

THE MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT WEALTH AND GOD'S KINGDOM LUKE 16:14–18

Introduction

Three of the greatest misunderstandings among men are covered in this passage. This is a critical message. It needs to be heeded by men so they can correct their misunderstanding.

- I. The misunderstanding of money and possessions (vv. 14-15).
- II. The misunderstanding of the new kingdom and world or social order (v. 16).
- III. The misunderstanding of the law (vv. 17-18).

I. *Luke 16:14–15 Money, Wealth and the Heart of Man*

The misunderstanding of money and possessions. Jesus had just said: “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Lk. 16:13).

The religionists and others standing before Jesus could not believe what they were hearing.

=> Jesus was saying that a man's energy and effort in seeking and looking after money was wrong, that a man could not seek money and at the same time keep his mind and thoughts upon God. It was impossible to concentrate on both. Jesus was demanding total allegiance, all of one's mind and thoughts, energy and effort. Those who heard Jesus knew exactly what He was saying.

=> Jesus was saying that a man must not give himself to seek the comfort and ease and pleasures and possessions of the world.

=> Jesus was going against the philosophy of the world, a philosophy that had even permeated religious circles: that money and possessions are a sign of the blessings of God.

What Jesus was teaching bothered men, in particular the religionists. The reason has to do with the nature of man. By nature, men want money and possessions, comfort and ease, acceptance and recognition; and at the same time, they want to be known as close to God. A man wants to fit in and be acceptable to the world and, at the same time, to feel acceptable to God. Therefore, a man becomes disturbed, sometimes extremely disturbed, when he is told...

=> that he cannot give his mind and thought, energy and effort to both God and money (the possessions of the world).

=> that he cannot serve both God and money at the same time.

=> that God demands a person's total allegiance, all of a person's mind and thoughts, energy and effort.

Note four things.

1. Men can be both religious and greedy; in fact, the most greedy men are sometimes the most religious. These men who were ridiculing Jesus were Pharisees, probably the most religious sect who had ever lived, yet they were said to be greedy. They wanted things of the world and the things of God at the same time.

Mat 6:24 *“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”*

Phil 3:18-19 *For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.*

1 Tim 6:10 *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*

2. Jesus said that men tend to use their money to justify themselves before other men.
 - a. They use their money to court the favour and honour of men and women. Even if they secured their money unjustly, they compensate for it by being generous, by entertaining, or by giving to some worthy need or project. And unfortunately, men and women alike give in to and go along with the wealthy.
 - b. Some rich persons are conscious of their need for a right relationship with God and of their obligation to help people. Therefore, they live strict religious lives and use some of their money to court the favour and honour of people through religious causes. The world, including the religious world, honours such benevolent giving by the wealthy.

Mark 7:6 *He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.’”*

2 Cor 10:12 *We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.*

Titus 1:16 *They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

1 John 3:18 *Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.*

Prov 20:6 *Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?*

Prov 30:12 *Those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth.*

3. Jesus said, “But God knows your hearts.” What did He mean?

- a. A man is acceptable to God because his heart is right before God, not because he has a lot of money. Money does not mean that a man is greatly blessed by God. God's blessings are not in material things.

=> Some people are wealthy, yet they are as ungodly and dirty as they can be.

=> Some people are poor, yet they are very godly, having little money and few things of the world.

=> Some people have some money and possessions, yet they are very godly.

The point is this: the heart is that which makes a man acceptable to God, not money. Money does not mean that a man is blessed by God. It is the heart of a man that shows the blessings of God. God's blessings are not material things, they are spiritual things (see *Wealth and Salvation*, Mt. 19:25; *God's Blessings*, Eph. 1:3).

Mat 19:23-25 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?"

Eph 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

- b. Note another important fact. When Jesus said that a man cannot serve both God and money, He did not mean that a man's mind and thought could not be put upon his profession and work.

Phil 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.

2 Cor 10:5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

The Scripture is very clear about this. A person's profession and the beneficial activities of life are included in the things of God. The legitimate things of life are true and honest. Therefore, a man is to live and work well. Living and working well are a great testimony to God's name; therefore, a genuine believer should be the very best at living and working, demonstrating that God's people are the most true and honest, pure and lovely people on earth.

- c. When dealing with the money and possessions of the world, we are to provide adequately for our families. But after adequate provision, the question arises, what are we to do? God is clear in His instructions: we are to work in order to have enough to help the needy. We are to help meet the needs of a desperate world.

Mat 19:21 Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Eph 4:28 *He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.*

4. God detests the esteem of men being centred around money and things. God wants men to centre their lives and esteem around the things of the heart, not around the things they possess. Material possessions pass away; spiritual possessions endure forever (see *God's Blessings*, Eph. 1:3. See notes, Mt. 19:16-22; 19:23-26; 19:27-30 for Christ's teaching concerning money and wealth.)

Mat 6:20 *"But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal."*

Luke 12:33 *"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys."*

MATHEW 19:25 WEALTH AND SALVATION

The disciples were shocked and thoroughly dismayed. Christ was saying something diametrically opposed to what they and everyone else had always thought. They had been taught (as have succeeding generations, even the church)...

- that prosperity (wealth, comfort, and things) is God's blessing
- that a person receives and has because God is blessing him
- that prosperity is the reward of righteousness and obedience
- that God blesses a person with the things of this earth if they are righteous and obedient

However, Christ was saying the very opposite: that a prosperous person would most likely never enter heaven; that prosperity posed such a dangerous threat to a person that his eternal doom was almost assured. The disciples knew that God would never put a person in such a precarious and dangerous position. They knew that Christ was attacking the world's most cherished and ardent belief: be good (righteous) and you will be blessed by God (and the thought of blessing is always of material blessing. See *God's Blessings*, Eph. 1:3.)

They were shocked, thoroughly dismayed: Who then could be saved? The vast majority of people were threatening their own eternal destiny. They were dooming themselves. Since prosperity is not the reward (sign) for righteousness, and the rich are barred from heaven, that means that the poor, too, are barred; for they are spending most of their time dreaming and seeking prosperity!

The idea that prosperity is the reward for righteousness, that God blesses a person with the things of this earth if they are righteous and obedient, is so prevalent a view that a comment is needed at this point.

1. God's concern is spiritual blessings, not material blessings. God promises a man the necessities of life (food, clothing, shelter) if he seeks God first (Mt. 6:33; see Mt. 6:25-34). God can, if He chooses, bless any of us with whatever and however much He wishes for special purposes, for the purposes of having in order "to share with those in need." But just because a man is prosperous does not mean the man is righteous, and just because a person is righteous does not mean that he is going to be blessed materially. Righteousness and prosperity have nothing to do with each other. In fact, "It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."
2. Wealth is seldom a good thing. As Christ taught in this passage, wealth is fraught with dangers that make it extremely difficult for the rich to enter heaven. Nevertheless the whole world, rich and poor alike, puts its primary attention upon securing more and more.
3. Wealth is secured by man himself, by his own energy and effort. Man secures wealth by dreaming how to make it (a vision, perspective) and having the initiative to make it (acting and timing). A man may trust God to help him secure wealth, but a man may have nothing to do with God and secure wealth on his own. There is a sense in which a man's strength and mind are from God, but that has nothing to do with a personal or active relationship with God. Most rich men control their own lives and go about securing their treasure on this earth without God (Mt. 6:21).

On the other hand, a man may trust God to bless him so that he may help others, and God may choose to bless him. But God's choosing to bless him is for the purpose of helping others, not to hoard and live above what is needed (extravagantly and sumptuously). In fact what Christ teaches is that the rich are to live just as sacrificially as the poor. (See *Hard*, and *Rich*, Mt. 19:23; Mk. 12:42. See outline, Lk. 21:1-4.)

Thought 1. Something is usually forgotten: man was not made for things (money, wealth, possessions), but things were made for man. Yet man allows himself to become enslaved to things, ever lusting after more and more.

Wealth (money, possessions, things) is only a commodity — a means, a tool — to help man carry out his purpose and service upon earth. At least, that is what wealth is supposed to be. But most men become the tool and the commodity of money. Few men know why God put them on earth.

Psa 118:9 *It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.*

Isa 2:22 *Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?*

Jer 17:5 *This is what the Lord says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. □*

EPHESIANS 01:03 GOD'S BLESSINGS

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Ephesians 01:03

God's blessings are spiritual and heavenly, not material blessings. Throughout history God has used two methods of blessings to deal with man. Before Christ, God dealt with man by blessing him with material blessings. He promised Abraham and Israel land, wealth, and fame. (See Israel, God's Special People, Jn. 4:22; Jews, the Seed of Abraham, Rom. 4:1-25. See Gen. 12:1f; 13:14-17; 15:1-7, 15-19; 22:16-18; 26:2-5, 24; 28:13-15; 31:13; 35:9-12.) But Israel misused and hoarded the material blessings. Instead of sharing its blessings with other nations, Israel isolated itself and claimed superiority and God-given rights over other nations of the earth. However, since Christ, God deals with man spiritually, blessing him with spiritual blessings.

Five things should be noted about this.

1. Spiritual blessings are of the Spirit. It is the Spirit that controls man and the circumstances that surround him. A man may feel bad; he may be down, depressed and oppressed; but if his spirit is strong, he arises and conquers his feelings. He controls and overcomes the oppressing circumstances, and he lives a victorious day. But if his spirit is weak, whether at work or at play, he often wallows around in self-pity, grumbling and griping and living a defeated day. And too often the days stretch into weeks and months until a person's life is down more than it is up — all because the spirit is too weak to conquer. Thus, the major blessings of God are bound to be blessings that are spiritual — that enable a person to control his life.
2. Spiritual blessings are the very opposite of temporal blessings. They are the blessings of the inner man, the blessings of the immortal. But of all blessings, they are the most glorious and satisfying. They are the blessings that erase the loneliness, alienation, and purposelessness of man. They are the blessings that give man an overabundance of life.
3. Spiritual blessings are vastly superior to material blessings. They are permanent and perfect and eternal, lasting forever. They are of the very same nature as God Himself. Spiritual blessings exist and can be experienced both upon earth (the physical dimension of being) and in heaven (the spiritual dimension of being).
4. Spiritual blessings are found only in Christ. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God the Father. He is in heaven, surrounded by all the heavenly atmosphere and blessings. All heavenly blessings are His;

He is Lord and Possessor of all blessings. Therefore, if a person is to experience the spiritual blessings, he must be in Christ. If a person is in Christ, then he sits in heaven with Christ. How is this possible? When a person believes in Christ, truly believes, God takes his faith and counts it as righteousness. God counts the person to be the same as Christ, righteous and acceptable. In God's mind faith in Christ makes a person just like Christ: holy and righteous and acceptable for heaven. Therefore, when a person believes in Christ, God's mind sees the person in Christ; God sees the person identified with Christ, seated in heaven. And being seated in heaven, the person can experience all the blessings of heaven. Simply stated, to be in Christ means to believe in God's Son so much that God becomes elated — elated so much that He counts the person to be just like Christ: acceptable and worthy to be blessed with all the blessings of heaven. (See *Justification*, Gal. 2:15-16.)

5. God dealt with man in material blessings first because man had to learn several things.
 - a. An earthly inheritance does not last. It is subject to being lost or stolen. We either watch our material possessions deteriorate or else we leave our material possessions behind for others.
 - b. An earthly nation and material inheritance cannot bring peace and security. Peace and security are of the spirit. Earthly nations and material things are of the earth, of a corruptible nature. Thus nations and material things do not solve the spiritual struggle that man senses within his own being. Neither can nations and material things erase the spiritual divisions between men and between man and God.
 - c. Man has within his inner being a basic selfishness and greed. Man finds a tendency, an unregulated urge, that desires and seeks the material and hoards the corruptible to the neglect of the spiritual.
 - d. Man must undergo a basic change of character to be freed of this urge, this tendency that causes so much bondage, disruption, and division within one's self and between men. Man must be born again, made into a new creation, created into a new man — spiritually, permanently, perfectly, eternally. And such a spiritual creation must be performed by Someone much greater than himself. Man must be recreated by the hand of God Himself. □

II. *Luke 16:16 Kingdom of God and the New Social Order*

The misunderstanding of the new kingdom and order. Note three things.

1. Jesus sees the period of Israel (the law and the prophets) lasting up to and including the ministry of John the Baptist. As God's Messiah He ushered in a new period and social order, that is, the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is presently a

spiritual kingdom that occurs within a man and takes effect in the acts and behaviour of men. Since Jesus has come, every man is to let God rule and reign in his heart and life (see *Kingdom of God*, Mt. 19:23-24).

2. The kingdom is now preached, a message which does not value what a man has, but what a man is — what he is within his heart. The message now centres upon the individual and his eternal potential in God, not upon material and temporal blessings. (See *Kingdom of God*, Mt. 19:23-24; *God's Blessings*, Eph. 1:3.)

Luke 17:20-21 *Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."*

Mark 1:15 *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"*

Luke 6:20 *Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."*

Rom 14:17 *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

3. Everyone tries to force his way into the kingdom. The Kingdom of God is not for any single race; the kingdom is for all people everywhere. When people hear the glorious message of the kingdom, they press and struggle to get into it. They no longer want a cheap, formal religion and an easy message. They cannot be content with such, not when they really get a glimpse of the Kingdom of God. Once they have seen the glory and value of God's kingdom, they press and struggle to enter, no matter the odds.

Mat 5:6 *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."*

John 12:32 *"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."*

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

Hosea 10:12 *Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.*

Isa 26:9 *My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you. When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.*

III. *Luke 16:17–18 Old Testament and the New Order*

The misunderstanding of the law. In this point Jesus dealt with a very serious question - a question that bothers men. Is there a higher law, a law of God to which men are to subject their lives? Since Christ has come, since there is now a new order and a New Testament, what about the Old Testament, the law and the prophets? Is the Old Testament and its laws still to be used and followed by us? What is the place of the law? Is it erased? Does it have a place in God's new kingdom? Jesus said that there is a higher law, a law of God that is given in the Old Testament. It is not erased; it has a place in the new order. In fact, the Old Testament is fulfilled in the new kingdom, and it shall outlast heaven and earth. An example is the law governing marriage. It is the law for both social orders. It never changes. (See notes, Mt.5:17-18; *Christ Fulfills the Law*, Rom. 8:3 for details of Christ fulfilling the law; see *Marriage and Divorce*, Mt. 19:1-12.)

Thought 1. There is a higher law, a law of God given by God in the Old Testament, that is, in the old dispensation. It has been fulfilled in Christ; therefore, all men are to obey the Law of God. (Again, see note, Mt.5:17-18. This is an extremely important note to see how the Old Testament law was fulfilled in Christ.)

Mat 5:17-18 *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”*

Mat 24:35 *“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”*

1 Pet 1:25 *But the word of the Lord stands forever. And this is the word that was preached to you.*

Psa 119:89 *Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.*

Psa 119:152 *Long ago I learned from your statutes that you established them to last forever.*

Isa 40:8 *The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”* ■

ROMANS 08:03

JESUS CHRIST FULFILS THE LAW AND CONDEMNS SIN

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man.

Romans 08:03

Christ condemned sin in the sinful man in the flesh by three acts.

1. Christ pointed to sin and condemned it as being evil. The very fact that He never sinned points out that sin is contrary to God and to God's nature. Christ rejected sin, and by rejecting it He showed that it was evil, that it was not to be touched. He condemned it as evil and unworthy of God and man.
2. Christ secured righteousness for all men. When He came into the world, He came with the same human nature, the same flesh that all men are born with — the same human nature, the same flesh with all its desires, passions and potential for evil. However, He never sinned, not once. Therefore, He secured a perfect righteousness; and because His righteousness is perfect and ideal, it becomes the model and pattern for all men. It stands for and covers the unrighteousness of all men. His perfect righteousness overcomes sin and its penalty — it condemns sin. It is to be noted that He condemned sin “in sinful man, in his flesh;” therefore, all flesh finds its perfection and ideal in His righteousness and perfection. All flesh finds its power to condemn sin “in Christ,” in His ideal righteousness.

John 8:46 *“Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?”*

Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

Heb 7:26 *Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

Heb 9:14 *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

1 Pet 1:19 *But with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

1 Pet 2:22 *“He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”*

1 John 3:5 *But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*

3. Christ allowed the law of sin and death to be enacted upon Him instead of upon the sinner. Man has sinned, so the natural consequence is corruption and death. However, Christ approached God and made two requests. First, He asked God to accept His Ideal righteousness for the unrighteousness of man. Second, He asked

God to lay man's sin and death upon Himself. He asked God to let Him bear the law of sin and death for man and to experience hell for man. He asked God to let Him condemn sin and death "in His body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). He was the perfect, ideal Man. Therefore, He could bear all the violations of the law and all the experiences of death for all men. God so purposed, and God bore the awful price of having to condemn sin and death in the death of His very own Son. Sin and its power have been made powerless. Death has been conquered (1 Cor. 15:1-58, esp. vs. 54-57), and he who had the power of death has been destroyed, that is, Satan. (See *Satan*, Jn. 16:11)

Rom 5:6 *You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.*

Rom 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

1 Cor 15:3 *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*

2 Cor 5:15 *And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

Gal 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."*

Titus 2:14 *Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

Heb 2:9 *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Heb 9:28 *So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.*

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

1 John 3:16 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. □*

MATHEW 05:17–18 JESUS FULFILLS LAW

A person must know that Christ came to fulfill the law. Jesus said He was neither contradicting nor abolishing the Old Testament Scriptures nor standing against them. He was fulfilling them, completing them, bringing out what was implied. He was showing what the real meaning of the Old Testament Scripture is, its full meaning — all that God intended the Scripture to say. As God's Son, He is the Revelation of the truth. He is to reveal the true and complete meaning of the Scriptures. There are several ways in which Jesus Christ fulfilled the law.

1. Before Christ, the law described how God wanted man to live. The law was the ideal, the words that told man what he was to do. But Christ fulfilled and completed the law; that is, God gave man more than just mere words to describe how He wants man to live. He gave man the Life, the Person who perfectly pictures and demonstrates the law before the world's very eyes. Jesus Christ is the Picture, the Living Example, the Pattern, the Demonstration of life as it is to be lived. He is the Perfect Picture of God's will, the Ideal Man, the Representative Man, the Pattern for all men.

***John 1:14** The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

***John 8:45** Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!*

***Col 1:15** He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

***Heb 1:3** The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

***1 Pet 2:21-23** To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

2. Before Christ, the law was only words and rules. It could only inject the idea of behaviour into the mind of a person. It had no spirit, no life, no power to enable a person to do the law. But Christ fulfilled and completed the law. He was Spirit and Life, so He was able to put spirit and life to the words and rules of the law. He was able to live the life described by the words and rules. As such, He was able to inject both the idea and the power to behave into a person's mind and life. It is now His life that sets the standard and the rule for the believer; it is His Spirit and life that gives the believer power to obey.

Rom 8:1-4 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*

Gal 2:19-20 *For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Gal 5:16-18 *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

Heb 8:10 *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. (see Heb 10:15-16)*

3. Before Christ, the law stated only the rule and the principle of behaviour. It did not explain the rule nor the spirit behind the rule. Neither did the law give the full meaning of the rule. The law always had to have an interpreter. But Christ fulfilled and completed the law. He explained the rule and the spirit behind the rule. He interpreted the law. He gave the law its real and full meaning.

Gal 3:23-24 *Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.*

Rom 3:20-22 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.*

4. Before Christ, the law demanded perfect righteousness; it demanded a perfect life. But man failed at certain points. Man just could not obey the law perfectly; he fell short of perfect righteousness. But Christ fulfilled and completed the law. He kept the law in every detail. He secured the perfect righteousness demanded by the law. He fulfilled all the requirements, all the types, and all the ceremonies

of the law — perfectly. As such, He became the Perfect Man, the Ideal Man, the Representative Man for all men. As the Ideal Man, He simply embraced all men; He embodied the righteousness that man must now have.

Rom 3:20-22 *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.*

2 Cor 5:21 *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

Heb 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin.*

Heb 7:26 *Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

5. Before Christ, the law demanded punishment for disobedience. If a man broke the law, he was to be punished. But Christ fulfilled and completed the law. In fact, He went to the farthest point possible in fulfilling the law. He paid the maximum price, showing the ultimate love. He bore the punishment of the law for every man's disobedience; He took the punishment of the law upon Himself. As the Ideal Man, He not only embodies the righteousness that must cover all men, He also frees all men from the penalty of the law. And He makes them sons of God. (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 3:13-14; 4:1-7.)

Thought 1. Several other passages need to be looked at for a complete understanding of Christ and the law and the believer. (Rom.7:4; 7:14-25; 8:2-4; Gal. 3:10.)

Thought 2. Christ speaks to two different types of people.

- 1) The strict religionist or legalist. Christ does not abolish or weaken the law. The liberty He preaches fulfills the law as it should be fulfilled. He is not to be rejected because a person thinks His liberty weakens the law. He is to be acknowledged as God's Son who is to be followed and obeyed. (Rom.14:1-23; Gal. 5:13; 5:16-18.)

2) The carnal or loose religionist. Christ does not weaken the law by allowing a person to live as he wishes — by conscience only. He does not release men from the duty and responsibility of the law. He fulfills and strengthens and even enlarges the law. Liberty does not mean license; it means that a person is now free to serve God in the spirit and life of the law, not just in the letter of the law.

Thought 3. The Old Testament is the Word of God — according to Christ. (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:11; 2 Pet. 1:19-21.)

Thought 4. Christ considered His coming to be significant - one of the pivotal points of history. The following words show this (see vv. 17-18).

“I have come....”

“I have come...to fulfill.”

“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear...”

“Until everything is accomplished.”

He speaks as a person whose entrance into the world held great meaning for the world. This fact says something of extreme importance to man: “Hear Him.” What He says is binding. It is as binding, if not more binding, than the law itself.

Rom 10:3-4 *Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

Mat 20:28 *Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

John 3:17 *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

John 10:10 *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

John 12:47-48 *“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. □*