

JESUS'
KINGDOM
MANIFESTO

given in the Teachings at the Mount

Doug Mason

Version 1,
July 2006

CONTENTS

Blessings 2
Nature of the Kingdom of Heaven 2
Eternal Life 4
Positive support..... 5
Law and the Prophets 5
“Not the least stroke” 6
Hyperbole? – the contemporary context 6
Hyperbole? - changes demanded in the Law 7
Hyperbole? – an accepted form of presentation 7
Hyperbole? – Law and Prophets until John the Baptist..... 8
Hyperbole? – Jesus’ subsequent words explain 8
Jesus used examples to provide his intended message 9
Warning against outward show 12
Personal response the Kingdom 14
Ask, Seek, Knock..... 14
The “Golden Rule” 15
Final warnings and exhortation..... 16
Jesus spoke with authority 17

JESUS' KINGDOM MANIFESTO

given in the Teachings at the Mount

As Jesus was about to commence his formal ministry, a man named John was preaching in the Desert of Judea, saying “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven¹ is near” ²

Following his baptism by John and after resisting the Great Temptation, Jesus commenced his ministry, preaching “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” ³

The topic “the kingdom of heaven (God)” is the single most important focus of Jesus’ ministry. It has to be, since this is speaking of God’s rulership, his kingship.

“The primary meaning of both the Hebrew word *malkuth* in the Old Testament and of the Greek word *basileia* in the New Testament is the rank, authority and sovereignty exercised by a king. A *basileia* may indeed be a realm over which a sovereign exercises his authority; and it may be the people who belong to that realm and over whom authority is exercised; but these are secondary and derived meanings.”⁴

Jesus’ primary message at all times had to be the Kingdom of Heaven (God).

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.

News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. ⁵

While Jesus preached the Kingdom, he provided physical healing, a clear sign of the presence and power of God’s kingship.

Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him. Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. ⁶

¹ Since the authorship of Matthew is of Jewish Christian origin, the surrogate “Heaven” is used in place of “God”. The “Kingdom of heaven” and “Kingdom of God” are identical in all facets.

² Matthew 3:1,2 (All Scripture references are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.)

³ Matthew 4:17

⁴ *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, G. Eldon Ladd (The Paternoster Press 1959) page 19

⁵ Matthew 4:23 - 24

⁶ Matthew 4:25 – 5:2

Jesus went up on a mountainside, clearly harking back to that great lawgiver, Moses. Then Jesus sat in the fashion of a teacher, to provide *spiritual* healing to the large crowds.

Blessings

Jesus opened with blessings. And when he did, God's Kingdom (kingship, rulership) sat at the surface.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
(*Isaiah 61:2*)⁷

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. (*Psalm 37:11*)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (*Psalm 24:4*)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.⁸

Jesus showed his support of the "Prophets"⁹, such as Isaiah and the Psalmist, citing them during his blessing.

Nature of the Kingdom of Heaven

The *Kingdom of Heaven (God)* is the "*rule by God*". Although it belongs to God and to him alone, the manifestations of his rule are received by people, such as being comforted, inheriting the earth, being satisfied, being shown mercy, seeing God, and so on.

Instead of the Kingdom of Heaven arriving as the all-conquering, all-powerful irresistible force, sweeping aside all in its path, Jesus described its arrival as transforming an individual from within.

⁷ A key feature of Hebrew poetry is parallelism of thought, rather than having rhyming end-words.

⁸ Matthew 5:3 – 12 (emphasis supplied)

⁹ Matthew 13:35 introduced a quotation from Psalm 78:2 with "this fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet".

“What Jesus meant is this. ‘Yes, the Kingdom of God is here. But there is a mystery – a new revelation about the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is here; but instead of destroying human sovereignty, it has attacked the sovereignty of Satan. The Kingdom of God is here; but instead of making changes in the external, political order of things, it is making changes in the spiritual order and in the lives of men and women.’”¹⁰

Instead of Jesus' hearers seeing the Kingdom wreak an eschatological, judicial war against the nations of the earth, it had arrived as an ever-present support for the faithful, while they continued to suffer.

Instead of the Kingdom of Heaven removing the occupying Romans, the Kingdom had arrived to reign while it remained in the heart of any, Jew and Gentile alike. How different this arrival of the Kingdom than was being portrayed by others.

Matthew continued this theme later in his Gospel, in the Parables of the Kingdom¹¹, where the arrival of the Kingdom is described as:

- The Son of Man sowing seed
- A small mustard seed being planted in a field
- Yeast being placed in a large amount of flour by a woman
- Treasure being hidden in a field
- A net being let down into a lake to catch all kinds of fish.

“A definite person always stands in the center in these parables, and his action demonstrates the meaning of the kingdom. This person is often no other than God or the Son acting in his name and according to his instruction.”¹²

The Kingdom, of course, encompasses all of God's activities, including the eschatological.

“By the term kingdom of God we can denote not only the fulfilling and completing action of God in relation to the entire cosmos, but also all facets of this all-embracing process.”¹³

It is at all times, God's Kingdom, God's rulership, and never man's. Never may the church (*ekklesia*) claim God's kingship (*basileia*).

“We want to define accurately the position of the idea of the *ekklesia* in the scope of Jesus' preaching of the kingdom. The *ekklesia* is the name of those who have been united into one community by the preaching of the gospel. First of all we should point out that the concept *basileia* nowhere

¹⁰ Ladd, page 55

¹¹ Matthew chapter 13ff; also Mark 4

¹² *The Coming of The Kingdom* Herman Ridderbos (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company 1969) page 25. Emphasis supplied.

¹³ Ridderbos, page 343

occurs in the sense of this idea of the *ekklesia*. Nor is it used in the sense that the kingdom of God in its provisional manifestation on earth would be embodied in the form and organization of the church.”¹⁴

“Those who begin with the idea of the Kingdom as a people base their definition upon the identity of the Kingdom with the Church, and for this there is very little scriptural warrant.”¹⁵



Mount of Beatitudes, towards the Sea of Galilee

Eternal Life

While the synoptic Gospels¹⁶ use the expression “kingdom of Heaven” or “kingdom of God”, the apostle John uses the term “Eternal Life”. He uses the expression qualitatively, as being the life of the Eternal One. This is not a description of its length, but of its source.

“What is this ‘eternal life’ which God has given to men in His Son? It is something other than mere endless existence. ... ‘Eternal Life’, then, is a particular *quality* of life which emanates from God, rather than a mere extension of existence. For man, it is the reception and enjoyment of the essential life of God Himself through Christ, the channel, by the Holy Spirit, the agent. It is a gracious participation in the very life of God. ‘It is more than endless [existence], for it is sharing in the life of God in Christ.’ (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. V, p. 50).”¹⁷

Significantly Eternal Life is, as is God’s Kingdom, able to be shared in now. Just as God’s rulership brings benefits to the believer, sharing in the life of Jesus brings the benefits of Eternal Life right now.

¹⁴ Ridderbos, page 343

¹⁵ Ladd, page 19

¹⁶ Matthew, Mark and Luke

¹⁷ *Life in the Son: A Study of the Doctrine of Perseverance*, pp21-22, Robert Shank, Bethany House Publishers, 1989, ISBN 1-55661-091-2

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched —this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the **eternal** life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ¹⁸

And this is the testimony: God has given us **eternal** life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have **eternal** life. ¹⁹

Positive support

In the next statement on his Sermon, Jesus poured his support upon his listeners, the poor and sick, rather than on their religious leaders.

You are the salt of the earth. ... You are the light of the world. ... let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. ²⁰

Law and the Prophets

Doubtless Jesus' intense focus on the Kingdom of Heaven (God) made people wonder about the approach they should now hold to the "Law and the Prophets", their Holy Scriptures. Did Jesus' message of the Kingdom replace the Holy Scriptures taught to them by the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law? Jesus answered:

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. ²¹

In no way did Jesus' Kingdom message eliminate the "Law or the Prophets". These remain. Rather than Scripture (Law and Prophets) being abolished, they were to be fulfilled, in him.

The expression "Law and the Prophets" encompasses the totality of the Hebrew's scriptures, often referred to as *Tanakh*²². During this Sermon,

¹⁸ I John 1:1 - 2

¹⁹ 1 John 5:11 - 13S

²⁰ Matthew 5:13 - 16

²¹ Matthew 5:17

²² **Tanakh** is an acronym that identifies the Hebrew Bible. The acronym is based on the initial Hebrew letters of each of the text's three parts:

1. **Torah**, meaning one or all of: "The Law"; "Teaching"; "Instruction". Also called the Chumash meaning: "The five"; "The five books of Moses". It is the "Pentateuch".
2. **Nevi'im** meaning: "Prophets"
3. **Ketuvim** meaning "Writings" or "Hagiographa".

Jesus cited and alluded to each part of their Scripture, the “Law” and the “Prophets”.²³

And Jesus went further, including their Targumim²⁴ into his discourse. The Targumim were written in Aramaic. During his discourse, Jesus used the Aramaic word *Raca*, which is drawn from a Targum.

“Not the least stroke”

After Jesus said that the Law and the Prophets remain, he continued:

I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.²⁵

Were Jesus' words to be understood literally or as hyperbole?²⁶ The contemporary context, later events and Jesus' subsequent words provide the answer.

Hyperbole? – the contemporary context

The contemporary context shows “the smallest letter” and “the least stroke of a pen” could disappear from the Law and the Prophets.

During the time of Jesus' ministry, there were numerous versions of the text of the Hebrew Scripture, some of which no longer exist. The dominant versions were variants of the Greek translation (Septuagint, or LXX) and of the Hebrew Masoretic (MT) text. While the LXX (Greek) texts and the MT (Hebrew) texts are in general agreement, differences exist. There was a “lack of standardization in the various Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek versions of the biblical text current in the first century”.²⁷

This shows that between the accepted renditions of the Hebrews' Scripture, changes existed that are far greater than the “the smallest letter or stroke of a letter”.²⁸ Further, New Testament writers and speaker selected the rendering that best suited their current reasoning.

“Jesus who normally spoke in Aramaic but could also use Greek and Mishnaic Hebrew to some extent, at times engaged himself in textual selection among the various

²³ The Jews, of whom Jesus was one, did not formally endorse their Scriptures until about 70 years after Jesus spoke these words.

²⁴ “A **Targum** (plural: targumim) is an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*) written or compiled in the Land of Israel or in Babylonia from the Second Temple period until the early Middle Ages (late first millennium). As translations, the targumim largely reflect rabbinic (i.e. midrashic) interpretation of the Tanakh.” (*Wikipedia*).

²⁵ Matthew 5:18

²⁶ **Hyperbole** – a deliberate exaggeration used for effect.

²⁷ *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, page 64, Richard N. Longenecker, © 1975 William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company ISBN 0-8028-1569-3

²⁸ And today the Hebrew Scriptures are reproduced into many dozens of versions, languages and dialects.

Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek versions then current, and some of the septuagintal features in the text-forms attributed to him actually arise from him".²⁹

His words are recorded in Greek, normally employing a Greek (LXX) text of the Hebrew Scriptures. Quite significantly, while Matthew's own citations of the Hebrew scriptures are distinctly Hebraic, the citations of the Hebrew scriptures he ascribes to Jesus are distinctly from Septuagintal (LXX) sources.

And when citing Scripture, Jesus did not always quote it literally, at times employing allusions and paraphrases.³⁰ Thus Jesus himself did not leave every iota and tittle literally unchanged.

Thus when Jesus said, "not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear" it is clear that a strictly pedantic, literal meaning was not intended.

Hyperbole? - changes demanded in the Law

Later events demanded changes to the operation of the Law. For example:

- The death of Christ supplanted memorials such as the Passover (as so dramatically portrayed by the tearing of the veil in the temple at the moment of his sacrifice), First-fruits, and so on.
- The installation of Jesus as "our High Priest" forced a "change in the law" (*Hebrews 7:12*).
- Acceptance of Gentiles into the Christian sect resulted in changes to the operation of the Law, such as related to food.³¹

Hyperbole? – an accepted form of presentation

It is clear that the use of hyperbole was an accepted form of expression during the time of Jesus' ministry. He employs hyperbole elsewhere in this Sermon.³²

²⁹ Longenecker, pages 65 - 66

³⁰ "1. Mark 4:12; Matt. 13:13; Luke 8:10 (Isa. 6:9f.), where the language of Jesus is almost a paraphrase of Isaiah; though Matthew's manner of first alluding to the passage (13:13) and then quoting it quite exactly from the LXX (13:14f.) indicates that this earlier employment should be understood more as an allusion than a quotation.

2. Mark 12:1; Matt. 21:33; Luke 20:9 (Isa. 5:1f.), where Jesus picks up the well-known Isaian parable of the vineyard and applies it allusively to himself and to his ministry.

3. Matt. 11:5; Luke 7:22 (Isa. 35:5f.; 61:1), where in his answer to the messengers from John the Baptist, Jesus vindicates his authority in terms allusively drawn from the promised kingdom blessings of Isaiah." Longenecker, page 59

³¹ See my "The Watchtower's Handling of Blood" (page 15, etc.) available at <http://www.jwstudies.com/index.html>

³² Matthew 5: 29 -30

Hyperbole? – Law and Prophets until John the Baptist

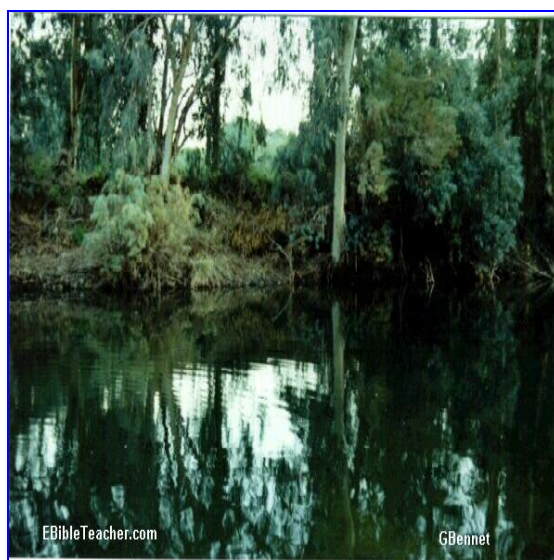
Luke records Jesus' words on the relationship between the proclamation of the "Law and the Prophets" and the preaching of the "Kingdom of Heaven (God)":

The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John (the Baptist). Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.

Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery. ³³

Jesus taught that the Law and Prophets were proclaimed until the time of John the Baptist, since which time the Kingdom of Heaven was being preached.



Jordan River, where John baptised

Hyperbole? – Jesus' subsequent words explain

So, if Jesus used hyperbole, what was the message he actually intended?

As an introduction to that answer, Jesus said of the "Pharisees and the teachers of the law":

Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

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. ³⁴

³³ Luke 16:16 – 18 (emphasis supplied)

Here, Jesus' concern was the hypocrisy of the "Pharisees and the teachers of the law" who broke "the least of [the] commandments and [taught] others to do the same".

Jesus sought righteousness that comes from within, as against the "Pharisees and the teachers of the law" who concerned themselves with external manifestation, even ostentatious behaviour. In the parallel passage of Mark 7:5-13, Jesus told "Pharisees and teachers of the law, ... you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down".

While he spoke about the practice and the teaching of the Law, Jesus kept his primary focus on "the kingdom of heaven (God)".

Jesus used examples to provide his intended message

In his sermon, Jesus had said, "not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law". Then, using examples, Jesus illustrated his meaning.

| You have heard that it was said | But I tell you |
|---------------------------------|--|
| The Law and the Prophets. | <p>The Kingdom message applies a deeper and fuller meaning to the Law and the Prophets.</p> <p>This higher standard that the Kingdom demands does not cause anything to be removed from the Law or the Prophets.</p> |

Several times Jesus contrasts what people had heard with what they were hearing now from him. One word reflects Jesus' approach to the law and the prophets: Authority.

"In the Matthean 'Sermon on the Mount', the expression 'you have heard it has been said' appears repeatedly in the conflation of Scripture and various Jewish traditions (Matt. 5:21 (Exod. 20:13; Deut. 5:17); Matt. 5:27 (Exod. 20:14; Deut. 5:18); Matt. 5:31 (Deut. 24:1); Matt. 5:33 (Ps. 50:14 [LXX=49:14]); Matt. 5:43 (Lev. 19:18))" ³⁵

He was telling them: "you have heard before, but hear me now. They have said, but I am telling you".

The people had listened to words that were read to them (see Luke 4:16-21 in the footnote ³⁶) but now, instead of listening to words from the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, the people were listening to Jesus' words.

³⁴ Matthew 5:19 – 20 (emphasis supplied)

³⁵ Longenecker, pages pages 60, 57

³⁶ Now Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.



Murder (*Matthew 5:21-22*)

| You have heard that it was said to the people long ago | But I tell you that |
|---|---|
| Do not murder, (<i>Exodus 20:13, Deut 5: 17</i>) and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment (<i>Exodus 20:21</i>) | Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. |
| Again, anyone who says to his brother 'Raca' is answerable to the Sanhedrin ³⁷ . | But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. |

Adultery (*Matthew 5:27-28*)

| You have heard that it was said | But I tell you that |
|--|---|
| Do not commit adultery (<i>Exodus 20:14; Deut 5:18</i>). | Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. |

Instead of external legalistic observance, Jesus said the believer had to look at the law from within. He was not destroying the law but gave it deeper

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and the regaining of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to tell them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled even as you heard it being read." (Luke 4:16-21, NetBible)

³⁷ *Sanhedrin*. The High Court of the Jews. In NT times it was made up of three kinds of members: chief priests, elders and teachers of the law. Its total membership numbered 71, including the high priest, who was presiding officer. Under Roman jurisdiction, the Sanhedrin was given a great deal of authority, but they could not impose capital punishment (see John 18:31). (*The NIV Study Bible*, Study Note on Mark 14:55, © 1985 The Zondervan Corporation, Library of Congress Catalog Number 85-50591)

meaning. The emphasis moved from the external letter to the internal attitude of the mind.



Divorce (*Matthew 5:31-32*)

| It has been said | But I tell you that |
|--|--|
| Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce (Deut. 24:1-4) | Anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery. |

This time when Jesus quoted from the law, he cited Deuteronomy. There is no concern to Jesus whether a statement comes from one part of the law or from any other.

Oaths (*Matthew 5:33-37*)

| You have heard that it was said to the people long ago | But I tell you |
|--|--|
| Do not break your oath (Lev 19:12), but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord (Num 30:2; Deut 23:21). | Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. |

When Jesus quoted from the law once more, he cited Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Revenge (*Matthew 5:38-42*)

| You have heard that it was said | But I tell you |
|---|---|
| Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth (Exodus 21:24; Lev 21:20; Deut 19:21). | <p>Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.</p> <p>And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.</p> <p>If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.</p> <p>Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.</p> |

Jesus quoted the law at Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. This was a very good and positive law, ensuring fair justice but once more Jesus provides his higher standard.

Love and hate (*Matthew 5:43-48*)

| You have heard that it was said | But I tell you |
|---|--|
| Love your neighbor (<i>Lev 19:18</i>) and hate your enemy (<i>Deut 23:6; Psalm 139:21, 22</i>). | <p>Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (verses 44, 45, 48)</p> <p>(Lev 19:2: "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.'")</p> |

When Jesus cited what they had heard, he combined Leviticus, Deuteronomy and the Psalms.

Warning against outward show

Having shown his listeners the higher demands of the Kingdom of Heaven (God), Jesus turned his attention to the hypocritical, legalistic behaviour of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law.

Instead of making a great show before men, Jesus told his listeners they were to speak directly with God in secret. And God, who sees in secret, will recognise and reward their direct contact with him.

Giving to the needy (*Matthew 6:1-4*)

| Legalistic behaviour | Kingdom behaviour |
|----------------------|-------------------|
|----------------------|-------------------|

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them.</p> <p>If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. (verse 1)</p> | <p>So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.</p> <p>But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.</p> <p>Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (verses 2-4)</p> |
|--|--|

Prayer (Matthew 6:5-15)

| <p>Legalistic behaviour</p> | <p>Kingdom behaviour</p> |
|--|---|
| <p>And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men.</p> <p>I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. (verse 5)</p> | <p>But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.</p> <p>Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you (verse 6)</p> |
| <p>And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.</p> <p>Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. (verses 7, 8)</p> | <p>This, then, is how you should pray:</p> <p>'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.</p> <p>Give us today our daily bread.</p> <p>Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.</p> <p>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.</p> <p>For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. (verses 9-15)</p> |

Fasting (Matthew 6:16-18)

| <p>Legalistic behaviour</p> | <p>Kingdom behaviour</p> |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|

| | |
|--|--|
| When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. (verse 16) | But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (verses 17, 18) |
|--|--|

Store treasures in heaven (*Matthew 6:19 – 24*)

| Legalistic behaviour | Kingdom behaviour |
|--|--|
| Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. (verse 19) | But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (verses 20, 21) |

Personal response the Kingdom

Do not worry (*Matthew 6:25 – 34*)

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ³⁸

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁹

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. ⁴⁰

Do not judge (*Matthew 7:1 - 6*)

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ⁴¹

Ask, Seek, Knock

In modern-day sporting terminology, Jesus “raised the bar”. He removed nothing from the expectations of the Law and the Prophets, but raised the standards even higher, revealing targets that are even more difficult for a person to reach.

It is not surprising that this greater manifestation of God’s rulership, his Kingdom, resulted in higher expectations of its followers. God cannot deny his nature.

Mankind could never completely achieve these expectations, whether under the auspices of the Law and the Prophets or under the Kingdom.

³⁸ Matthew 6:25

³⁹ Matthew 6:33

⁴⁰ Matthew 6:34

⁴¹ Matthew 7:1

But God provided the solution. There is one who DID meet every one of these expectations, Jesus Christ. His full satisfaction of the Kingdom's demands are placed on the account of the faithful, simply by asking and seeking in faith, believing and trusting.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁴²

Justification⁴³, of being in the right state before God, is achieved only through faith, under both the Law and the Prophets and under the Kingdom of God. This status is given as a gift, not as a reward.

The apostle Paul grasped this, saying that a person is not justified before God on the basis of obedience ("law"), to which the "Law and the Prophets testify". In the same context, Paul said that justification comes only through faith in the death ("blood") of Jesus Christ:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. ⁴⁴

The "Golden Rule"

Not only did Jesus support the "law and the prophets" but he used them to underpin his teachings. He said the *Golden Rule* "sums the law and the prophets".

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. ⁴⁵

The apostle Paul repeated this message when he wrote concerning relationships with other people:

He who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. ⁴⁶

⁴² Matthew 7:7

⁴³ Justification => "Just as if I had never sinned"

⁴⁴ Romans 3:21 - 25

⁴⁵ Matthew 7:12

⁴⁶ Romans 3:8 - 10



The Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him 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.” (Deut 6:5)

This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Lev 19:18)

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”⁴⁷

Jesus said the two “greatest commandments in the Law” which support all Hebrew Scripture appear in Leviticus and in Deuteronomy.

Final warnings and exhortation

The Gates (*Matthew 7: 13 - 14*)

Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.⁴⁸

A Tree and its Fruit (*Matthew 7: 15 - 23*)

Watch out for false prophets.⁴⁹

The firm foundation (*Matthew 7: 24 - 29*)

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (verse 24)

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. (verse 25)

⁴⁷ Matthew 22: 34 - 40

⁴⁸ Matthew 7:14

⁴⁹ Matthew 7:15

| | |
|--|--|
| But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. (verse 26) | The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. (verse 27) |
|--|--|

Jesus spoke with authority

When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. ⁵⁰

Jesus' words gave the "law and the prophets" (the Hebrew's Scriptures) greater fuller meaning, without removing the sense. Their scripture was not diminished; rather it was enlarged. Jesus had not destroyed the essential meaning and message of Scripture ("law and the prophets").

Jesus did and said nothing to undermine God's word, indeed he relied on it to show the words pointed to him. He was fulfilling Scripture's expectations.

The Christian follower can only look at the Hebrew Scriptures through Jesus. The true meaning can only be understood after listening to him, not through the external legalism of "the Pharisees and the teachers of the law".

The New Testament provides the only passageway for understanding and employing the Law and the Prophets, the Hebrew Scriptures.

⁵⁰ Matthew 7:28, 29