

## Lesson 6

# Righteousness That Surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees - Part 1

Key Scripture Readings: Matthew 5:17-20

### Summary

- A key section of this sermon has to do with the Law and the Prophets. Some people might have thought that Jesus had come to teach against the Old Testament Law. That was not the case! Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the prophets. He was always obedient to the Law that God had given through His servant Moses (1 Peter 2:22).
- Whatever the Law of Moses taught, Jesus intended to keep (fulfill). The same was also true of the writings of the prophets. There are hundreds of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. Men like Micah, Daniel, Isaiah, David, and others foretold things about the Messiah's birth, ministry, sufferings, death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus came to fulfill every one of their prophecies. He promised that not even the smallest part of the Law would pass away until all these things were fulfilled.
- The foundation of the sermon is found in Matthew 5:19-20. Due to the corrupt religious leaders of the day, the Jewish people had many wrong ideas about God, the Law, and matters of salvation. Like people today, many Jews thought that some of God's Law could be relaxed. Jesus taught and cleared up that erroneous thinking. He taught that no commandment of God is to be taken lightly (Matthew 5:19)! Jesus repeatedly emphasized this in the sermon (Matthew 7:13-14, 21-29).
- In Matthew 5:20, Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." This statement had to be extremely radical to the original audience. In the minds of most Jews in the first century, the scribes and Pharisees were great examples of holy men of God. These men studied, discussed, and taught the word of God. If their righteousness was not good enough, then whose was?
- Jesus revealed that the scribes and the Pharisees were religious hypocrites (Matthew 23:13-29). Religious hypocrites behave one way before men and another way in private. In addition to practicing hypocrisy, the scribes and Pharisees often changed things in God's law to suit themselves and their traditions. This kind of "righteousness" does not lead to favor with God.
- Beginning in Matthew 5:21, Jesus will contrast the corruptness of the scribes and Pharisees with the lives of truly righteous people. He will emphasize how a life that truly pleases God starts with the development of a righteous heart. Righteous hearts lead to righteous actions!
- Imagine being a scribe or Pharisee and sitting in the audience listening to Jesus preach this sermon! When we challenge ourselves to see Jesus' entire sermon as a shot at these corrupt men, it makes more sense to read about them later orchestrating a plan to kill Him.

## Study Questions

1. What did Jesus come to do with the Law and the Prophets? What does this mean?
2. How did Jesus describe the “righteousness” of the scribes and Pharisees? Why would this have been a radical description to first-century Jews?
3. What does Jesus have to say to those who are loose with God’s law? List some ways in which people are guilty of doing this today?
4. How did Jesus treat the Old Law? How should His example impact us?
5. How might the scribes and Pharisees have reacted to this section of Jesus’ sermon? Why?
6. How was Jesus able to know the truth about the “righteousness” of the scribes and Pharisees? How should this impact us?