

“JESUS’ KINGDOM MANIFESTO”

BIG IDEA . . . Part 3: The Attitude Behind the Act (Matt. 5:21-48)

INTRO: The Christian faith is first a matter of the heart. God looks at the heart (Deut. 4:29; 1 Sam. 16:7; Jer. 29:13; Matt. 15:19). Nowhere is this more clearly stated than by King Jesus in His Kingdom Manifesto (Matt. 5-7). Jesus came teaching salvation by divine accomplishment (grace) and never human achievement (works). MacArthur (p. 285) . . . That God is concerned about the heart in both testaments (Deut. 10:12-13; Isa 29:13; Jer. 17:10; 1 Cor. 4:4-5).

Ch. 5 – Jesus’ Manifesto on True Righteousness

vv. 1-16 True Righteousness *defined* in the Beatitudes (Order-roots, life, fruit, consequences . . .)

vv. 17-20 True Righteousness *received* – NOT the false righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees (external, partial, redefined, self-centered) BUT available only by God’s grace shown in the finished work of Christ. God imparts (gifts) His perfect righteousness to us (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21). We can never earn or deserve it – all grace (Eph. 2:8-9)

vv. 21-48 True Righteousness *PRACTICED* and illustrated in Part 3 Jesus examines the attitude (heart) behind our actions (Pro. 16:2).

REPEATED PHRASE: Six (6) times in passage Jesus uses the phrase, “you have heard that it was said” (vv. 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). Phrase refers not to the revealed Mosaic law of God, but to the added over time rabbinical traditional teachings (added oral traditions treated as equal to God’s revealed Law). In each incident Jesus contrasts human wisdom with the divine word of God, which leads to death (Pro. 14:12; 16:25). God’s way to righteousness “exceeds” that of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus raises the standard and He explains true meaning of the Law. Jesus deals with six specific subjects: murder, sexual sin, divorce, telling truth, retaliation, and loving others. All illustrate the same principle – *True righteousness is a matter of the heart* (Matt. 15:10-20). “Your religion teaches you that, but I say that you should do this.” Their standard was too low. You worry about . . . God looks at your heart – the internal attitude (hatred vs. murder, lust vs. adultery, etc.). What does “exceeding righteousness” look like?

SIX ILLUSTRATIONS BREAKDOWN (vv. 21-48)

How does God’s righteousness surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees? First two deal with two of the T.C. (Exo. 20:13, 14). Next two general principles on social relationships Law of Moses. Last two highlight two broad principles on mercy and love – Protect all life and love everyone, even enemies.

BASIC PRINCIPLES SUMMARIZE Matt. 5:21-48

1. *It is the spirit of the law that is priority, not the letter.* The law was not given as a mechanical set of rules by which people in their power could govern their outward living. The law was a guide to the character (internal) God is looking for.
2. *The law is not just negative, it is also positive.* Its purpose was not only to prevent both inward and outward sin, but to promote both inner and outward righteousness.
3. *The law is not an end in itself.* It had a purpose going beyond purifying the lives of God’s people; but to glorify God Himself, never self.
4. *God alone is qualified to judge me* (1 Cor. 4:3-5). Only He truly knows our hearts (Heb. 4:12-13). He knows us perfectly and completely – how bad we can be on the inside, so He makes His grace and mercy available (Heb. 4:14-16).
5. *Everyone is required to live up to the perfect divine standard to which the law points.* Listen to Jesus (Matt. 5:20, 48) . . . to Paul (Rom. 3:10, 21-22a) . . . Though we can never on our own attain the perfect righteousness God requires, we can receive the perfect righteousness He provides. What grace! Never forget the Lawgiver is also our Redeemer! We are covered in the righteousness of Christ.

CONC: It’s the attitude behind and motivating the act that matters to God. Heart being right must precede any eternal behavior, even if that behavior is good and right – else it’s hypocrisy, which receives Jesus’ great condemnation. We justify ourselves by what we don’t do, while our hearts are corrupt. Thoughts are as important as actions; both will be judged. How is your heart, today? God is looking for hearts that are completely His (2 Chron. 16:9).