MATTHEW

Chapter Five

Whose is the Kingdom of Heaven?

5 [1]And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him.

A Rabbi would sit and then teach. This detail belongs to the first century Jewish culture.
Jesus was preaching the "Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven", the Goodnews of the coming kingdom of heaven, as we read in the previous chapter. Those who are suffering now will see their consolation in the kingdom: the good news is for them!

[2] Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:
[3] "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
[4] Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.
[5] Blessed *are* the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.
[6] Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

[7] Blessed *are* the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.
[8] Blessed *are* the pure in heart, For they shall see God.
[9] Blessed *are* the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.
[10] Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
[11] Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. [12] **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This is the good news: the reward will be in heaven!

[13] "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

[14] "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. [16] Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

> We must see Jesus' statements in light of the culture of the time.
> **Salt** was precious: it was a preservative, even used as currency: that is why we call wages "salary". **Light** was fundamental if you consider that at the time they had no electricity and human activities were limited to the time of the day when natural light was shining.

[17] "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all of God's promises, from Genesis on. He also fulfills the Messianic prophecies concerning his first coming. One day he will fulfill the prophecies concerning His Second Coming.

18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

What the KJV translates "Verily" and is by the NKJV rendered as "assuredly" corresponds to the Hebrew word "Amen," simply transliterated and retained in the Greek.

"The law" spoken of here is the "Torah" of Moses. The Bible is the Word of God and it is immutable, like the counsel of God. Jesus said something similar to this expression here in verse 18 that should give us better awareness of who he actually is: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

[19] Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them,* he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. [20] For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

> The materialistic interpretation of the Torah by religious people was limiting its deep, spiritual meaning. Jesus was the one who gave the law to Moses. Now he explains its true meaning.

[21] "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' [22] But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca! shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says,

‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. [23] Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. [25] Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. [26] Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

I just finished an article on confession and reconciliation. You will find it on my page. Human relationships are at the center of the Torah. Once we have understood who God is, we need to understand that we all are His creation and there is nothing that a loving father wants more than seeing His children live in one accord.

27 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not
commit adultery.’ **28** But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman
to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
29 If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you;
for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than
for your whole body to be cast into hell. **30** And if your right hand
causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more
profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your
whole body to be cast into hell.

It is all in heart. It is all in our thoughts. How we look at things, how we deal with things. Even a wrong attitude – and not only what we do – may put us in danger of hindering our entrance in the kingdom.

31 “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him
give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I say to you that whoever
divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her
to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced
commits adultery.

Jesus here is calling for a literal and faithful application of the law. It was a serious problem for a woman at that time to be sent away by her husband without a certificate of divorce. The husband “causes her to commit adultery,” Jesus says. Because at the time a woman needed a man more than a man needed a woman. The word translated here as “divorced” gives the English reader a wrong impression: the text here speaks literally of “sending away.” And so the only reason why a woman could be simply sent away is for “sexual immorality,” that is if the couple is not actually and lawfully married. This is one of the least understood sayings of Jesus, used by legalistic believers to put a weight

on the shoulders of those who, even having no fault, divorced their spouse.

33 "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' **34** But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; **35** nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. **36** Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. **37** But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

This principle ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ is part of our judicial systems even to this day. But here Jesus elevates the standard to a higher level, kingdom level.

39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

If someone hits you on your right cheek he is not simply slapping you on your face. Because in order to do so he must hit you with the back, and not the palm of his hand. That was not simply hitting someone, but offending the person. The words of Jesus extend their meaning to moral offences.

40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. 41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with

him two. [42] Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.
[43] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

You will not find this statement in the Bible. The Jewish sect of the Essenes taught this. We know now thanks to the Dead Sea Scrolls. This statement is so important. For many years some said that Jesus was an Essene. Now such a position is untenable, in fact its supporters have disappeared.

[44] But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, [45] that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. [46] For if you love those who

love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? [47] And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others?* Do not even the tax collectors do so? [48] Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Our conduct must not be limited to what we see, what is happening around us, what is going against us. Our eyes must be lifted up to heaven for a heavenly reward of whatever we do.