

Matthew Survey, Section 1

Salt, Light & the Law

Lessons 34–35 • Matthew 5:13–20 | Keith Blades • Enjoy the Bible Ministries®
Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Section

This study overview covers Lessons 34–35 of Keith Blades' Matthew Survey, Section 1. Lesson 34 concludes the Beatitudes and opens Section B with the salt and light exhortation (Matt. 5:13–16): the Lord calls Israel's remnant to function as the salt of the earth and the light of the world in truth, backed by Deuteronomy 4:5–8, Deuteronomy 32:7–9, Isaiah 11:9, and Isaiah 25:7. Lesson 35 completes the section by addressing Matt. 5:17–20 — "Think not that I am come to destroy the law" — establishing three distinct kingdom possibilities for remnant members: great in the kingdom, least in the kingdom, or not entering at all. Matthew 20:20–28 is previewed to show what it means to be "great" in the kingdom. All doctrine is addressed to Israel's remnant; right division (2 Tim. 2:15) must be applied before drawing application from these passages.



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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Content Focus
L34	Exhortation to conduct consistent with Israel's role (vv. 13–16); salt of the earth and light of the world; Deut. 4:5–8; Deut. 32:7–9; Isa. 11:9; Isa. 25:7; Matt. 5:17–20 begun
L35	"Think not I am come to destroy the law" (vv. 17–20) completed; three kingdom possibilities (great, least, no entry); Matt. 20:20–28 on positions of greatness; preview of Section C corrective doctrine

Lesson Summaries

L34

Salt, Light & the Exhortation to Conduct (vv. 13–16) *Matt. 5:13–16; Deut. 4, 32; Isa. 11, 25*

Israel: The Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World

- The Lord's exhortation in vv. 13–16 follows directly from the Beatitudes: having set forth reasons for happiness in the face of persecution, he now exhorts the remnant to conduct themselves consistent with who Israel is in God's plan and purpose

- Two analogies drawn from the law and the prophets: "Ye are the salt of the earth" (v.13) and "Ye are the light of the world" (v.14); both describe the designed effect Israel was to have upon the nations — not upon Israel internally, and not upon the Body of Christ in this dispensation
- Salt: Israel was designed to savor the earth with the knowledge of the Lord — in fulfillment of Isa. 11:9 (the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea); but under the vain religious system the salt has lost its savor and is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden underfoot
- Light: Israel was designed to be a light set on a hill, drawing the nations out of the darkness described in Isa. 25:7 (the veil cast over all people); Deut. 4:5–8 shows how the nations were set around Israel specifically so they would see Israel's righteous statutes and be attracted to the Lord; under the vain religious system the light has been hidden under a bushel
- The Lord's call to these remnant members: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (v.16) — their good works will fulfill Israel's original design and give these disciples the privilege of being a first-fruits of that complete fulfillment (James 1)
- Deuteronomy 32:7–9 (Song of Moses): God set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel — Israel placed in the midst of the nations for exactly this purpose; the rebuke in the song is that Israel has failed in this mission

Why This Is Not Written to Us Today

- The salt and light language in Matt. 5:13–16 is Israel's program-language, rooted in the prophets' description of Israel's role among the nations in the kingdom era; Paul's reference in Phil. 2:16 to "holding forth the word of life" describes a parallel but distinct function in a different program
- Israel functions as the salt and light in connection with the law and the kingdom; members of the Body of Christ hold forth the word of life in connection with the gospel of the grace of God and the mystery — a different message, program, and time is in view

"Think Not I Am Come to Destroy" — The Law Fulfilled; Three Kingdom Possibilities *Matt. 5:17–20; Matt. 20:20–28*

"I Am Not Come to Destroy, But to Fulfill" (vv. 17–18)

- The phrase "think not" signals that members of the remnant were either already thinking this or would be pressured toward it: Israel's vain religious system taught that the Messiah would jettison the law and the prophets and validate pharisaical tradition instead
- "Verily I say unto you" stands in direct contrast to that teaching: not one jot or tittle will pass from the law until all be fulfilled — the full scope of what the law and prophets speak about (including the fifth installment, the kingdom, and all its reward criteria) will be fulfilled right to the letter
- "Fulfill" here is not primarily about the cross; the cross addresses the kinsman redeemer mandates; what is in view is the entirety of the law and prophets — including all that is said about the fifth installment, the day of wrath, and the rewards in the established kingdom

Three Kingdom Possibilities for Remnant Members (vv. 19–20)

- Possibility 1 — Great in the kingdom (v.19b): those who do and teach the

commandments consistent with the corrective doctrine the Lord is about to give; they will occupy positions of high rank, authority, and honor in the established kingdom

- Possibility 2 — Least in the kingdom (v.19a): those who break even the least commandments and teach men to do so in the manner of the pharisaical tradition; they will have entrance but no significant position of authority or reward
- Possibility 3 — Not entering at all (v.20): those whose righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees will in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven — this does not address eternal life but the timing and terms of kingdom entry; a justified member of the remnant can be excluded from the kingdom's opening and remain outside until nearly its close

Kingdom Entry as a Reward Issue

- This foundational distinction must be maintained: being justified unto eternal life and entering the kingdom at its establishment are not the same thing; members of the remnant who believed the gospel of the kingdom have eternal life secured, but kingdom participation is a reward contingent upon conduct and faithfulness
- The first ones to hear the gospel and respond are not automatically the first to enter the kingdom — the Lord builds on this throughout his ministry; kingdom entry is the opening reward-threshold, and positions of greatness within it are additional rewards

Positions of Greatness in the Kingdom — Matt. 20:20–28

- The mother of Zebedee's sons requests that her sons sit at the Lord's right and left hand in the kingdom — these are the two highest positions of authority under the Lord himself; the Lord's answer establishes that these positions are not his to arbitrarily give but are prepared by the Father for those who qualify through faithfulness under suffering
- Matt. 20:24–28: greatness in the kingdom is modeled on servanthood — "whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister"; the nature of the reward is positions of governmental rank and ruling authority over the nations, exercised in the character of servant-leadership modeled after the Son of man
- The corrective doctrine in Section C (Matt. 5:21–7:12) is therefore not abstract; it is the content upon which their reward will be judged — taking it seriously and living by it qualifies remnant members for the great positions in that kingdom

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Salt and Light: Written TO Israel's Remnant, Not the Body of Christ

The designations "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" in Matthew 5:13–16 are drawn from the prophetic descriptions of Israel's designed role in God's program among the nations. The salt/light language is grounded in Deuteronomy 4:5–8 (nations observing Israel's righteous statutes), Deuteronomy 32:7–9 (God setting the nations' bounds relative to Israel), Isaiah 11:9 (the earth full of the

knowledge of the Lord), and Isaiah 25:7 (the veil removed from the nations). None of these passages address the Body of Christ. The Lord is calling the remnant to function as Israel was always designed to function — and warning that those who follow the vain religious system are the salt that has lost its savor. Paul's language in Philippians 2:16 ("holding forth the word of life") touches an analogous concept but is rooted in a distinct message, program, and time. These are not the same calling and must not be conflated.

"Fulfill" in Matt. 5:17–18 Is Not Primarily About the Cross

A common misapplication reads "I am not come to destroy but to fulfill" as a statement about the cross, as though the cross exhausts the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. Keith's teaching is precise: the cross fulfills the aspects of the law and prophets pertaining to the kinsman redeemer qualifications and the foundational redemptive work. But what is primarily in view in Matt. 5:17–18 is the full scope of the law and the prophets — including every passage about the fifth installment, the day of the Lord's wrath, the rewards for remnant conduct, and the criteria for kingdom participation set forth in Psalm 15, Psalm 24, Isaiah 33, and elsewhere. Not one jot or tittle passes away until all be fulfilled. That fulfillment reaches its completion when the Lord returns, establishes the kingdom, and rewards faithfulness — not solely at the cross.

Three Kingdom Possibilities: Eternal Life vs. Kingdom Entry vs. Kingdom Greatness

Matthew 5:19–20 presents three distinct outcomes for members of the remnant, and all three must be correctly distinguished from the issue of eternal life. Eternal life is secured at justification by faith in the gospel of the kingdom — it is not in view in these verses. The three possibilities address kingdom participation as a reward. Being great in the kingdom means occupying high positions of rank, authority, and honor in the established kingdom. Being least means having an entrance but with minimal reward or position. Not entering at all means being excluded from the kingdom's opening — remaining outside for a period — because the remnant member's conduct did not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. This third category is not exclusion from eternal life; it is the withholding of the reward of kingdom entry at its establishment. The Lord builds extensively on these distinctions throughout his ministry in parables and direct teaching.

Positions of Greatness in the Kingdom: Authority, Not Status

When the Lord speaks of being "great" or "least" in the kingdom of heaven, the content of that greatness is governmental rank and ruling authority. Matthew 20:20–28 makes this concrete: the request for the right and left hand positions is a request for the two highest positions of kingdom authority beneath the Lord himself. The Lord answers by tying these positions to faithfulness under suffering — drinking his cup and being baptized with his baptism. The princes of the Gentiles and those that are great exercise dominion and authority; the kingdom will have a parallel structure of authority, but one exercised in servant-leadership. Least in the kingdom means having the lowest position in that structure — still in the kingdom, still with eternal life, but with minimal governing authority. Great means belonging to the Lord's inner royal entourage, dwelling in proximity to him (Psalm 15; Psalm 24; Isa. 33), exercising authority over the nations as he reigns as King of Kings.

Key Scripture References

Matt. 5:13–16	Ye are the salt of the earth... the light of the world; if the salt has lost its savor it is good for nothing but to be cast out; let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father — the exhortation to conduct consistent with Israel’s designed role in God’s plan
Matt. 5:17–20	"Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill"; not one jot or tittle passes until all be fulfilled; three possibilities: great (v.19b), least (v.19a), no entry (v.20)
Deut. 4:5–8	Moses commands Israel to keep the statutes so that the nations see them and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people” — the designed impact of Israel’s righteous conduct upon the nations; the prophetic foundation for salt/light
Deut. 32:7–9	Song of Moses — God set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel; Israel placed in the midst of the nations for the Lord’s purposes; a rebuke to Israel for failing in this mission
Isa. 11:9	The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea — the ultimate fulfillment of Israel functioning as the salt of the earth; the kingdom outcome Israel is designed to bring about
Isa. 25:7	He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations — the veil of Satanic darkness over the Gentile nations; Israel’s light is designed to be the instrument of its removal
Isa. 43:1, 7	Thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Israel... everyone that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory — Israel created to be the glory of God in the world; the “good works” of Matt. 5:16 fulfill this calling
Matt. 20:20–28	Request of Zebedee’s sons for the right and left hand positions; the Lord ties greatness to suffering and servant-leadership; “Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister” — the content and criterion of kingdom greatness
Psalms 15	Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? — the criteria for the closest proximity to the Lord in his kingdom; backdrop for “great in the kingdom” and the positions of his royal entourage
Psalms 24	Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? — the counterpart to Psalm 15; kingdom-entry criteria; those with clean hands and a pure heart shall receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of their salvation
Isa. 33:17	Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off — kingdom reward for those who qualify; being in the Lord’s royal entourage and seeing him in his glory
James 1:18	Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures — James applies to the remnant the privilege of being the first-fruits of Israel’s kingdom function; foundational to the salt/light exhortation

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