’s Word is eternal and that it shall never pass away?
 - 4) Do you put it into practice or just listen to it over & over?
 - 5) Do you follow the Spirit in putting sin to death, or do you resist?