

3Biblical Ethics

Jesus and the Law of Moses

Introduction:

1. For the past two weeks we have given consideration to the study of Biblical Ethics.
2. Thus far in our study we have learned . . .
 - a. That the biblical system of right and wrong finds its origin in the very nature of God. We, in turn, are called on to imitate Him. 1 Pet. 1:14-16 says, "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"
 - ~But this system of ethics is not bare rules. God's requirements are set in the framework of His gifts. He has done mighty acts for His people and they "ought" to respond in an appropriate way.
 - ~This line of reasoning is evident throughout Scripture but particularly in the Epistles, like Romans.
 - `The first several chapters focus on what God has done (1-8, 9-11).
 - `12:1-2 is a transition point.
 - `12:3-15:3 describe the conduct appropriate to those saved by means of Christ's death for sins.
 - ~And so, our relationship to God is the foundation of all ethical behavior.
 - b. Secondly, we learned that ethics in the kingdom involve a trustworthy King, who is wise, just and perfectly righteous in His judgments. As such, His wisdom inspires total confidence and results in obedience by all His citizens.
 - ~His law is not imposed upon us, but willingly accepted as the instruction that brings life, peace and happiness to those formerly suffering because of their ignorance.
 - ~Thus, His law is more desirable than gold. It is sweeter than the honey comb.
 - ~We affirm allegiance to the Lord, accept the yoke of His kingship and walk in His way.
 - ~"Trust and obey" is the motto of His citizens.
3. In this lesson we will learn about Jesus and His relation to the Law of Moses, especially as evidenced in the Sermon on the Mount.

Discussion:

- I. There is a direct link between the ethics of holiness in the Law of Moses and the ethics associated with the teaching of Jesus.
 - A. This is evident in Jesus' statement in Matt. 5:17-19.
 1. That the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is founded upon God's own nature is evidenced in Mat. 5:48: "You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."
 2. And again in Lk. 6:32-36: "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to

sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

- B. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 -6-7) is a primary source for learning about Jesus and his relation to the Law of Moses, and about the understanding of the first century scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20).
 - 1. This sermon is not about how men should live if they want to build the kingdom on earth.
 - 2. It is a sermon to disciples (5:1) about how those who constitute the kingdom live as citizens in that kingdom.
- C. The sermon begins with a series of congratulatory notes that we know as the beatitudes (5:3-10).
- D. It notes not only the responsibility of influencing the world (5:13-16), but the response of the world (5:11-12).

II. The Sermon on the Mount takes the fundamentals of Judaism and restates them in terms of the life of the citizens of the kingdom living under the New Covenant. The sermon falls into three sections: 1) The “new” law (5:17-48); 2) the “new” worship (6:1-34); 3) the “new” relationships (7:1-12); Conclusion (7:13ff).

- A. The Law and the Prophets will not be abolished but fulfilled (5:17).
 - 1. Annuling one of the least of the commandments and teaching this to others diminishes one in the new kingdom.
 - 2. Keeping and teaching them is great in the new kingdom.
 - 3. This should help us to understand something of the value of the Law and the Prophets and to appreciate their place as foundational to the ethics of the new kingdom.
- B. But the Law and the Prophets is not to be confused with the perceptions of the scribes and Pharisees (5:20). We make a serious mistake when we confuse our understanding of the terms of the covenant with God’s intent.
 - 1. Some say the O.T. was a matter of outward externals and the new involves inward devotion. But such is not true. The O.T. demanded inward devotion (cf. Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:3ff).
 - 2. Jesus elaborated on the meaning of the fundamentals of the terms of the covenant.
 - 3. This occurs in 5:21-48. Review some examples of the statement of the law, Pharisees understanding and Jesus’ elaboration. Note especially 5:48—The Father’s nature summarizes the standard. He is the model and origin of all ethical standards in both the old covenant kingdom and the new covenant kingdom.
 - 4. Jesus, the King, speaks with the authority and wisdom of God (7:28)— “. . . but I say to you.” Like Solomon did in the dispute between the two harlots.
- C. Genuine worship is not “before men” but in the presence of God (6:1ff).
 - 1. Three areas illustrate this: giving to the poor, praying, fasting.
 - 2. Thus the emphasis is on relationship to God first and primarily (6:19-21). This gives direction to all that we do (6:22-23). We can only serve one master (6:24).
 - 3. Following this principle means there is no need for worry (6:25-34).

- D. The third area is how citizens in the kingdom treat one another (7:1-12).
 - 1. Not judgmental, but gracious (7:1-6). One of the great dangers of any ethical system is that we trust in ourselves that we are righteous and view others with contempt (Lk. 18:9). Yet discerning judgment is to be used (7:6).
 - 2. Treatment of fellow citizens is based on God's graciousness (7:7-12).
 - 3. Note the summary: "This is the Law and the Prophets." So the new covenant kingdom principles are founded in the old covenant kingdom principles and all are founded upon God's nature. So we are to be perfect as He is perfect (cf. 7:22-23).
- E. This is followed by a call to walk in the Way of the King (7:13-23).
 - 1. Walking in the wrong way leads to destruction.
 - 2. Some will attempt to lead you in a false way—know them by their fruits.
 - 3. Lawlessness does not characterize kingdom citizens.
 - 4. They build on "these words of Mine."

III. So what is Jesus' relationship to the Law of Moses? What is my relationship to the ethics of the new kingdom?

- A. The ethics of the Law of Moses is fundamental/foundational to the terms of the new covenant.
- B. The new King, Jesus, evidences the wisdom of God in His understanding and application of these fundamentals. We should reverence (fear) Him.
- C. As citizens in His kingdom we . . .
 - 1. Trust the King.
 - 2. Value the kingdom above all.
 - 3. Submit to the terms of the covenant.
 - 4. Worship in recognition of the Lord; we do not worship ourselves (to be noticed by men).
 - 5. Treat others the way the Father treats us.
 - 6. Avoid self-righteousness.
 - 7. Walk in the pathway of the King.

Conclusion:

- 1. Are you a citizen of this kingdom?
- 2. You need to give your allegiance to the King.
- 3. You need to trust Him and submit to His wisdom.
- 4. If you are a citizen in this kingdom you need to live like the King.