

CONVERSION

A study of the Sermon on the Mount

Jesus changes everything for the one who believes to live in Him.

READ Matthew 5:17-20

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

¹⁹Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

*²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. **Matt 5:17-20***

INTRO Today I introduce a new series entitled "CONVERSION". Conversion simply means a change in character, form or function. It is imperative we understand the call of God in Christ Jesus -- the invitation from the good news of the gospel -- that by faith in Him we convert our life to His Lordship. We often hear much about Jesus as Savior and far too little about Him as Lord. But Jesus is the Savior of no one over whom He is not ruling Lord. Conversion represents outwardly the transformation Jesus makes inwardly, and brings that change to its full, intended purpose.

Jesus changes everything for the one who believes to live in Him.

In this series we will walk through the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel, chapter 5 through 7. Each week's message will introduce a different topic or subject where Matthew causes us to look at what we think or believe in light of what the Scriptures teach and convert our thinking and living to accord with Jesus and His teaching. **CONVERSION means we look and listen to the One who is our Lord, remember His righteousness He has put on us in salvation, and convert our lives by faith to walk in obedience with Him.**

CONVERSION: Jesus, Righteousness Fulfilled

Matthew 5:17-20; 7:28-29

MPS: Jesus is Lord who gives himself as Savior to become our righteousness.

OBJ Every person should convert to Jesus as our righteousness and the center of the whole Bible by Four Points.

TRANS Today we begin this CONVERSION series by considering the One to whom we convert that changes everything, the center of all our faith and understanding, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is Lord who gives himself as Savior to become our righteousness.

We begin in Matthew's gospel with a passage that introduces and frames Christian conversion. Matthew records what has become known as the Sermon on the Mount in chapters five through seven. These are collected teachings of Jesus that instruct and demonstrate how one's salvation in Jesus leads them to live according to Him as their righteousness and obey God's Word.

Matthew outlines a Christian's new identity in Jesus with the Beatitudes, 5:1-12, and our purpose in the world, 5:13-16. Then, in Matthew 5:17-20 he shows how Jesus taught that His coming was not to nullify the Law and Prophets but fulfill them, and how the Scriptures remain fully authoritative for God's purposes in the world until His will is accomplished. Matthew shows that Jesus sets forth a radical new understanding of how a Christ-follower relates to God's Word because of our new identity. **Key to Conversion:** What we believe about WHO Jesus is and WHY He came becomes the "lense" through which we read and understand God's Word according to God's purpose and will for His people.



The principle change that occurs in our new righteousness (aka salvation transformation) is that we think differently by thinking distinctively according to Jesus. Because He is our righteousness, we think distinctively about the whole Bible, what it means for us and how we obey, according to our relationship with Jesus. [Conversion to Jesus means we think differently about all things, specifically the Bible, because we think distinctively of Jesus.](#)

OBJ [CONVERSION to Jesus is best understood by Five Points.](#)

1. [Conversion means Jesus centers our life on God as the One who fulfills the Law of God for us.](#)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Matthew presents Jesus teaching a radical reorientation to God’s Word. He lifts our eyes from the page to the Author and embodiment of God’s Word, Jesus, as the defining figure, the center of all Scripture. [Jesus addresses the Law and Prophets by explaining the purpose for his coming.](#)

What does it mean when Jesus said He “fulfilled” the law? Jesus teaches that the full meaning and understanding of all the Law and Prophets are fully satisfied in Him, His life, teaching and work in dying and rising from the dead for our salvation. He is referencing what we understand today as the whole Old Testament. [Jesus’ purpose and mission for coming to earth was to fulfill, to completely satisfy everything that is taught in the Old Testament.](#)

Jesus’ fulfillment means He made two specific accomplishments. The Law’s demand and condemnation are no longer on those who are in Christ, in His Kingdom. This does not remove the necessity of the Law or Prophets. Rather, it amplifies their importance for our lives. The demand of and condemnation from is not the essence of the Law but the fruit and result of its work. The Law places its demand and condemnation only on those who are outside of Jesus Christ. For those who are in Christ, the Law’s demand has been satisfied and the Law’s condemnation removed by Jesus. (Rom 5:1-2; 8:1-2)

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” **Rom 5:1-2**

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” **Rom 8:1-2**

Removing the demand and condemnation of the Law does not nullify it to us but changes its purpose for us. Conversion means the Law and Prophets now serve a new purpose for our lives. God’s revelation no longer tells us why we are separated from Him but proclaims how we walk with Him because of His power and work for us. [The first point of Christian conversion means we think differently about the whole of Scripture in a way that is distinctive to Jesus Christ.](#)

Jesus centers the whole Bible because He fulfills it all.¹ Jesus fulfilled the Law NOT just because he performed perfectly on earth, which He did. But even more because He is the Author and Origin of God’s Word, the embodiment and being of the whole Bible as the “Word made flesh”. (John 1:14) The way Christians think about the Law, or Old Testament, today is fully shaped by Jesus because He is the perfect fulfillment of them. [Every teaching, every commandment, every part of and the whole Bible finds its full meaning in Jesus.](#)

[First, Conversion means Jesus centers our life on God as the One who fulfills the Law of God for us.](#)

¹ Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 107. Morris states, “What then was the place of the commands that Scripture conveys so clearly? It was important for Matthew’s readers (as well as for the Jews and the disciples at the time of Jesus) that Jesus’ attitude to the law be made plain, and in this section of the Sermon Matthew includes important teaching about the law. He shows that Jesus affirmed its continuing validity and that he came to fulfil it.”



2. Conversion means the Bible is fully authoritative for life, but not all parts apply identically to our lives.

¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Jesus references the smallest letter and grammatical mark in the Greek language. He presses upon what anyone may consider the smallest, most minute or least important parts of the Word to say that all of it is important until God's Will and work are completely accomplished. [Jesus tells us the whole Bible is authoritative for our life with God.](#)

Jesus' coming does not mean we need the Bible less.² Jesus says the Bible is essential until all things are accomplished, or eternity is ushered in. Because the Bible finds fulfillment in Jesus, we need the Bible more to understand God's revelation in Jesus. The more we know the Bible the more we come to know Jesus. The more we walk with Jesus the more and better we understand the Bible. [Jesus as the fulfillment of all Scripture makes every part of the Bible more important for us, not less.](#)

According to Jesus – because of Jesus, the Old Testament is as authoritative and binding before God on Christians today as the New Testament. They are one body of holy Scripture with equal authority, power and application for us today. Therefore, the issue for us is not “[what can we dismiss or disregard?](#)”, but “[How should we understand to apply the Scriptures?](#)” In the Scriptures God is not introducing a set of regulations only to govern our behavior. THIS is the very changes we addressed in the first point of conversion. The Bible is not a rule book. That's how people see it who are not in Christ. When we think this way about the Bible, we think in a way that is contrary to our salvation and subsequently opposed to our conversion. [The Bible is God's revelation of Himself for people to bring us into relationship with Him by the gospel of Jesus Christ.](#)

Salvation in Jesus is the knowledge of God as He reveals Himself to us to draw us more deeply into relationship with Him. (2 Cor 10:5; Eph 1:17; Col 1:10; 2 Tim 2:25) THAT the Bible does not all apply equally to us does not mean it has no application for us. It simply means that our full and final application comes through the full revelation of Jesus, and not just the application we see in former history. [God's Word is the Christian's authority for relationship with God, in faith, life and all practice.](#)

[Second, conversion means the Bible is fully authoritative for life, but not all parts apply identically to our lives.](#)

3. Conversion means Christians honor Jesus as Lord by obeying Him and teaching others to do the same.

¹⁹Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Once we are set free from the demand and condemnation of the Law, we cease our striving after achieving God to live in the full pleasure of God. Jesus empowers and guides our obedience to walk in His commands and statutes. We don't obey Jesus to get to Him but because we love and trust Him. [Christians obey Jesus because we live to honor Him.](#)

Christian conversion changes our motivation and our purpose for obedience. We are not here simply to accomplish a task but to fulfill a life that honors our Lord. In Jesus we find our true purpose and full meaning for life. And it is in this purpose and meaning that we live and teach others to live. This is known as disciple-making, where we evangelize, share the good news, those who do not know Jesus and disciple those to full maturity who are walking with us to follow Him.

² Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 108. Morris notes “Davies and Allison well remark: “First, he who fulfils the law and the prophets displaces them in so far as he must become the centre of attention: the thing signified (Jesus) is naturally more important than the sign (the law and the prophets)... Secondly, if the law is fulfilled, it cannot on that account be set aside. Fulfilment can only confirm the Torah's truth, not cast doubt upon it.” But however we interpret it, we must not forget that the law may be summed up in the two commandments of love (22:37–40) and that “love is the fulfilment of the law” (Rom. 13:10). We must bear in mind that “fulfil” does not mean the same as “keep”; Jesus is speaking of more than obedience to regulations.”



Conversion changes us from asking the questions of rebellion, “how much can I get out of?” or “how much can I get away with?”, to pursuing the honor of our Lord by asking “How can I consume my life with God to honor Him?” [Conversion changes our questions that change our thinking because we’ve had a change in direction and purpose.](#)

A wrong or bad attitude toward Jesus’ commands dishonors Jesus. The one who holds Jesus’ commands in high regard to honor them is the one who lives to honor Jesus. According to Jesus, the person who holds his commands in high regard is great in the Kingdom of God.³ [Obedience honors Jesus and encourages others to obey.](#)

[Third, Conversion means Christians honor Jesus as Lord by obeying Him and teaching others to do the same.](#)

4. [Conversion means Christians trust and obey Jesus as our exceeding \(better\) righteousness.](#)

²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus concludes this teaching on how they should regard the Law and Prophets and why He came by confronting their traditions and shattering their worldview. He says that the righteousness of the Pharisees and scribes is not sufficient to get them into the Kingdom of God. Pharisees majored on parts of the Law while neglecting weightier matters of love and care toward others. (Matt 23:23) A righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees reminds us that the standard by which we are measured is never another person, but Jesus Himself. God judges every person by the full measure of the Law. And when we recognize this, we know that our righteousness is as filthy rags before Him. We need a better righteousness than what we can produce, earn or achieve. We need a righteous that is not our own. Jesus is the complete, the full end of the Law for all who believe in Him, God’s righteous demand fully satisfied. [Jesus came to give His righteousness that is exceedingly better than religion.](#)

WHAT does it mean to have a “better righteousness”? A “better righteousness” means we have a righteousness that is “better than our own”, and “better than any the world or anyone else can provide for us”. It is greater in quality, first, but also quantity. The ‘better righteousness’ of every Christian is the perfect righteousness of Christ placed on us before God as our life. We get full credit for something we not only did not do, but could have never done. If the righteousness of your life does not fulfill the whole Law of God, every dot and iota, then you too need a better righteousness. [Who’s righteousness will you trust when you stand before God? Conversion means we live in Jesus as our better righteousness. Jesus’ righteousness is our better righteousness because it is sufficient to give us eternal life with God.](#)

[Fourth, Conversion means Christians trust and obey Jesus as our exceeding \(better\) righteousness.](#)

5. [Conversion brings IN us the life-giving power of Jesus’ righteousness ON us by His Word TO us.](#)

*And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. **Matt 7:28-29***

I bring these verses into this message because they demonstrate the power of His Word. Just as He taught in a way that no one else taught, with authority, so today His Word still comes to us in this way. Jesus IS the living Word revealed to us in the Bible. [Knowing the Author changes the way we experience the Word, and the way the Word works in us. When you live with Jesus as Lord in conversion you obey His Word as your authority for life.](#)

[Jesus is Lord who gives himself as Savior to become our righteousness.](#)

³ Leon Morris, [The Gospel according to Matthew](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 110. Morris writes, “A wrong attitude to God’s commandments means a lowly position in God’s kingdom. The other side of this coin concerns the person who both obeys the commandments and teaches others to do the same. This is the person who attains honor, who is called great in the kingdom. Apparently both are in the kingdom, but the former has just made it (cf. 1 Cor. 3:15) whereas the latter is held in honor.”



CLOSE The Question for each message in this series is this; WHO is Lord of your life (in each area or topic we cover)? Are you living in Jesus' righteousness or trusting in your own?

- Is Jesus the center of your whole life?
- Do you **believe the Bible** as God's authority for your life?
- Do you **honor Jesus as Lord** by obeying His Word and teach (encourage) others to do the same?
- Do you **trust Jesus' righteousness** as your own?
- Do you **live by Jesus' life-giving power** ON you through Holy Spirit IN you applying God's Word TO / FOR you?

