

**"Go!!!!"**

**A Verse-by-Verse Study of the Book of Matthew**

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## **The Kingdom of Heaven Is All About Being Perfect**

Matthew 5:17-48

By now you are probably beginning to realize that as believers in Jesus Christ we actually live in the Kingdom of Heaven, and this Kingdom is pretty much the exact opposite of the kingdom we see all around us – (the kingdom of this world).

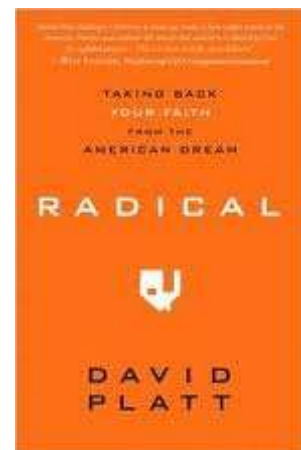
It's like we live in the same world with everyone else, but we're almost in a different dimension!

It's like we live in the same world with everyone else, but we're almost in a different dimension! We see the same trees. We drive the same cars. We feel the same hunger pains at 4 in the afternoon. But we operate under a different set of rules. We react differently to tragedies.

Our expectations are set to a whole different level. And we have peace when everything around us spins out of control. It's wonderful to live in the Kingdom of Heaven. But it can be confusing...after all....what I am seeing with my eyes isn't always what I am knowing with my spirit....so Jesus takes The Sermon on the Mount to help us understand how everything in our life turns upside down when we decide to live full-out for Christ in His Kingdom.

In "Radical", David Platt tells a story of a family in his church in Alabama who decided to step away from the kingdom of this world and do something different for the Kingdom of Heaven. It didn't turn out like they thought it would....

"A few weeks ago we sent out a family from our church to an impoverished country overseas. Several months earlier Craig and Amy had shared with me their desire to sell their home in Birmingham and take their three kids to another part of the world where they could better glorify God. ....A couple of months after that initial meeting, we met again, and Craig shared with me the setbacks they had experienced. Since we had last talked, one of their grandmothers had died, one of their brothers had been rushed to the



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hospital with a stroke, they had been robbed, and they had been in a car wreck.

On top of all this, they had been dealing with various health problems that Amy was experiencing. This was threatening to limit their ability to go overseas because Amy's health might require her to live in a particular climate that would be more conducive to her health. With tears in their eyes, Craig and Amy shared how God had led their hearts to one particular country. When they went to her doctor to ask his opinion on how Amy would fare in that climate, the doctor said she would actually do even better in that climate than in the United States." !!!

This passage is going to turn your expectations upside down.

Amazing? Unbelievable? No...this is normal for the Kingdom of Heaven....things work differently in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now, in today's passage, Matthew 5:17-48, we're going to see that the Kingdom of Heaven isn't all about trying hard to do things differently. It isn't even about doing your best. Nope - It's about being perfect - in the same way that God is perfect.

So hang on to your seats - this passage is going to turn your expectations upside down!

*Matthew 5:17&18 "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."*

This message Jesus was preaching - was it totally different from the message of the Old Testament? Was it the opposite of what God had already said before Jesus arrived?

No! Verses 17 & 18 give the simple answer - Jesus considered the Old Testament very accurate, very true, and very timeless. He did not come to show that the Old Testament wasn't true anymore. He didn't come teaching

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new truths that contradicted the old truths. He came to be the fulfillment of the old truths. To show what they really meant. To live them out in front of real people in real time.

Why is this necessary for us to know? Because many people at that time were soon going to be saying that Jesus was setting aside all they knew to be true, and was teaching a whole new set of truths. Once His ministry got going in full speed, they were going to be hesitating to believe He was God because it would seem He was teaching things contrary to what God had already told them.

For instance, Jesus wasn't going to keep all the rules about the Sabbath. He was going to heal on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-14), and hadn't God told them not to do any work on the Sabbath?

So why did Jesus go against the law? Why did He heal on the Sabbath?

His disciples were at one point going to eat ears of corn plucked from the fields on the Sabbath, (Matthew 12:1-8) and again, hadn't God told them not to do any work on the Sabbath? He soon would tell a man to pick up his bed and carry it on the Sabbath (John 5:1-18), and again, hadn't God told them not to do any work on the Sabbath?

You see, what Jesus' enemies were going to say about Him was that He couldn't possibly be God, as He claimed, because He did not keep the very rules God had given.

But in this passage, Matthew 5:17-19, Jesus dispels that untruth before it even gets started. He is proclaiming from the start that every word, every letter, and every little grammatical mark, are supremely important in the Old Testament, because it is, indeed, the very Words of God. Timeless. Never out of date.

God's Truth is supreme  
in God's Kingdom.

So why did Jesus go against the law?

Why did He heal on the Sabbath? Because it never was against God's law to heal on the Sabbath. Men had made up their own laws about the Sabbath, and then had begun to say those laws they made up were actually the laws

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God had given them. Jesus didn't go against God's laws. He went against the proud, arrogant laws of men.

And how important are the true laws of God?

*Matthew 5:19 "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."*

If anyone breaks one of God's laws, or teaches others to do so, he's the lowest of low in God's kingdom. God's Truth is supreme in God's Kingdom.

*Matthew 5:20 "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."*

Here is the key verse in this chapter. It explains all the other things Jesus is going to say in this chapter.

If I would rephrase this verse in my own words I would say: **You won't even get into the kingdom of heaven unless you are perfect.** *What? Who can be perfect? Read on.*

Let's look at each of these "perfections" and ask ourselves: What was the old way of thinking about this...but how does Jesus say we should think about it?

Here is what we'll see about perfection in Matthew 5:

- :21-26 What every-day relationships should look like
- :27-32 What marriage relationships should look like
- :33-37 How you should talk
- :38-48 How you should act towards those who don't treat you well

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*Matthew 5:21-26 "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.' 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. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. 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. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny."*

The old way of thinking said Do not murder.

But Jesus said: Do not even be angry with anyone, or you will be just as guilty as if you had murdered them. In addition, if someone does something bad to you, don't let it simmer. Be reconciled.

*What? How can I help but be angry with someone who hurts me? That's impossible.*

*Matthew 5:27-32 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 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. 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. Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' 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.*

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The old way of thinking said Do not commit adultery. (adultery is being married to one person, but being intimate with another)

But Jesus said: If you even let yourself desire someone you are not married to, you have committed adultery. It would be better for you to get rid of your eyes rather than to use your eyes to commit adultery.

*What? My thoughts are just as bad as my actions?  
I'm doomed.*

The old way of thinking said If you want to divorce your wife, you can, but you have to do it legally...you have to give her a piece of paper that says she is free of you. You can't just walk away from her.

But Jesus said: If you do give your wife that slip of paper, you are still putting her in the horrible position of being an adulteress if she marries again. The slip of paper doesn't dissolve the marriage. And if you marry someone who has been divorced, the same applies to you....you also are committing adultery.

*What? There's no legal way out of a marriage? I  
can't live like that!*

*Matthew 5:33-37 "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.' But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one."*

The old way of thinking said If you swear to do something you must perform it.

But Jesus said: Don't swear to do anything. Just a "yes" or a "no" is sufficient. Your word should be worth something.

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*What? Other people may not think my word is worth that much. I need something else to lend power to my words. You are taking away my ability to do business...to get what I want in the world.*

*Matthew 5:38-48 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—' 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 anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.*

*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 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— 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. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors—do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*

The old way of thinking said If someone hurts you, you are allowed to hurt them back.

But Jesus said: If someone hurts you, love them. Give to them. Take care of them. Do more than they ask.

*What? OK – that's going too far. Impossible. No one can be expected to do that.*

The old way of thinking said Love those who love you. Hate those who hate you.

But Jesus said: Love those who hate you.

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*What? I can't do that. I don't have it in me.*

*What are you saying Jesus? "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."*

*Be perfect? You mean...sinless?  
Be just like God, all the time?*

*I can't. Nobody can.*

No. We can't. That's why Jesus came. To be perfect.

Because when the perfect Son of God would die on that awful cross, He would offer His death as the payment for my imperfection. And if I accept His offer, believe He did that for me, then His perfection will cover my life.

Righteousness is not just trying to be good. Righteousness is not just doing more good than evil. Righteousness is perfection. And nobody can be perfect.

And I will be perfect in the eyes of God, because when God looks at me He will see the perfection of His Son covering my life.

And I will be welcome in the kingdom of heaven. Perfect because of Jesus.

This is what He was telling them in the Sermon on the Mount. He was telling them what He was about to do (die for their sins), and why He was about to do it (they couldn't be perfect without Him doing this...and they couldn't be a part of the kingdom of heaven without being perfect).

He was telling them UP is DOWN, and DOWN is UP....Righteousness is not what you thought it was....and He was the solution to the problem. Righteousness is not just trying to be good. Righteousness is not just doing more good than evil. Righteousness is perfection. And nobody can be perfect.

- Do I have anger problems? The perfect Son of God can change me.



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- Do I have broken relationships? The perfect Son of God can show me how to heal them.
- Do I have sexual thought problems? Pornography problems? The perfect Son of God can clean up my mind.
- Have I divorced...remarried...committed adultery? The perfect Son of God can heal my bruised life.
- Do I have to swear on a stack of Bibles because my word is worth nothing? The perfect Son of God can teach me how to talk simple truth.
- Do I find myself hurting others because they have hurt me? The perfect Son of God can change my desires.
- Do I love those who love me, but hate those who hate me? The perfect Son of God can give me love for everyone.

Every time I come up against an impossible situation in my life, and when I am tempted to solve it in the old way, I can remember these things from Matthew Chapter 5:

1. Jesus' own perfection covers over my life now that I have believed in Him. When God looks at me, he sees the perfection of Jesus.
2. I am a part of the Kingdom of Heaven now. Things work differently.
3. What Kingdom truth applies in this situation?
4. I will pray and ask the Lord to help me to do the Kingdom thing, not the old thing.
5. And when it works, and I see blessing as a result, I will remember Who did this and give Him the glory.

### **Apply This to My Life:**

Let's look at some typical life situations and ask ourselves how to handle them now that we know we live in the Kingdom of Heaven:

- ? My neighbor has a dog that he allows to bark all night. I fume about it all night long. I just lost it the other day and yelled at my neighbor

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across the fence. He won't speak to me now. This is his fault, not mine.

- ? I think my son has been watching a lot of pornography on his computer. What do I do?
- ? My wife is not a believer in Jesus, and she and I have been living two separate lives for some time now. I really think we'd both be happier if we divorced.
- ? I can't stand my sister-in-law. I just hate to be around her. She is not nice to me, and is mean to my kids. And now she has asked me to drive her to the airport next week. I don't want to do it. Do I have to?
- ? My husband and I have had an argument. The same old problem keeps coming up again and again...