

Missions Breaks the Yoke of Religion

Matthew 5:17-20

Key verse: V17

These four verses immediately follow the beatitudes and are part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. To the common man His sermon was spiritually refreshingly in its presentation of practical living that pleases God. But, it ruthlessly exposed the hypocrisy of the false religious leaders of the day. Jesus reserved his harshest words for those who practiced spiritual deception. He basically declares in v20 that the scribes and Pharisees would not enter the kingdom. Jesus spoke the phrase "woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees" no less than 8 times, calling them hypocrites, "children of hell" and "blind leaders of the blind." They claimed to love the law, but rejected the One who came to fulfill it.

There is no more glorious message in the Sermon on the Mount than Jesus' bold claim in verse 17 to fulfill the law. Do you realize that our very salvation hinges on it? The law does not save. It condemns. The law makes us aware of a problem that it cannot solve. Although it does not save, it should drive us to the Savior. Jesus fulfilled the law in that He perfectly kept the law. He was sinless. He once asked, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (Jn. 8:46). Part of the Gospel message is that Jesus is the second Adam (Romans 5:17). Just as sinful Adam cast the race into sin, the sinless Second Adam died once for all. Only a sinless man could satisfy the Law as a substitutionary atonement. Jesus died in my place. He purchased my salvation.

Romans 1 teaches us that the knowledge of sin and condemnation resides in every man's soul even apart from the revelation of Scripture. This is why the mission fields of the world provide so many examples of man's efforts to atone for himself. A stark example is the Spanish Holy Week tradition called *Semana Santa*. Rather than celebrate a risen Savior who paid the price in full, penitents wear special costumes, carry candles or crosses, and walk barefoot or carry shackles and chains as symbols of penance. But, the focus of Scripture is on a resurrected Lord. His victory over death is our promise of resurrection unto life eternal.

Without law and sin there is no Gospel because there is no need that requires salvation or a Savior. Without resurrection there is no hope because it proved the veracity of Jesus' claim to sinlessness and deity. Man's religion is a heavy yoke. Christ broke that yoke forever!

Dr. Kevin L. Brosnan
Field Administrator for Europe and Central Asia
Baptist World Mission