

# ***BULLETIN***

## **Church of Christ Stallings Drive**

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### **THE GOSPEL AND THE LAW**

The teaching Jesus did shows an obvious connection to the Old Testament. He said in His mountain sermon: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. "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. "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. 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" (Matthew 5:17-20).

Jesus' appeal to the Old Law had a special connection to the high Messianic expectations of the Jews. Jesus was the true, complete fulfillment of the Law. In the mountain sermon, He established Himself as the Messiah of God. The interpretations by the "fathers" would be replaced by Christ. His kingdom manifesto restored the true intent of the Law—an intent lost by those seeking to establish their own righteousness. To properly understand the commandments of God would determine whether one was less or great in the kingdom.

Jesus described a righteousness that exceeded the righteousness of the

Pharisees. The Pharisees were determined to be righteous; they went so far as to try to establish a righteousness of their own. An example of this would be their expansion of the laws surrounding the observance of the Sabbath. This commandment from God was an integral part of Jewish life (cf. Exodus 20:8-11). While a day of rest would help the physically tired, the Sabbath reached beyond, as it helped the Jews focus on God and His power. Yet, the Pharisees, seeking greater righteousness, increased the strictures surrounding the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28).

How is the righteousness of Jesus greater than that of the Pharisees? Would it be in further manipulation of the Law? No, for that would violate the very thing Jesus was condemning in His teachings on the mountain. The foundation of Jesus' teachings was the Father. "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). The Father alone has the right to dictate to those who will follow how they will follow. He alone determines and explicates the kingdom of heaven. So, too, Jesus interpreted the Father's will. Others might say this or that, "but I say unto you." When we understand *that* Jesus is speaking and when we understand *what* Jesus is teaching, then we can be citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Do we really want to be kingdom citizens?  
*Randy Harshbarger*

