



Chapter 5

The Sermon on the Mount

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Christ's Major Discourses

- 1) Sermon on the Mount Mt 5-7
 - The Manifesto of the Kingdom
- 2) Mystery Parables Discourse Mt 13
 - The direction that the Kingdom of heaven will take after Christ's rejection.
- 3) Olivet Discourse Mt 24-25
 - Prophetic, (yet distinct from Luke 21)
- 4) Upper Room Farewell Address Jn 14-17
 - New relationships in view of Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession.

“The Sermon on the Mount”

This is the manifesto of the King and the platform of the Prince of Peace. And it's law! It will be the law of this world during the Millennium, and then it will find full fruition. Christ will reign on earth in person and will enforce every word of it. The Sermon on the Mount will finally prevail when He whose right it is to rule shall come. Only the Gospel of the grace of God can make men obedient to Christ, and it was given to bring men into *obedience* to God. Don't let the familiarity of this passage lure you into thinking that you have mastered it; it is tough ground.

- It's one of the most misunderstood portions of Scripture.
- As The Law of the Kingdom, it is the highest ethical teaching in the Bible. It goes vastly beyond the Law of Moses. The Ten Commandments *amplified and expanded*. It raises the Law to the *nth* degree.
- It is the longest discourse recorded in Scripture.
- Who is it addressed to? *Believers*.
- This would be a source of condemnation to the unsaved.
- No viable path to salvation mentioned; No gospel of salvation discussed.
- Presents ethics without supplying the dynamic.¹

Relationships of His Subjects

1. to Self Mt 5:1–16
2. to the Law Mt 5:17–48
3. to God Mt 6
4. to Others Mt 7

Matthew 5

The first 16 verses of Matthew 5 describe the true Christian and deal with character. The rest of the Sermon on the Mount deals with the conduct that grows out of character. Character always comes before conduct, because *what we are* determines *what we do*.

Character vs. Integrity?

- Integrity = Belief + discipline. It is the vertebrae of the soul.
- Character = Integrity + Wisdom.

¹ Chuck Missler, Commentary on Matthew, khouse.org

(Proverbs 9:10) *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

In Matthew 5:1-16, Jesus shows us that true righteousness is inward; in Matthew 5:17-48 He points out that *sin* is also inward. *Thus, He exposed the false righteousness of the Pharisees, who taught that holiness consisted in religious actions, and that sin was what you did outwardly.* How many people make these mistakes today! God looks upon the heart, for there is life's destiny decided.

The Beatitudes: Matthew 5:1-12

The Lord did not actually give the "Sermon on the Mount" to the multitudes: *He gave it to His disciples, those who were already His.* They are recognized as citizens of Heaven. They are *be*-attitudes, not *do*attitudes. In these twelve verses, our Lord used the word *blessed* nine times. The Book of Psalms opens with the same word: "**Blessed** is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly..." (Ps1:1).

The Beatitudes

The word *beatitude* is not found in your Bible. It simply means "blessing" and comes from the Latin word for "blessed." There is definite progression in these verses. They show how the person begins with his or her own sense of sin and finally becomes a child of God and the results that then follow.

Note that these verses deal with attitudes—what we think in our hearts, our outlook on life. "Beatitudes"—the *attitudes* that ought to *be* in our lives if we are true Christians.

Nine Beatitudes (not 7) as there are 3 groups of 3 each. These are inexhaustibly profound.

Matthew 5:1

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

[mountain] Not known, so all speculation as to which one is useless. Not the same sermon as in Luke 6:17-49, which was "in a plain."

[set] The posture of teachers in the East was to sit (cp. Matthew 9:10; Matthew 13:1; Matthew 15:29; Matthew 18:2; Matthew 24:3; Matthew 26:55; Mark 3:32; Mark 4:1; Mark 9:35; Mark 12:41; John 6:3; John 8:2). People marveled at the gracious words of His mouth, not at His physical gestures. Sitting was a synonymous term for teaching among the rabbis.

Although one would stand to read Scripture publicly, Jewish teachers would sit to expound it, often with disciples sitting at their feet. Many scholars have compared the

disciples ***Disciples.** Students of rabbis or philosophers, normally committed to memorizing and living according to their master's teachings.

“mountain” (cf. Lk 6:17) here to Mount Sinai, where God through Moses first taught his ethics by the law (Ex 19–20; cf. Is 2:2–3).²

Hegg: *When Yeshua saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.* These are the crowds of 4:25, and indicates that the Master’s popularity had grown. The people were seeking Him for His teaching and His power to heal and overcome demonic powers (cf. Lk 6:18). The common posture of a teacher in the synagogal community was that of sitting, and thus Yeshua assumes this position as the Teacher to whom the masses had come.

We need not necessarily understand the term “disciples” to be speaking particularly of the Twelve, since Matthew does not have the choosing of the Twelve until later. “Disciple” may at times denote those who simply were following Yeshua and accepting His teaching. In this case, “disciple” may be a sub-group of the larger “crowds.” It may be that many were coming to hear His teaching and see His miraculous works, but some of them were genuinely His disciples. These are the ones who gather around Him as He sits to teach.

The notice that “He went up on the mountain” may be variously understood. The Greek *to; (to oros)* “the mountain” may just as easily mean “the mountainous region” and not some well-known mountain or hillside. Most likely, Yeshua had retreated to the hill country west of the Kenneret. Moreover, the term Luke utilizes, i.e., “level place” (Lk 6:17, *pedinos*), is only found here, and should not be understood as akin to the American prairie, but as a flat place among rough, rocky, or hilly terrain. The picture that emerges is one of Yeshua entering the hill country and then finding a level place that would accommodate the crowd that had gathered. Many commentators have noted the parallel to Moses in the phrase “He went up on the mountain.” Allison-Davies (*Matthew* 1.423-24) collate similar phrases in the Tanach, and note that the majority of these are found in the Torah, and with direct reference to Moses. Generally, those who emphasize the parallel to Moses do so in order to suggest that Matthew is presenting Yeshua as the “new Moses,” Who comes with a “new Law” to replace the Mosaic legislation. Of course, this viewpoint is based upon a similar interpretation of the Sermon itself.

However, had Matthew intended for us to see a parallel between Yeshua’s ascending the hill country and Moses’ ascent to the top of Mt. Sinai, it seems that he would have made more explicit allusions to the Sinai pericope. In fact, there are none. Rather, if there is a parallel to Moses, it is that Yeshua intends to bring the people to a correct understanding of the Torah and its proper application in light of the Kingdom of Heaven, not to replace it with something new.³

law ***Law.** “Torah” (the Hebrew word behind the Greek word translated “law”) means literally “instruction” and “teaching,” not just regulations. It was also used as a title for the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch, the books of Moses) and sometimes for the whole Old Testament. This commentary uses the translation “law” because it is familiar to readers of most translations, even though the English term’s semantic range is much narrower than the Jewish concept.

²Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:1). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

³ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

Hegg: and He opened His mouth and began to teach them saying To “open one’s mouth” is a Hebraic way of noting a solemn discourse, or a proclamation particularly germane to the events at hand (cf. Job 33:2; Ps 51:15; 78:2; Prov 31:9; Ezek 3:27; 29:21). Only Matthew retains this semitic expression. The opening of the Sermon has become known as the “beatitudes,” based upon the repeated word “blessed” (*makarios*), which reflects the Hebrew אֲשֵׁרִי (*ashrei*). This mode of speech is repeatedly found in the Psalms and Proverbs, and is common in the rabbinic literature as well.

It is instructive to note how Matthew has structured his Gospel up to this point. Before Yeshua ever teaches or gives His commands, He is known to the reader as the One Who fulfilled prophecy, as the Son of David and the Son of God, and (through the words of Yochanan HaMatbil), as the promised Messiah Who would “baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.” He is presented as the Son of God, and lauded as the One in Whom the Father is pleased. It is only after we are well aware of the status of Yeshua of Natzeret that we then hear His own words. This accords with the rabbinic teaching that one must acknowledge the sovereignty of God before one is able to submit to His commandments:

Said R. Joshua b. Qorha, “Why does [the passage of] Shema precede [the reciting of Deut 11:13ff which begins “And it will come to pass if you hearken...?”] “So that one may first accept upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven and afterwards may accept the yoke of the commandments. (m.Berachot 2.2)

Thus, Matthew follows this same pattern. Before Yeshua utters a word, or begins His teaching, we have come to understand Who He is, and having accepted Him as the Messiah, are enabled to hear and submit to His words.

Many have sought to find a literary structure for the Beatitudes, but there is no consensus. As Matthew records them, they consist of nine sayings, all linked by the opening word “Blessed.” The first eight are all cast in the third person (“they”), while the final beatitude is put in the second person (“you”).³ If we seek a chiasmic structure, the following pattern emerges.

Those poor in spirit —> kingdom of heaven
 Those who mourn —> comforted
 Those who are gentle —> inherit the earth
 Those who hunger & thirst after righteousness —> satisfied
Those who show mercy —> shown mercy
 Those pure in heart —> see God
 Those who are peacemakers —> called sons of God
 Those persecuted for the sake of righteousness —> kingdom of heaven
 Those persecuted as disciples of Yeshua —> great reward in heaven

If this chiasmic arrangement has warrant, then the major emphasis is placed upon “showing mercy,” and the structure itself may help define the categories:

- 1) poor in spirit = those persecuted as disciples of Yeshua
- 2) mourn = persecuted for righteousness
- 3) gentle = peacemakers
- 4) hunger & thirst after righteousness = pure in heart

Again, from the structure we may suggest that all of these categories flow from the fountain of showing mercy (the central point of the chiasm), and this accords with the overall emphasis of our Master's teaching and example, in which the showing of mercy takes a preeminent position.⁴

Talmidim (plural; singular *talmid*), “disciples.” The English word “disciple” fails to convey the richness of the relationship between a rabbi and his *talmidim* in the first century C.E. Teachers, both itinerant like Yeshua and settled ones, attracted followers who wholeheartedly gave themselves over to their teachers (though not in a mindless way, as happens today in some cults). The essence of the relationship was one of trust in every area of living, and its goal was to make the *talmid* like his rabbi in knowledge, wisdom and ethical behavior (compare 10:24–25, and see the *JNT* glossary entry on *talmid*).⁵

Matthew 5:2

And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

And he opened his mouth—a solemn way of arousing the reader's attention, and preparing him for something weighty. (Job 9:1; Ac 8:35; 10:34).⁶

Introduction (cf. Mk. 3:13; Lk. 6:20). The audience is clearly specified as *his disciples*, as opposed to *the crowds*. The latter reappear as a wider audience in 7:28, but they are clearly not the main focus of the teaching, which typically contrasts ‘you’ (the disciples) with other people (see especially 25:11–16).⁷

Enormous crowds were following Jesus—he was the talk of the town, and everyone wanted to see him. The disciples, who were the closest associates of this popular man, were certainly tempted to feel important, proud, and possessive. Being with Jesus gave them not only prestige, but also opportunity for receiving money and power.

The crowds were gathering once again. But before speaking to them, Jesus pulled his disciples aside and warned them about the temptations they would face as his associates. Don't expect fame and fortune, Jesus was saying, but mourning, hunger, and persecution. Nevertheless, Jesus assured his disciples, they would be rewarded—but perhaps not in this life. There may be times when following Jesus will bring us great popularity. If we

⁴ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

⁵ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:1). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁶ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 5:2). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

cf. compare

⁷ Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Mt 5:1). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

don't live by Jesus' words in this sermon, we will find ourselves using God's message only to promote our personal interests.⁸

Matthew 5:3

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

[poor in spirit] Our attitude toward ourselves in which we feel our need and admit it.

- We must be empty before we can be full. The opposite of this is self-sufficiency. Our sufficiency is not of ourselves (2 Cor 3:5).
- The world promotes self-sufficiency, yet God dwells with the person whose heart is broken (Isa 57:15).
- This does not mean false humility or cowardice; it means a proper attitude toward self, realizing how weak and sinful we are apart from Christ.
- Compare the two men in Luke 18:9f: Proud Pharisee vs. humble publican...

McGee: This verse says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." It doesn't tell you *how* to become poor in spirit; it just says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." In these twelve verses, our Lord used the word *blessed* nine times. By the way, the Psalms open with the same word: "Blessed is the man ..." (Ps. 1:1). This is in contrast to the curses of the Mosaic Law. You may remember that Joshua was told that when the people of Israel were come over Jordan, they were to stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people. And then the curses were to be given from Mount Ebal. The blessings from the Sermon on the Mount are in sharp contrast to the curses from Mount Ebal, and they far exceed the blessings from Mount Gerizim, because Christ alone can bring those blessings. In our day only the saved sinner can know his poverty of spirits—"Blessed are the poor in spirit." The Sermon on the Mount, instead of making folk poor in spirit, makes them boast

We Christians today are actually very poor in spirit, we are spiritually bankrupt, but we have something to give which is more valuable than silver and gold. Paul expressed it this way: "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:10). "As poor, yet making many rich" is referring to spiritual riches which are available to everyone who belongs to Christ.⁹

Contrast to the Mosaic Law

- Joshua was told that when the people of Israel were come over Jordan, they were to stand on Mount Gerizim to receive the blessings and Mount Ebal for the presentation of the curses.
- The blessings from the Sermon on the Mount are in sharp contrast to the curses from Mount Ebal, and they far exceed the blessings from Mount Gerizim... *because Christ alone can bring those blessings.*

⁸ Life Application Notes

⁹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

[Blessed] The word *blessed* means *happy*,—used 9 times here of people who have godly characteristics as:

1. Broken spirit (Matthew 5:3; Matthew 11:28-30; Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 57:15; Isaiah 66:2)
2. Penitent spirit (Matthew 5:4; Isaiah 61:2; James 4:9; 2 Cor. 7:9-11)
3. Mild-tempered, gentle spirit (Matthew 5:5; Matthew 11:29; Psalm 37:11; 1 Peter 3:4)
4. Hungering, thirsting spirit for righteousness (Matthew 5:6; Psalm 34:10; Psalm 42:1-3; Psalm 63:1; Psalm 84:2; John 7:37-39)
5. Compassionate and merciful spirit (Matthew 5:7; Matthew 18:27; 1 Peter 3:8)
6. Pure spirit (Matthew 5:8; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:5; 1 Tim. 3:9; 1 Tim. 5:22; 1 Peter 1:22)
7. Spirit of wisdom and mediation (Matthew 5:9; Romans 14:19; 1 Cor. 13)
8. Longsuffering and forgiving spirit (Matthew 5:10-12; Matthew 10:16-28; 1 Cor. 13; 1 Peter 3:14-17; 1 Peter 4:3-19)

[theirs is the kingdom of heaven ...] The 4th New Testament prophecy in Matthew (Matthew 5:3-12). Eight prophetic promises are being fulfilled; they will be completely fulfilled at the second coming of Christ. Next, Matthew 5:17.

for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—(See on Mt 3:2). The poor in spirit not only shall have—they already have—the kingdom. The very sense of their poverty is begun riches. While others “walk in a vain show”—“in a shadow,” “an image”—in an unreal world, taking a false view of themselves and all around them—the poor in spirit are rich in the knowledge of their real case. Having courage to look this in the face, and own it guilelessly, they feel strong in the assurance that “unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness” (Ps 112:4); and soon it breaks forth as the morning. God wants nothing from us as the price of His saving gifts; we have but to feel our universal destitution, and cast ourselves upon His compassion (Job 33:27, 28; 1Jn 1:9). So the poor in spirit are enriched with the fulness of Christ, which is the kingdom in substance; and when He shall say to them from His great white throne, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom *prepared for you*,” He will invite them merely to the full enjoyment of an already possessed inheritance.¹⁰

How blessed. Greek *makarios* corresponds to Hebrew *asher* and means “blessed,” “happy,” and “fortunate” all at once, so that no one English word is adequate. For a Hebrew example, compare Psalm 144:15: “How blessed/happy/fortunate the people whose God is *Adonai*!” Verses 3–12 are known as the Beatitudes because the word “*beatus*” was used in the best-known Latin version, Jerome’s “Vulgate” (c. 410 C.E.), to translate “*makarios*.”

According to Elazar (Larry) Brandt, a Messianic Jewish friend, the Beatitudes are actually *Tanakh* phrases in the form of blessings representing the messianic age. At the end of them, Yeshua says, “How blessed *you* are when people insult *you* and persecute *you* and tell all kinds of vicious lies about *you* because *you* follow *me*” (v. 11; italics

¹⁰Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 5:3). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

added). By pronouncing this blessing in the context of messianic blessings, he is saying, in code, that he is the Messiah—which must have surprised and shocked his hearers.

This understanding supports my interpretation of v. 17 as the theme sentence for the Messiah's interpretation of *Torah*. Previously I did not have ground for assuming that Yeshua's premise in his Sermon on the Mount was "I am the Messiah," so that my understanding of v. 17 "came from nowhere." Now I see that it is the logical implication of the "I am the Messiah" premise, communicated in code by the Beatitudes.¹¹

Ancient writers and speakers would sometimes bracket a section of material by beginning and ending with the same phrase. These blessings thus deal with the gift of the kingdom (5:3, 10).

Many Jewish people believed that the kingdom would be ushered in only by a great war and force of arms; Jesus promises it for the "poor in spirit," the "humble" or "meek" (5:5), the peacemakers (5:9). Poverty and piety were often associated in Judaism; the term *poor* could encompass either physical poverty (Lk 6:20), or the faithful dependence on God that it often produced ("in spirit," as here).¹²

Hegg: The vast majority of English translations have "blessed," but some have opted for the word "happy" (TEV, Youngs). While "blessed" certainly contains the idea of "happy," it is much more than that, for as the Beatitudes themselves show, one may be "blessed" even in a state of mourning. Thus, "blessing" captures the idea of a conscience at peace before the Almighty—the sense that one exists under the protection of divine favor regardless of the current circumstances. Furthermore, the perspective of some commentators that the blessing promised in the Beatitudes is eschatological misses the fact that in the coming of Messiah, the eschaton has invaded the present. While in some sense the ultimate and final blessing awaits the age of peace and the world to come, those who walk in righteousness participate in a genuine foretaste of the eschatological blessings in the here and now.¹³

Hegg: The Greek word translated "poor" is (*ptoxos*), which has a basic meaning of "being economically disadvantaged" but also carries an extended metaphoric sense of one being "thrust on divine resources." Luke simply says "poor" without adding "in spirit," and some have therefore suggested that the opening Beatitude deals primarily with those who are impoverished of material things. But this is too simplistic. Poverty can be self-imposed, as the parable of the Prodigal demonstrates. Here, the sense of "poor in spirit" is of those who have recognized their own spiritual bankruptcy and have therefore cast themselves entirely upon God's mercies. Further, if the chiasmic structure noted above has merit, then the "poor in spirit" may be those who have undergone persecution because they have been willing to follow Yeshua and accept Him as the Messiah. Such persecution upon oneself or upon family and community members could

¹¹ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:3). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

¹² Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:3). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

¹³ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

surely bring despair.¹ As such, they are powerless (“impoverished”) in and of themselves to change the circumstances, and must rely entirely upon God’s help.

It is in this full reliance upon God that those who are “poor in spirit” obtain the kingdom of heaven. They do not achieve entrance therein through their own strength or prowess, nor by their material wealth, nor even from the lack thereof. They receive the present benefits of God’s reign (the shalom of a conscience right before the Almighty and the comfort this brings) and await the future, eschatological reign of God in which the troubles of this fallen world will be vanquished.

Here, then, in the opening Beatitude, the emphasis is laid upon reliance upon God for entrance into the kingdom. Far from teaching a salvation through one’s own righteous deeds, the Master begins by reinforcing that membership in the kingdom of heaven is a gift from God to those who have admitted their own spiritual poverty.¹⁴

The Poor in Spirit: “Who are the poor in spirit” Anonymous:

Although the Evangelist Luke explains in part the same Beatitudes, the Beatitudes in Matthew must be considered more complete. The former were spoken on a level plain, whereas the latter were expounded on a mountain. The former were low-key in nature, whereas the latter were well-rounded and more directly addressed to the apostles themselves. The reason for this difference we outlined earlier. Luke simply said “poor” whereas Matthew said “you poor in spirit.” One who is poor in spirit and humble of heart has a meek spirit and does not think great things of himself. On the other hand, one who imagines himself to be rich in spirit will imagine great things of himself. He is proud and does not fulfill the commandment of Christ that “unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Only one who has repented and become like a child is poor in spirit.¹⁵

Incomplete Work on Matthew, Homily 9

Poor in Spirit: “Perfect Blessedness Is Humility of Spirit”, Hilary

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The Lord taught by way of example that the glory of human ambition must be left behind when he said, “The Lord your God shall you adore and him only shall you serve.” And when he announced through the prophets that he would choose a people humble and in awe of his words, he introduced the perfect Beatitude as humility of spirit. Therefore he defines those who are inspired as people aware that they are in possession of the heavenly kingdom... Nothing belongs to anyone as being properly one’s own, but all have the same things by the gift of a single parent. They have given the first things needed to come into life and have been supplied with means to use them.¹⁶

On Matthew 4.2

¹⁴ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

¹⁵ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Editor, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

¹⁶ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Editor, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

Matthew 5:4

Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Again, it should be noted that the Lord did not actually give the Sermon on the Mount to the multitudes. He gave it to His disciples, those who were already His.

[**mourn**] Our attitude toward sin, a true sorrow for sin.

- This is sincere sorrow for sin, our sin and the sins of others.
- How careless we are about sin! We excuse it, yet God hates it, and sin breaks God's heart.
- Beware of the sorrow of this world (2 Cor 7:8-10). Peter mourned with godly sorrow and was forgiven; Judas had remorse—the sorrow of this world—and he took his life.
- Micah is an example of those who mourn and are comforted (Micah 7).

McGee: It is interesting to note that the same thoughts expressed in the Beatitudes can be found elsewhere in the Scriptures. The poor in spirit are referred to in Zephaniah 3:12. Micah is an example of those who mourn and are comforted (see ch. 7).¹⁷

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted—This “mourning” must not be taken loosely for that feeling which is wrung from men under pressure of the ills of life, nor yet strictly for sorrow on account of committed sins. Evidently it is that entire feeling which the sense of our spiritual poverty begets; and so the second beatitude is but the complement of the first. The one is the intellectual, the other the emotional aspect of the same thing. It is poverty of spirit that says, “I am undone”; and it is the mourning which this causes that makes it break forth in the form of a lamentation—“Woe is me! for I am undone.” Hence this class are termed “mourners *in Zion*,” or, as we might express it, religious mourners, in sharp contrast with all other sorts (Is 61:1–3; 66:2). Religion, according to the Bible, is neither a set of intellectual convictions nor a bundle of emotional feelings, but a compound of both, the former giving birth to the latter. Thus closely do the first two beatitudes cohere. The mourners shall be “comforted.” Even now they get beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Sowing in tears, they reap even here in joy. Still, all present comfort, even the best, is partial, interrupted, short-lived. But the days of our mourning shall soon be ended, and then God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. Then, in the fullest sense, shall the mourners be “comforted.”¹⁸

Mourning was usually associated with either repentance or bereavement; the conjunction with “comfort” means that the second aspect is in view here. It could mean grief over

¹⁷McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹⁸Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 5:4). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.
repentance **Repentance**. In the New Testament, this term does not merely mean “change of mind” (as some have gathered from the Greek term); it reflects the Old Testament and Jewish concept of “turning around” or “turning away” from sin. Jewish people were to repent whenever they sinned; the New Testament uses

Israel's sins, but in this context probably refers to the pain of the oppressed. "Comfort" was one of the blessings promised for the future time when God would restore his mourning people (Is 40:1; 49:13; 51:3, 12; 52:9; 54:11; 57:18; 61:2; 66:13).¹⁹

Those Who Mourn: "Mourning Unrepented Sin. Jerome:

The mourning discussed here does not concern the common natural law of the dead but rather their sins and vices. Thus Samuel grieved over Saul, and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel. Also Paul the apostle says that he wept and mourned over those who, after committing fornication and impure deeds, did not feel the need of repentance.²⁰

Commentary on Matthew 1.5.4

A Greater Blessedness, Anonymous:

Those who mourn their own sins are indeed blessed, but blessed in a less wonderful way than those who mourn the sins of others. Those who mourn the sins of others are less likely to have sins of their own to mourn. These are the ones who should be called teachers. They are with the Lord on the mountain.²¹

Incomplete Work on Matthew, Homily 9.

Intense Grief over Sin, Chrysostom:

He calls blessed even those who mourn. Their sorrow is of a special kind. He did not designate them simply as sad but as intensely grieving. Therefore he did not say "they that sorrow" but "they that mourn." This Beatitude is designed to draw believers toward a Christian disposition. those who grieve for someone else – their child or wife or any other lost relation – have no fondness for gain or pleasure during the period of their sorrow. They do not aim at glory. They are not provoked by insults not led captive by envy not beset by any other passion. Their grief alone occupies the whole of their attention.²²

The gospel of Matthew, Homily 15.3

the term especially for the once-for-all turning a Gentile would undergo when converting to Judaism or any sinner would undergo when becoming a follower of Jesus.

¹⁹Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:4). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

²⁰ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Editor, Thomas C. Oden, InterVarsity Press

²¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Editor, Thomas C. Oden, InterVarsity Press

²² Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Editor, Thomas C. Oden, InterVarsity Press

Matthew 5:5

Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

[**meek**] Our attitude toward others; we are teachable; we do not defend ourselves when we are wrong.

- Meekness is not weakness!
- Jesus was meek (Mt 11:29), yet He drove the changers from the Temple.
- Moses was meek (Num 12:3), yet he judged sinners; even faced Aaron with his sin.
- Meekness means not asserting my own rights, but living for the glory of God.
- Christians are to show meekness (Eph 4:1–2; Titus 3:2).
- So good that you have nothing to prove (Ps 37).
- We find this in Psalm 37:11.
- The meek are not inheriting the earth today.
- They will when Christ is reigning on the earth.

McGee: We find this in Psalm 37:11. The meek are not inheriting the earth in this day in which we live—I'm sure you recognize that. So apparently the Sermon on the Mount is not in effect today. However, when Christ is reigning, the meek will inherit the earth.

How do you become meek? Our Lord was meek and lowly, and He will inherit all things; we are the heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. We are told that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, temperance, and meekness. Only the Spirit of God can break you and make you meek. If you could produce meekness by your own effort, you would be proud of yourself, wouldn't you? And out goes your meekness! Meekness is not produced by self-effort but by Spirit effort. Only the Holy Spirit can produce meekness in the heart of a yielded Christian. The Christian who has learned the secret of producing the fruit of the Holy Spirit can turn here to the Beatitudes and read, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth," and see that the rewards of meekness are still in the future. Paul asked the Corinthian believers, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? ..." (1 Cor. 6:2).

The Beatitudes present goals which the child of God wants to realize in his own life, but he can't do it on his own.²³

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth—This promise to the meek is but a repetition of Ps 37:11; only the word which our Evangelist renders "the meek," after the *Septuagint*, is the same which we have found so often translated "the poor," showing how closely allied these two features of character are. It is impossible, indeed, that "the poor in spirit" and "the mourners" in Zion should not at the same time be "meek"; that is to say, persons of a lowly and gentle carriage. How fitting, at least, it is that they should be so, may be seen by the following touching appeal: "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men:* FOR WE OURSELVES WERE ONCE FOOLISH, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures ... But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared ... :

²³McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

according to His mercy He saved us,” &c. (Tit 3:1–7). But He who had no such affecting reasons for manifesting this beautiful carriage, said, nevertheless, of Himself, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Mt 11:29); and the apostle besought one of the churches by “the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2Co 10:1). In what esteem this is held by Him who seeth not as man seeth, we may learn from 1Pe 3:4, where the true adorning is said to be that of “a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.” Towards men this disposition is the opposite of high-mindedness, and a quarrelsome and revengeful spirit; it “rather takes wrong, and suffers itself to be defrauded” (1Co 6:7); it “avenges not itself, but rather gives place unto wrath” (Ro 12:19); like the meek One, “when reviled, it reviles not again; when it suffers, it threatens not: but commits itself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1Pe 2:19–22). “The earth” which the meek are to inherit might be rendered “the land”—bringing out the more immediate reference to Canaan as the promised land, the secure possession of which was to the Old Testament saints the evidence and manifestation of God’s favor resting on them, and the ideal of all true and abiding blessedness. Even in the Psalm from which these words are taken the promise to the meek is not held forth as an arbitrary reward, but as having a kind of natural fulfilment. When they delight themselves in the Lord, He gives them the desires of their heart: when they commit their way to Him, He brings it to pass; bringing forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noonday: the little that they have, even when despoiled of their rights, is better than the riches of many wicked (Ps 37:1–24). All things, in short, are theirs—in the possession of that favor which is life, and of those rights which belong to them as the children of God—whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are theirs (1Co 3:21, 22); and at length, overcoming, they “inherit all things” (Rev 21:7). Thus are the meek the only rightful occupants of a foot of ground or a crust of bread here, and heirs of all coming things.²⁴

The meek ... will inherit the Land. Or will they, as other versions have it, “inherit the earth”? Christians often think that since the Gospel is for all humanity God is no longer interested in Israel as a nation (even though 23:37–39&N proves the opposite). This error—known variously as Replacement theology, Dominion theology, Kingdom Now theology, Covenant theology (in some of its forms), Reconstructionism and (in England) Restorationism—with its antisemitic implications, is so widespread that New Testament passages are even mis-translated in conformance with it (see Ro 10:1–8&NN for another such passage). The present verse is one of those passages. Most versions inform the reader that “the meek,” presumably all the meek, from all the nations, “shall inherit the earth,” ruling the entire planet. While believers will return to rule with the Messiah at his Second Coming (1 Th 4:13–18, Rv 20), here Yeshua is quoting Psalm 37:11, where the context makes it clear that “the meek” refers to the meek of Israel, who, according to God’s promises, “will inherit the Land,” the Land of Israel, which Mattityahu has already mentioned explicitly (2:20–21&N).

Although Greek *gê* can mean either “earth” or “land,” in Psalm 37 the Hebrew word “*eretz*” means “Land” (and not “earth”) not less than six times: those of Israel who trust

²⁴Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 5:5). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

in *Adonai* will “dwell in the Land” (v. 3); and those of Israel who wait upon *Adonai* (v. 9), are meek (v. 11, cited here), are blessed by *Adonai* (v. 22), are righteous (v. 29) and keep his way (v. 34) will “inherit the Land.” The term “inherit” in the *Tanakh* refers to the Jewish people’s inheritance from God, which includes, in addition to spiritual elements, not the whole earth but a specific small territory on the east shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

Because the Gospel is universal, and because of the false theology teaching that God is no longer interested in the Jews as a nation, Christians have tended to suppose that the New Testament somehow cancels God’s promise to give the Jewish people the Land of Israel. No small amount of opposition to the present-day State of Israel on the part of Christians is based on this false assumption. To combat this error it is important for Jews and Christians alike to understand that the New Testament does not alter any of God’s promises to the Jewish people; God’s literal promises are not somehow spiritualized out of existence “in Christ.”

Further evidence that the Land of Israel belongs forever to the Jewish people: Psalm 105:7–11 shows God using words and phrases of great certainty—“everlasting covenant,” “swore,” “oath,” etc.—to speak of this promise. At Messianic Jews 6:17–18 the author speaks of God’s promise and his oath as “two unchangeable things, in neither of which God could lie.” At 47 places in the *Tanakh* God swears to give the Land to Israel. This is the kind of language the Bible uses to assure us that the promise of the Land to the Jews is eternal and irrevocable.

Eighteen times in the New Testament the Greek phrase “*ê gê*” refers to the Land of Israel. As mentioned, two are explicit—Mattityahu calls the Holy Land “*Eretz-Israel*” twice (Mt 2:20–21&N). Four are citations from the *Tanakh*—here (Psalm 37:11), Mt 24:30 and Rv 1:7 (Zechariah 12:10, 14), and Ep 6:3 (Deuteronomy 5:17). Five are based on the *Tanakh* without being citations—Lk 4:25 and Ya 5:17, 18 (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41–45), MJ 11:9 (Genesis 12, 13, 15, 20, 23), and Rv 20:9 (Ezekiel 38–39). The remaining eight are implied by the context—Mt 5:13, 10:34, 27:45; Mk 15:33; Lk 12:51, 21:23, 23:44; Rv 11:10. Because Replacement theologians claim that God no longer promises the Land of Israel to the Jews, it is important to see that the New Testament still gives Jewish possession of the physical Land of Israel a significant place in God’s plan.

For more on Replacement theology and its refutation, see notes at Mt 24:34; Lk 21:24; Ac 1:6–7, 21:21; Ro 2:28–29; 11:1–32, 11–12, 13–32, 23–24, 28–29; 2C 1:20; Ga 6:16; Ep 2:11–16.²⁵

Here Jesus cites Scripture (Ps 37:9, 11). Not those who try to bring in the kingdom politically or militarily but those who humbly wait on God will “inherit the earth.” The Hebrew of the psalm could mean “inherit the land” in a narrower sense (Ps 25:13), but in Jesus’ day Jewish people expected God’s people to reign over all the earth, as some other Old Testament passages suggest.²⁶

²⁵Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:5). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Old Testament ***Old Testament**. The common modern term for the Hebrew Bible (including Aramaic portions) as defined by the Jewish and Protestant Christian canons; Jewish readers generally call this the Tenach.

Hegg: The English word “gentle” (NASB, WEB) here translates the Greek (praus), which has a basic meaning of “not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s importance.” Thus, most other English translations use the English word “meek” (KJV, RSV, NRSV, ESV, CJB, NIV). We find Matthew using the same Greek word in 11:29, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart ...” as well as in the Lxx quote from Zech 9:9 in 21:5, “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold your King is coming to you, gentle, and mounted on a donkey....’” Peter also uses the term in his first epistle (1Pet 3:4). Admonishing women not only to adorn themselves with outward beauty, he writes, “but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.” We see, then, that the word generally has the sense of “humble,” “meek,” “gentle,” and even “submissive.” These positive qualities do not envision weakness of any sort, but rather stress a response of faith in the power of God Who controls the events of life. It may also be the case that our word in this context has some sense of “the powerless,” those who have been marginalized by the ruling authorities and who are unable, in and of themselves, to affect any change in their situation. When such people commit themselves to the protection and power of the Almighty, they evidence a “meek” spirit in the midst of being persecuted. And as noted above, the other two times that our word is used, it is descriptive of Yeshua Himself. Thus, our Master stands as the model for us of meekness.

If the chiasmic arrangement of the Beatitudes suggested above has warrant, then the “gentle/meek” are parallel to “peacemakers.” This would give the picture that those who are gentle do not have it in their hearts to overpower those who stand in opposition to them, but who, in putting their trust in God, seek to make peace. Once again, this does not mean that the gentle shy away from speaking the truth, and even speaking the truth with vigor, as modelled by our Master (e.g., Matt 23). But it would mean that the character of the gentle is such that peace is their goal, that is, the winning of those who oppose them over to the truth rather than subjugation.²⁷

Matthew 5:6

Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

[hunger and thirst Here our attitude toward God is expressed; we receive His righteousness by faith because we ask for it.

- A true Christian has an appetite for spiritual things.
- Ask people what they desire and you will know what they are like.
- Character is what you are when no one is looking.
- This is evidence of your new life in Christ. How do you know if you’re saved? One Way you can tell is by checking your appetites, what do you hunger and thirst after?
- The natural man will have nothing of this.
- The Sermon on the Mount is the statement of the problem.
- Jesus Christ—and the Holy Spirit—is the solution.

²⁶Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:5). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

²⁷Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

[hunger and thirst after] An idiom for a strong desire

What about the natural man; does he hunger and thirst for righteousness? The ones I meet do not! “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). The “natural man” is in contrast to the spiritual man who has found that Christ is his righteousness—“... of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled—“shall be saturated.” “From this verse,” says THOLUCK, “the reference to the Old Testament background ceases.” Surprising! On the contrary, none of these beatitudes is more manifestly dug out of the rich mine of the Old Testament. Indeed, how could any one who found in the Old Testament “the poor in spirit,” and “the mourners in Zion,” doubt that he would also find those same characters also *craving* that righteousness which they feel and mourn their want of? But what is the precise meaning of “righteousness” here? Lutheran expositors, and some of our own, seem to have a hankering after that more restricted sense of the term in which it is used with reference to the sinner’s justification before God. (See Je 23:6; Is 45:24; Ro 4:6; 2Co 5:21). But, in so comprehensive a saying as this, it is clearly to be taken—as in Mt 5:10 also—in a much wider sense, as denoting that spiritual and entire conformity to the law of God, under the want of which the saints groan, and the possession of which constitutes the only true saintship. The Old Testament dwells much on this righteousness, as that which alone God regards with approbation (Ps 11:7; 23:3; 106:3; Pr 12:28; 16:31; Is 64:5, &c.). As hunger and thirst are the keenest of our appetites, our Lord, by employing this figure here, plainly means “those whose deepest cravings are after spiritual blessings.” And in the Old Testament we find this craving variously expressed: “Hearken unto Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord” (Is 51:1); “I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord,” exclaimed dying Jacob (Ge 49:18); “My soul,” says the sweet Psalmist, “breaketh for the longing that it hath unto Thy judgments at all times” (Ps 119:20): and in similar breathings does he give vent to his deepest longings in that and other Psalms. Well, our Lord just takes up here—this blessed frame of mind, representing it as—the surest pledge of the coveted supplies, as it is the best preparative, and indeed itself the beginning of them. “They shall be saturated,” He says; they shall not only have what they so highly value and long to possess, but they shall have their fill of it. Not here, however. Even in the Old Testament this was well understood. “Deliver me,” says the Psalmist, in language which, beyond all doubt, stretches beyond the present scene, “from men of the world, which have their portion in this life: as for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Ps 17:13–15). The foregoing beatitudes—the first four—represent the saints rather as *conscious of their need of salvation*, and acting suitably to that character, than as possessed of it. The next three are

of a different kind—representing the saints as *having now found salvation*, and conducting themselves accordingly.²⁸

Jewish people understood that God would also satisfy his people's needs in the future kingdom (Is 25:6; 41:17–18; 55:2), as he had supplied for them in the exodus when he first redeemed them (Deut 6:11; 8:7–10). But the greatest object of longing should be God (Ps 42:1; 63:1) and instruction in his righteousness (Ps 119:40, 47, 70, 92, 97, 103; Jer 15:16).

Luke's parallel has "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied." Matthew alerts us to the fact that the "hunger" and "thirst" is to be understood metaphorically of one's soul-longing for righteousness. This does not necessarily negate physical hunger and thirsting, but focuses attention upon how one's desire for righteousness encompasses one's entire life.

Later, our Master will teach that His true disciples seek above all else "the kingdom and His righteousness" (6:33), which is parallel to "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Thus, in the same manner that we naturally work to sustain our physical lives through food and drink, so we are to earnestly and habitually seek after righteousness. We are to follow God's ways in every aspect of our life.

"The Passionate Longing for Justice", Chromatius:

He taught that we must seek after righteousness with earnest desire, not with fainthearted energy. Indeed, he calls those persons blessed who in their search for righteousness virtually burn with passionate longing in their hunger and thirst. For if each one of us really hungers and thirsts for righteousness with eager desire, we can do nothing else but think and seek after righteousness. It is necessary that we eagerly desire that for which we hunger and thirst.²⁹

Tractate on Matthew 17.5.1

Matthew 5:7

Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

[**merciful**] We have a forgiving spirit and love others.

- Not legalism, but merely the working of the Biblical principle of sowing and reaping.
- If we show mercy, because Christ has been merciful to us, then mercy will come back to us (Lk 16:1–13; James 2:13; Prov 11:17).
- We cannot earn mercy, but we must have hearts prepared to receive it. This beatitude is so misunderstood in our day because it makes our obtaining mercy conditional on our being merciful. This is not the condition on which *we* obtain mercy.

²⁸ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 5:6). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

²⁹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Editor, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

This beatitude is so misunderstood in our day because it makes our obtaining mercy conditional on our being merciful. This is not the condition on which *we* obtain mercy—“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his *mercy* he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5, italics mine). We should be merciful *because* we have obtained mercy. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Pet. 2:9–10).³⁰

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy—Beautiful is the connection between this and the preceding beatitude. The one has a natural tendency to beget the other. As for the words, they seem directly fetched from Ps 18:25, “With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful.” Not that our mercifulness comes absolutely first. On the contrary, our Lord Himself expressly teaches us that God’s method is to awaken in us compassion towards our fellow men by His own exercise of it, in so stupendous a way and measure, towards ourselves. In the parable of the unmerciful debtor, the servant to whom his lord forgave ten thousand talents was naturally expected to exercise the small measure of the same compassion required for forgiving his fellow servant’s debt of a hundred pence; and it is only when, instead of this, he relentlessly imprisoned him till he should pay it up, that his lord’s indignation was roused, and he who was designed for a vessel of mercy is treated as a vessel of wrath (Mt 18:23–35; and see Mt 5:23, 24; 6:15; Jam 2:13). “According to the view given in Scripture,” says TRENCH most justly, “the Christian stands in a middle point, between a mercy received and a mercy yet needed.” Sometimes the first is urged upon him as an argument for showing mercy—“forgiving one another, as Christ forgave you” (Col 3:13; Eph 4:32): sometimes the last—“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy”; “Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven” (Lu 6:37; Jam 5:9). And thus, while he is ever to look back on the mercy received as the source and motive of the mercy which he shows, he also looks forward to the mercy which he yet needs, and which he is assured that the merciful—according to what BENGEL beautifully calls the *benigna talio* (“the gracious requital”) of the kingdom of God—shall receive, as a new provocation to its abundant exercise. The foretastes and beginnings of this judicial recompense are richly experienced here below: its perfection is reserved for that day when, from His great white throne, the King shall say, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and thirsty, and a stranger, and naked, and sick, and in prison, and ye ministered unto Me.” Yes, thus He acted towards us while on earth, even laying down His life for us; and He will not, He cannot disown, in the merciful, the image of Himself.³¹

³⁰McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³¹Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 5:7). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Some later rabbis uttered similar statements (cf. also Prov 11:17). Like the peacemakers (v. 9), the merciful are not those who seek to bring in the kingdom by force. The mercy Jewish people generally hoped to receive was expected in the day of judgment (cf. Mic 7:18–19).

Matthew 5:8

Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

[pure in heart] Greek: *katharos* (GSN-2513), translated "clean" (note, John 13:11). This takes place at the new birth (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:29; 1 John 3:5-10; 1 John 5:1-4,18; Ephes. 4:24; 2 Thes. 2:13).

[pure in heart] We keep our lives and motives clean; holiness is happiness to us: no substitutes.

- Not sinlessness but the truth within (Ps 51:6; 1 Jn 1:8).
- It means a single heart, not divided between God and the world.
- No honest man can say that his heart is pure. How can the heart of man, which is desperately wicked, be made clean? The Lord Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (Jn 15:3). It is by the washing of regeneration that we are made clean. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse us from all sin Cf. Jn 1:7.

No honest man can say that his heart is pure. How can the heart of man, which is desperately wicked, be made clean? The Lord Jesus said, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). It is by the washing of regeneration that we are made clean. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse us from all sin (see 1 John 1:7).

Matthew 5:9

Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

McGee: Can you name one peacemaker in the world right now? There is no one today who can make peace. Christ alone is the great Peacemaker. He made peace by His blood between a righteous God and an unrighteous sinner. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).³²

rabbis ***Rabbi**. Jewish teacher. Sometime after A.D. 70 the term became a technical one for those ordained in the rabbinic movement, which probably consisted primarily of Pharisaic scribes. (To accommodate customary usage this commentary sometimes applies the term to Jewish teachers of the law in general, although such common usage may have technically been later; it also applies the term to the teachings of Jewish legal experts collected in rabbinic literature.)

³²McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:30). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

[peacemakers] We should bring peace, between people and God, and between those who are at odds with each other.

- This world is at war (Titus 3:3).
- Christians have the Gospel of peace on their feet, so that wherever they go, they bring peace (Eph 6:15).
- This is not “peace at any price,” for holiness is more important than a peace based on sin (James 3:17; Heb 12:14).
- Compromise is not peace; but Christians should not be contentious as they contend for the faith.
- God hates discord (Prov 6:16-19).
- The Lord loves peace (Rom 14:19; 15:33).
- There is no one today who can make peace, but Christ alone, the great Peacemaker. He made peace by His blood between a righteous God and an unrighteous sinner.
- Things which are *not* of peace (Gal 5:19-21).

Hegg: Peacemakers (*eirenopoios*) are those who work for reconciliation; who seek to bring about peace where it is lacking. The word (used only here in the Apostolic Scriptures) is not found in the Lxx. It is a compound word made up of the word for peace (*eirene*) and the verb “to do or make” (*poieo*). It does not connote a “pacifist” or simply the sense of “peace.” Peacemakers are those who “love their enemies” and seek to reconcile their differences (Matt 5:44; Lk 6:27, 35). Even where such reconciliation is illusive, peacemakers refuse to heighten the discord. They do not throw fuel on the fire. As James writes: “And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (3:18).

Since Adonai is the source of peace (Job 25:2), and since He is the One Who ultimately brings peace to His people (Ps 29:11; Is 26:12), those who likewise are peacemakers are known as His sons, for they follow in the footsteps of their Father. But this does not imply “peace at any cost.” Yeshua Himself said “Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matt 10:34). Ultimately, He is the “prince of peace” (Is 9:6[5]), and it is through His power to reign as King over all the earth that He will bring about a final and lasting peace. But peace is the fruit of righteousness, not that which results from a miscarriage of justice. As the prophet Zechariah teaches us:

These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates. (Zech 8:16)

In our world it is common to hear of “peace” as an entity unto itself. But true peace is always the result of justice and righteousness. “There is no peace for the wicked, says Adonai” (Is 48:22, cp. 57:21).

The parallel to our beatitude in the chiastic scheme we have proposed is that of the gentle or meek (v. 5). Peacemakers are those who are willing to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God and await His verdict. Instead of seeking retaliation against their opponents, they rather seek avenues of reconciliation and peace. As the Psalmist admonishes: “Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it” (Ps 34:14). Hillel was known for teaching this same message:

Hillel said: “Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace, and pursuing peace, loving your fellow creatures and bringing them near to the Torah.” (*Avot* 1.12)³³

What's is God's concept of a *peacemaker*? It may not be what one would call "politically correct." For instance, there is one person in the Scriptures specifically called a peacemaker. He is Pinchas, the grandson of Aaron. What did he do to earn this title from God? He took a spear and simultaneously ran it through a man and woman who were fornicating. For this specific action of killing these people, God praises him and calls him a peacemaker (Numbers 25:6-13). Pinchas later became the High Priest.

“The Peacemaker”, Cyril of Alexandria:

The peacemaker is the one who demonstrates the harmony of the Scriptures, where others see only a contradiction: the Old with the New, the law with the prophets, Gospel with Gospel. Accordingly, having imitated the Son of God, “he shall be called a son,” having by his work grasped of the “spirit of adoption.”³⁴

Fragment 38.

Matthew 5:10

Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[**prsecuted**] All who live godly lives will suffer persecution.

- We should be accused “falsely.” We should never be guilty of deliberately inviting persecution (2 Tim 3:12).
- If we live godly lives, suffering will come! Note the rewards: we are in the same company as Christ and the prophets, and we shall be rewarded in heaven.

Eight Beatitudes: a new beginning. (The ninth: “Blessed are the flexible, for they will not be broken.”)

McGee: The application of this beatitude to our day and to the remnant of Israel during the Great Tribulation is easy to see. But can it apply to the kingdom which is to be established? Won’t all evil be removed in the kingdom? Well, many Scriptures show that in the millennial kingdom there will still be evil in the world because it will be a time of testing. The outbreak of rebellion at the end of the Millennium reveals that evil will be prevalent during the Millennium (see Rev. 20:7–9).³⁵

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, &c.—How entirely this final beatitude has its ground in the Old Testament, is evident from the concluding words, where the encouragement held out to endure such persecutions consists in its being but a continuation of what was experienced by the Old Testament servants of God.

³³ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

³⁴ Ancient Christian Copmmentary on Scripture, Editor, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

³⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:31). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But how, it may be asked, could such beautiful features of character provoke persecution? To this the following answers should suffice: “Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.” “The world cannot hate you; but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.” “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” “There is yet one man (said wicked Ahab to good Jehoshaphat) by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil” (Jn 3:20; 7:7; 15:19; 2Ch 18:7). But more particularly, the seven characters here described are all in the teeth of the spirit of the world, insomuch that such hearers of this discourse as breathed that spirit must have been startled, and had their whole system of thought and action rudely dashed. Poverty of spirit runs counter to the pride of men’s heart; a pensive disposition, in the view of one’s universal deficiencies before God, is ill relished by the callous, indifferent, laughing, self-satisfied world; a meek and quiet spirit, taking wrong, is regarded as pusillanimous, and rasps against the proud, resentful spirit of the world; that craving after spiritual blessings rebukes but too unpleasantly the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; so does a merciful spirit the hard-heartedness of the world; purity of heart contrasts painfully with painted hypocrisy; and the peacemaker cannot easily be endured by the contentious, quarrelsome world. Thus does “righteousness” come to be “persecuted.” But blessed are they who, in spite of this, dare to be righteous.³⁶

5:3–10 The good life (cf. Lk. 6:20–22). The discourse begins with a rounded portrait of the true disciple in the form of eight ‘beatitudes’. Neither *blessed* nor ‘happy’ adequately translates *makarios*, which is rather a term of congratulation and recommendation. These qualities are to be envied and emulated; they make up ‘the good life’. Each is followed by a reason, pointing out that no-one will be the loser by following this way of life, however unpromising it may appear in the short term. The rewards are at the level of spiritual experience and relationship with God rather than of material recompense. The key phrase, which opens and concludes the series, is *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. This refers to the people who acknowledge God as their King and who may, therefore, confidently look forward to the fulfilment of his purpose in their lives.

Lk. 6:20–22 offers only four beatitudes, balanced by four ‘woes’. They are phrased in the second person and focus on the material and social condition of the disciples, rather than on the spiritual qualities set out here.

Notes. 3 *Poor in spirit* suggests the OT theme of the ‘poor’ or ‘meek’, the oppressed people of God who, nonetheless, trust in him for deliverance. This and the next verse

³⁶Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 5:11). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

cf. compare
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echo Is. 61:1–2, while v 5 draws on Ps. 37:11, another passage which contrasts the ‘meek’ with the ‘wicked’.³⁷

Matthew 5:11

Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Matthew 5:12

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

“Persecuted”

- We should be accused “falsely.” We should never be guilty of deliberately inviting persecution (2 Tim 3:12).
- If we live godly lives, suffering will come! Note the rewards: we are in the same company as Christ and the prophets, and we shall be rewarded in heaven.

Eight Beatitudes: a new beginning. (The ninth: “Blessed are the flexible, for they will not be broken.”)

Many of the Old Testament prophets suffered in bringing God’s word to Israel (e.g., Jer 26:11); Jewish tradition amplified the number of prophetic martyrs further and made it a major emphasis. The burden of proof was always on the prophet who spoke what people wanted to hear (Jer 28:8–9; cf. 6:14; 8:10–11; 23:17).

Most Jewish people did not believe that prophets still existed in the Old Testament sense, so Jesus’ comparing his followers to the prophets indicated that they would have an extraordinary mission. To suffer for God was meritorious (Ps 44:22; 69:7), and Judaism highly honored martyrs for God’s law; yet no other rabbi called disciples to die for his own teachings or name.³⁸

³⁷Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Mt 5:3). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

law ***Law**. “Torah” (the Hebrew word behind the Greek word translated “law”) means literally “instruction” and “teaching,” not just regulations. It was also used as a title for the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch, the books of Moses) and sometimes for the whole Old Testament. This commentary uses the translation “law” because it is familiar to readers of most translations, even though the English term’s semantic range is much narrower than the Jewish concept.

rabbi ***Rabbi**. Jewish teacher. Sometime after A.D. 70 the term became a technical one for those ordained in the rabbinic movement, which probably consisted primarily of Pharisaic scribes. (To accommodate customary usage this commentary sometimes applies the term to Jewish teachers of the law in general, although such common usage may have technically been later; it also applies the term to the teachings of Jewish legal experts collected in rabbinic literature.)

disciples ***Disciples**. Students of rabbis or philosophers, normally committed to memorizing and living according to their master’s teachings.

Hegg: Luke's parallel (6:22–23) includes four aspects of persecution:

Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

Matthew has only three: 1) insult, 2) persecute, and 3) slander. If we understand Matthew's "persecute" to mean "drive away," then it may be parallel to Luke's "ostracize you." Further, Luke's opening item, "men hate you" may be a general heading which is then explained by the following three terms. In essence, the two are essentially saying the same things.

The change to the second person ("blessed are you") from the third person ("blessed are they," i.e., poor in spirit, etc.) is curious and numbers of explanations have been offered. But it seems very probable to me that the previous beatitudes were directed to the general public who had gathered to hear our Master's teaching, while this final beatitude is directed specifically to His disciples. All of the previous beatitudes apply to them as well, but this final one has the persecution they would inevitably endure in view. This also makes sense with the analogy to the persecution of the prophets. In the same way that the prophets of old came to Israel with the words of the Almighty, and were often rebuffed by the people, so the disciples who would carry the message of Yeshua would meet with a similarly hostile reception. Moreover, it was the prophet's faithfulness to the message they had received that resulted in their persecution, and the same would be experienced by the Apostles of our Master.³⁹

Matthew 5:13

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Salt

- Salt was used as a preservative; it preserves materials from corruption.
- Salt also creates thirst, and introduces flavor.
- Salt speaks of inward character that influences a decaying world; Our task is to keep our lives pure that we might "salt" this earth and hold back corruption so that the Gospel can get out.

[salt have lost his savour] Salt is a seasoning and preserving chemical, but if left on the bare earth or exposed to the sun, rain, and air it loses its savor and is worthless (cp. Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34-35).

McGee: God's people in any age and under any condition are both salt and light in the world. The Scots translate "savour" by the more expressive word *tang*. I like their word much better. "If the salt has lost its tang." The problem today is that most church members have not only lost their tang as salt, but as pepper they have lost their pep also.

³⁸Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:10). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

³⁹Tim Hegg, commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

We have very few salt and pepper Christians in our day. Now salt doesn't keep fermentation and that type of thing from taking place, but it will arrest it. You and I ought to be the salt in the earth and have an influence for good in the world.⁴⁰

Hegg: The metaphor of the salt in Matthew also contains a general sense of judgment, for those who are the talmidim of Yeshua function as salt, but all others are “thrown out and trampled under foot by men,” which envisions the final judgment in which the unrighteous are condemned. Here, Yeshua is not considering Israel to be the salt of the earth, but His true disciples. Moreover, the fact that His disciples are the salt of the *earth* (*ges*) may envision a wider influence than simply the confines of Israel. Though Yeshua's initial mission is the “lost sheep of Israel,” He continues to indicate that His message and its affect would have a much wider audience. As the salt of the earth, the Gentiles are once again brought into the picture.

You are the salt of the earth The paradox with the former beatitudes is given in stark contrast. “The world is saved precisely by those it persecutes.” But it is not clear how our Master uses the metaphor of salt in this saying. Salt (*halas*) is used in the rabbinic literature as that which is essential for life: “The world cannot exist without salt” (m.*Soferim* 15.8).

The use of salt in the Scriptures and rabbinic literature provides a number of options for its understanding in our text:

1. Salt was used as preservative for foods, particularly for meat and vegetables. As a result, salt is used metaphorically in the sense of “preserving something from decay or demise.” In b.*Ketuvot* 66b, “the salt of money is diminution (others read ‘benevolence’),” which is spoken in regard to Nakdimon ben Gorion, means that the *preservation* of money is giving of charity. We may also note m.*Sota* 9.15, which speaks of the “wisdom of the Sages” becoming “putrefied,” i.e., spoiled as opposed to preserved (note Col 4:5 and the comments below, #3).
2. In connection with salt as a preservative, Lev 2:13 commands that salt be added to all of the grain offerings offered on the altar (cp. Ezek 43:24). This was to be symbolic of the enduring nature of God's covenant with Israel.
3. Thus, the Tanach speaks of the “covenant of salt” (Lev 2:13; Num 18:19; 2Chr 13:5). The Davidic covenant is described as a covenant of salt as is the Mosaic covenant of the Torah. In this same connection, to “eat salt” with someone may describe mutual covenant membership. Thus, in Ezra 4:14, those who eat the salt of the palace cannot be witnesses against the king.
4. Salt was used for purification. In 2Ki 2:19–23, Elisha performs a miracle in that he uses salt to purify bad drinking water. In a similar fashion, salt mixed with incense (Ex 30:35) renders the mixture “pure and holy.” We may understand Mk 9:50 in this light: “Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another” may mean “have your hearts pure and so be at peace with one another.” Similarly, Paul admonishes (Col 4:5), “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt...” by which he may mean that one's speech should be purified (holy), and thus not with an admixture of senseless talk or course jesting (cp. Eph 5:4).

⁴⁰McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:31). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

5. Salt may have been used for medicinal purposes. We read in Ezek 16:4 (cp. b.*Shabbat* 129b) that newborns were rubbed with salt.
6. Salt was, of course, used as a condiment for food (cf. Job 6:6).

It is impossible to determine precisely if one or another of these uses of salt are to applied to our text. And we should most likely presume that our Master intended to let His metaphor of salt be multifaceted. The fact that “you are the salt of the earth” is paralleled in the next verse to “you are the light of the world” shows that salt is to be taken in very broad sense, i.e., that which affects all substances to which it comes in contact. The message and person of Messiah is essential to spiritual life, even as salt is to one’s physical existence. This is the primary point of the metaphor. That the witness of Messiah borne by the disciples would preserve, purify, heal, and bring to fruition the new covenant are all aspects of the salt metaphor.

but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it become salty again? Much discussion has ensued over whether salt can, in fact, lose its savour. We know that sodium chloride is a stable compound and is not transformed through dilution. But as many have noted, salt in ancient Israel was generally obtained through evaporation pools at the edge of the Dead Sea (cf. Ezek 47:9–11; Zeph 2:9), meaning that the salt which was gathered could be mixed with impurities, and the more impurities, the less the salt was usable as salt. Carson¹ notes that the salt would be more soluble than the other impurities, and therefore if allowed to become wet, would lose its salty properties and leave the useless impurities. This makes perfect sense with our Master’s teaching. The righteous life and message of the talmidim was that which would affect the expansion of the kingdom of Heaven. If, however, they allowed impurities to be mixed in, their effective witness for the Master would be lost.

how can it be made salty again? This question on the lips of our Master is rhetorical. Once salt has become so diluted through the admixture of impurities, there was no effective way to reclaim it, particularly if such dilution happened because the salt supply became wet. This sense, that once salt has lost its saltiness it is worthless, may also parallel Yeshua’s use of other metaphors that teach the need for a new beginning (the old wineskin/new wineskin; new patch on old cloth). If the current generation of Israel was to be the “salt of the earth,” but had become diluted through false teachers and even idolatry, then there was need for a new generation to return to its effectiveness as the bearers of God’s truth.⁴¹

Matthew 5:14

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Christians are also the light of the world. Certainly in the kingdom the believers are going to be the light of the world. This is a tremendous principle for us. We need to be a light in our neighborhood and wherever we go. We have no light within ourselves, but the Word of God is light. Being a light means giving out the Word of God in one way or another. This doesn’t mean that you should be quoting Scripture all the time, but it does mean that you are to share the light that God has given you.

⁴¹ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

Ye are the light of the world—This being the distinctive title which our Lord appropriates to Himself (Jn 8:12; 9:5; and see Jn 1:4, 9; 3:19)—a title expressly said to be unsuitable even to the highest of all the prophets (Jn 1:8)—it must be applied here by our Lord to His disciples only as they shine with His light upon the world, in virtue of His Spirit dwelling in them, and the same mind being in them which was also in Christ Jesus. Nor are Christians anywhere else so called. Nay, as if to avoid the august title which the Master has appropriated to Himself, Christians are said to “shine”—not as “lights,” as our translators render it, but—“as *luminaries* in the world” (Php 2:15); and the Baptist is said to have been “the burning and shining”—not “light,” as in our translation, but “*lamp*” of his day (Jn 5:35). Let it be observed, too, that while the two figures of salt and sunlight both express the same function of Christians—their blessed influence on their fellow men—they each set this forth under a different aspect. Salt operates *internally*, in the mass with which it comes in contact; the sunlight operates *externally*, irradiating all that it reaches. Hence Christians are warily styled “the salt of the *earth*”—with reference to the masses of mankind with whom they are expected to mix; but “the light of the *world*”—with reference to the vast and variegated surface which feels its fructifying and gladdening radiance. The same distinction is observable in the second pair of those seven parables which our Lord spoke from the Galilean Lake—that of the “mustard seed,” which grew to be a great overshadowing tree, answering to the sunlight which invests the world, and that of the “leaven,” which a woman took and, like the salt, *hid* in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened (Mt 13:31–33).⁴²

Matthew 5:15

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

[candle] Greek: *luchnos* (GSN-3088), oil lamp. Wax candles as we know them were unknown in Biblical times. Lamps were made of various materials—clay, brass, silver, and gold—and with one to several bowls into which the oil and a flax wick were put to make light (Exodus 25:31-35; Exodus 30:27). Oil was made from olives and was used in cooking, lighting lamps, and personal adornment (Exodus 25:6; Exodus 27:20; Exodus 29:2,23).

[bushel] Greek: *modios* (GSN-3426), about one peck.

[candlestick] Lamp stand for lamps and extra oil.

Hegg: This second metaphor strengthens the idea that the salt metaphor was intended to evoke Israel’s chosen mission as God’s witness upon the earth. For the prophets regularly speak of Israel as a “light.”

⁴²Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 5:14). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Is 42:6 “I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations,

Is 49:6 He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

Is 60:3 “Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.

Dan. 12:3 “Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

The rabbinic literature also uses the metaphor of “light” for teachers of the truth as well as for Israel as a worshipping nation:

When R. Abbahu arrived at the Emperor’s Court from College, the ladies of the court went out to receive him and sang to him: Great man of thy people, leader of thy nation, lantern of light, thy coming be blessed with peace. (b.*Sanhedrin* 14a)

In his last hours Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai kept weeping out loud. “O Master,” his disciples exclaimed, “O tall pillar, light of the world, mighty hammer, why are you weeping?” (ARN, 25)

Herod then said: I am Herod. Had I known that the Rabbis were so circumspect, I should not have killed them. Now tell me what amends I can make. He replied: As you have extinguished the light of the world, [for so the Rabbis are called] as it is written, For the commandment is a light and the Torah a lamp, go now and attend to the light of the world [which is the Temple, of which] it is written, And all the nations become enlightened by it. (*Batra* 4a)

Jerusalem is the light of the world, as it says, And nations shall walk at your light (Is 60:3); and who is the light of Jerusalem? God, as it is written, But the Lord shall be to you an everlasting light (Is 60:19). (Mid. Rab. *Gen* 59.5)

With the words of the prophets as background, it becomes clear that in claiming His talmidim to be the “light of the world (*kosmos*),” Yeshua is making an emphatic statement: Israel as a nation had strayed from the truth and had lost her way. Only in returning to the message of the prophets and thus to the teachings of the Messiah they foretold, would Israel once again be able to carry the light of the truth to the nations. In calling His disciples the “light of the world,” Yeshua is not displacing Israel from her ordained role as God’s chosen people, but calling Israel back to covenant faithfulness. Indeed, His disciples, each of them “sons of Israel,” were the beginning of the eschatological renewal promised by the prophets, for the light had come into the world in the arrival of Messiah (Jn 1:4ff; 8:12; 12:46), and the talmidim were to be witnesses of that light (v. 16).⁴³

⁴³ Tim Hegg, Commentary on Matthew, torahresource.com

Matthew 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Light

- Light speaks of the outward testimony of good works that points to God.
- Our good works must accompany our dedicated lives as we let our lights shine.

[that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven] The purpose of all good works among men is to glorify the heavenly Father (John 14:12-15; John 15:7-8; Titus 2:14; Rev. 4:11).

Fifteen Things that Glorify God: (Dake)

1. Physical healing (Matthew 9:8; Matthew 15:31; Luke 5:25-26; Luke 13:13; Acts 4:21)
2. Physical resurrection (John 11:4)
3. Christ's work of redemption (John 13:3-32)
4. Answered prayer (John 14:13)
5. Bearing much fruit (John 15:8)
6. Completing God's work (John 17:4)
7. Salvation of Gentiles (Acts 13:48)
8. Miracles among Gentiles (Acts 21:20)
9. Gifts ministered properly (1 Peter 4:10-11)
10. Offering praise (Psalm 50:23)
11. Good works (Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12)
12. Martyrdoms (John 21:19)
13. Clean bodies (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19-20)
14. Christian profession (2 Cor. 9:13)
15. Liberality (2 Cor. 9:13)⁴⁴

McGee: There are those of the liberal persuasion that feel the Sermon on the Mount is anthropocentric, or man-centered, rather than theocentric, or God-centered. (Those are their terms.) But, obviously, the Sermon on the Mount is *not* anthropocentric, man-centered. It is theocentric. Does this verse say, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify *you* and pat you on the back, and give you a gold medal and a loving cup?" No! This verse says that you and I are to let our light so shine in this world that we may glorify our Father which is in heaven. The Sermon on the Mount is Godcentered. During the Millennium, during the kingdom here on earth, everything which is done and said will be God-centered. And in the present age, in this lost world in which you and I live today, our prime motivation should be to bring glory to God. This is something that every Christian should consider very seriously. The aim and purpose of our lives should be to glorify our God.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁴⁵ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:31). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

5:11–16 The distinctiveness of the disciples (*cf.* Mk. 9:50; 4:21; Lk. 6:22–23; 14:34–35; 8:16). The change to the second person brings a direct application to Jesus’ audience. The last beatitude is picked up to emphasize that the persecution which results from following Jesus puts his disciples in the succession of God’s faithful servants. The distinctiveness which makes them the object of persecution is then illustrated by the two images of salt and light; each is essential but has its necessary effect on its environment only if it is both distinctive from it and yet fully involved in it. So disciples must function in society as an alternative and challenging community. It is by their visible goodness that they will bring glory to the God who has made them so.⁴⁶

Matthew 5:17

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

5:17–48 Jesus and the law (*cf.* Lk. 16:17; 12:58–59; 16:18; 6:27–36). This long section is all on one theme, and it is important that its parts should not be interpreted in isolation from each other. The theme is Jesus’ ‘fulfilment’ of the law, which is expressed by general statements (17–20) followed by a series of six examples contrasting Jesus’ teaching with the accepted understanding of the OT law (21–47) and a concluding summary (48).

[the law, or the prophets] First of 15 times Christ used this term (Matthew 5:17-18; Matthew 7:12; Matthew 11:13; Matthew 12:5; Matthew 22:40; Matthew 23:23; Luke 10:26; Luke 16:16-17; Luke 24:44; John 7:19-23; John 8:17; John 10:34; John 15:25).

[fulfil] *pleroo*, Greek 4137, Strong’s *play-ro'-o*; from Greek 4134 (*pleres*); to *make replete*, i.e. (literal) to *cram* (a net), *level up* (a hollow), or (figurative) to *furnish* (or *imbue, diffuse, influence*), *satisfy, execute* (an office), *finish* (a period or task), *verify* (or *coincide* with a prediction), etc. :- accomplish, × after, (be) complete, end, expire, fill (up), fulfil, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply.

McGee: Remember that part of the Mosaic Law was the ceremonial law. Christ was the sacrifice for the sins of the world, the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth. Christ came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill the Law. He fulfilled it in that He kept it during His earthly life. And the standard which was set before man *He* was able to attain, and now He is able to make over to you and me (and every believer) His own righteousness. God’s standards have not changed, but you and I cannot attain them in our

cf. compare

⁴⁶Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Mt 5:11). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

cf. compare

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own strength. We need help; we need a Savior. We do need mercy, and we obtain mercy when we come to Christ.⁴⁷

I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil—Not to subvert, abrogate, or annul, but to establish the law and the prophets—to unfold them, to embody them in living form, and to enshrine them in the reverence, affection, and character of men, am I come.⁴⁸

Don't think that I have come to abolish the *Torah* or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete, to make their meaning full. The Hebrew word "*Torah*," literally "teaching, doctrine," is rendered in both the Septuagint and the New Testament by the Greek word "*nomos*," which means "law." Greek has had a more direct and pervasive influence on English and other modern languages than Hebrew has, and this is why in most languages one speaks of the "Law" of Moses rather than the "Teaching" of Moses. It is also part of the reason why the *Torah* has mistakenly come to be thought of by Christians as legalistic in character (see Ro 3:20bN, Ga 3:23bN).

In Judaism the word "*Torah*" may mean:

- (1) *Chumash* (the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses); or
- (2) That plus the Prophets and the Writings, i.e., the *Tanakh* (known by Christians as the Old Testament; see 4:4–10N); or
- (3) That plus the Oral *Torah*, which includes the Talmud and other legal materials; or
- (4) That plus all religious instruction from the rabbis, including ethical and aggadic (homiletical) materials.

Here it means the first of these, since "the Prophets" are mentioned separately.

The Prophets. The word "Prophets," capitalized (as here, 7:12, 22:40; Lk 16:16, 28, 31; 24:44; Yn 1:45, 6:45; Ac 13:15, 27, 40; 15:15; 24:14; 28:23; Ro 3:21), refers to the second of the three main parts of the *Tanakh*. When the *Tanakh* prophets as persons are referred to, the word is not capitalized; "prophet" in the singular is never capitalized. By mentioning both the *Torah* and the Prophets Yeshua is saying that he has not come to modify or replace God's Word, the *Tanakh*. Compare Lk 24:44–45.

To complete. The Greek word for "to complete" is "*plêrôsai*," literally, "to fill"; the usual rendering here, however, is "to fulfill." Replacement theology, which wrongly teaches that the Church has replaced the Jews as God's people (v. 5N), understands this verse wrongly in two ways.

First, Yeshua's "fulfilling" **the *Torah*** is thought to mean that it is unnecessary for people to fulfill it now. But there is no logic to the proposition that Yeshua's obeying the *Torah* does away with our need to obey it. In fact, Sha'ul (Paul), whose object in his letter to the Romans is to foster "the obedience that comes from trusting" in Yeshua, teaches that such trusting does not abolish *Torah* but confirms it (Ro 1:5, 3:31).

Second, with identical lack of logic, Yeshua's "fulfilling" **the Prophets** is thought to imply that no prophecies from the *Tanakh* remain for the Jews. But the Hebrew Bible's promises to the Jews are not abolished in the name of being "fulfilled in Yeshua." Rather,

⁴⁷McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (4:31). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴⁸Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. (1997). *A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. (Mt 5:18). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

fulfillment in Yeshua is an added assurance that everything God has promised the Jews will yet come to pass (see 2C 1:20&N).

It is true that Yeshua kept the *Torah* perfectly and fulfilled predictions of the Prophets, but that is not the point here. Yeshua did not come to abolish but “to make full” (*plêrôsai*) the meaning of what the *Torah* and the ethical demands of the Prophets require. Thus he came **to complete** our understanding of **the *Torah* and the Prophets**, so that we can try more effectively to be and do what they say to be and do. Verses 18–20 enunciate three ways in which the *Torah* and the Prophets remain necessary, applicable and in force. The remainder of chapter 5 gives six specific cases in which Yeshua explains the fuller spiritual meaning of points in the Jewish Law. In fact, this verse states the theme and agenda of the entire Sermon on the Mount, in which Yeshua completes, makes fuller, the understanding of his *talmidim* concerning the *Torah* and the Prophets, so that they can more fully express what being God’s people is all about.

The Anglican Christian writer Brigid Younghughes supports my understanding of this passage in these words:

“ ‘... I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.’ And surely ‘to fulfil’ means to complete, in the sense of bringing to perfection, not, as Christians have all too often interpreted it, to render obsolete; to fulfil in such a way as to perfect a foundation on which to build further.” (*Christianity’s Jewish Heritage*, West Sussex: Angel Press, 1988, p. 8)⁴⁹

Jesus’ ethical demands (5:3–16) are no weaker than those of the law given by Moses; cf. 5:21–26. Jewish teachers said that one “abolished” the law by disobeying it (cf. Deut 27:26), because one thereby rejected its authority. Such highhanded rebellion against the law—as opposed to particular sins—warranted social and spiritual expulsion from the Jewish community. The charge of openly persuading others that the law was no longer in force would be even worse. Jesus opposed not the law but an illegitimate interpretation of it that stressed regulations more than character.⁵⁰

“Jesus’ Passion Fulfilled the Law” Chromatius: The son of God, who is the author of the law and the prophets, did not come to abolish the law or the prophets. He gave the people the law that was to be handed down through Moses, and he imbued the prophets with the Holy Spirit for the preaching of the things to come. Therefore he said, “I have come not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them.”

He fulfilled the law and the prophets in this way: He brought to pass those things that had been written about him in the law and the prophets. Hence, when he drank the vinegar offered him on the cross, he said, “it is finished”, evidently to show that everything written about him in the law and the prophets had been completed, even including the drinking of vinegar. He fulfilled the law at any rate when he completed by the sacrament of his passion the once prefigured mystery of the paschal meal. Consequently the apostle says, “For Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed.”⁵¹

Tractate on Matthew 20.1.1-2

⁴⁹Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:17). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁵⁰Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:17). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

⁵¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Editor, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

Hegg: Verses 17–20 form a natural heading to the larger section (5:21–48) in which Yeshua contrasts His own interpretation and teaching from the Torah with well-known teachings generally received by the Jewish community He addresses. These verses also carry forward the previous teaching of our Master that His talmidim are to shine forth the light of truth through the doing of the *mitzvot*.²

The overall structure of vv. 17–20 is important for understanding their meaning:

Statement/Heading:

Negative: Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets

Positive: I did not come to abolish but to fulfill

Proof: God's word is eternal

Negative: Until heaven and earth pass not the smallest aspect of God's word will pass away

Positive: all will be accomplished

Application/Halachah for Yeshua's talmidim:

Negative: whoever annuls even the least commandment & so teaches others to annul the commandments will be least in the kingdom of Heaven

Positive: whoever does the commandments & teaches others to do them will be called great in the kingdom of Heaven

Conclusion:

Positive: one's righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees

Negative: else one will not even enter the kingdom of Heaven

This structure helps us see several important points:

1. the concept of “abolish” is further defined by the structure as “annulling” and teaching others to “annul” the commandments
2. “fulfilling” is further defined by the structure as “doing” the commandments and teaching others to do them
3. those who enjoy membership in the kingdom of Heaven are known for their righteousness
 - a. the standard of righteousness is the eternal word of God: the Torah and Prophets
 - b. the practical benchmark is the righteousness for which the scribes and Pharisees are known

The opening verse of this section therefore makes it clear that Yeshua did not consider His teaching to be at variance with Moses, and He did not ever want His talmidim to think that it did. To interpret the ensuing context (the so-called “antitheses”) as though Yeshua was replacing the words of Torah with His own teaching is completely wrongheaded. As Allison-Davies remark:

As the introduction or preamble to 5:21–48... it is intended to prevent the readers of the First Gospel from making two errors. First, it plainly states that the six subsequent paragraphs are not to be interpreted— as they have been so often by so many—as ‘antitheses’, ‘antitheses’ that, in at least two or three instances, set aside the Torah. Instead, Jesus upholds the law, so that between him and Moses there can be no real conflict. Then, secondly, and despite the concord declared by 5:17–19, 5:20 tells us that what Jesus requires of his followers surpasses what has traditionally been regarded (by the scribes and Pharisees) as the requirements of the Torah.

It has been a fairly standard Christian understanding to interpret the meaning of “fulfill” here as “to finish, to complete.” The interpretation of the verse is then that Yeshua fulfilled the Torah in every way and as a result, it not longer is a functioning component of God’s will in the lives of Christians. While its precepts and wisdom are still valuable, the Torah has ceased to have direct application to the life of faith for followers of Yeshua. If our verse stood in isolation of any larger context, such an interpretation of the word “fulfill” would be within the realm of possibilities. But such a meaning cannot stand here, for the obvious reason that the following verses (which are explanatory of the opening verse), Yeshua clearly admonishes His talmidim to “do” and to “teach” the Torah. Moreover, the appeal to the enduring creative order (“until heaven and earth pass away”) makes no sense if in this opening verse Yeshua has declared the Torah and Prophets to be finished. Furthermore, the fact that “fulfill” must append not only to the Torah but also to the Prophets renders this interpretation impossible. No one would claim that the words of the Prophets have been “finished” in the sense of no longer having an active and direct application to the lives of believers.

We may thus understand our verse in this way:

“Do not think that I have come to render the Torah and Prophets in any manner as ineffectual. On the contrary, I have not come to render them ineffectual, but to confirm their words and establish them in your lives.”

When understood in its proper Hebrew context, here is some of what the "New Testament" says about Torah:

- Faith does not abolish any part of the Torah as a whole (Matthew 5:17-20, James 2:10)
- Keeping the Torah *is part of the faith* that gets you to heaven (Matthew 19:17; Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 22:14)
- You will abide in Yeshua's love, if you keep Torah (John 14:15-23) as He abided in the Father's love by keeping Torah (John 15:10; Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:15)
- Faith in Yeshua does not cancel out what the Torah says, it establishes it (Romans 3:31)
- Torah is itself "liberty" and the standard we are to judge ourselves by (James 1:22-25)
- It is those of the flesh who are not subject to the Torah (Romans 8:5-8)
- If you say you know Him, and ignore His Torah, you are a liar (1 John 2:3-7)
- It does not matter if you are a Jew or a gentile, what matters is keeping God's Torah (1 Cor. 7:19)
- The "law of love" is that we keep his Torah - which is by no means a "burden" (1 John 5:3; 2 John 1:6; Matt. 11:29,30)

These "New Testament" references to Torah might at first confuse people, as they aren't used to thinking in these terms. However, when the Hebrew New Testament authors, and Yeshua Himself, spoke of law/commandments in their first century Jewish religious context, it must be interpreted as "Torah," unless there is a clear reason to do otherwise, as this was what it meant to them.

“Not to Abolish”; Anonymous:

For two reasons Christ says that he did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. First, so he might persuade his disciples, whom he had instructed to excel in all good works, to follow his own example. Even as he fulfilled every law, they too must eagerly fulfill even the least part of the law. Second, because Jesus worked on the Sabbath and touched lepers, other Jews accused him of attempting to abolish the law. Or at least so it seemed. He needed to respond to these false accusations. He said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish but to fulfill.” The Law and the Prophets are both in force. They prophesy concerning Christ and constitute the law of living. Christ fulfilled them both.⁵²

Incomplete Work on Matthew, Homily 10.

Matthew 5:18

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

The opening “For” (*gar*) connects this verse to the former as giving further support for the claim that Yeshua did not come to subvert the Torah. Luke (16:17) has: “But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Torah to fail (*pipto*, “to fall”).”

This section presents the heart of Jesus’ message, for it demonstrates His relationship to the Law of God. Jesus was not presenting a rival system to the Law of Moses and the words of the Prophets, but a true fulfillment of **the Law** and **the Prophets**—in contrast with the Pharisees’ traditions. “The Law and the Prophets” refer to the entire Old Testament (cf. 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23; Rom. 3:21). **I tell you the truth** is literally, “Surely (or Verily, KJV) I say to you.” “Surely” renders the word “Amen” (Gr. *amēn*, transliterated from the Heb. ’ *āman*, “to be firm, true”). This expression, “I tell you the truth,” points to a solemn declaration that the hearers should note. It occurs 31 times in Matthew alone. (In the Gospel of John this Gr. word always occurs twice: “Amen, Amen.” Cf. comments on John 1:51.)⁵³

A call to taking the text *very* seriously. These are the strongest words on verbal inspiration and infallibility! (Even hidden encryptions depend upon the precise order of the letters!)

[pass] Greek: *parerchomai* (GSN-3928), pass away, be changed, or pass from one condition to another. They will never pass out of existence, but they will be changed and purified by fire, becoming renewed again (Hebrews 1:10-12; Hebrews 12:25-29; 2

⁵² Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Editor, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press
cf. *confer*, compare

Gr. Greek
Heb. Hebrew

⁵³Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:30). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Peter 3:10-13; Romans 8:21-24; Rev. 21:1). They remain forever (Eccles. 1:4; Psalm 72:17; Psalm 89:36-37; Psalm 104:5). They will pass away in the same sense old things pass away when one becomes a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

[jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled] A "jot" is the smallest letter and a "tittle" the smallest ornament placed upon certain Hebrew letters. Every jot and tittle of the whole law or contract at Sinai was fulfilled, ended, and abolished in Christ and "done away" by Him when He made the new contract (2 Cor. 3:6-15; Acts 15:5-29; Galatians 3:19-25; Galatians 4:21-31; Galatians 5:1-5,18; Ephes. 2:15; Col. 2:14-17; Hebrews 7:11-28; Hebrews 8:6-13; Hebrews 9:1-22; Hebrews 10:1-18; Romans 10:4).

Except at the end of prayers, “**Yes indeed**” and “Yes” are used in the *JNT* to render Greek *amên* (which transliterates Hebrew *.amen*). The Hebrew root *.-m-n* means “truth, faithfulness,” which is why the Hebrew word *.amen* means “It is true, so be it, may it become true”—hence its use in English as well as Hebrew by those listening to a prayer. A speaker’s “Amen” to his own prayer is itself superfluous, yet useful as a cue for others to respond with “Amen” (as at 6:13; Ro 1:25, 9:5, 11:36).

In any case, Hebrew *.amen* is always used in reference to something previously said. Yet most versions translate it as if it pointed forward rather than back. For example, the King James Version (KJV) translates this passage as, “Verily, I tell you” what follows. The translators who do this have New Testament internal evidence as grounds; for there are parallel passages in which one gospel writer has, “*Amên* I tell you ...,” while the other has “Truly (Greek *aleithôs*) I tell you ...” (compare Lk 12:44 with 24:47 below, and Lk 9:27 with Mk 9:1). But this solution requires assuming that Yeshua invented a different pattern of speech than can be found in other sources. While one can say that he was originality incarnate, I think it facile to invoke this notion over ordinary conservative scholarship. Instead, one must ask whether his “Amens” make good sense understood traditionally as referring back, not forward. And in fact, they do. (At Yn 16:7 the text does not say, “*Amên, Amên*”; it actually says in Greek what I have put in English, “But I tell you the truth, ...”; this does, of course, point forward.)

To be specific, his “Amen” to himself emphasizes his own previous point, sometimes with the force, “You may not think that I really meant what I just said, but I do!” (v. 26; 6:2, 5, 16; 10:15, 42; 13:17; 18:18; 23:36; 24:34, 47; 26:13). His “Amen” to what someone else has just said can be an acknowledgment conveying the sense, “I recognize the problem,” (19:28) or even ironic in tone, “Your question/answer shows me that at last you’re beginning to catch on!” (21:21, 31), “You can’t be serious!” (25:12) or “How I wish it were so (but it isn’t!)” (26:34). Sometimes after a speech, or even after an event, it calls attention to what just happened, conveying things like, “That was amazing! Did you notice?” (8:10) or, “Not what you expected, is it?” (a beautiful example at 18:3); at 19:23 it amounts to a sigh; at 25:40, 45 the King’s “Amen” means, “You are astounded that things are working out this way, but that’s how it is”; at 26:21 Yeshua’s “Amen” means, “Right now you’re relaxed and comfortable, but I have news for you!” And sometimes Yeshua’s “Amen” is simply affirmative (“I agree”) but becomes the take-off for his own reinforcing or contrasting remarks (several of the above examples, and 8:13, where his

“Amen” means, “I agree with your unspoken answer to my rhetorical question”). See also Rv 7:11–12N.

The *Tanakh* provides a striking example of “Amen” used ironically, even sarcastically, at the beginning of a sentence. In Jeremiah 28 the false prophet Chananyah predicts that within two years God will restore the Temple vessels taken by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. Yirmiyahu replies, “Amen! May Adonai do so! May Adonai perform the words which you have prophesied Nevertheless, hear now, ... Chananyah: Adonai has not sent you. Instead, you are making this people trust in a lie!”

Yud is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet and is used in the *JNT* to render Greek *iôta*, the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet. Only a small **stroke** distinguishes one Hebrew letter from another—for example *dalet* (d) from *resh* (r) or *beit* (b) from *kaf* (^). KJV transliterates “*yud*” as “jot” and renders “stroke” as “tittle” (the corresponding Hebrew term is “*kotz*,” literally, “thorn”).⁵⁴

Matthew 5:19

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

[**commandments**] The laws and commandments of the new covenant are just as binding as those in the old covenant (James 2:10). There are 613 Commandments in the Old Testament. There are over 1,050 commands in the new covenant, plus many other teachings not expressed in the form of commands.

Only people who obey God and keep His commandments are promised eternal life, not those who profess and do not obey (John 6:27).

Mitzvot (singular *mitzvah*). A *mitzvah* is a commandment; traditionally in the *Torah* (the Pentateuch) there are 613 *mitzvot* for the Jewish people to obey. In casual Jewish English (see the paragraph “Jewish English” in the Introduction to the *JNT*, Section IV), “doing a *mitzvah*” means “doing a good deed, something nice, something helpful to someone, a favor”; but these meanings derive from the original sense, “a commandment” from God.⁵⁵

⁵⁴Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:18). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁵⁵Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:19). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Matthew 5:20

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

What a blow to the Jew! He knew the extremes that the professional lawkeepers resorted to! What was to become of himself? You cannot break the commandments and get by with it. But you cannot keep them in your own strength. The only way you can keep them is to come to Jesus Christ for salvation, power, and strength.

The commandments are not a *way* of salvation but a *means* to show you the way to salvation through the acceptance of the work of Jesus Christ.⁵⁶

Matthew 5:21

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

[**whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment**] Not a direct quotation of any scripture, so must be an old comment or an old saying.

Sixth of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17). In this commentary I use the Jewish enumeration of the Ten Commandments, in which the first Commandment is, “I am *Adonai*, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Since this is in fact not a commandment but a declaration, Christian enumerations do not include it. But the Hebrew phrase for “the Ten Commandments” is “*aseret-hadibrot*,” literally, “the ten sayings.” This first “saying” is actually the basis for the other nine *dibrot* as well as for all the *mitzvot* (see v. 19N). It is because of who God is (“I am *Adonai*”) and because of his benevolent involvement in the ongoing life and history of his people (“who brought you out of the land of Egypt”) and his concern for their welfare (“out of the house of bondage”) that, in faith, hope, love and gratitude, his people should obey him. Yeshua begins his detailed “filling” of the *Torah* (v. 17N) with one of the Ten Commandments, implicitly alluding to this underlying ground for all obedience to God. “In Judaism the citation of a Scripture text implies the whole context,” all Ten Commandments, “not merely the quoted words” (2:6N).⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Chuck Missler, Commentary on Matthew, khouse.org

⁵⁷ Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:21). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Matthew 5:22

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

[I say unto you] Christ speaks with authority in making the laws of the new covenant (Matthew 7:29; Matthew 26:28; John 1:17).

[without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment] People must have just and lawful causes to be angry and even then they are to keep their temper under strict control (Ephes. 4:26). The fruit of the Spirit is temperance or self-control (Galatians 5:22).

“Without a cause” is not included in some manuscripts (NU omits *without a cause*).

[Raca] An Aramaic word of utmost contempt and scorn, such as "scoundrel" or "wicked rascal."

“Raca” is Aramaic for “empty-headed one”; the insult is about the same as the one that follows it, “Fool!” The punishments are also roughly equal: the (day of God’s) judgment, the heavenly Sanhedrin or supreme court, and hell. (Jewish literature described God’s heavenly tribunal as a supreme court, or sanhedrin, parallel to the earthly one.) “The hell of fire” is literally “the Gehenna of fire,” which refers to the standard Jewish concept of Gehinnom, the opposite of paradise; in Gehinnom the wicked would be burned up (according to some Jewish teachers) or eternally tortured (according to other Jewish teachers). Not only the outward act of murder but also the inward choice of anger that generates such acts violates the spirit of God’s law against murder.⁵⁸

[council] The Sanhedrin, composed of 71 judges presided over by the high priest, or a local council of each synagogue composed of 3 or more men.

[fool] Greek: *moros* (GSN-3474), a wicked reprobate, destitute of all spirituality.

[hell] Greek: *gehenna* (GSN-1067) (Hebrew: *gay* (HSN-1516) *Hinnom* (HSN-2011), Valley of Hinnom), near Jerusalem, where perpetual fires were kept to burn all

Aramaic ***Aramaic**. A language related to Hebrew that was the standard international language of the ancient Near East before Alexander the Great’s conquests made Greek the standard; it was still widely spoken in different forms in Syria-Palestine and farther east in Jesus’ day. Most Jewish people in first-century Palestine probably spoke both Greek and Aramaic.

Gehenna **Gehenna**. A Greek transliteration of the Hebrew *Gehinnom*, which in Judaism had come to describe the abode of the wicked dead in torment. Various Jewish sources differ on the duration of punishment in Gehenna and whether the wicked would eventually be annihilated, continue to be detained or be released; the Gospels, Acts and Revelation are much more united in their picture of a resurrection to eternal judgment.

⁵⁸Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:21). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

refuse and purify the air to prevent pestilence (Isaiah 30:33; Jeremiah 7:31-32; Jeremiah 19:6-14; 2 Kings 23:10). Used 12 times of hell, the place of eternal punishment of the wicked (Matthew 5:22,29,30; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 18:9; Matthew 23:15,33; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6). It is the same as "the lake of fire" (Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:11-15; Rev. 21:8), "furnace of fire" (Matthew 8:12; Matthew 13:42,50; Matthew 22:13; Matthew 24:51; Matthew 25:30; Luke 3:17), and a place of eternal "fire and brimstone" (Matthew 25:41,46; Rev. 14:9-11; Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:10-15; Rev. 21:8; Isaiah 66:22-24). See Luke 12:5.

Verses 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44 all begin with "**But I tell you.**" The Greek word translated "but" is "*de*," which can be rendered either "but" or "and"; see Ro 10:6-8N, which is the basis for what follows. Yeshua is not here abrogating the Law (v. 17 &N); so his "but" does not introduce something that contradicts or contrasts with the ideas of the prior "**You have heard**" (vv. 21, 27, 33, 38, 43) or "**It was said**" (v. 31). Yeshua is not telling his audience that they **have heard** something which is wrong that he is now about to correct. Rather, his "but" completes and "fills" (v. 17 &N) the full sense of the *Torah* which they **have** already **heard**. At vv. 22, 28 and 34 "*de*" can successfully be rendered "and" or "moreover," to bring out how Yeshua's remark carries forward and completes the thought of the previous verse. However, in vv. 32, 39 and 44 "but" does the job better while also remaining satisfactory in the other three verses.

Gey-Hinnom, brought over into Greek and English as "Gehenna" and usually translated "hell." Literally, "valley of Hinnom" (a personal name); located both then and now just south of the Old City of Jerusalem. Rubbish fires were always burning there; hence its use as a metaphor for hell, with its burning fire of punishment for the unrighteous, as taught in the Hebrew Bible at Isaiah 66:24. Elsewhere in the *Tanakh* Deuteronomy 32:22 talks about a burning hell; 2 Samuel 22:6, Psalm 18:5 and Psalm 116:3 show that hell is a sorrowful place; Psalm 9:17 says that the wicked go to hell; and Job 26:6 shows that hell is a place of destruction. The Hebrew word in all these verses is "*sh.ol*"; it usually corresponds to Greek "*adês*" ("Hades"). Thus hell is not a New Testament *chiddush* (novelty). When liberals assert that Judaism teaches there is no hell, they are introducing a later doctrine of their own not based on the *Tanakh*.

Since the idea of eternal punishment is at the very least offputting, some seek to soften it by proposing that the final judgment is total annihilation, in which nothing is experienced, either good or bad. Nevertheless, what the Bible teaches about both *sh.ol* (*adês*) and Gey-Hinnom is that there is a state of eternal sorrowful existence to be consciously experienced by those who come under God's ultimate condemnation (see the above passages and Rv 20:15&N). Changing the Biblical concept of hell to non-existence is, unfortunately, wishful-thinking theology.⁵⁹

⁵⁹Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:22). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Matthew 5:23

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

Matthew 5:24

Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

[**altar**] Of 433 occurrences in Scripture, 24 are in the New Testament. It means "a place of sacrifice" or "a place to meet with God." Christians should have such a place (Matthew 5:23-24; Hebrews 13:10; Romans 12:1-3).

Traditional Judaism expresses this idea thusly in the Mishna:

“*Yom-Kippur* [the Day of Atonement] atones for a person’s transgressions against God, but it does not atone for his transgressions against his fellow-man until he appeases him.” (Yoma 8:9)⁶⁰

Judaism stressed reconciliation between individuals; God would not accept an outward offering if one had oppressed or mistreated one’s neighbor and did not make it right. In the Old Testament God accepted only sacrifices offered with a pure heart toward him and one’s neighbor (Gen 4:4-7; Prov 15:8; Is 1:10-15; Jer 6:20; Amos 5:21-24).

Matthew 5:25

Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

[**adversary**] Opponent at law. Under Roman law an adversary could force his opponent to go before the judge (Matthew 18:28-30). If he would settle on the way to the judge he would not be tried in court (Luke 12:58-59).

Matthew 5:26

Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

⁶⁰Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:23). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.
Old Testament ***Old Testament**. The common modern term for the Hebrew Bible (including Aramaic portions) as defined by the Jewish and Protestant Christian canons; Jewish readers generally call this the Tenach.

Matthew 5:27

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:

[**Thou shalt not commit adultery**] Exodus 20:14; Deut. 5:18.

Matthew 5:28

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

While actual adultery is far worse than inward lustful fantasies, the inner desires can quickly lead to this forbidden sin (Ex 20:14). We must deal ruthlessly with ourselves and not encourage the imagination to “feed on” these sins. The eyes and the hands (seeing and touching) must be kept under control. For Christ’s teachings on marriage and divorce, see Mt 19:1–11.⁶¹

[**looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart**] With continual longing with the mind made up to commit the act if at all possible (James 1:13-16). It becomes a state of the heart and is as deadly as the act itself (1 Samuel 16:7; Mark 7:19-23).

The believer has “the mind of the Messiah” (1C 2:15) and is not to nurture and cherish improper sexual feelings, desires, urges and lusts. If he does, then, for reasons explained at Ya 1:12–15, he will succumb to the temptations they raise, give sexual fantasizing undue control in his life and finally engage in wrong sexual behavior such as adultery, fornication and homosexuality⁶²

Matthew 5:29

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

[**offend thee**] To cause a moral fall and loss of the soul by some means.

[**pluck it out**] Nothing is gained by changing the literal meaning.

[**it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell**] Giving the reason why one should get rid of the offending member. Would it not be more profitable to do this literally than to have all members cast into eternal hell? Jesus is simply emphasizing the terribleness of eternal hell. There is a better method than this provided by the gospel. If one will become a new creature in Christ by the new birth this problem of sinful members will be solved (2 Cor.

⁶¹ Chuck Missler, Commentary on Matthew, khouse.org

⁶² Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:28). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

5:17-18; Galatians 5:16-26; Romans 6:16-23; Romans 8:1-13; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 2:29; 1 John 3:6-10; 1 John 5:1-5,18). Matthew 18:8-9.

[whole body should be cast into hell] Used twice of the whole body going to hell (Matthew 5:29-30; Matthew 10:28; note, [□]Luke 12:5; Rev. 20:11-15).

Matthew 5:30

And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

[hell] Used three times here (Matthew 5:22,29-30; Matthew 18:8-9; Mark 9:43-48; Isaiah 66:24).

Matthew 5:31

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:

[Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement] Deut. 24:1-4; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8.

[put away] Greek: *apoluo* (GSN-630), to loose (Matthew 18:27); release (Matthew 27:15-26); let go (Luke 14:4); set at liberty (Acts 26:32); send away (Matthew 14:15-23); dismiss (Acts 15:30); put away (Matthew 1:19; Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18); and divorce (Matthew 5:32). Put away here means divorce and was so understood by the Jews. If the divorce was granted for fornication, a sin God looked upon as most serious, the putting away was legal, Christian, and sanctioned by Christ. It made the contract null and void as before marriage (cp. Deut. 24:1-4).

[writing of divorcement] A legal document dissolving the marriage bonds. Called "writing of divorcement" (Matthew 5:31; Matthew 19:7) and "bill of divorcement" (Deut. 24:1-3; Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8; Mark 10:4). See notes [□]Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:2-4; 1 Cor. 7.

Matthew 5:32

But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

[fornication] Fornication in the Bible means: adultery of married or single people (Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:2; 1 Cor. 10:8; 1 Thes. 4:3; Rev. 9:21); incest (1 Cor. 5:1; 1 Cor. 10:8); idolatry and adultery in honor of idol gods (2 Chron. 21:11;

Isaiah 23:17; Ezekiel 16:15,26,29; Acts 15:20,29; Acts 21:25; Rev. 2:14-21; Rev. 14:8; Rev. 17:2-4; Rev. 18:3-9; Rev. 19:2); natural harlotry (John 8:41; 1 Cor. 6:13-18); spiritual harlotry (Ezekiel 16:15,26,29; Rev. 17:2-4; Rev. 18:3-9; Rev. 19:2); sodomy and male prostitution (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Hebrews 12:16; Jude 1:6-7; Romans 1:24-29; 2 Cor. 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephes. 5:3; Col. 3:5). Do all these scriptures apply to single people only? If not, then fornication does not apply only to single people as some teach.

[adultery] Adultery is unlawful relationship between men and women, single or married. Out of 69 times that the sin is referred to in Scripture, only 2 passages speak of spiritual adultery (Jeremiah 3:3-12; Ezekiel 16:37). This term is not used in the broader sense of all forms of unchastity as is fornication (*porneia* (GSN-4202)). All adultery is fornication, but all fornication is not adultery.

Under Jewish law, “adultery” referred only to the wife’s misbehavior, not the husband’s. Matthew does not agree with this view (5:28); but because his readers must obey the law of their communities, he deals only with the issue of the wife.

Some Pharisaic rabbis allowed divorce for almost anything (just as Roman law did); others allowed it only if the wife were unfaithful (see comment on 19:1–10; both Jewish and Roman law *required* divorce for adultery). Yet the stricter rabbis did not view more lenient divorces as invalid. Jesus thus goes beyond the stricter position: not only does he allow divorce only if one’s wife is unfaithful, but he regards divorce for any other reason as invalid, thus making remarriage in those cases adulterous. This seems, however, to be hyperbole (as in 5:29–30), a graphic way of forbidding divorce except when the other partner has already irreparably broken the marriage covenant.

If Jesus’ interpretation of the law was stricter than what the law said at face value, no one would have thought that he was therefore contradicting the law; “building a fence” around the law was a standard Jewish practice that involved making certain that the law’s intent was not broken.⁶³

Pharisaic ***Pharisees**. A movement of several thousand pious Jewish men who sought to interpret the law carefully and according to the traditions of previous generations of the pious. They had no political power in Jesus’ day but were highly respected and thus influential among the larger population. They emphasized their own version of purity rules and looked forward to the resurrection of the dead.

rabbis ***Rabbi**. Jewish teacher. Sometime after A.D. 70 the term became a technical one for those ordained in the rabbinic movement, which probably consisted primarily of Pharisaic scribes. (To accommodate customary usage this commentary sometimes applies the term to Jewish teachers of the law in general, although such common usage may have technically been later; it also applies the term to the teachings of Jewish legal experts collected in rabbinic literature.)

hyperbole **Hyperbole**. A rhetorical exaggeration, a figure of speech often used by Jewish wisdom teachers to underline their point. The point of Jesus’ hyperbolic illustrations is generally to grab the hearer’s attention and force that hearer to take his point seriously.

⁶³Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:38). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

Matthew 5:33

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:

[Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths]

Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; Deut. 23:21.

[forswear] Greek: *epiorkeo* (GSN-1964), swear falsely. Making vows by heaven, earth, or any other thing that we have no power to change is forbidden (Matthew 5:33-37; James 5:12), but making vows and taking oaths to speak the truth is always right (Matthew 5:33; Hebrews 6:16; Genesis 22:16; Genesis 28:20).

Matthew 5:34

But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

Do not break your oath (or: “Do not swear falsely,” or: “Do not perjure yourself”).

Keep your vows to Adonai. The distinction between vows and oaths is hazy not only to us, but also within Judaism; and the issue doesn't seem important today. The early believers understood Yeshua not as prohibiting all vows (see Ac 18:5&N, 21:23&N), but as prohibiting vain oaths—the rabbis of the time did the same. In the Apocrypha compare Sirach 23:9, “Do not accustom your mouth to swearing oaths, and do not habitually use the name of the Holy One.” Philo of Alexandria recommended avoiding oaths entirely (Decalogue 84). The Talmud has this parallel to v. 37: “Let your ‘no’ and ‘yes’ both be righteous [i.e., straightforward].” (Bava Metzia 49a)⁶⁴

Matthew 5:35

Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

Matthew 5:36

Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.

Most people in Jewish Palestine had black or dark hair, unless they were older, in which case their hair was turning white; verse 36 would have been heard as referring to God's control over aging. Jesus' rule here is stricter than the letter of the law but in accord with

⁶⁴Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:33). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

its spirit (Deut 23:21–23; Eccles 5:5). It is possible that the Essenes also avoided oath-taking after their initial oath to join their sect.⁶⁵

Matthew 5:37

But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

When a man says to me, “I’d swear on a stack of Bibles a mile high,” that is the fellow I do not believe because I think the lie he’s telling is a mile high.

Matthew 5:38

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

[An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth] Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deut. 19:21.

Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21, where the context of **eye for eye**, etc. shows that God was not commanding revenge, but controlling and limiting it. Retribution and punishment must be commensurate with the crime; contrast Cain and Lamech’s extraction of multiplied vengeance at Genesis 4:24.

The following citation of the Mishna is given at length in order to show that rabbinic thinking on the matter of legal damages goes far beyond the simple *lex talionis* (Latin, “law of retaliation,” i.e., eye for eye):

“If someone wounds his fellow, he becomes liable to compensate the injured party for five different aspects of the injury: damage, pain, healing, loss of time from work, and insult.

“In the case of damage, here is an example of how restitution is determined. Suppose someone blinded someone else’s eye, cut off his hand or broke his leg. They value the injured person as if he were a slave for sale in the market, and they appraise his value before the injury and now.

“Here is an example of determining the compensation for pain. Suppose someone burns another with a skewer or nail, even if only on his fingernail, where it doesn’t actually produce a wound. They determine how much a man of his position would be willing to be paid to suffer that amount of pain.

“For healing the indemnity is determined in this way. If someone hit another person, he must pay all the expenses of healing him. If he develops ulcers, then if they come about in consequence of the blow, he is liable; but if not, he is not liable. If the wound heals, reopens, heals and reopens again, he is liable for all the expenses. But once it has healed thoroughly, he does not remain liable to pay the expenses of healing him.

Essenes ***Essenes**. A strict group of pietists, some of whom withdrew into the wilderness as monastics. The Dead Sea Scrolls are probably from one group of Essenes.

⁶⁵Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* (Mt 5:38). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

“The value of time lost is estimated in this way. They consider what he would earn if he were a watchman over a cucumber field [a job requiring no special skills], for he has already been paid for the loss of his hand or foot. [In practice, this means they determine what kind of work he will be fit for when he fully recovers and evaluate the time lost by this standard.]

“For insult the compensation is determined entirely in accordance with the social status of both the one who caused the indignity and the one who suffered it. If someone insults a person who is naked, blind or asleep, he is liable. But if a sleeping person causes an insult, he is not liable. Someone who falls from a roof and causes injury and insult at the same time is liable for the injury but not for the insult, ... because one should not be held responsible for an indignity one did not intend to cause.” (Bava Kama 8:1)⁶⁶

Matthew 5:39

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

[But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also] Three Christian Principles:

1. Do not retaliate (Matthew 5:39; Romans 12:14).
2. Do more than required (Matthew 5:40-41).
3. Be kind and generous (Matthew 5:42).

Matthew 5:40

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also.

Matthew 5:41

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

[compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain] A reference to the custom of forced service in transport by a king's courier who could demand the service of others to carry out the king's business. To refuse was an unpardonable offense to the king (Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21).

⁶⁶Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:38). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Matthew 5:42

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

[Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away] What one can afford with justice to the family and personal obligations (1 Tim. 5:8; Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:6-8; 1 John 3:17).

Matthew 5:43

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

[Thou shalt love thy neighbour] Leviticus 19:17-18; Matthew 22:39; Luke 10:27.

[hate thine enemy] Exodus 17:14-16; Deut. 7:1-2; Deut. 23:3-6.

Leviticus 19:18 told **our fathers** to “**love your neighbor** as yourself.” While in Psalm 139:21–22 the writer commends himself for hating *God’s* enemies, nowhere does the *Tanakh* teach that you should **hate your enemy**. Such a teaching must have come from the misinterpretations of those who “teach man-made rules as if they were doctrines” of God (Isaiah 29:13, cited by Yeshua below at 15:9). On “Jacob I loved but Esau I hated” (Malachi 1:2–3) see Ro 9:10–13&N.⁶⁷

Matthew 5:44

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

[But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you]

Four commands in Matthew 5:44:

1. Love your enemies.
2. Bless them that curse you.
3. Do good to those that hate you.
4. Pray for your persecutors.

Love your enemies! Some contrast the “realistic” ethics of Judaism with “Christian romanticism” and cite this as an example. However, the command is not to have good feelings about your enemies, but to want and do good for them, and, more specifically, to **pray for those who persecute you**. It is realistic enough to have been flattered by

⁶⁷Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:43). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

imitation in a well-known medieval Jewish work: “Pray for your enemy that he serve God.” (*Orchot Tzaddikim*15c)⁶⁸

Matthew 5:45

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Matthew 5:46

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

[**publicans**] Tax-gatherers. Used 17 times. They were despised by the Jews, so any reference to being less than this class was the lowest thing that could be said of anyone religious. They were classed with sinners (Matthew 9:10-11; Matthew 11:19; Matthew 21:31-32). Many repented and were baptized (Luke 3:12; Luke 7:29). One of them—Matthew—became an apostle (Luke 5:27-29; Luke 19:1-10).

Tax-collectors. Jews who undertook to collect taxes for the Roman rulers were the most despised people in the Jewish community. Not only were they serving the oppressors, but they found it easy to abuse the system so as to line their own pockets by exploiting their fellow Jews.⁶⁹

Matthew 5:47

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?

Goyim. The Greek word “*ethnê*” (singular “*ethnos*”) corresponds to Hebrew *goyim* (singular *goy*), also translated in the *JNT* as “Gentiles,” “nations,” “pagans” or “non-Jews”; KJV sometimes renders it “heathen.” Jews who speak English often use the Hebrew (and Yiddish) word “*goyim*” to refer to non-Jews. Although today “*Goyim*” sometimes carries a mildly pejorative tone linked to the idea that a *goy* is not “one of us” (see Ga 2:15&N), Yeshua here is referring to the fact that the *Goyim* had not received God’s revelation as had the Jews, and therefore less was to be expected of them; since this was God’s doing, there is no defamatory connotation. See also 10:5N, 24:7N.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:44). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁶⁹Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:46). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

⁷⁰Stern, D. H. (1996, c1992). *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A companion volume to the Jewish New Testament* (electronic ed.) (Mt 5:47). Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications.

Matthew 5:48

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

[perfect] Greek: *teleios* (GSN-5046), complete in conformity to God's laws.

What a Christian Must Be:

1. Broken in spirit, burdened for others, meek, humble, hungry for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, wise, patient, loving, joyful, and gracious (Matthew 5:3-12)
2. Salt to preserve and a light to shine (Matthew 5:13-16)
3. A teacher and keeper of the truth (Matthew 5:17-19)
4. Free from hypocrisy, selfishness, and grudges (Matthew 5:20-24)
5. A peacemaker (Matthew 5:9,25-26)
6. Free from lusts (Matthew 5:27-30)
7. A family man (Matthew 5:31-32)
8. Truthful (Matthew 5:31-37)
9. Nonresistant to mistreatment (Matthew 5:38-41)
10. Charitable, neighborly, and God-like in society (Matthew 5:38-47)

All This Is Possible Through:

1. The new birth (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 2:29; 1 John 3:5-10; 1 John 5:1-4,18)
2. Walking and living in the Spirit (Romans 8:1-13; Galatians 5:16-26)
3. Proper use of Christian weapons (2 Cor. 10:5-7; Ephes. 6:10-18; Col. 2:6-10; Col. 3:3-10; 2 Tim. 2:21)

In vs 17–20 Jesus places *the Law* alongside *the Prophets* as finding fulfilment in him (for this sense of the law as ‘prophesying’ until Jesus came *cf.* 11:13; and Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:24). To *fulfil* is to bring about that to which Scripture pointed, and that is what Jesus has now done. But the fulfilment of the law does not mean its abolition; it remains wholly authoritative and demands the fullest respect of the disciple (18–19). The question remains, however, how its function for the disciple is affected by its fulfilment in Jesus, and v 20 indicates that the meticulous legalism of *the Pharisees and the teachers of the law* is inadequate in the new context of *the kingdom of heaven*. Some higher approach is needed, and that is what vs 21–47 go on to spell out, by showing how Jesus’ demand surpasses that of current ethical teaching based on the OT law. It does this not by being more scrupulous in literal observance but by penetrating to the true will of God enshrined in the law.

Thus in the first two examples (21–30) a mere literal avoidance of *murder* and *adultery* does not get to the heart of the problem. Underlying these outward acts are the fundamental attitudes of hatred and lust. Where the heart is not right, drastic action is needed to correct it *before* it results in outward sin.

Thirdly (31–32), a literal appeal to Dt. 24:1–4 had led to the sanctioning of divorce provided the due form of certification was observed, but Jesus restates God’s original purpose of the permanence of marriage (see on 19:3–12 for fuller discussion).

Fourthly (33–37), Jesus sets aside the intricate discussion of the relative weight of different oaths (*cf.* 23:16–22) in favour of the ideal of simple truthfulness, which makes

cf. compare
OT Old Testament

oaths and vows unnecessary. Here, as with the issue of divorce, Jesus refuses to allow the law's regulations, which were designed to control human sinfulness, to take precedence over God's original intention. Ethical standards must be built not on the law's concessions but on the positive purpose of God.

Fifthly (38–42), the natural desire for vengeance and retaliation may conveniently be justified from the OT's regulations, which were originally designed to limit the extent of legal retribution (*An eye for an eye etc.*). But to extend this principle to personal ethics makes it a charter for self-interest. By a series of vivid examples (39–42), Jesus calls instead for an unselfish attitude which not only refuses to retaliate but does not *resist*, even when it would be legally right to do so. Such an attitude is one which subordinates one's own rights to the benefit of others.

Finally (43–47), the natural inference that the OT's command to love one's neighbour carries the corollary that one should hate one's enemy is replaced by the extraordinary command to love one's enemies. Here again Jesus goes far beyond the explicit teaching of the OT law and offers an ethic in sharp contrast to natural human values.

Thus, in all these examples a superficial observance of the letter of the law has given way to a radical search for the true will of God. This goes beyond the literal interpretation of the law and may indeed in some cases leave it on one side, as Jesus' sovereign authority (*I say to you*) reveals the radically alternative value-scale which discipleship must involve. It is amazingly but appropriately summed up in the concluding verse, *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*. Legalism has been left far behind, and the law has been 'fulfilled'.⁷¹

⁷¹Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Mt 5:17). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

CHART: KEY LESSONS FROM THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

<i>Beatitude</i>	Poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3)
<i>Old Testament anticipation</i>	Isaiah 57:15
<i>Clashing worldly values</i>	Pride and personal independence
<i>God's reward</i>	Kingdom of heaven
<i>How to develop this attitude</i>	James 4:7-10
<i>Beatitude</i>	<i>Mourning</i> (Matt. 5:4)
<i>Old Testament anticipation</i>	Isaiah 61:1-2
<i>Clashing worldly values</i>	Happiness at any cost
<i>God's reward</i>	Comfort (2 Cor. 1:4)
<i>How to develop this attitude</i>	Psalm 51, James 4:7-10
<i>Beatitude</i>	Meekness (Matt. 5:5)
<i>Old Testament anticipation</i>	Psalm 37:5-11
<i>Clashing worldly values</i>	Power
<i>God's reward</i>	Inherit the earth
<i>How to develop this attitude</i>	Matt. 11:27-30
<i>Beatitude</i>	Righteousness (Matt. 5:6)
<i>Old Testament anticipation</i>	Isaiah 11:4-5; 42:1-4
<i>Clashing worldly values</i>	Pursuing personal needs
<i>God's reward</i>	Filled (satisfied)
<i>How to develop this attitude</i>	John 16:5-11; Phil. 3:7-11
<i>Beatitude</i>	Mercy (Matt. 5:7)
<i>Old Testament anticipation</i>	Psalm 41:1
<i>Clashing worldly values</i>	Strength without feeling
<i>God's reward</i>	Be shown mercy
<i>How to develop this attitude</i>	Ephes. 5:1-2
<i>Beatitude</i>	Pure in heart (Matt. 5:8)
<i>Old Testament anticipation</i>	Psalm 24:3-4; 51:10
<i>Clashing worldly values</i>	Deception is acceptable
<i>God's reward</i>	See God
<i>How to develop this attitude</i>	1 John 3:1-3
<i>Beatitude</i>	Peacemaker (Matt. 5:9)
<i>Old Testament anticipation</i>	Isaiah 57:18-19; 60:17
<i>Clashing worldly values</i>	Personal peace is pursued without concern for the world's chaos
<i>God's reward</i>	Be called sons of God
<i>How to develop this attitude</i>	Romans 12:9-21; Hebrews 12:10-11
<i>Beatitude</i>	Persecuted (Matt. 5:10)
<i>Old Testament anticipation</i>	Isaiah 52:13; 53:12

Clashing worldly values
God's reward

Weak commitments
Inherit the kingdom of
heaven

How to develop this attitude 2 Tim. 3:12

In his longest recorded sermon, Jesus began by describing the traits he was looking for in his followers. He called those who lived out those traits blessed because God had something special in store for them. Each beatitude is an almost direct contradiction of society's typical way of life. In the last beatitude, Jesus even points out that a serious effort to develop these traits is bound to create opposition. The best example of each trait is found in Jesus himself. If our goal is to become like him, the Beatitudes will challenge the way we live each day.