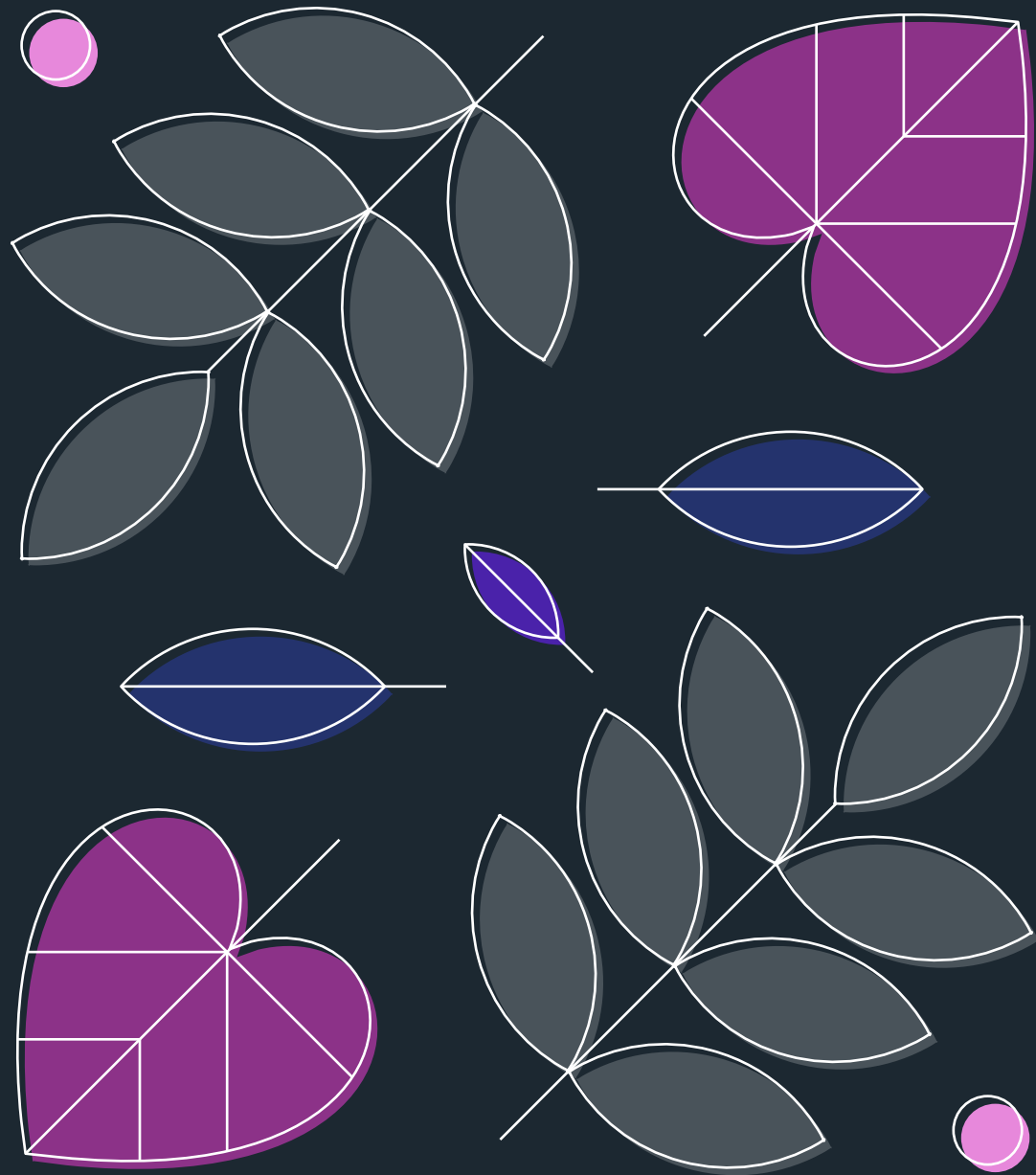


# THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEYING GOD'S LAWS



*Sermon on the Mount - Part 2*

*Matthew 5: 17-20*



## MATTHEW 5: 17-20

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' "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Therefore, whoever relaxes 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 does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. '

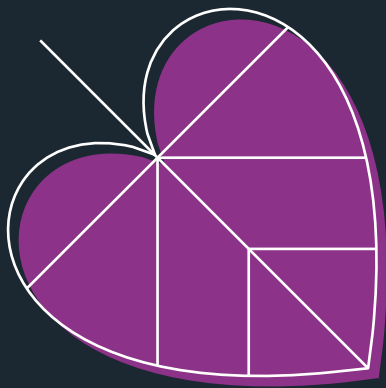
## THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM IN RELATION TO THE LAW

- Verses 17-20 explain how Jesus and the Kingdom fulfil the law of Moses
- This is the key to interpreting the sermon on the mount and indeed the whole of Jesus's ministry
- 'So far Jesus has spoken of the character of Christians. He has also emphasized the influence we will have in the world if we exhibit this character and if our character bears fruit in good deeds. In Matthew 17-20 he proceeds to further define this character and these good deeds in terms of righteousness. This passage is of great importance not only for its definition of Christian righteousness but also for the light it throws on the relation between the NT and the OT, between the gospel and the law" – John Stott, The Sermon on the Mount

# GROUP DISCUSSION

- John Wesley (1703-1791) said –“I am a bible bigot. I follow it in all things, both great and small”
- Definition of a BIGOT today - “a person who is utterly intolerant of any differing creed, belief, or opinion.”
- QUESTION  
*Do you agree with John Wesley? Should everything that the Bible says still be followed today? Why or why not?*
- QUESTION  
*If the Old Testament did not exist, what would be missing in your knowledge of God?*

Q1. This passage naturally divides into two parts, verses 17-18 and 19-20. What does each part emphasize?



- John Stott's Response
- Look at the pronouns used to see if it sheds any light on things - verses 17-18 discuss Christ and the law, while 19-20 focuses on Christians and the law
- Notes from bible study ... 17-18 emphasizes the importance and relevance of The Law BUT 19-20 make clear that righteousness can only come from God, not from adhering to The Law

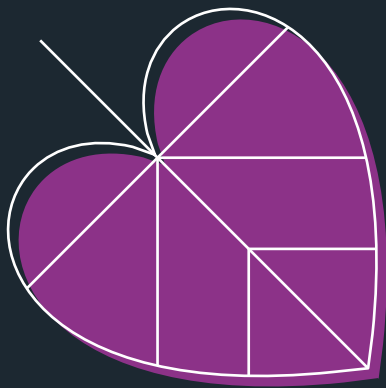


Q2. Why might some people have thought that Jesus came to abolish the law and the prophets?



- John Stott's Response
- Jesus spoke with his own authority. He loved to use a formula that no ancient prophet or modern scribe had ever used. "Truly I say to you", spoke on his own terms but was it on his own authority? Some people thought so, but here he says he has NOT come to abolish it. He is answering their question.
- The law (Torah) is the 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of the OT - the prophets is the rest of the OT.

Q3. The law and the prophets (OT) consist of doctrine, prophecy and ethical precepts. In what sense has Jesus fulfilled these?



- John Stott's Response
- The verb 'to fulfil' is 'plerosai' which literally means TO FILL - not a repeal of the former but a drawing out and filling up of them.
- Jesus fulfils ALL the OT in that it all points to Him, not only in its specific predictions of a Messiah but also in its sacrificial system, in the laws which only he fully obeyed and a behavioural pattern that his life exemplified.
- BUT until *it was finished* it remained unfinished - The Law was fulfilled / finished by Jesus at Calvary

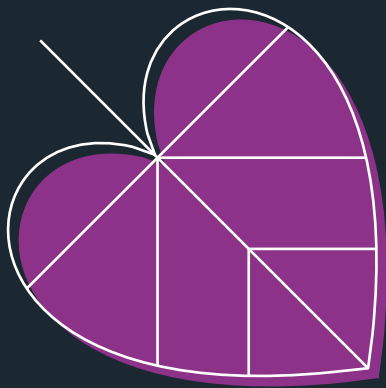


Q4. How does Jesus emphasize his high view of OT scripture? How can His words strengthen our confidence in scripture?

- John Stott's Response
- The smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet is a yod (the iota), almost as small as a comma. The least stroke of a pen (the dot) probably refers to one of the hooks that distinguished one letter from another. Jesus is referring to the law in verse 18, not to the prophets i.e., the total divine revelation of the OT.
- Did "It is finished" mean that ALL was accomplished, or must we wait until the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming for that?



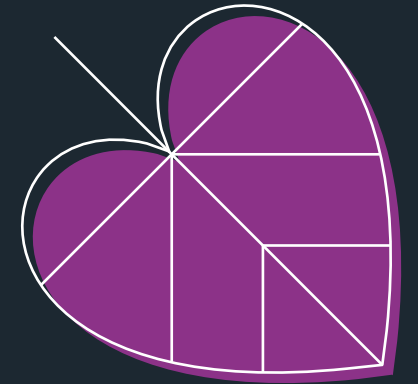
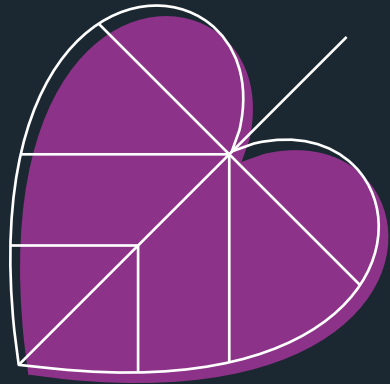
Q5. What portions of the Bible have you tended to skip over or neglect? How can you make studying these a higher priority?



- For discussion
- Bible Study Notes ...  
*Until recently the Be Attitudes  
Tend to focus on the Gospels and Acts  
Minor prophets get skimmed over  
The genealogies also get a speed reading  
Sometimes hard to see the relevance of the  
more detailed accounts of kings and battles  
in the OT*

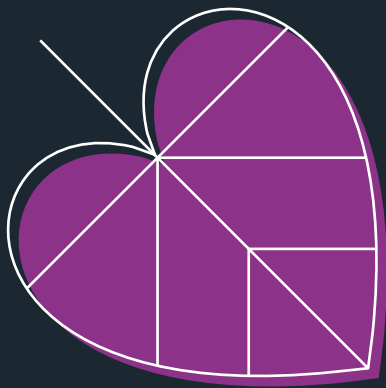
Q6. How will our response to the law determine our status in the Kingdom of Heaven?

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- John Stott's Response - verse 19
- The law has not been abolished but fulfilled
- Therefore, greatness in the kingdom of God does depend on conformity to it and personal obedience is not enough -his disciples were required to teach others to do the same
- Not all commandments are equally weighty, but we must not loosen their hold on our consciences or encourage others to do so - Jesus demands a commitment to both from his disciples and from us
- To do so is to demote oneself in the kingdom.

Q7. The Pharisees and teachers of law were zealous about observing the Law. How can our righteousness possibly surpass theirs?



- John Stott's Response - verse 20
- This must have astonished the 1<sup>st</sup> hearers and should continue to do so today
- Christian righteousness far surpasses pharisaic righteousness in kind rather than degree
- Not because Christians can keep 240 commandments when the best of the pharisees only scored 230, but because it is deeper and 'of the heart'
- Scribes and pharisees were trying to make it easier to obey OT commands by describing them in tortuous detail, but Jesus sought to reverse this BUT
- Jesus is teaching a much more demanding interpretation of scripture, one that is not about pride in outward conformity but a righteousness that works from the inside out, so that the actual conduct of his followers EXCEEDS that of the pharisees and scribes.

Q8. Jesus states that only those who have this surpassing righteousness will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. How can this be harmonized with his statement about the poor in spirit (those who admit their spiritual bankruptcy)?

- John Stott's Response
- People can have the surpassing righteousness when they are committed to God's law with their mind and motive and yet be poor in spirit when they recognize how far they are from their (and God's) ideal.
- Bible Study Notes ... this surpassing righteousness can ONLY come from God, and from Jesus



I NEEDED A BIT MORE  
HERE SO TURNED TO ...

[CLICK HERE](#)

‘Jesus is prepping his  
listeners to understand  
that they need a  
righteousness only he can  
earn for us’

- Jesus has been forceful and clear about a point that can be difficult to understand: He has not come to abolish the law of Moses, but to fulfil it. It will not pass away until all has been accomplished. Those hearing Jesus' message should not be lenient on themselves or their students about obeying the commands of the law. Those who obey them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven; those who do not carefully obey will be called the least. This doesn't suggest that good deeds earn salvation, but it does make an important point about God's intent for those prior messages (Matthew 5:17-19).

- Now Jesus demands a standard which would have sounded impossible to His listeners—exactly how it is meant to be taken. Scribes were professional experts in the Scriptures. The Pharisees were a sect famous for their extremely careful keeping of the law of Moses. They were so careful, in fact, that they added layers of detail, rules, and regulations on top of the law, so they'd never come close to breaking it. Pharisees were extraordinarily strict with their students and with the common synagogue-goers about what it took to follow the law in order to be righteous.

- Jesus is making two distinct points here. **Matthew has already shown that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is false.** John the Baptist called them out as a "brood of vipers" in need of a repentance that will actually "bear fruit" instead of just looking good to other people (Matthew 3:7-8). Jesus, too, will clash with the Pharisees over the way they work so hard on outward appearances while sin decays their hearts. As Jesus will emphasize in the rest of this sermon, **God cares far more about what is in a person's heart than how other people perceive them.** God values true purity motivated by true love more than technical rule-keeping motivated by spiritual pride. So true "righteousness" is something better than the rotten version paraded by religious hypocrites.

- The other point being made, which upcoming teaching will support, is that **nobody can be truly, perfectly righteous.** No person can live a life of moral purity worthy of heaven. As Paul will write in Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." He will add, though, in the following verse what Jesus' listeners will come to understand is that those who come to faith in Christ "and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).





Q9. Some people claim that Jesus abolished the law for Christians and that we are only required to obey the “law of love”. Respond to this view in the light of Jesus’s words in this passage.

- John Stott’s response
- Paul summarizes the ‘law of love’ in Galatians 5:14 – but do not be mistaken that if our actions are motivated by love that we can do whatever we wish.
- Jesus disagreed with the Pharisees’ interpretation of the law – not their acceptance of its authority. He asserted its authority as God’s written word and called on his disciples to accept its true and deeply exacting interpretation.

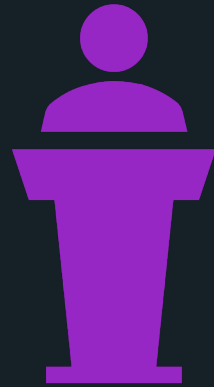
Q10. How should you study and  
apply the OT law today?



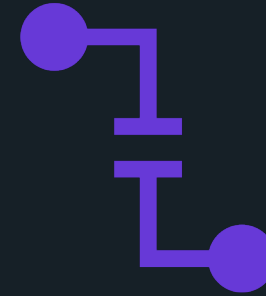
*John Stott gave no guidance to this question, but let's not skip it, what do we think?*

# NEXT TIME

*Based on John Stott's life builder study (2000) - the sermon on the mount © John Stott, Inter-Varsity Press*



The sermon on the mount  
part 3



Matthew 5: 21-30



# SOME NOTES FROM BIBLE STUDY – 3/1/23

- Important that we remember the audience for this address - His disciples!
- Yes, the bible should always be followed - we are grounded by it!
- Everything that we need is contained within.
- Didn't like the word 'bigot' as it has negative connotations - maybe its meaning has changed over the last couple of centuries, but Wesley's sentiment is right i.e. standing up for the truth
- Must be respectful in how we respond to criticism - with love and humility - take care that people don't try to trick you into false belief, even within the church
- The OT gives us the context for the NT - answers the question 'Why?' in relation to Jesus - he refers to it all the time i.e. "It is Written ..." so if it was important to Him then it should be important to us
- Pharisees and Scribes were focused on the details and not on the meaning / intent - inside change can only be produced by God / outside conformity is not what He wants from us! Be like a CHILD - don't get lost in the details!
- The Law - referred to by the statement: 'It is Finished' - SEE MICAH CH6 - God's Righteousness gets applied to us because of the sacrifice of Jesus (He fulfilled The Law in himself - see Romans and Galatians)
- Do we need a Bible Reading Plan as a church - to ensure that we don't just look at the good bits?!