

## Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 5 – January 5<sup>th</sup> – Matthew 5:1-26

### Works frequently referenced in these notes on Matthew

- Hagner, Donald A      *Word Biblical Commentary Vols.33a & 33b: Matthew 1-13 & Matthew 14-28*, Word Books, Dallas, 1993 & 1995
- Morris, Leon          *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992

#### Matthew 5-7

"The Sermon on the Mount (chaps 5-7) is the first and lengthiest of the five Matthean discourses. It presents the first and main example of the ethical teaching of Jesus. The righteousness of the kingdom of God (cf. 6:33) expounded in the sermon is presented as being in continuity with the righteousness of the OT law (5:17-19), yet also as surpassing it (cf. the antitheses of 5:21-48). The evangelist's placement of this first discourse toward the beginning of the Gospel indicates he attached importance to this material. Indeed the content of the sermon would have had special relevance for the Jewish-Christian readers of the Gospel." Hagner.

#### Verses 1-16

"The norms of the kingdom, worked out in the lives of the heirs of the kingdom, constitute the witness of the kingdom." DA Carson.

#### Verse 1

Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος· καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσήλθαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ·

ἰδων Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s ὄραω see, observe

ὄχλος, ου m see 4:25

ἀνέβη Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἀναβαίνω go up, ascend

ὄρος, ους n mountain, hill

Green suggests that the mountain has symbolic significance suggesting a place of divine revelation. He links this with what he views as the 'Exodus typology' of these chapters and sees this hill as linked with Sinai. Hagner comments, "Jesus, somewhat like a new Moses, goes up to the mount to mediate the true interpretation of the Torah."

καθίσαντος Verb, aor act ptc, m gen s καθίζω sit down, sit, take one's seat

"It was customary in Judaism for the rabbi to teach from a seated position." Hagner.

προσερχομαι come or go to, approach

μαθητης, ου m disciple, pupil, follower

Cf. 7:28 which indicates that 'disciple' here means more than the 12 and may simply denote all who wished to hear the teacher's instruction. Nevertheless, Matthew is emphasizing that this is instruction for *disciples* – it is not an evangelistic address.

#### Verse 2

καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων·

ἀνοίγω open

στόμα, τος n mouth, utterance

διδασκω teach

#### Verses 3-12

"The beatitudes stand at the head of the Sermon on the Mount as the 10 commandments stand at the head of the Torah (Ex. 20:1-17) ... [they are] a statement of the moral and spiritual qualities which are characteristic of discipleship, and of the rewards which go with them." Green.

#### Verse 3

Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

μακαριος, α, ον blessed, fortunate, happy

The word μακαριος is difficult to translate adequately with a single English word. It carries the sense of a privileged recipient of divine favour. "The true background to the NT use of the word is in the OT... The LXX often uses the word as a translation of יְשָׁע (deeply 'happy, blessed'). The word is of course especially appropriate in the NT in such contexts as the present one, where it describes the nearly incomprehensible happiness of those who participate in the kingdom announced by Jesus. Rather than happiness in its mundane sense, it refers to the deep inner joy of those who have long awaited the salvation promised by God and who now begin to experience its fulfilment." Hagner.

πτωχος, η, ον poor, pitiful

Cf Is 61:1. The term 'poor' is used in the OT of those who, perhaps because of long economic and social distress, have placed their hope and trust solely in God. See also Pss 9:18; 34:6, 18; 40:17; Isa 57:15; 66:2 and also Jas 2:5.

Hagner draws attention to Isaiah 61:1-2 saying, "This passage is almost certainly the basis for the present beatitude. The good news that has now come to the poor is that the kingdom is 'theirs' (αὐτῶν is in an emphatic position). Thus this opening beatitude points to eschatological fulfilment (cf. the citation of Isa 61:1-2 at the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry in Luke 4:18-19)."

It is interesting to note that Plato uses πτωχος of those who have no resource of their own and are reduced to begging. He believes that there should be no place for such in the State.

αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν They have "a present claim to a future inheritance." Green.

#### Verse 4

μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

A number of MSS reverse the order of verses 4 and 5.

Again in this beatitude there is a strong allusion to Isa 61:1-2.

πενθεω mourn, be sad, grieve over

Some MSS (κ<sup>1</sup> 33 vg<sup>mss</sup> sa<sup>mss</sup> bo) add νῦν, 'now,' emphasising the contrast between the present time and the future eschatological blessings.

Thomas Watson says that this mourning is Gospel repentance and comments, "We must go through the valley of tears to paradise." Hagner comments, "Those who mourn do so because of the seeming slowness of God's justice. But they are now to rejoice, even in their troubled circumstances, because their salvation has found its beginning."

παρακληθήσονται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 pl  
παρακαλεω encourage, comfort

The passive is a reverential circumlocution for the action of God.

"Perhaps we should bear in mind that typically the worldly take a lighthearted attitude to the serious issues of life, a fact that is very evident in our modern pleasure-loving generation. In their seeking after self-gratification and pleasure they do not grieve over sin or evil. Because they do not grieve over the wrong they share with others in the communities in which they live, they take few steps to set them right. Because they are not moved by the plight of the poor and the suffering, they make no move to help the world's unfortunate. It may be that Jesus is saying that our values are wrong and that it is those who mourn in the face of the evils that are part and parcel of life as we know it, those who mourn over the way in which God's cause is often neglected and his people despised, who are the truly blessed ones." Morris.

In his book, *Lament for a Son*, Nicholas Wolterstorff writes, "Blessed are those who mourn.' What can it mean? One can understand why Jesus hails those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, why he hails the merciful, why he hails the peacemakers, why he hails those who endure under persecution. These are qualities of character which belong to the life of the kingdom. But why does he hail the mourners of the world? Why cheer tears? It must be that mourning is also a quality of character that belongs to the life of this realm. "Who then are the mourners? The mourners are those who have caught a glimpse of God's new day, who ache with all their being for that day's coming, and who break out into tears when confronted by its absence. They are the ones who realise that in God's realm of peace there is no one blind and who ache whenever they see someone unseeing. They are the ones who realise that in God's realm there is no one hungry and who ache whenever they see someone starving. They are the ones who realise that in God's realm there is no one falsely accused and who ache whenever they see someone imprisoned unjustly. They are the ones who realise that in God's realm there is no one who fails to see God and who ache whenever they see someone unbelieving. They are the ones who realise that in God's realm there is no one who suffers oppression and who ache whenever they see someone beat down. They are the ones who realise that in God's realm there is no one without dignity and who ache whenever they see someone treated with indignity. They are the ones who realise that in God's realm of peace there is neither death nor tears and who ache whenever they see someone crying tears over death. The mourners are aching visionaries.

"Such people Jesus blesses; he hails them, he praises them, he salutes them. And he gives them the promise that the new day for whose absence they ache will come. They will be comforted.

"The Stoics of antiquity said: Be calm.

Disengage yourself. Neither laugh nor weep. Jesus says: Be open to the wounds of the world. Mourn humanity's mourning, weep over humanity's wounds, be in agony over humanity's agony. But do so in the good cheer that a day of peace is coming."

### Verse 5

μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσι τὴν γῆν.

Practically a quotation of the LXX of Ps 36[37 in English enumeration];11. Cf. also Deut 4:1; 16:20; Ps 68 [69 Eng.]:36; Isa 61:7. Hill comments, "Just as obedience and righteousness (for the deuteronomist) are the conditions of entrance into the land of promise, so is humble obedience to the pattern of life approved in the Beatitudes the means of entering the new land of God's kingdom."

πραεῖς Adjective, m nom pl πραῦς, πραεῖα, πραῦ humble, gentle

"Self-assertion is never a Christian virtue; rather it is Christian to be busy in lowly service and to refuse to engage in the conduct that merely advances personal aims." Morris. Hagner, however, writes, "In view are not persons who are submissive, mild, and unassertive, but those who are humble in the sense of being oppressed (hence, 'have been humbled'), bent over by the injustice of the ungodly, but who are soon to realise their reward."

κληρονομεῶ receive, gain possession of, inherit

γῆ, γῆς f earth

"The 'earth' (τὴν γῆν) originally referred to the land of Israel, i.e., what was promised to the Jews beginning with the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen 13:15). But in the context of messianic fulfilment it connotes the regenerated earth (19:28; cf. Rom 4:13, where κόσμος, 'world,' replaces γῆ), promised by the eschatological passages in the prophets (e.g., Isa 65-66)." Hagner.

### Verse 6

μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

πεινῶντες Verb, pres act ptc, m nom pl

πειναῶ be hungry

διψαῶ be thirsty, thirst for

Cf. Is 55:1; Ps 42:1f.

δικαιοσύνη, ἧς f righteousness, what is right, what God requires  
χορταζῶ feed, satisfy

Cf. Ps 107:9.

"In keeping with the preceding, the fourth beatitude names the literally hungry and thirsty, i.e., the downtrodden and oppressed, who especially hunger and thirst after the justice associated with the coming of God's eschatological rule. There is, then, no significant difference between the Matthean and Lukan versions of the beatitude, despite the additional words καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην 'and thirst for justice,' in Matthew. That δικαιοσύνη here means 'justice' rather than 'personal righteousness' is clear from the context. The poor, the grieving, and the downtrodden (i.e. those who have experienced injustice) are by definition those who long for God to act. They are the righteous who will inherit the kingdom. Yet this interpretation does not altogether exclude the sense of δικαιοσύνη as personal righteousness. The justice of God's eschatological rule presupposes the δικαιοσύνη of those who enjoy its blessings (cf. 2 Pet 3:13). Thus, albeit to a slight degree, this verse may anticipate the stress on δικαιοσύνη in v.20 and 6:33." Hagner.

### Verse 7

μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

ἐλεημων, ον gen ονος merciful  
ἐλεαῶ and ἐλεεῶ be merciful; pass.  
receive mercy

Mercy is a theme running right through Matthew's gospel, see 6:12,14f; 6:19-7:12; 18:23ff; 23:23 and the two citations of Hos 6:6 at 9:13 and 12:7. "What the poor and oppressed have not received from the rich and powerful, they should nevertheless show to others." Hagner.

### Verse 8

μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

Cf. Ps 24:3-4

καθαρος, α, ον pure, clean, innocent

"'Pure in heart' refers to the condition of the inner core of a person, that is, to thoughts and motivation, and hence anticipates the internalising of the commandments by Jesus in the material that follows in the sermon." Hagner.

ὄψονται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 pl ὄρω  
see v.1

Cf. Ps 73:1. To see God is a pictorial expression indicating the bliss of fellowship with God in the kingdom.

### Verse 9

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

εἰρηνοποιος, ου m peacemaker

Occurs here only in the NT (though a verb from the same stem occurs in Col. 1:20). It denotes active pursuit of peace.

κληθήσονται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 pl καλεω

### Verse 10

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

δεδιωγμένοι Verb, perf pass ptc, m nom pl διωκω persecute, seek after

The perfect participle suggests that persecution has already been experienced.

ἐνεκα (ἕνεκεν and εἵνεκεν) prep with gen because of, for the sake of

δικαιοσύνη, ης f see v.6

Cf. 1 Peter 4:15. "To be identified with Jesus and the kingdom is to be in 'the way of righteousness' (cf. 21:32); hence ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, 'on account of righteousness,' finds its counterpart in the ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ, 'on account of me' (cf. 10:22), of the following verse." Hagner.

### Verse 11

μακάριοι ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ' ὑμῶν ψευδόμενοι ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ.

ὅταν when, whenever, as often as

ὀνειδίζω reproach, insult, abuse

διώξωσιν Verb, aor act subj, 3 pl διωκω see v.10

εἴπωσιν Verb, aor act subj, 3 pl λεγω

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

ψευδομαι lie, speak untruth, deceive

ψευδομενοι is read by many important MSS but is also omitted by a significant group. It is difficult to judge whether it is original or an addition. Having considered the evidence and arguments, Morris concludes, "On the whole I think it should be read. But if it is not read it is implied, for what the enemies say could not really be evil if it were true."

On this point, Morris says, "Believers are not to engage in the kind of conduct that enables people to accuse them genuinely; their lives are to be above reproach."

ἐνεκα (ἕνεκεν and εἵνεκεν) see v.10

### Verse 12

χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφῆτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.

χαίρω rejoice, be glad

ἀγαλλιᾶσθε Verb, pres midd/pass dep

imperat, 2 pl ἀγαλλιαω be extremely joyful or glad

μισθος, ου m pay, reward, gain

The promise of reward is not an insignificant element in the teaching of Jesus (cf. 5:19; 46; 6:1; 19:29; 20:8). It is present also in the teaching of Paul (see Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17 cf 1 Cor 15:19).

πολυσ, πολλη, πολυ gen πολλου, ης, ου

much, many

οὐρανος, ου m heaven

οὕτως and οὕτω thus, in this way

"The suffering of the righteous at the hands of persecutors is nothing new in the history of God's dealings with Israel, as the evangelist reminds his readers. It is an honoured tradition they stand in when they suffer persecution." Hagner. Morris comments, "Persecuted believers are in good company."

### Verses 13-16

On the theme of salt and light, compare Mk 9:50; 4:21; Lk 8:16; 11:33; 14:34f for similar sayings in other contexts and with a slightly different sense. The emphasis here is upon good works: it is by their good works that disciples will be 'salt' and 'light'. See also the comment by Don Carson quoted at the beginning of Verses 1-16.

### Verse 13

Ἵμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ, ἐν τίνι ἀλισθήσεται; εἰς οὐδὲν ἰσχύει ἔτι εἰ μὴ βληθὲν ἔξω καταπατεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Note the emphatic use of ὑμεῖς – 'it is you who are my disciples and none other who ...'

ἅλας, ατος n salt

Salt is a preservative from corruption and gives taste to food. "What is good in society his followers will keep wholesome. What is corrupt they oppose; they penetrate society for good as a kind of moral antiseptic. And they give a tang to life like salt to a dish of food." Morris. Hagner, having surveyed the various ways in which the phrase 'salt of the earth' might be understood, comments, "Since it is virtually impossible now to know which of its several associations would have come most readily to the minds of the disciples when they heard these words, it may be best simply to take the metaphor broadly and inclusively as meaning something that is vitally important to the world in a religious sense, as salt was vitally necessary for everyday life." Christians are to allow their influence to be felt in the world at large. They are not to become a 'sect'.

γη, γης f earth  
ἐάν if

μωραίνω make foolish, make tasteless

"The unusual use of it [μωραίνειν] here to describe what has lost its saltiness goes back to the underlying Hebrew root ... *tpl*, a word that has both meanings... A Greek translator then chose the Greek word μωραίνειν because it applied more readily to the disciples. For the disciples, the salt of the earth, to lose their saltiness was equivalent to becoming foolish. It would in effect be to lose their identity." Hagner.

The Christian's effectiveness depends on the Christian's distinctiveness.

ἀλισθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s ἀλιζώ  
salt, restore flavour to (salt)

οὐδεις, οὐδεμία, οὐδεν no one, nothing  
ισχυω be strong, be able, be sufficient  
ἐτι still

βληθῆν Verb, aor pass infin βαλλω trans  
throw, throw down

A great number of MSS (D W Θ f<sup>15</sup> TR) have βληθῆναι ἐξω και, 'to be thrown out and.' The better text, however, is βληθην ἐξω, lit. 'having been thrown out.'

ἐξω out, outside, away

καταπατεῖσθαι Verb, pres pass infin  
καταπατεω trample on/under foot

#### Verse 14

Ἑμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου. οὐ δύναται πόλις κρυβῆναι ἐπάνω ὄρους κειμένη·  
φως, φωτος n light

The phrase (or thought of being) 'light of the world' is used in several contexts: of Israel in Isa 42:6; 49:6; 51:4-5 (cf. Rom 2:19); of Jesus in Jn 8:12; 9:5; of Christians in Eph 5:8; Phil 2:15. Jesus' disciples share a part in his calling as the Servant of the Lord. See also 2 Cor 4:4. "If the world is not to be left in darkness, the disciples must fulfil their calling to represent the kingdom. They are now the light (cf. v.16), whose shining thus becomes the hope of the world." Hagner.

δυναμαι can, be able to  
πολις, εως f city, town  
κρυβῆναι Verb, 2 aor pass infin κρυπτω  
hide, conceal, cover  
ἐπάνω on, upon  
ὄρος, ος n mountain, hill  
κειμαι lie, be laid; stand, be standing

The metaphor has unavoidable associations with Jerusalem on Mount Zion. Cf. Isa 2:2-5.

#### Verse 15

οὐδὲ καίουσιν λύχνον καὶ τιθέασιν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τὸν μῶδιον ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὴν λυχνίαν, καὶ λάμπει πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ.

καιω light, keep burning, burn  
λυχνος, ου m lamp  
τιθημι place, set, appoint  
μοδιος, ου m basket, bucket  
λυχνια, ας f lampstand, stand  
λαμπω shine, give light  
οικια, ας f house, home, household

"The very purpose of being a follower of Jesus is to give light. Giving light is not an option, so to speak, which the disciple may or may not choose. It is part of being a disciple, just as much part of discipleship as giving light is of a lighted lamp." Morris

#### Verse 16

οὕτως λαμψάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅπως ἴδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα καὶ δοξάσωσιν τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

"This verse takes up the words 'shine,' 'light' and 'men' in the three preceding ones and is therefore Matthew's comment on the whole." Green.

οὕτως and οὕτω thus, in this way  
λαμπω shine, give light  
ἔμπροσθεν before, in front of  
ὅπως (οὐ ὅπως ἀν) that, in order that

"The ὅπως clause spells out the result of such a shining of the light and thus provides a most welcome aid to the interpretation of the metaphor. To let one's light shine is to live in such a way as to manifest the presence of the kingdom." Hagner.

ἴδωσιν Verb, aor act subj, 3 pl ὄραω see, observe, perceive, recognise  
καλος, η, ον good, right, fine, beautiful  
δοξάσωσιν Verb, aor act subj, 3 pl δοξάζω praise, honour, glorify, exalt

The purpose is not that they should merely admire the good works of the Christian but that they should recognize the author of that goodness in the disciple. Contrast what is said of the Pharisees' desire to gain praise for themselves.

"God is referred to as πατηρ, 'Father,' forty-five times in Matthew, and in nearly half the occurrences (nineteen times) it is modified, as here, by the words 'in heaven' or 'heavenly.' ... The expression 'Father in heaven' is remarkable in that it combines the personal, or immanent, element of fatherhood with the transcendental element of God's otherness, 'in heaven.'" Hagner.

#### Postscript to verses 13-16

"The kinds of good deeds that enable light to be seen as light are now to be elaborated in the course of the sermon that follows. They are shown to be nothing other than the faithful living out of the commandments, the righteousness of the Torah as interpreted by Jesus." Hagner.

#### Verses 17-20

"This passage is placed here for a very important reason. The ethical teaching of Jesus that follows in this sermon, as well as later in the Gospel, has such a radical character and goes so much against what was the commonly accepted understanding of the commands of the Torah that it is necessary at the outset to indicate Jesus' full and unswerving loyalty to the law. Only when this is set clearly before the listeners or readers will they be in a position to understand correctly Jesus' teaching about the righteousness of the kingdom. This is especially the case given the six contrasts drawn in the remainder of this chapter, which begin with the words 'you have heard it said' (5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). Jesus' corrections of the mistaken understandings involve the presentation of the true meaning of the Torah, not its cancellation as might at first seem to be the case." Hagner.

#### Verse 17

Μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας· οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι·

νομίσητε Verb, aor act subj, 2 pl νομιζω think, suppose, assume

Jesus opposes the false claims of the scribes and Pharisees that he is overthrowing the law. He has come to fulfil the law but to overthrow their traditions.

"He is in no way contradicting the Mosaic law, though he is opposed to the legalistic type of religion the scribes had built on it." Tasker.

ἦλθον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3 pl ἐρχομαι

Messianic overtones, cf. 10:34.

καταλῦσαι Verb, aor act infin καταλυω destroy, tear down, do away with

Cf. the use of this verb in relation to the destruction of the temple, 24:2; 26:61; 27:40.

νομος, ου m law

ἢ οἱ

"The law and the prophets' is shorthand for the entire Old Testament. It suggests that Jesus' relation to the law can only be understood adequately in the context of his relation to the OT as a whole.

πληρῶω fill, fulfill, accomplish

"The whole process of revelation in the Old Testament finds in Jesus its completion and validation – the ceremonial law and the moral law. No part of Scripture is abrogated."

Murray

"*To fulfill* has been understood in three main ways: (1) It may mean that he would do the things laid down in Scripture. (2) It may mean that he would bring out the full meaning of Scripture. (3) It may mean that in his life and teaching he would bring Scripture to completion. Each points to an aspect of the truth, and Jesus may well have meant that he would fulfill Scripture in more ways than one." Morris.

Hagner thinks that the second of these is the meaning here, he writes, "Since in 5:21-48 Jesus defines righteousness by expounding the true meaning of the law as opposed to wrong or shallow understandings, it is best to understand πληρωσαι here as 'fulfill' in the sense of 'bring to its intended meaning' – that is, to present a definitive interpretation of the law, something now possible because of the presence of the Messiah and his kingdom. Far from destroying the law, Jesus' teachings – despite their occasional strange sound – penetrate to the divinely intended (i.e., the teleological) meaning of the law. Because the law and the prophets pointed to him and he is their goal, he is able now to reveal their true meaning and so to bring them to 'fulfilment.' This view is consonant with the expectation that the Messiah would not only preserve the Torah, but also bring out its meaning in a definitive manner." Hagner.

Oliver O'Donovan comments, "Two accounts of how 'fulfil' should be understood go back to St Augustine: performing all that the law requires; and adding to the law that in which it falls short (*De sermone Domine* I.8). The interpretative question comes to be framed in this way because Augustine, like many commentators since, assumed that the verb 'fulfil' must make sense with 'law', standing on its own, as object. But in fact the text speaks of fulfilling 'the law and the prophets', a phrase which sums up the legacy of Israel's tradition as a whole. This encourages us to understand fulfilment in a third way: *expectation* is what Israel has inherited, *fulfilment* is the satisfaction of that expectation. In the strange saying that not a yod or a serif will pass from the law 'until all be fulfilled', the law itself is treated as a kind of promise. It anticipated a righteousness for which the faithful hungered and thirsted, a righteousness in which all would be subject to God's command. That promise is now to be made good, and the life of the new community is a demonstration of it. That life is an advance upon the bare text of the law and upon current interpretations of it (5:20)." *The Desire of the Nations*, pp. 108,109.

### Verse 18

ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ, ἰῶτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται.

ἕως ἂν until

παρέλθῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s παρερχομαι  
pass, pass away

οὐρανός, ου m heaven

γῆ, γῆς f earth

Cf. 2 Pet 3:7, 13; Rev 21:1.

ἰῶτα n iota

εἰς, μία, ἐν gen ἑνός, μίας, ἑνός one, single  
κεραία, ας f stroke (part of a letter)

"ἰῶτα ('iota') is the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet but translates an underlying reference to the smallest Hebrew letter, the yod (י). The κεραία ('tittle,' lit. 'horn' or 'hook') refers to minute markings of the written text, either those that distinguish similar Hebrew letters (as between י and ך) or, more probably, the ornamental marks customarily added to certain letters." Hagner.

Jesus affirms the verbal inspiration of Scripture. Not even the smallest detail of the Old Testament will fail to come to fulfilment and be established in Christ.

γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι

On this final clause Hagner comments, "The explanation of Matthew's addition of a tautological clause is that the repetition emphasises a most important point for the evangelist: the law remains in place until the consummation of the age. We must reiterate, however, that the way in which the law retains its validity for Matthew is in and through the teaching of Jesus... Jesus is the goal of the law and the prophets, the bringer of the kingdom, and hence the final interpreter of the law's meaning. The law as *he* teaches it is valid for all time, and thus in effect the law is upheld." The stress of the last clause is again on fulfilment: it is not that the law and the prophets are simply swept away at the end of the present age, it is rather that all will have come to pass in fulfilment of what was written.

### Verse 19

ὃς ἐάν οὖν λύσῃ μίαν τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων καὶ διδάξῃ οὕτως τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, ἐλάχιστος κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν· ὃς δ' ἂν ποιῆσῃ καὶ διδάξῃ, οὗτος μέγας κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν.

ὃς ἐάν if anyone should, whoever

λύσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s λυω loose, set  
aside

ἐντολή, ης f command, order, instruction

Opinion varies over whether τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων refers to:

- i) The commandments of the OT (so Hagner and most commentators); or,
- ii) The teaching of Jesus as given, for instance, in the following verses (so Banks, Lohmeyer, Schweizer)

Though Hagner thinks the former he, in effect, adopts a mediating position saying, "As in the preceding verse, a literal understanding is not consistent with Jesus' own treatment of the law, nor indeed with the emphasis of v.20. What is being emphasised in this way are not the minutiae of the law that tended to captivate the Pharisees but simply a full faithfulness to the meaning of the law *as it is expounded by Jesus*. Thus, the phrase 'the least of these commandments' refers to the final and full meaning of the law, but as taken up and interpreted by Jesus, as for example in the material that begins in v 21."

ἐλαχιστος, η, ον (superl of μικρος) least, smallest, insignificant  
 διδάξῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s διδάσκω teach

"The addition of the word διδάξῃ, 'teach,' in both halves of the verse stresses the responsibility of the disciples, not simply to observe the law as interpreted by Jesus but also to teach it faithfully. Teaching receives great emphasis in the Gospel of Matthew, and the evangelist obviously regarded it as of the highest importance for his church (cf. 28:20)." Hagner.

οὕτως and οὕτω thus, in this way  
 κληθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s καλεω  
 μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great

The one called great is not concerned simply with personal obedience while being tolerant of sin in others; he is concerned to encourage others to join him in obeying God.

### Verse 20

λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ὑμῶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν.

ἐὰν μὴ unless, except  
 περισσευω be more than enough, increase, excel  
 δικαιοσυνη, ης f righteousness, what is right, what God requires

The righteousness spoken of here cannot be imputed righteousness since Jesus is here speaking of teaching and obeying the requirements of God. The 'righteousness' spoken of here is the *character of life* that is to mark children of the Kingdom.

"Later in this sermon Jesus will emphasise the spirit rather than the letter of the law. The Pharisees put a tremendous emphasis on the letter of the law, but Jesus was looking for something very different from the Pharisaic standard. For them it was a matter of observing regulations (and softening them where possible) but for him it was keeping the commandments in depth; he taught a radical obedience." Morris.

"Jesus expects, as the antitheses to follow show, a new and higher form of righteousness that rests upon the presence of the eschatological kingdom he brings and that finds its definition and content in his definitive and authoritative exposition of the law... The larger context of the verse (e.g., the grace of the beatitudes) forbids us to conclude that entrance into the kingdom depends, in a cause-effect relationship, upon personal moral attainments. The verse is addressed, it must be remembered, to those who are the recipients of the kingdom. Entrance into the kingdom is God's gift; but to belong to the kingdom means to follow Jesus' teaching. Hence, the kingdom and the righteousness of the kingdom go together; they cannot be separated. And it follows that without this righteousness there can be no entrance into the kingdom (cf. 6:33)." Hagner.

πλειων, πλειον οἱ πλεον more  
 γραμματευς, εως m scribe, expert in  
 Jewish law, scholar  
 εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in

### Verses 17-20 Postscript

"As the Messiah, Jesus has come to bring both the law and the prophets to their intended fulfilment. Jesus' view of the law as valid until the end of time means that the fulfilment he brings is in true continuity with the past, a fulfilment toward which the law and the prophets pointed. God's purposes have a unity; yet a new stage in his purposes has been reached. Jesus alone and not the Pharisees can interpret the Torah finally and authoritatively. This is the explanation of the radical-sounding teaching of Jesus that cuts through the casuistry and mystification of the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus' commitment to the whole law is no less serious than theirs, but he alone is in a position to penetrate to the intended meaning of the Torah. In this connection, it is absolutely important to note that the understanding of the Torah and the attainment of the righteousness of the law are thus vitally linked with the presence of the kingdom. Where the kingdom has come, there exists the possibility of the realisation of the righteousness of the law." Hagner.

**Verses 21-48**

The contrasts drawn by Jesus in these verses are *not*, as some argue, contrasts between Old Testament teaching and that of Jesus:

- i) In verses 17-20 Jesus has clearly stated that he has not come to undo the OT law;
- ii) The content of his teaching here does not contradict the OT but upholds its demands. For instance, he does not lessen the demands concerning murder or adultery.
- iii) Jesus does not use the formula 'you have heard that it was said' to refer to the OT but rather uses the phrase 'it is written'. Jesus is here referring to the *Scribes' and Pharisees' shallow and inadequate understanding of and teaching concerning the OT.*

"Jesus' understanding of keeping the law meant a great deal more than making sure that the letter of the law was not infringed. For him it was important that the deeper implications of what God had commanded be understood and put into practice. He brings this out with reference to specific commands that the Pharisees had no difficulty in keeping in their literal sense. He shows that in each case a principle is involved. When this is understood, keeping the commands is far from the simple thing the Pharisees understood. He is not abrogating the law but exposing the limitations of the way some provisions in it had been understood." Morris.

Hagner makes the additional point that, "What tension may exist between Jesus' teaching and the law here, as elsewhere in the Gospel, is to be understood not as the violation of the law but as the eschatological fulfilment of the law brought about by the authoritative teaching of the Messiah. This does not mean that the contrasting antithetical element should be minimised... Despite his affirmation of the continuity between Jesus and the law, Matthew at the same time stresses the authority of Jesus as the eschatological Messiah who in bringing the law to a new, definitive interpretation can also transcend it. Messianic transcending of the law is not understood as involving a violation of it. All commentary on this material in Matthew that attempts to avoid this necessary dialectic is less than fair to the text and thus inadequate."

**Verse 21**

Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις· Οὐ φονεύσεις· ὃς δ' ἂν φονεύσῃ, ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει.

Ἠκούσατε Verb, aor act ind, 2pl ἄκουω

The repeated formula means 'you have received a tradition' (Strack-Billerbeck).

ἐρρέθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s λεγω  
ἀρχαίος, α, ον old, ancient, former, original  
φονεῦω murder, put to death

Cf. Ex 20:13; Deut 5:17.

ὅς ἂν whoever

ἐνοχος, ον liable, answerable, guilty

Jeremias suggests that the occurrences of ἔνοχος ἔσται in this and the next verse are "expressions of the death penalty in a kind of crescendo."

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 2 s εἶμι

κρίσις, εως f judgement, condemnation

**Verse 22**

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει· ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ· Ῥακά, ἔνοχος ἔσται τῷ συνεδρίῳ· ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ· Μωρέ, ἔνοχος ἔσται εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός.

"It is not correct to say that he replaces the law with his own commands, for in no case does he relax the provisions of the law. Rather, he shows that, rightly understood, the law goes much farther than his hearers had reckoned." Morris.

The phrase ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν underlines the personal and unparalleled authority of Jesus.

Many MSS (κ<sup>2</sup> D L W Θ f<sup>1,13</sup> TR it sy co) add εἰκη 'without reason' after the first αὐτοῦ, is an obvious attempt to soften the teaching of the passage (p<sup>75</sup> κ\* B lack the word).

εἴπη Verb, aor act subj, 3 s λεγω

ῥακά empty-headed fool (term of strong abuse)

"The precise meaning of this word is uncertain, but it is clearly an expression of contempt that evidently was used by angry people." Morris

συνεδριον, ον n Sanhedrin (the highest Jewish council in religious and civil matters)

μωρος, α, ον foolish

γεεννα, ης f hell

The valley of Hinnon to the west of Jerusalem was used as a rubbish dump for the city and its smouldering fires were seen as a symbol of eternal punishment.

πυρ, ος n fire

"This teaching is not necessarily incompatible with the display of righteous anger by Jesus in Mark 3:5 (cf. Eph 4:26) or his calling the Pharisees 'fools' in 23:17 (where Matthew uses the same word as here)." Hagner.

**Verse 23**

ἐὰν οὖν προσφέρῃς τὸ δῶρόν σου ἐπὶ τὸ  
θυσιαστήριον κάκει μνησθῆς ὅτι ὁ ἀδελφός  
σου ἔχει τι κατὰ σοῦ,

ἐὰν if

προσφέρω offer, present, bring

δωρον, ου n gift, offering

θυσιαστηριον, ου n altar

κάκει (και ἐκει) and there

μνησθῆς Verb, aor pass dep subj, 2 s

μμνησκομαι remember, call to mind

**Verse 24**

ἄφες ἐκεῖ τὸ δῶρόν σου ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ  
θυσιαστηρίου και ὕπαγε πρῶτον διαλλάγηθι  
τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου, και τότε ἐλθὼν πρόσφερε τὸ  
δῶρόν σου.

ἀφιμι leave, forsake, let go

ἐκει there, in that place

ἐμπροσθεν before, in front of

ὕπαγω go, go one's way, depart

πρωτον first, first of all

διαλλάγηθι Verb, aor pass dep imperat, 2 s

διαλασσομαι be reconciled to, make  
peace with

Here alone in NT.

τοτε then, at that time

Cf. Mk 11:25.

**Verses 25-26**

Jeremias thinks that the situation envisaged is that of a man arrested for debt, a practice which, like imprisonment in general, was unknown to Jewish law. "Jesus is deliberately referring to non-Jewish legal practices which his audience considered inhuman." These verses emphasise the urgency of reconciliation.

**Verse 25**

ἴσθι εὐνοῶν τῷ ἀντιδίκῳ σου ταχὺ ἕως ὅτου εἶ  
μετ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, μήποτε σε παραδῶ ὁ  
ἀντίδικος τῷ κριτῇ, και ὁ κριτής τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ,  
και εἰς φυλακὴν βληθήσῃ.

ἴσθι Verb, pres imperat, 2 s εἰμι

εὐνοεω make friends, come to terms

ἀντιδικος, οι m opponent at law, enemy

ταχυ adv quickly, without delay, soon

ἕως ὅτου while

ὁδος, ου f way, path, road, journey

μηποτε lest, otherwise

παραδῶ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s παραδιδωμι

hand or give over, deliver up, commit

κριτης, ου m judge

Many MSS ([D] L W Θ TR lat sy<sup>c,p,h</sup>) read ὁ  
κριτής σε παραδῶ, perhaps in imitation of the  
preceding clause (cf. also Lk 12:58).

ὑπηρετης, ου m attendant, assistant

φυλακη, ης f prison, imprisonment

βληθήσῃ Verb, fut pass indic, 2 s βαλλω

throw, throw down, place

**Verse 26**

ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃς ἐκεῖθεν ἕως ἂν  
ἀποδῶς τὸν ἔσχατον κοδράντην.

ἐξέλθῃς Verb, aor act subj, 2 s ἐξερχομαι

ἐκειθεν from there

ἕως ἂν until

ἀποδῶς Verb, aor act subj, 2 s ἀποδιδωμι

give, give back, repay

ἔσχατος, η, ον last, final

κοδραντης, ου m quadrans (Roman copper  
coin worth 1/4 assarion or 1/64 denarius)

**Verses 21-26 Postscript**

"It is a mistake to treat these stipulations casuistically and thus to fall into a new and harsh nomism. While they are meant to be taken seriously, calling attention to the relation between the root of a tree and its fruit (to use other Matthean metaphors), they, like the antitheses that follow, function more as exhortations to a life that perfectly reflects the reality of the kingdom." Hagner.