

# 4 The Blessed Life

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7

## The Law of Christ Matthew 5:17-48

*Starter Questions: (5 mins max.)*

Do you think it is possible for a really good Christian to obey the 10 Commandments?

Do you think that obeying the 10 Commandments was important to Jesus?

### *Introduction*

Matthew 5 is a passage which forms our Christian character-- it shapes us as people as we try to live under Christ's rule.

As Christians we know that we no longer live under the Old Testament Law of Moses, but now live under Christ (Romans 6:14; 1 Corinthians 9:21), but our responsibilities to the Law seem unclear. Even though we are no longer under the Law (as a means of being 'right with God') should we still try to keep the Law? Should we perhaps just keep some parts of the Law, like the 10 commandments? The answer is, of course, that we are not bound by the Law of Moses at all. Instead we are to live by Christ's "law" in response to God's grace.

When we turn to Matthew 5 we see that there is a close relationship between Christ's law (that is, his moral teachings) and the Law of Moses; but they are not the same. Jesus' teachings, and not the Law of Moses, are the things which are to form our Christian character and shape us as people as we try to live under his rule.

## Read Matthew 5:17-20

- A. In verse 17, when Jesus refers to 'the Law and the Prophets' he is talking about the entire Old Testament. What do you think Jesus means in verses 17-18?
- B. In verses 17-18 Jesus' uses the words 'to fulfil' and 'until everything is accomplished'<sup>1</sup>. What do you think might be the significance of these words?
- C. How do you think the crowds listening to Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5-7) would have responded to verse 20? What do you think Jesus really means in this verse?

## Read Matthew 5:21-48

In this section Jesus is re-interpreting the 10 commandments for Christians. Following is a summary of the 10 commandments (from Exodus 20:2-17); see if you can identify which sections of Matthew 5:21-48 refer to which commandments<sup>2</sup>.

- 1 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me.
- 2 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below...
- 3 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, ...

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<sup>1</sup> Literally: "until all things have come to be".

<sup>2</sup> Hint: Matthew 5 may be broken down into the following sections--

Mt 5:21-26; 5:27-32; 5:33-37; 5:38-47 (cf Ex 21:24; Lev 19:18; 24:19-20).

- 4 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy...
- 5 "Honour your father and your mother, ...
- 6 "You shall not murder.
- 7 "You shall not commit adultery.
- 8 "You shall not steal.
- 9 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.
- 10 "You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

- D. What do you think is the relationship between verses 17-20, 21-47, and 48?
- E. When we read Jesus' teachings here, deep down we sometimes want to water this down. Are we justified at any point to do this? If so, on what grounds?
- F. Where do you think grace, confession and forgiveness fit in with Matthew 5:17-48?
- G. Split into smaller prayer groups and take a few moments to identify one area of your life which God has spoken to in this passage. Then pray for one another - pray that God would enable you to grow and change in this area as you seek his forgiveness.