



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The King's Declaration on The Law

MATTHEW 5.17-20

2/18/2015

Don Garner / PO Box 302703, Austin, TX 78703 / Don.Garner@capitolcom.org

Our nation's founders realized how critical it was that the rule of law be established if the new government was to succeed. It goes without saying that those who would be subject to the new government were certainly interested in the laws by which they would be governed. Likewise, Jesus declares His position on the law to a crowd of hearers who eagerly anticipated to hear the King speak of the laws by which they, as His subjects, would be governed.

Jesus' inauguration speech began with a description of the character produced in those submitted to His spiritual governance and an assessment of its influence. Now He declares His position on the law to those that will be subject to His government.

Matthew 5.17-20—Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

In this passage, Christ, as King of a spiritual kingdom, makes a clear declaration of His position on the law. He would have us understand as citizens in His kingdom that the law is fulfilled, decreed, enforced, and surpassed by Christ.

I. THE LAW IS FULFILLED BY CHRIST (17)

Jesus begins by denouncing the idea that He had any intention of pulling down the law of God. The law given on Mt. Sinai in the form of the Ten Commandments would stand in His heavenly kingdom. The Word of God, given by the prophets was not to be cast aside by Christ. In fact, the law and the prophets would find their ultimate fulfillment in Him.

Jesus Christ would meet every requirement of the law without even a hint of transgression. Many of the world's despots have placed themselves above any requirements of the law. Yet, Jesus humbled Himself and with careful attention to the spirit of the law sought to fulfill all righteousness.

Do not think that I came to destroy the law...

Jesus came as a fulfillment of all that was typified and foreshadowed of the coming King. All the ceremonial laws of the sacrificial system pointed to Christ as their fulfillment. All that was foretold in the words of the prophets would be fully realized in Christ and His heavenly kingdom. Rather than subverting or annulling the law, Christ came to embody it, to revere it, and to enshrine it in the character of men.

II. THE LAW IS DECREED BY CHRIST (18)

When Jesus uses the phrase rendered, "For assuredly, I say to you..." He takes an authoritative tone that those gathered on that hillside could not have mistaken. "Assuredly" renders the word "amen" signifying stability or steadfastness. This is the first use of many uses of the term by Jesus in Matthew's gospel. It prompts the listener that a weighty statement follows. Jesus asserts His sovereign authority to decree the law as immutable.

For Assuredly, I say to You...

The jot referred to the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and the tittle to the hooks used on the letters to help distinguish one from another. This emphasizes the unchangeable quality of the law of God. Not the smallest provision of the law could be extracted from it till heaven and earth pass away.

BIBLE STUDIES

SENATE MEMBERS: TUESDAY AT 7:30AM IN CAP 1E.9

HOUSE MEMBERS: WEDNESDAY LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB (11:30AM OR UPON ADJOURNMENT, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)

CAPITOL STAFF STUDY: THURSDAY LUNCH @ NOON IN SAM HOUSTON BUILDING, ROOM 210

Texas

Being Salt and Light

III. THE LAW IS ENFORCED BY CHRIST (19)

If those in authority have no ability to compel obedience to the law, the law would be considered worthless. Codified law has no value without enforcement. Jesus speaks to the consequences of breaking God's law. The term rendered break is better translated annul or pull down. This speaks to those who set aside or disregard the commands of God and cultivate that same disregard in others. To do so would relegate one to the lowest rank in the heavenly kingdom. Conversely, to cultivate reverence and faithful attention to God's commands would mark out the great ones in the kingdom of heaven.

Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so...

In Christ's kingdom, it is expected that teachers live the principles they teach. With all their rigorous attention to the minutia of their legalism, the Pharisees are condemned by Jesus for setting aside certain provisions of the law and encouraging that same lawlessness in their pupils. Christ calls His subjects to reverence for and faithful teaching of God's commands.

IV. THE LAW IS SURPASSED BY CHRIST (20)

Christ calls those in His heavenly kingdom to a standard that exceeds that demonstrated by the scribes and Pharisees. Those listening to Jesus' words regarded the scribes and Pharisees as the religious elite. They did not imagine that they were required to live by such rigid standards. Nor did they flatter themselves with the idea that they possessed the ability to match the righteousness of the Pharisees, much less surpass it. Jesus announces to those who desire to have a place in His kingdom that the standard for right living would transcend the reach, capacity, and powers of the scribes and Pharisees. This would have been unthinkable!

...Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes...

Jesus does not speak to relative greatness in the kingdom as He did in the preceding statement. He states here that unless your righteousness surpasses that demonstrated by the religious leaders of the day you should not expect for a moment that you would have a place in His kingdom. This seems to be an impossible standard to any reasonable person. What could He mean by such a statement?

The religious leaders Jesus calls out here were attentive to the smallest matters of the law, take for example the tithing of mint, while failing in relation to weightier matters of the law, such as gratitude toward God as the giver of all things. Jesus will go on to illustrate this idea with several specific examples of how our righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees as a citizen in the heavenly kingdom.

The bottom line is this: you and I cannot measure up to the demands of the law unless God credits the righteousness of Christ to our account. The righteousness of Jesus Christ did surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees. By virtue of your faith in Christ, His righteousness becomes yours. Under His reign, with the power of His indwelling Spirit, a righteousness that arises from the motives and intents of the heart can be yours. You can do and teach others to love God's commands as you fulfill the spirit of the law.

CONCLUSION

If you profess to be a Christian you are saying that you are a willing subject of Christ's heavenly kingdom. Are you **subject** to the laws Christ Himself has fulfilled, decreed, enforced, and surpassed? ...or are you a law unto yourself? Does your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? How ought you to live as a Christian? Reflection on

Texas

Being Salt and Light

how Christ's rule ought to affect your daily life is time well spent!