

## **Lesson #6- Matthew Chapter 5 Questions for Discussion (With Help for Teachers):**

Chapter 5 begins with Jesus first major block of teaching. It is commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount.

1. Moses had an experience with the law on a mountain. Jesus got involved with that same law while on a mountain. Compare and contrast the two and discuss the importance.

### **Help for Teachers:**

- **Moses received the law on Mt Sinai.** The lengthy story of the delivering of the law through Moses begins in Exodus Chapter 19. As Moses relays God's message to the people, they repeatedly affirm, "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do". Moses was then ordered by God to go up onto this mountain and take receipt of the law, written by the finger of God on stone, and bring it back to the people. It began and ended with failure on the part of the people. Moses had to make two trips up to get the law because on arriving back from the first trip, the people were in such rebellion that they had made an idol and were having a wild party as they worshiped the thing. Moses was so angered that he threw down the stone tablets containing the law and they were broken. God made a covenant with the people that if they obeyed Him indeed, He would make them a peculiar treasure above all people, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation (compare with 1 Peter 2:9). They utterly failed.
- **Jesus delivered the law from the mountain.** Jesus, the better Moses of prophecy (Deut. 18:15), went up onto a mountain with authority far beyond that of Moses. Jesus was the author of the law. Instead of receiving the law and bringing it back down the mountain to the people, He delivered the law to His people (the disciples) who came to Him on the mountain. The people under Moses were unable to keep the law as they understood it, now Jesus reveals to His disciples that the magnitude of the law is infinitely more than they ever thought, even more impossible to keep. But the first portion of His teachings, the "blessed are the" sayings, turn everything upside down. You see, Jesus has become man, He will keep the law in every requirement, He will fulfil it. The only Man that ever has or will. With Jesus as our substitute, the poor, the hurting, the meek, will be changed and made righteous. In Jesus emerges a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a peculiar people indeed! They will utterly overcome!

2. Jesus preached a strange message that began with what it looks like to be blessed. What was shocking about His take on being blessed and how does the gospel make sense of it?

### Help for Teachers:

- Conventional wisdom says that the aggressive go-getters, that are forceful and confident will overcome and are the blessed. Jesus says that the poor in spirit are blessed. The world teaches that it is best to avoid suffering any loss. Jesus taught that those that mourn will find comfort. Meekness is defined as “enduring injury with patience and without resentment, deficient in spirit and courage, not violent or strong”. Everyone knows this is a recipe to get run over and fail in business, but Jesus says the meek will inherit the earth. And the list goes on, blessed when you are hungry and thirsty? Blessed for being merciful and pure in heart and making peace? Nice guys finish last. Blessed when you are persecuted and hated and falsely accused? How can all this be?
- Only through the light of the gospel does this make sense. One can hardly repent without the realization of guilt and helplessness, the first thing the gospel teaches us is that our sin has placed us under God’s wrath, and we are helpless to correct our situation, we are poor in spirit and mournful. Lacking any righteousness of our own, and righteousness being the only remedy for the condemnation we are under, we hunger and thirst for righteousness. When we respond in faith to the call of Jesus, His righteousness is imputed into us, so powerfully that we will “never thirst again”. We still crave His righteousness, more and more of Him, but now we have endless access to “living waters” and can feast at will on the “bread of life”. We can be merciful because we have obtained mercy. Our hearts are made pure by the blood of Jesus Christ, in which we have been washed, Jesus taking our guilt and giving us His cleanness. God has made us peacemakers, because He is the God of peace, placing in us a peace that passes all understanding. And yes, as they hated the Master and persecuted, reviled, and falsely accused Him, so will they do to His servants. Paul says that we have a smell that accelerates a process, “For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). To those that reject Jesus and are perishing, we are “death unto death”. We smell like Jesus, and they will hate us for it.

### 3. Discuss Jesus' teachings on salt and light.

#### Help for Teachers:

- **Salt:** I thought this was interesting. It is not a religious article but an educational article in answer to the question, "Can salt go bad?", by Redmond Life. It says, "As it turns out, the answer is no...and yes. Natural salt without additives won't ever go bad. Why? For food to spoil, fungal, bacterial, yeast or other microbial growth has to take place. All of these require water. Salt doesn't contain water, so it doesn't support microbial growth, meaning it won't spoil. Remember, salt is a preservative and it's been part of the oceans' waters or sitting in rocks for millions of years prior to being harvested, so another year or two in your pantry really isn't going to be detrimental. But what about the "yes" portion of the answer? If you'll notice, we said above that natural salt without additives won't go bad. Refined table salt—the pure white stuff you probably grew up using—will go bad. It's not because of the salt, though. It's because of the additives. Iodine and anti-caking agents degrade over time, reducing the shelf life of the salt to about five years. ... Alright, so old salt will be safe to eat, but will it taste like salt? Doesn't it lose its flavor? The salt we eat is the compound sodium chloride, or NaCl. This compound is incredibly stable and won't degrade and lose flavor over time. Unlike most spices, salt isn't derived from a plant, so there's no freshness factor. The notion of salt losing flavor originated from a verse in the Christian bible that mentions salt losing its savor, which was strictly a metaphor in a religious lesson and not advice on seasonings. Interestingly, though, salt back in New Testament times often did lose its "savor." In those days, salt was generally not pure. It contained multiple other compounds, most of which held up to humidity better than sodium chloride. So, if the salt was exposed to the typical humidity of a place like Israel, the sodium chloride would eventually evaporate while the other compounds wouldn't, leaving behind a white substance that appeared to be salt but had none of its flavor." So, the clear teaching of Jesus is that we are purposed by Him to do as salt does: Preserve truth by clinging to the gospel as the "faith once delivered to the saints" and allowing only Scripture to be the basis of all our teachings and practices. When we do this, we will have a distinct savor, as already discussed above (Question #2), that brings the influence of Jesus Christ wherever we go. Just like when salt is mixed with additives and is no longer pure, if we fail to remain doctrinally pure and allow ourselves to be mixed with the ingredients of the world, we are in danger of losing our effectiveness and being good for nothing but throwing out.
- **Light:** Mankind's purpose in creation was to reflect God's glory. We failed. God reached out in mercy and by the blood of His own Son restored a people to Himself to again fulfil His purpose. Now we really can, by His power and authority, do what we were made to do! We need to be like a city on a hilltop. If we don't reflect the

glory of God through word and action, we are not fulfilling our gospel purpose, we are hiding our light. That's not supposed to happen.

4. Some people will argue that Jesus did away with the law. Based on Jesus' own teaching here in Matthew, what did Jesus say He came to do as concerning the law and the prophets and what does that mean? (Base your discussion on verses 17-20)

#### Help for Teachers:

- Jesus was emphatic that He did not come to do away with the law, He made it clear that the unchanging God had given a law, and words to prophets. These together compose what we know as the inspired Old Testament portion of the Bible. It was not and is not to be nullified or altered, even to the point that heaven and earth pass away. Paul wrote that the law served as a schoolmaster, to bring us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). By the knowledge of the law, we are painfully aware of our past transgressions (Rom. 7:7), and equally aware of our helplessness to measure up going forward (Rom. 3:12). The first man Adam failed by sin and every descendant of Adam since, all the way to today and beyond, has stayed the course, utterly depraved and unable to change, with one, and only one, exception. That exception is Jesus Christ, the second man Adam (1 Cor. 15:45)). Romans 5:12 says, "Wherefore, **as by one man** sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: Later in verse 19 we read, "For **as by one man's** disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Jesus Christ, of Adam's race and yet fully God, lived with all the issues and problems of life common to all of us, and faced every temptation that any person has ever known, and yet in truth declares that He had come to fulfil the law. He makes the bold statement that He is going to perfectly keep everything that the law demands... and then He did it (Heb. 4:15)! As Jesus taught, the law has and will not loose any of its power. Those that sin will die as prescribed by the law, eternally. But Jesus fulfilled the law *on behalf of* all that come to Him by faith. He took our place in life and then took on himself our sins and endured our punishment under God's wrath, on our *behalf*. He gave us His righteousness and took our guiltiness (2 Cor. 5:21). Those that disbelieve will face the judgement of a righteous God who has made it clear that He will in no way clear the guilty (Rom. 2:12, Ex. 34:7)). Few people could ever have said that their righteousness exceeds that of the law-keeping-est sect you could imagine, the Pharisees. Yet Jesus says that unless you exceed their righteousness, no way are you getting into heaven. If that's not shocking enough, He goes on in the remainder of the chapter to totally destroy the Pharisee's claims to righteousness, revealing that their interpretation of the law was woefully short of what was really required.

5. The remainder of the chapter is Jesus giving a never-before-heard interpretation of the law, an interpretation that radically changes the scope of guilt. Six times He says that what you have heard about the law is not the whole story and explains what is really meant. What was Jesus' interpretation and what are its impacts?

### Help for Teachers:

- In verse 21 Jesus begins a series of "You have heard it said..." (This is what you were taught and thought you understood), followed in each case by a "but I say unto you..." (You weren't taught the whole story, here is the true interpretation). The Pharisees were very good at looking like they were righteous. They went to great lengths to externally keep the law, to do the things and say the things that presented to everyone watching that they were "good people", blameless of violating the Torah. But then Jesus shatters their self-delusion by declaring that the keeping of the law meant much more than never doing the deed, it meant never in your heart allowing the desire to do the deed. It meant that if you wanted to do it, even if you disciplined yourself and didn't act on it, you are still guilty of breaking that law- Horrifying news flash: the verdict of innocence or guilt isn't going to be based on what you have let people see, it's going to be based on what you thought no one would ever know about you, the thoughts and desires of your heart! In the kingdom of heaven that Jesus presides over, unlike any kingdom of man, what is in your heart is what matters, for out of the heart come the issues of life (Prov. 4:23) and God sees and weighs the very thoughts and intents of the heart (1 Cor. 4:5). In the kingdom of heaven nothing is hidden, for it is a pure kingdom. In the kingdoms of man, evil is masked everywhere because the only thing that can be weighed is the external.
- In the kingdom of heaven, normal actions are backwards to common sense. Common sense dictates self-preservation and a "me first" outlook. A pure heart, imputed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, views things in light of the viewpoint of Jesus, **"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"** (Phil 2:6-8). A disciple of Jesus will do weird things, like being careful about making statements they can't keep, often answering with a simple yes or no, and then honoring the yes or no, like turning the other cheek instead of retaliating, like giving one that wants to take from you more than they demand, like loving and doing things for and praying for your enemies, and like treating all people as your neighbor.