 How To Become A Disciple Of Jesus Christ

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount: Study 3

‘Perfectly Fulfilling God’s Law’ (Matthew 5:17 - 48)

*“[Jesus said,] 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.” (Matthew 5:17)*

The fact that there are joke books about corrupt lawyers is evidence that people can be skilfull at finding ways of acting immorally without necessarily breaking the law. Even 2000 years ago Jesus said to his disciples, *“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:20). Later on, some of the leaders from the Pharisee’s strict religious sect sent one of their experts in religious matters to test Jesus with this question: *“’Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments”* (Matthew 22:34 – 40).

With Jesus’ understanding of the purpose of God’s Law in mind, what does it mean that Jesus came to fulfill the Law on our behalf? Furthermore, how are Christ’s disciples meant to live in light of his teaching? These are the main questions we will explore in this study.

1. (Read Matthew 5:17 – 20). In this section, Jesus begins each new topic with the words, *"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago…”* (E.g. 5:21, 5:27, 5:31, 5:33, 5:38, 5:43). Where does Jesus expect that his disciples would have heard these commands previously?

2. Jesus follows each of these ancient commands with the phrase, *“But I tell you…”* This could sound like Jesus’ was contradicting God’s Old Testament Law. But given that Jesus said that he didn’t come to abolish the Law, why did he speak like this?

3. What evidence is there in Jesus’ teaching that he takes God’s ancient commands very seriously?

4. (Read Matthew 5:21 – 48). After reading these instructions of Jesus concerning murder, adultery, divorce, etc., which way seems more difficult to follow: Jesus’ way or the way of the Law? Explain your answer.

5. In Matthew 5:48 Jesus commands his disciples to, *“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* What does this seemingly impossible command mean and why did Jesus say this? (See God’s similar statement in Leviticus 20:26).

6. Given that the whole Old Testament Law is about loving God and loving others, how has Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Law on our behalf? (E.g. John 15:9 – 13)

7. Choose one area from this section of Jesus’ teaching that convicts you to do a better job of loving others. (E.g. how might you apply Christ’s teaching to improve a difficult relationship with someone in your life?)