

Lesson 3- Salt and Light, Matt.5:10-16

The *Beatitudes* encapsulate the required attitudes, dispositions, and activities of citizens in Jesus' coming kingdom. Indeed, it would be and is "*not of this world*" (John 18:36) not only in the sense that it would reside within the boundaries of human hearts instead of nationalistic borders (cf. Luke 17:21; lit. "*within you*"), but also that it was certainly not of *the world* most of the Jews expected, and ultimately, demanded. In these senses, His kingdom was *spiritually revolutionary*, and the Beatitudes are the opening barrage in the battle that would bring it to fruition.

But this battle for the *hearts and minds* of mankind would not be without its casualties, or its heroes- who were often one in the same. Thus, Jesus follows the *essence* of this new kingdom's citizens with the *effects* (both *negative* and *positive*) such transformations will spawn. For the most part, the Beatitudes are both *personal* and *internal*- how each kingdom citizen must think, feel, reason, and be *on the inside*. But such a spiritual revolution taking place *within* sufficient numbers of individuals, surely would and did have dramatic consequences *outwardly* on these individuals, and the world in which they lived. Thus, 5:10-16 manifest the *outward effects* of the *inward transformation* resultant from the Beatitudes.

A. Blessed are the Persecuted, vv.10-12

1. What is the specific connection between v.9 and v.10?

Rarely do those who, by *negotiation*, *compromise*, and *conflict resolution* skills or tendencies (whether natural or learned) become "targets" for *persecution* themselves. But this is precisely what often and unfortunately happens to those who engage in the *kind of peacemaking* that v.9 actually addresses (please review the answer to #14 in Lesson 2). Those who seek to *make peace* by and through *the gospel of peace* (Eph.6:15) often are *persecuted* for their efforts, cf. 7:6; 10:16-25.

However, *both parties* involved in this *conflict* (of man and God) will not *persecute* the *peacemakers*. God, instead and for His part, will *bless* and reward those making the effort toward *peace* with "*the kingdom of heaven*" regardless of the actual outcome of these *individual battles*, vv.10-12; cf. 10:26-42.

2. Some lists include v.10 with the Beatitudes and some don't. Though its truth and importance remains untarnished either way, what reasons would you give or its *inclusion and exclusion*?

I would *exclude* it from the Beatitudes because: 1) the Beatitudes proper (vv.3-9) encapsulate the required *attitudes*, *dispositions*, *character*, and *activities* of kingdom citizens; 2) As such, they are *requirements* each individual who seeks to be in and receive the benefits of citizenship in the kingdom- they are things we must become, feel, and do; 3) But v.10, though it begins similarly with "*Blessed...*", instead of stating a *requirement* and pronouncing the incumbent *blessing*, is explaining the *result* of having met the criterion of the Beatitudes; *i.e.* when one becomes a kingdom citizen, *this* (persecution) *has happened previously* (v.10), and likely *will happen* to you also (v.11). Otherwise (if v.10 is

an actual Beatitude in the same vein as vv.3-9), *persecution* becomes a *requirement* of citizenship in the kingdom, cf. 2Tim.3:12.

3. What surely “jumped out” at the original audience of v.11 when Jesus said it?

For those expecting an *earthly Messiah* to deliver the *earthly kingdom* (of Israel) from its oppressors and restore it to its former *earthly glory*, the thought of “kingdom citizens” being *personally “persecuted”* surely must have been shocking, to say the least, cf. 11:2-3; 20:20-22ff!

4. From v.12: a) *Who* was it that “*persecuted the prophets who were before you*”? b) In what sense are citizens of the kingdom *prophets*? And c), Why should kingdom citizens *rejoice* when they are *persecuted*?

a) By and large, it was not *foreigners* who *persecuted the prophets* God sent to His people, but the people themselves, cf. 23:29-36; cp. Luke 20:9-19ff.

b) A *prophet* is one who *speaks for God*, whether he is foretelling the future, relaying lessons of the past, or preaching repentance to deliverance, or conversely pronouncing judgment from God in the present (or future). If we understand v.9 correctly as those *proclaiming and making peace* with “*the gospel of peace*,” then kingdom citizens are *prophets*, cp. 1Pet.2:9-10.

c) I don’t think the Lord is suggesting some sort of sadomasochism in which we are to derive *pleasure* from the *pain of persecution*. Instead, we should: recognize through the persecution our *association with our Master* in these regards and *rejoice* in it, 10:24-25; and *be happy* that though we may indeed be *persecuted* for our efforts, others have *blessed* with the opportunity to know and accept the truth, even though at the present, they have rejected it, cp. Acts 18:5-6 and Phil.1:18.

B. Salt of the Earth, v.13

5. Why, do you think, Jesus chose “*salt*” to illustrate His point?

Much like the *parables* Jesus would soon provide, here He uses the *everyday* and the *ordinary* to reveal the *eternal* and the *extraordinary*. Every home in that time and place, even as now, has some *salt* in it (as well as some form of *light*). The world at that time (and again, even as now) was *rotting* from the effects of sin, or spiritual corruption. Commonly, *salt* was used to save (*preserve*) meat from *putrefaction*. It was even used to *make palatable (flavor)* meat that may have begun to deteriorate. Through efforts of *peacemaking* with the *gospel of peace* (v.9 and Eph.6:15), kingdom citizens become just such a *preserving* and *flavoring* influence in the world- *preventing* and *correcting* the degradation of sin.

6. Who is the intended antecedent of the pronoun “*You*” in vv.13,14? Jesus’ 12 disciples *specifically*, or the multitude in the audience *generally*? Please explain.

The question stems from vv.1-2, where it appears that Jesus’ *disciples “came to Him”* in v.1, and He “*began to teach them*,” v.2. So, were His words in vv.11-16 in which He switched from third (vv.3-10) to second person, meant for the *multitude* of v.1a, or His *disciples* of vv.1b and following?

While I'm not certain, it should be obvious that *the Twelve* (disciples, who later become *apostles*) "fit" what Jesus has to say about *salt* and *light* in more specific ways and to greater degrees than other kingdom citizens, cf. 10:19-20; 18:18; but it is also readily apparent that *the multitude* heard and were greatly affected by the SOTM, cf. 7:28-29. So, given the technical requirements of the syntax, Jesus may indeed have been speaking *directly* to *His disciples*, but certainly included *the multitude* in application. The *disciples/apostles* were sent "*into all the world*" (Mark 16:15) as *salt* and *light*, but every kingdom citizen has the opportunity to *preserve* and *illuminate* wherever he may be, cf. Acts 8:1-4; 11:19.

7. How do kingdom citizens *become* "salty" in the first place?

In order to have a *preserving* influence on others, one must first be personally *preserved*, obviously (one can't *share* that which is not first *possessed*). Such effects are gained by contact with *the Savior* and the adoption of His *dispositions*, *attitudes*, and *actions*, cf. vv.3-9; 10:24-25a; Phil.2:1-8.

8. How do kingdom citizens *lose* their "saltiness"?

If I understand the chemistry correctly, *pure* salt never really loses its *saltiness*. It can, however, by *pollution* with and *dissolution* with corrupting and degrading elements, lose its effectiveness. The lesson is readily apparent: kingdom citizens lose their effectiveness to *preserve* when they forfeit their *purity*, cf. v.8. *Salt* that has been polluted by compromise with the very worldly elements from which they were intended to *preserve* becomes "*worthless*," vv.13,15.

C. Light of the World, vv.14-16

9. What is necessary for kingdom citizens to become "*the light of the world*"?

Firstly, the *light* kingdom citizens manifest is *reflected*, cf.4:14-16 and John 1:9-13. In order to have an *illuminating* effect on others, one must first be truly and well *illuminated* personally, Eph.5:6-14.

Secondly, that *light* must be allowed to *shine forth* "*in such a way*" as to allow others to "*see*"- as a *light on the path*, cf. Eph.5:15 – 6:9.

Thirdly, *the world* has to be willing to *see* and *come to* such *light* for guidance, cp. John 1:9-10 with John 3:19-21.

10. Provide some examples of how kingdom citizens might *hide their light*?

Kingdom citizens can *hide their light* by keeping their "citizenship" *secret*; that is, being unwilling to *proclaim* their true identity/affiliation, cf. 10:32-33. Likewise, they can *hide their light* by effectively *denying its Source*- taking *personal credit* for the "*good works*" that are *seen* rather than *glorifying* "*your Father in heaven*."

11. How can kingdom citizens *shine their light* improperly?

Perhaps the most common way is *shine our lights* in others' eyes to the degree that they are *blinded* rather than *illuminated*. We want them to see *our good works*, and subsequently *glorify us*, so badly that we become just like *the hypocrites* of 6:1-2,5,16.

Lesson 4- The Law and the Gospel, Matt.5:17-20

These few verses are often viewed and/or treated as “fly-over territory”- just something to read through/over while you get to the more important parts. This is unfortunate since they are “the heart of Jesus’ great address” (Invitation to a Spiritual Revolution, p.22; Paul Earnhart). How so? Prior to the SOTM, Jesus has had at least three significant confrontations with the Pharisees (the most ardent defenders of Jewish nationalism based on the Law of Moses) over Sabbath law and its observance, cf. Luke 6:1-11; Mark 2:23 – 3:6; and John 5:2-18. Though woefully self-righteous and hypocritical (cf. 23:1ff), the Pharisees were sticklers when it came to the Sabbath. So much so that as a result of the *defeats* they suffered from Jesus on these occasions, they were “*filled with rage*” and became willing to, and indeed began seeking opportunities to, “*destroy Him*,” Luke 6:11; Mark 3:6. What do these things have to do with 5:17-20 being *the heart* of the SOTM?

The Pharisees viewed themselves as the *protectors* and *dispensers* (23:2), or “*keepers of the Law*” (cp. Acts 22:3; 26:5; Phil.3:5-6). The Jewish people largely viewed them that way too. Surely those knowledgeable of Jesus’ conflicts with the Pharisees, who were now hearing Him speak words that were diametrically opposed to what they’d heard from and seen in the Pharisees, would assume that He intended to abrogate Moses’ Law and replace it with His own. But beginning here (vv.17-20), and continuing through to the end of the SOTM (7:29), Jesus makes it clear that His contention was with the Pharisaic perversions of the Law, rather than the Law itself. Citizens of His kingdom would have to *be* and *do* much better than the Pharisees, v.20! Thus, 5:17-20 sets the stage for everything else Jesus has to say on this occasion. Think of it this way: the *Beatitudes* are the *doctrine*; and *Salt* and *Light* are the *effects* of its *implementation*; then, 5:21 – 7:27 explain both *how* and *why* kingdom citizens’ righteousness would necessarily/must “*surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees*,” 5:20!

A. Fulfilling the Law, vv.17-18

1. Why did Jesus say, “*Do not think that...*”? (Hint: review the introduction above.)

Jesus warned, “*Do not think that*” because that is precisely what they *were* or *would* (when He finished the SOTM) think! This is comparable to the oft-repeated phrase, “*Do not be deceived...*” In NT usage, it is associated with a principle or truth that most would readily admit- like, “*Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap*” in Gal.6:8. But, there seems to be an almost universal tendency of man to apply the adage to *everyone but himself!* Thus, the warning “*Do not be deceived*” is necessary because men *deceive themselves* in thinking it applies to *everyone* else, but that his own situation is somehow different, and therefore excluded and exempted.

The point is that “*Do not think...*” is likely very much akin to “*Do not be deceived...*”- both were or became necessary “*for He Himself knew what was in man*,” John 2:25!

Given that the Pharisees viewed and presented themselves as the *teachers*, *protectors*, and even the *embodiment* of the Law, the SOTM audience might naturally assume from the things already stated (and especially from those about

to be more specifically stated in 6:1ff) that Jesus intended to *abolish* (translated from *kataluo-* to *throw down*) the Law of Moses and *replace* it with His own.

2. Since Jesus' death **did** ultimately *remove* and *replace* the Law with His Law (cf. Heb.9:15-17; Col.2:13-14), why does He say He **did not** "*come to abolish the Law or the Prophets*"?

Here we must make a distinction between *effect* and *purpose*. Jesus' death on the cross obviously *did* have the *effect* of both "*taking away*" or "*removing*" the Law of Moses, and making *the covenant of Jesus Christ* "*of force,*" cf. Col.2:14ff; Heb.8:13; 9:10-17. But look closely at what Jesus actually said, "*I did not come to abolish...*" While this may have been the *effect* of His coming and subsequent actions, it was not the **purpose** of them. He did not come to *abolish* but to *fulfill*. In this way, Jesus was the "*end*" (Grk. *teles-* *fruition, completion*) "*of the law,*" Rom.10:4. The Law, as the *tutor/schoolmaster* (one responsible for the children *from the parents to the teacher*), was thus *fulfilled* when it *led* or *delivered us to Christ*, cf. Gal.3:23-25.

Additionally, Jesus did not "*fulfill*" the Law by just keeping it *perfectly*- though He violated none of it in principle or application. Such was not specifically the *purpose* of either the Law or His coming, cf. Rom.7:5 – 8:4. Instead, Jesus *fulfilled* the Law and the Prophets by being the *purpose* or *object* of them- *justification by faith!* He *fulfilled* every *prophecy* they made concerning Him. He *fulfilled* every *principle* dictated by them. He *fulfilled* every *type* and *shadow* they predicted. He *fulfilled* everything the Law *prophesied* and *promised* but could not *provide*- eternal salvation, cf. Heb.10:1-14!

3. Does v.18 mean that we are still under (responsible for; amenable to) the Law since "*heaven and earth*" have not yet *passed away*? Why, or why not?

It cannot mean this, for such would violate Paul's statements in Col.2:14-17; *i.e.* that *the Law* was "*cancelled out*" and "*taken... out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*" Since what Paul (and the other inspired writers) wrote, "*are the Lord's commandment,*" cf. 1Cor.14:37, Jesus' words cannot be legitimately so interpreted. So, what is He saying? A few things, actually:

- a. He establishes the *validity* of the *Law and the Prophets*. Nothing contained therein would *fail to come to pass*- not even the "*smallest letter*" (*iota*- Greek; *yodh*- Hebrew; of which there were 66,420 we read!) or "*stroke*" (or *tittle*- the *serif* was smallest part of a letter in the Hebrew alphabet which distinguished some consonants from one another) were unimportant for a very simple reason: they all came from God!
- b. He verifies the *authority* of the Law. Though it is accurately described by inspiration as being "*set aside*" because of its "*weakness and uselessness*" in Heb.7:18, a specific application is being made there regarding its *inability* to *perfect* (forgive sins), cf. Heb.7:19; 10:1-4. The Law, nonetheless, was also "*holy... righteous... good... spiritual*" (Rom.7:12-14) and accomplished precisely what God intended: 1) to make known the *sinfulness of sin*, Rom.7:7; 2) to reveal the *need of salvation*,

Rom.7:8-11; and, 3) to *bring mankind to salvation in Jesus Christ*, Gal.3:24. But, Jesus' words also indicate...

- c. He reveals that the Law *would come to an end*. The Law would not “*pass away*” (*parerchomai*- to go past or pass by) “*until*” such time when the specified conditions that follow are “*accomplished*” (*ginomai*- to be made, finished, completed). This addition of “*until*” clearly indicates a limited lifespan or duration of the Law.
- d. Jesus *fulfilled every jot and tittle* of the Law and the Prophets- every *prophecy* made of the Messiah; every *type* and *shadow*; every *command* was kept and every *prohibition* was honored; He “*fulfilled*” (*pleroo*- to render full or complete) them all, v.17 (cp.23:32). He “*accomplished*” every aspect of the Law, bringing it to an *end*, Rom.10:4.

Thus, no one is “under” the Law or the Prophets anymore- not just because they were “*taken away*” and “*nailed to the cross*” (this passage actually refers more specifically to the unforgiven/unforgiveable sins committed under the Law rather than the Law itself, cf. Col.2:13-14), but because Jesus “*fulfilled*” all of its requirements, and through and in Him, all of its purposes were “*accomplished*,” vv.17,18!

B. Least or Great in the Kingdom, v.19

4. Does the phrase “*these commands*” refer to the Law of Moses, or Jesus' Law? Please explain your answer.

Though the SOTM is, on the whole, part of and the heart of *the gospel*, cf. 4:23ff, the specific context of v.19 demands that we interpret the phrase in application to *the Law of Moses*, cf. vv.17-20. In the two previous verses, He clearly has reference to *the Law of Moses*, and in v.20, the “*righteousness*” of *the scribes and Pharisees* was certainly was not derived from *the gospel/Jesus' law*. Though it should be clear from what follows in v.20 – 6:18 that the “*righteousness*” of *the scribes and Pharisees* did not, despite protestations to the contrary, actually stem from the Law of Moses either.

However, there is another important point that needs to be understood. If the *Law of Moses* had been summarily *disregarded*, or *parceled up* between *greater commands* to be observed and *lesser commands* that could be violated without recompense or otherwise disregarded- and such was certainly done by and *taught/encouraged* by the scribes and Pharisees, **surely such a mindset would be brought into play regarding the gospel as well**. Thus, Jesus affirms that *even the smallest letter or stroke* comes from God, and must be considered as such under any covenant- *old* or *new*. In truth, God's *law/will* for man “*inheres in creation, not in the covenants*” (Invitation to a Spiritual Revolution; p.25). Those who lived *prior to* the Law of Moses were not exempt from duty to God, cf. Gen.6:5ff. “A man is not under law to God because he is under covenant (new or old). He is under law to God because he is man.” (Ibid; p.26). If this is true (and it is), then why is Jesus, in His preaching of “*the gospel of the kingdom*,” urging obedience to the Law of Moses?

The answer is that regardless of the particular *covenant* under which one lives (*Patriarchal, Mosaic, or Christian*), the duty remains the same: *trust and obey God*. Since, largely by the influence and teaching of the Pharisees, God's (Mosaic) law was being *set aside for a righteousness of their own making*, that tendency- if left uncorrected, would likewise permeate the thinking of even adherents to *the gospel*. This would not do! So, Jesus seeks to identify and correct the attitude *toward the Law* (since His largely Jewish audience was still *under* that covenant) in order to prevent the same mindset being brought forward into *the kingdom*.

5. The phrase "*least commands*" seems to indicate that there are *greater* and *lesser* commands of God. What is the basis for such a distinction? Are the *penalties* for violation then different for *lesser* and *greater* commands (cf. Jas.2:8-11)?

Jesus here seems to be *borrowing* from the Pharisaical mindset of *lesser* and *greater* commands. He has clearly indicated that such is neither God's nor His view of *any* command of God, vv.18-19a. So, "No," there are no *lesser* and *greater commandments*- He is simply turning their own mindset against them. In fact, He is about to illustrate this very point in the next section by pointing out that *anger* can be as sinful as *murder*, vv.21-22; *lust* as sinful as *adultery*, vv.27-28; *et al*.

The very nature of *law* requires that violation- even of a tenet that may be considered *lesser* by the perpetrator or the innocent bystander, renders one "guilty," Jas.2:10.

6. Does Jesus here teach that one can *annul* "*one the least commands*" of God and still be "*in the kingdom of heaven*"- just in a *lesser/least* position? If so, how? If not, what *is* Jesus teaching in these regards?

Though some suggest exactly what the question proposes, and further seek to bolster their conclusions with passages such as Luke 12:47-48, it is not Jesus' point. His point is that those who *disregard*- by *practice* and/or *teaching*, the commands of God are *lesser* by comparison to those who are *greater* because they *regard*- by *practice* and *teaching* the commands of God. The later is *approved/accepted* and the former is *denied/rejected*, v.20; 7:15-23; (see also 13:36-43; 22:1-14; 25:1-46 where *some* depicted as *in* or part of "*the kingdom of heaven*" are ultimately rejected and prevented from entering heaven itself; thus, the phrase "*kingdom of heaven*" may not always refer to either the *universal church* or *heaven proper*).

A. Surpassing Righteousness, v.20

7. Research: What was the origin of the Pharisees? When did the party arise, and for or to what purpose?

"*Pharisee*" refers to a sect of Judaism that seems to have arisen in Post-Exilic (likely third or second century B.C.) Israel that apparently originally sought to prevent a complete overtaking of Jewish culture and religion by the swelling Greek influence that swept through the world from Alexander the Great.

8. What kind(s) of “righteousness” did the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus’ time exemplify?

Though perhaps it began with noble intentions, by the time of Jesus, Pharisaism had devolved into *legalism*, 23:13-22; *religious ritualism*, 23:23-24; *arrogant self-righteousness*, Luke 18:9-12; and perhaps most “at issue” in our text, *corruption of God’s law by adhering to oral traditions*, and teaching/requiring others to do likewise, vv.21 - 5:18; 15:1-9; cf. Mark 7:1-9.

9. Why is it essential for kingdom citizen’s righteousness to surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees? Is it just a matter of *doing/being better than them*, or, is there more to it? Please explain.

Jesus begins this section (at v.17) by clearly defining *the enemy* to whom He has brought *His sword*. It is **not the Law of Moses**- each and every part of it came from *His Father*, and would He would fulfill it all. Instead, His war was **on the corruption of God’s Word by the Pharisees** in both **teaching**, vv.21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44, and **practice**, 6:1-4, 5-15, 16-18. *Kingdom citizens* would have to do better, to say the least! They would have to exceed *Pharisaism’s*:

- *Arrogance with poor spirits*, 5:3;
- *Self-righteousness with mourning* for sins, 5:4
- *Harshness with gentleness*, 5:5;
- *Self-righteousness with true hungering and thirsting* for God’s righteousness, 5:6;
- *Judgmentalism with mercy*, 5:7;
- *Hypocrisy with purity in heart*, 5:8; and,
- *Religious despotism/tyranny with peace-making*, 5:9.

In short, they would have to become and be everything that Pharisaism was not, and could not be, to “*enter the kingdom of heaven*”!