

Sermon on the Mount Part XLII - Questions & Answers

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[0 : 00] built upon the rock. And if you'll note in the bulletin, the responsive reading there, this is dealing with the two foundations, and it's taken from Matthew 7, 24 through 29.

And I will read... Because last Sunday was Resurrection Sunday, you will recall, if you were here, that we took a slight detour from the Sermon on the Mount, and we brought a message that was more in keeping with Resurrection Sunday.

So that meant that our completion of the Sermon on the Mount was delayed one more week, and we intend to conclude that today, and we will, unless there is a sufficient number of questions that arise from the audience that will possibly cause us to engage the rest of the morning.

And I want you to know that that would be perfectly legitimate, because sometimes questions that are asked and answered can be more beneficial and more helpful than what I was planning to bring anyway.

So sometimes it just works out that way. And I want you to know that you have perfect liberty to raise your hand. You will be recognized with the roving mic, and the reason we do that with the mic is not to intimidate anybody.

[1 : 35] And by the way, the microphone will not bite you. It's defenseless. And all you need to do is just hold the mic up, and we want that on the disc.

Otherwise, if you ask the question without the mic, the people who are listening to the disc in Timbuktu, they can't hear what the question is, and they can't hear what your comment is. So feel free to use the mic and ask any questions.

Or if you want to make a point, you're free to do that as well. And we will allow however much time is needed. And the Sermon on the Mount is targeted for completion today, but that doesn't have to be.

We can complete it in June if need be. That's not a problem. So last week we dealt with the issues that created enormous confusion in the minds and thinking of the apostles and the followers of Christ in connection with Palm Sunday, the crucifixion, and the resurrection.

And we attempted to tie some loose ends together to explain why everybody was so confused, because one would think that those who were there and actually lived through what they were experiencing would have had a pretty good handle on it as to what was taking place.

[2 : 57] But they didn't. We have much better understanding today with what is revealed in Scripture than they had when they were actually living it. So if you have questions regarding that, and by the way, it doesn't have to be limited to that.

If you just have questions that you want addressed, then we'll do our best to do that. So the floor is yours. All right? Who would like to be first?

Yeah. Something that is a little confusing to me, but in Luke 22, 2, and I've read over this a number of times without really noticing it, but the leading priests and teachers of religious law were plotting how to kill Jesus, but they were afraid of the people's reaction.

And then when I look at 2321, later in the day, the crowd was there, 2321, yeah, but they kept shouting, crucify him, crucify him.

Was this a different crowd, or what's the, I was having trouble putting those two together? Yeah, well, the traditional position, and probably the position of the majority view, is one that I just cannot subscribe to, and I know that sounds like a typical Wiseman position.

[4 : 33] Don't go with anything with the majority, but sometimes the majority is wrong. And one of the, probably the most common expression, interpretation of this, is that it is used as a description

of the fickleness of a crowd.

And I've even heard prominent preachers say this, I just don't believe it's true. But, and I don't mean to imply that crowds cannot be fickle.

They certainly can, and not just baseball fans either. But just about anybody can be fickle and turn on someone. And this is often used as a classic example of how people, on the one hand, when Jesus was coming into Jerusalem, were shouting, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest to the son of David, and throwing the palm leaves in front of him. And then, this same crowd turns right around, and in the presence of Pontius Pilate, are shouting out from the crowd, crucify him, crucify him, we'll not have this man to reign over us.

And I don't know where in the world, they come up with the idea, that these are the same people. Because they're not the same people. And there's nothing in the text, that would make us think that they're the same people. Not that people are not capable, of radically turning on somebody.

[5 : 53] But there's no evidence for that here. We discussed just briefly, the different people who were represented there. And first of all, there was the crowd proper, the large number of people.

We don't know how many there were. There had to have been several hundred, maybe even a couple of thousand, lining the ways, and throwing the palm branches, and throwing their garments down, in front of Christ, where the donkey was walking, and all that.

These were, these were the people who were on board. These were the people who were anticipating, the arrival of the kingdom, and here comes the king, and he's going to set it up.

And they were ecstatic, with thinking that, that the kingdom of heaven, was actually going to come to earth, and that Jesus was going to go into that temple, and establish himself as the king of Israel, and chase the Romans out, and it would be wonderful.

Israel would be returned to its rightful state. There were a lot of people who were thinking that.

There were a lot of people in that crowd also, who hadn't really made up their mind about Jesus.

[6 : 57] They weren't convinced that he was the Messiah. They thought he might be, but they weren't sure. And then, there were those who were of the antagonistic crowd, and they are the scribes and the Pharisees, the religious establishment.

They opposed Jesus, in the same way that they opposed John the Baptist. They did not accept the legitimacy, of either one of them. And these were the people, who had all of the religious clout.

These were the shakers and movers, in the Jewish religion, at that time. They were the ecclesiastical hierarchy, presided over by the high priest, and all of his underlings.

And these were the ones, these were the ones, who before Pilate said, we have no king but Caesar. That was a terrible thing for a Jew to say.

But they were Jews. They were well positioned, well favored Jews, who had very cushy positions, and they were kept in power, through the permissive will, of the Roman Empire.

[8 : 01] And they just allowed, the religious establishment, to stay intact, corrupt as though it was, because it made the people, easier to control, than if you went in, with a heavy hand, and tried to stamp out, the Jewish religion, as it were.

So, as far as Rome was concerned, they could just, add multiple gods, to their lineup, and that made no, big difference to them. So, these people, were not really, the same people.

In verse 20, verse 2, of chapter 22, the chief priests, and the scribes, were seeking how they might, put him, that is, put Jesus to death, for, they were afraid of the people.

And that simply means, that, they wanted to arrest him. They wanted to take him, put him before a kangaroo court. They knew what the verdict, would be going in. It would just be a sham, of a trial, but at least, on the surface, it would appear to be legal, and everything would be done, nice and orderly, and they would get Jesus, out of their hair.

They would be able to, have him executed. And yet, they knew they couldn't do that, publicly. They couldn't do that, in a setting like, the triumphal entry.

[9 : 09] It would cause a huge riot. The people would just rebel. It would, there would have been a bloodbath, because the Romans would have come in, to break it all up, and it would have been a real, nasty scene.

So, these people, ended up conspiring, with Judas Iscariot, and they were just looking, for ways, that they might be able, to arrest Jesus, without a lot of commotion.

And, and, Judas Iscariot, dropped the opportunity, right in their lap, just seemingly, out of nowhere. He went to the chief priests, and said, I know, you seek to arrest him.

I know, you can't do it publicly. It would create a big scene, and a big mess. I can deliver Jesus, to you. Nice, and quiet, and easy, on the side, and there won't be, any tumult, at all.

I know where he will be, and I know, when he will be there, and I will take you to him. Well, to them, that was like, an answer to prayer. And, of course, Judas led them up there, in the wee hours, of the morning, just hours, before Jesus, would be crucified.

[10:18] I've approximated this, somewhere between, 2, and 4 a.m. The disciples, were all conked out. They had a long day. They had no sleep, before.

They were all, sleeping, resting. Jesus was the one, who was awake, and was praying, et cetera. And then, they came to take him. So, these are different people here, very definitely.

Does that help any? If you've got a further question, follow-up question, or if I haven't clarified it, please say so. So, the crowd that was, then, kept shouting, crucify him, crucify him, they were followers, of the Pharisees, and scribes?

Yeah, they were the Pharisees, and scribes. They were the Pharisees, and scribes, or those who were, in allegiance with him. I think that, I think that might be borne out, here.

Let's see. Well, where are we? 23.10 of Luke, the chief priests, and the scribes, were standing there, accusing him vehemently, and, and Herod, with his soldiers.

[11:48] Now, these soldiers, Herod's soldiers, these were Jews. These were temple police, not to be confused, with the Roman soldiers. And, they treated him, with contempt, mocked him, put on the robe, and, what am I looking for here?

Well, later in the chapter, in 23, it says, verse 20, that Pilate, wanting to release him, addressed them again. But, they kept on calling out, saying, crucify him, crucify him.

And, maybe, maybe what I'm looking for, is in John. It's a passage, that says, Pilate, when, when Jesus, stood before Pilate, and, Pilate questioned him, and, we have some of that, in, in John 18, where, Pilate says, what is truth?

And, he says, I find no guilt in him, I'm ready to turn him loose. And, yes, Pilate made, in 1912, as a result of this, Pilate made efforts, to release him.

He really wanted, to turn Jesus loose, because he knew, the charges, were not sufficient, against him, to, order this man's execution.

[13:23] And, he would have set Jesus free. But, what happened was, the Jews, put Pilate, in a no-win kind of situation. And, Pilate must have despised it, because, he knew, he was the guy, who was in charge there.

He was the Roman authority, and he had jurisdiction, over all of those Jews. And, he, he must have been, livid on the inside, because he recognized, that the Jewish, religious, hierarchy, had, put him, in a no-win situation, where he, as their superior, was actually, being used, by them.

And, he really resented that. But, this was very shrewd, on the part of the Jewish, authorities. And, Pilate says, that, he, wanted to release him. And, and, I'm looking, what I'm looking for, the references, Pilate even went along, a little bit with Christ.

And, he said, when they said, crucify him, crucify him, Pilate says, what? Shall I crucify your king? And, they responded, we have no king, but Caesar.

Now, what's Pilate going to do? They have just affirmed, their allegiance, and loyalty to Caesar.

And, Pilate, looks like he is willing, to overlook the fact, that Jesus is calling himself, a king.

[14:52] And, he, seemingly, is ready to just, let that go. Maybe dismiss Jesus, as just, some kind of a, a radical, that's not completely in touch.

The guy thinks he's a king. You know, that kind of thing. Going along with it. And, when they came back with that, which was like, a loyalty oath, for Caesar. And, what was their true position, with Caesar?

They hated him, with a passion. But, they were manipulating, Pilate, by saying, we have no king, but Caesar. That's where our loyalty lies, which was just as big, a lie, as ever came down the pike. And, Pilate knew it. But, there was the crowd. And, Pilate was put on the hot seat. And, with great resentment, said, all right then.

All right, crucify him. And, he wrote out the bill of crucifixion, the execution order, and threw it down to them. And, they got their way, and Pilate was fuming, and he walked off, but he would get his revenge later.

[15:52] So, you've got to keep in mind, these different groups, that are in place. And, and the only way, to get the full picture, is to compare, all four of the gospels.

Because, very often, one includes something strategic, that the other three omit. And, one of the most helpful things, that you will find, in doing that, is what is called, a harmony of the gospels. And, A.T. Robertson, who was a Greek scholar, at Louisville Seminary, for like 50 years, wrote numerous works, on the Greek New Testament. He's got an excellent, excellent book, called, The Harmony of the Gospels.

And, he puts all four of the gospels, together, side by side, so you can make comparisons. And, pastors find that, very, very helpful. A lot of lay people do too. And, when you use something like that, for a study guide, it really helps you fill in, the empty spaces.

Because, you don't get all of the facts, from any one gospel. You've got to compare, all of the others. Thank you. That was a very good question. I appreciate that. Any other questions, along that line, or, in the back?

[16:54] Roger? I think the two verses, at the end of, chapter 7, when the people were astonished, and, said Jesus had authority, spoke as having authority, not as the scribes, I think they, they didn't like the scribes.

They had no, no love for them. So, they probably weren't invited, to the trial. Yeah, well, the scribes, the scribes were, the so-called experts, of the time.

But, they were, pretty much, limited to, and this is, this is, kind of strange to us, because it's, nothing that we have, anything to do with, by way of, procedures.

managers. But, when they were asked, questions, and when they taught, they, limited themselves, and I'm not exactly sure, why they did this, other than just a tradition, but they, limited themselves, pretty much, to what, previous, rabbis, and authorities, had said, in their interpretation, of the scriptures.

scriptures. And, these, in the Jewish, in the Jewish religion, are referred to, as the Talmud, the Mishnah, and the Gemara. And, these are nothing more, than commentaries, that have been, accumulated, and contributed to, by writers, over periods, of hundreds of years, and their interpretation, of certain texts.

[18:25] And, of course, it was all limited, to the Old Testament. And, whenever they taught, they would always, quote these rabbis. Rabbi so-and-so said, Rabbi so-and-so, and they would, quote the rabbis, and their interpretation, of the law.

Jesus never did that. He never once, quoted one of the rabbis, who had, gone on, maybe hundreds, of years earlier. He, spoke, as though, he himself, was the authority, because, he was.

And, that was stunning, to them. They'd never heard, anybody, speak, as though, he himself, was the authority. The rabbis, and scribes, never did that.

They just quoted, those who had gone on before. Jesus, said, you have heard, that it has been said. And, he would, he was, he was actually referring, to what they had been told, by the religious establishment, that the scribes, and Pharisees, et cetera, had said.

And, then he would, come back with, but, I say unto you. Now, that is a complete contrast. And, what Jesus is doing, is, he is inserting, himself there, in a way, that counter-mans, or overrides, what you have heard.

[19:48] And, he later, particularly in, in Matthew 22, and 23, he is going to charge, the religious establishment, with, teaching, their, traditions, as if, it were, the word of God.

Which, it most certainly, was not. And, he said, you have made, the word of God, of none effect, by your traditions, and, your, commentaries.

You have actually, really neutralized. And, what they were doing, was causing people, to put their trust, and, and their confidence, in what these rabbis, were teaching them. And, the religious establishment, what they were teaching them.

And, Christ, quoted, there were times, when he said, it is written, not, you have heard, but, it is written.

For instance, when he confronted, Satan, in the temptation, he said, it is written, command that these stones, be made bread.

[20:54] And, Jesus responded, by saying, it is written, thou shalt not tempt, the Lord thy God, and that man shall not live, by bread alone. And, he quoted from the Old Testament, he used the word of God, against Satan, and his suggestions, and his temptations.

And, he came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. So, Christ, repeatedly, quoted, from the law, and interpreted the law, but he never bothered, quoting from the rabbinical sayings, the mission of

the Gemara, or the Talmud, and their writings.

He went straight to the source, or, he injected his own word, as the equivalent, of the source. And, this is what amazed the people. It was kind of like, who does this guy think he is?

Where is he getting this stuff? He is speaking, and answering these questions, and making these statements, as if, he is the authority. Well, he was.

And, that was what was so stunning to them. They had never heard anybody, speak like that. And, on one occasion, the authorities, sent, some, temple police.

[22 : 05] These were Jews, not, not Roman soldiers. They were temple soldiers, Jews. And, they had various responsibilities, to fulfill in the temple. And, the religious establishment, got some of these temple police together, and said, you go, find Jesus.

Go find him, and bring him here. And, they left. I don't know how long they were gone. But, when they came back, whenever it was, when they came back, they said, well, where is he?

Why haven't you brought him? Where is he? And, all these poor soldiers, could say was, they kind of hung their head. Well, text doesn't say that, but, I'm reading in the white spaces.

They hung their head, and said, no man, ever, speak like, this man. They, they were just, befuddled before him.

No, nobody ever, talked like, this man talks. You know, that still didn't answer the question, where is he? Why didn't you bring him? And, I'm satisfied that, what Jesus had to say, in his words, in the logic, and in the truth, just so, overpowered these men.

[23 : 20] They were not in a position, to insist that Jesus, accompany them, to these authorities. And, they just, kind of walked away, with their tail, between their legs. And, when they got back, they, I'm sure they were talking, among themselves, saying, what are we going to tell, old so and so, as to why we didn't bring, Jesus with us, as to why we didn't arrest him, and bring him, what are we going to tell him?

I don't know. Well, but obviously, they weren't able to do that. And, we're not told that Jesus, resisted them, or fought them off. They just went away, up to the hand, without him. And, they got back to the authorities, and they said, why haven't you brought him?

All I could say was, we never heard anybody, speak like this man, speaks. And, that's true, too, of course. And, we're told that, the common people, the ordinary, everyday Joe, the common people, heard him, gladly, because he was a breath, of fresh air to them.

They'd never heard anybody, speak like this. And, as has been mentioned, that's how the Sermon on the Mount, concludes. The people were amazed, and they were saying, we've never heard it, like this before.

Nobody's ever spoken like this. For he spoke, as one having authority, one being the authority, not as the scribes and Pharisees. Fascinating, fascinating concept.

[24 : 43] The more you get into this, the more you get into the personality, and everything of Jesus, just stunning. Somebody else, up here in the front. Jesse? Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Jesse? Marv, I got one significance, the three crosses, the trial.

You never hear anything about it until they get to Galgotha, and Christ is crucified between two other men. Now, what is the significance that the two thieves are never mentioned until Christ is crucified?

Now, what is the significance there? Well, I can't say that there was... It's very puzzling. I'm sorry? It's very puzzling.

You know, the two thieves on him, they're never mentioned nowhere until they get to the crucifixion. Well, I understand that, but one thing that you have to keep in mind, and that is this.

[25 : 55] Death by crucifixion was a very commonplace thing in Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans. Somebody was always being crucified.

I mean, if you can imagine... No, you can't imagine. I can't imagine either. But think of, if you can, try to contemplate, try to contemplate what a scene would look like with 10,000 human beings crucified at one time, one day.

10,000 crosses. And they would take an expired body down off the cross to make room for another person.

This was Rome's brutality, and it was absolutely unspeakable. There were crucifixions almost daily. Roman soldiers were assigned to...

There was a crucifixion squad, and they even had it down pat. They knew exactly what to do and how to do it. They knew almost exactly how long someone would live.

[27 : 07] They would come along, and if they didn't die within a certain prescribed time, they would take a large stone mallet and take that mallet and swing it against the kneecap of the person hanging there on that cross and break their legs at the kneecap.

And then, with their legs broken, they couldn't push themselves up. See, these people, most of them died of asphyxiation because they couldn't breathe. When you're hanging there on the cross like that, the body just sags.

And most of these had a little foot piece at the bottom of the cross where they could actually put their feet on. And when the breathing became so labored, they could push themselves up with the heels of their feet just enough to get a breath of air.

And when they'd come along and break their legs, they could no longer push themselves up and get a gasp of air, and they just died by suffocation. Many of them did.

And when they came to the soldiers, when they came to those who were crucified, we're told they broke the legs of the first. We see what was happening was it was getting close to sunset.

[28 : 25] Jesus was on the cross from approximately nine in the morning and about three o'clock in the afternoon is when he died.

So he was on the cross about six hours. And the soldiers were somewhat amazed that he was already dead. And when you look at the history of the thing, it's very easy to understand.

He was brutally beaten, lashed, whipped, scourged. His flesh was all laid open. The wounds would have been raw and just bleeding, a profuse amount of blood loss and the scourging, everything that went with it.

Jesus was absolutely spent, exhausted, before they ever nailed him on that cross. He was almost dead then. And the time that he spent on the cross, of course, just physically finished him off.

And we are told in the text, I think it's in John's Gospel, that they came to the first thief and they broke his legs and then they broke the legs of the second one.

[29 : 28] And then one of them, of course, was repentant and the other was not. One of them cursed Jesus and cursed God and the other one said, one thief said to the other thief, man, are you crazy?

Here we are on this cross and you know what? We deserve what we're getting. This is the life we've lived and now we're paying for it. But this man, this man in between us here, he hasn't done anything to deserve death.

And he turned to Jesus and said, Lord, would you remember me when you come into your kingdom? That was nothing but an act of commitment, an act of belief, an act of confidence on the part of that dying thief.

He's called the repentant thief. And Jesus said, verily I say unto you, today you will be with me in paradise.

And the other thief cursed and reviled and said things like, if you are the son of God, save yourself and save us too, come down off that cross.

[30 : 38] And others in the crowd mocked and jeered and said, he saved others, he can't even save himself. If thou be the son of God, come down off the cross and then we'll believe you.

All of the taunting and jeering that went with it. And, of course, just hung there. though reviled, he reviled not again, we are told by the psalmist.

Absolutely incredible, incredible scene. Okay, any other comments or questions?

comments? Now, you know I'm not going to let you go 13 minutes early. That would be a terrible way for me to start a vacation.

Any other thoughts, comments? comments? Okay, Gary?

[31 : 55] Thinking about the thieves, is there any indication what religion they were and if they were Jewish and if the one who recognized the Lord and said remember me in paradise, would he be Jewish?

I would say just off the top of my head, chances are nine out of ten times that they would be. They would probably be both Jewish. For one thing, no Roman, at least no Roman citizen, ever had to be concerned about being crucified because that was off the table.

if you were a Roman citizen, you were not subject to being crucified. Crucifixion, the method of crucifixion was reserved exclusively for criminals, criminal types, thieves, those who had done

some harm or disservice to the Roman Empire, but they were not Romans.

They would be zealots or insurrectionists who were caught and captured by the Romans and they could crucify and did crucify. Thousands and thousands of them were crucified.

It's interesting that the Jewish method of execution, of course, was by stoning. and in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, both written hundreds of years before Christ ever came to the earth, was ever born in Bethlehem, both of those give vivid descriptions, detailed descriptions of someone dying from crucifixion, suffering crucifixion.

[33 : 45] and read Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 and see if it doesn't sound like crucifixion. My bones are all out of joint and the description that's given is very vivid.

But the Jewish method of execution was always by stoning. And when the Romans came in and took over Israel as an occupied people, the Roman government, being in power, laid down certain requirements for the Jewish people, some things that they would be permitted to do and some things they wouldn't be permitted.

By the way, do you know when the United States defeated Japan and MacArthur went into Tokyo and he confronted Hirohito, who was the emperor of Japan, do you, well, many of you here aren't old enough to remember that, but, well, actually, I was only 10 years old, but I read about it in history and in school, but one of the first things that MacArthur did was he got on Japanese radio with Emperor Hirohito and he made the emperor talk to the Japanese people and tell them that he was not a god.

And that's how the American occupation of Japan began man. Because the people had worshipped the emperor as a deity. And they were willing to do very radical things in honor of the deity.

But when Emperor Hirohito had to admit to the Japanese people that he was not a god, that put him in an entirely different category. And it made the Japanese people a lot more governable by occupation forces than they would have been otherwise.

[35 : 36] So that was very significant. And I've completely lost my train of thought. Now where was I going with that? Oh yes, the Jewish method of execution was stoning.

And this is why when Pilate told the Jews, well, you brought this man here, you got some kind of religious charges against him, I'm not interested in any of that stuff.

You take him and judge him according to your own law. Now go on and get out of here. And they said, but this man is an enemy of the state. We don't have the power, we don't have the authority to execute him because you, the Romans, took that away from us.

And we're not allowed to put anyone to death. That is a prerogative of the Roman government that occupies us. And everybody knew that. And then Pilate wisened up and he said, you mean, you're seeking this guy's life?

You want him dead? Is that what you're saying? And that put the whole thing in a different scenario. And Pilate says, well, why?

[36 : 48] What's he done anyway that's worthy of death? Well, he's against Caesar. And they tried to make it, they tried to make Jesus guilty of some political crime because then Pilate would have jurisdiction.

Then he is a threat to the state of Rome. But of course he wasn't. And yet that was all trumped up. And Pilate was manipulated by the Jews into ordering the execution of Christ.

Sometimes the Jews just got away with it. They got, remember in chapter 7 of Acts, when they stoned Stephen to death? They didn't have the right to do that.

They didn't have the legal right to do that. But what happened was it was mob frenzy. And if you know anything about the chemistry of mob actions, it can be very, very scary and very unpredictable.

And this mob action in Acts chapter 7 that resulted in stoning of Stephen to death was physically, was physically carried out by the ruling elite of Israel, the Sanhedrin.

[37 : 58] these were the shakers and movers, the ones we talked about earlier. This is the religious establishment. The Sanhedrin consisted of 70 Jewish men, all well respected in the community, presided over by the high priest.

He was the chief one. And when they could not answer Stephen's questions, this is a dramatic turning point in the New Testament, when they could not answer Stephen's questions and they could not refute his arguments and his claims, they were furious.

And you want to read something that is just really hairy and exciting, read that seventh chapter of the book of Acts. And in mass, these old men, and a lot of them were old men, a lot of them were as old as I am, and they rose up physically, and they jostled and grabbed Stephen, and they dragged him, and pushed him, and shoved him, and carried him out to the city limits, and there they put him in the stoning pit, which all you can do is look up at the next stones that's coming down, and the stones were anywhere from the size of your fist to the size of your head, and the man was in this pit, this round pit, that there was no way out, and all he could do was try to dodge the stones, and the people would surround him on the edges of this pit, and you never knew which direction the next stone was coming from or who was going to throw it, and they just pelted him to death until he died in that pit.

That was the Jewish method of execution, and it was all carried out in a mob frenzy, there was no attempt to get Roman authority or approval for doing it, these people were just so angry and so mad and so satanically inspired that they just took the law into their own hands, and they did something that they were not technically allowed to do.

It was a nasty, nasty scene. Some have referred to Stephen as the first martyr of the Christian church, and when Stephen looked up, the text says Stephen saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and scholars are convinced that that's very significant, because every other time, the scriptures speak of Jesus as being at the hand of God, he is seated at the right hand of God.

[40 : 25] And the thinking is that when Stephen was martyred, Jesus rose to his feet to welcome the first martyr into heaven.

Pretty significant. we'll take time for just one more, if there is one more quick question. Anybody? Yes, up here, Jerry has a question up in front.

I don't have a question, but Stephen was the first martyr.

Was the thief on the cross the first soul to be saved by the cross? Well, it's a very interesting question. I would suggest that there's probably some real validity there.

the thief, obviously, I don't want to read a bunch of stuff in the white spaces that isn't there, but you need to realize that after a three and a half year ministry in a relatively confined area, because Israel is pretty small, and it was pretty small then, too, you would probably have to look far and wide to find somebody that hadn't heard of Jesus of Nazareth, because his name was pretty much a household word and very controversial, and all of the controversy centered around just one single solitary thing, just one, and that is this.

[42 : 12] Is Jesus of Nazareth the one God promised through Moses and the prophets? Either he is or he isn't. That was the question.

That was the only question that mattered. And the significance of the question, the significance of the answer is enormous, because if he was who he claimed to be, then you have absolute responsibility to obey him, to follow him, to honor him in every way, shape, and form.

and if he was not the Messiah, then he is the greatest con man, religious con man that ever came down the pike. And everybody was talking about this, and there were people who were convinced he was the Messiah, there were people who were convinced that he was not the Messiah, and there were people who would say, you know, one day I think he is, the next day I think he isn't.

I can't quite make up my mind. I just don't know. If you take a poll, you have those who say, yes, certain percent, you have those who say no, certain percent, and you have the undecided middle who represent 10 or 20 percent.

So they had to have known, and I'm suggesting that this thief had to have known, because along with the king, with Jesus being the king, what do you tie with the king?

[43 : 44] The kingdom, absolutely. If he is the king, he's got to establish a kingdom. And where was the kingdom? As far as anybody could tell, especially if you were hanging on that cross, it still looked very much like the Romans were in charge.

It doesn't look like the kingdom of God coming to earth to me. And yet, this thief had to have come to the conclusion, and I think it was all because of the trial, and because of the response of Jesus, and because of what Jesus said from the cross.

This thief, the same one who said to the other thief, man, we deserve what we're getting, but this guy hasn't done anything. He's done some powerful thinking, and he'd come to the conclusion, maybe it was the first conclusion that he reached there on the cross.

Maybe he really made up his mind then and there. Jesus really is the king, and I can't believe they're doing this to him. And I believe that he being the king, he is going to establish the kingdom.

I know this isn't it. It's going to be somewhere, somehow, sometime, but all I know is I want to be a part of it, and I believe he is who he said he is. Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

[44 : 59] I believe you are who you say you are, and I believe you're going to establish that kingdom. I don't know how or when, but I want to be a part of it. And Jesus responded, Verily I say unto you, this day you will be with me in paradise.

The other thief, as far as we know, rejected everything. He was angry, bitter, etc. So, well, thank you for your questions.

Your questions really stimulate my thinking. They are insightful, and I appreciate you offering them so much. We will be in touch while we're gone.

and we'll stay in touch with the office. And if anybody needs me, I will have my cell phone with me. And I don't know, is my cell phone number in the bulletin?

Has it ever been in the bulletin? Mary, would you put it in the bulletin next week? See that it gets in there in case anybody needs to call me. I'll have it on, and you can reach me in case of an emergency, wherever we are.

[46 : 09] And so you all behave yourselves while we're gone now. Here? Yeah. We're going to miss you, I'm sure.

But we're anticipating having a great time. Yes, we do.

We've got one. Lynette and Bill got it for us for Christmas. Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, Marie does. Marie knows how to turn it on. And it's called a tom-tom.

But I think you have to be a full-blooded Indian to operate it. No, she's got it down pat now. She even got us someplace in Dayton and back, I think, once with it.

So it really works. But you know, for the most part, we're going to be on Interstate 40 almost all the way across the United States and crossing over the panhandle of Texas and Oklahoma City and Flagstaff, Arizona.

[47 : 16] We'll be in Albuquerque. Many of you remember Steve and Lucy Drawn? We're going to see them. We're going to see them in Albuquerque. Steve is working there as an engineer at Los Alamos, and he's counting the days.

He's going to be retiring soon, so we'll get to see them. Would you stand with me, please? Father, we are grateful for this time together and for the atmosphere the Spirit of God provides here through the hearts and minds of these dear people.

We are so grateful to be members of the body of Christ and to be able to encourage one another and weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

Thank you for having established such a wonderful thing. such a wonderful organism as the body of Christ and thank you especially for you being the head of it.

We pray your blessing upon these people and as we part company that you will be with them as much as you are with us because you are that kind of God. So thank you for all that you build into our lives and we recognize that it's all because of that old rugged cross and that wonderful life that was forfeited on it.

[48 : 30] We bless you for it in Christ's name. Amen.