

Sermon on the Mount Part X - Murder

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[0 : 00] The law of murder. And I would like you to please turn to Matthew chapter 5. And there we'll be looking at verses 17 through 26.

Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets.

I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

[1 : 47] You have heard that the ancients were told, you shall not commit murder. And whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.

But I say to you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court.

And whoever says to his brother, you good for nothing, shall be guilty before the supreme court.

And whoever says, you fool, shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go.

[2 : 59] First, first be reconciled to your brother and then come and present your offering. Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer and you be thrown into prison.

Truly, I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.

I have been a Christian since 1956, and I have been your pastor since 1971. And over the course of 50 plus years, I have heard thousands upon thousands of messages in churches, on the radio and TV, in my automobile with tape recordings, and in Bible conferences all over the place for all those years.

And I have never, ever, once heard one message on this passage in Matthew 5, unless it was just superficial in passing.

What in the world does this mean? Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court.

[4 : 47] Everyone shall say to his brother, whoever shall say to his brother, Raka shall be guilty before the Supreme Court. What does that mean? Well, I hope that we get that far today, but this has to do with spit.

Can you imagine the doctrine of spit? Wasn't it Alvin Barclay, who was vice president to Franklin D. Roosevelt, when he was asked about the value and the importance of the vice presidency, to which he replied, it's about as valuable as a bucket of warm spit?

That's not very valuable, is it? What in the world could this have to do with? And why doesn't it say something about spit here in verse 22?

Because it doesn't. But the Bible talks about spit and spitting in someone's face and the significance of that in other places. And we will look at it.

And when we do, you will find, once again, the importance of allowing the Bible to interpret itself.

Because it does that, you know. You just have to allow Scripture to be compared with Scripture.

[6 : 10] And this business is about presenting your offering at the altar. And verse 25, making friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him in the way. What is that all about anyway?

Well, the answer is simple. In a way, it all has to do with cultural considerations. And if you do not understand the prevailing culture at the time these statements were given by our Lord, you cannot hope to understand this passage.

But fortunately, we've been able to dig out some things that I think will be very helpful. So, because we have had a brief hiatus for a couple of weeks, let me remind you of a couple of things.

This passage, the Sermon on the Mount, as well as, for that matter, all of the rest of Matthew, all has to do with the subject of the kingdom of heaven. That ought to be very obvious at the outset. And if you do not understand that, you can give up on trying to understand the gospel of Matthew. And for that matter, all four of the gospels, you're not going to get it. It's impossible unless you understand the major prevailing theme under, above, beyond, beside, and in.

[7 : 21] All of this passage has to do with the kingdom of heaven. It does not mean heaven where God dwells, going there when you die. That's not the kingdom of heaven that it's speaking of.

Look, if you will, at verse 5. I'm sorry, verse 3, chapter 5 and verse 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And then, verse 5. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. That, I am suggesting, is synonymous with the kingdom of heaven, because that's where the kingdom of heaven is going to be, on earth.

And look at verse 10. Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. It almost makes it sound like, in common parlance, that if you are persecuted, that's a ticket to heaven.

But that's not what it's saying at all. It's saying, if you endure persecution, it is a ticket into the kingdom of heaven. But that's not the same thing as heaven, the dwelling place of God.

[8 : 27] And while we're in the neighborhood, look at verse 12. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great. Where would that heaven be? That's the same place.

The kingdom of heaven is here on earth. There is a spiritual kingdom that exists now, but that's not what he's talking about. He's talking about the mediatorial kingdom, or the messianic kingdom, which has to do with God's rule and reign in heaven now, coming to the earth and being established here on the earth.

And when that happens, everything is going to get fixed. That will be the time of restitution, the time of restoration. It will be the refreshing of which Peter spoke in Acts chapter 2 and chapter 3.

The earth right now is under divine curse. We live in a fallen world. That's why we die. That's why there's death and disease and crime and murder and all the rest that goes with it.

It's because this is not a perfect world. This is not the world God created. This is the world that God created, that man remade. It's because of the world that's not a perfect world.

[9 : 39] It's because of the world that's not a perfect world. And we are living with the consequences of it. So when the kingdom of heaven comes to earth, then the prayer will be realized. Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom, which is in heaven, thy kingdom, it is a prayer for the kingdom to come. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.

That's what's going to happen when the kingdom of heaven comes to earth. God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And anybody who thinks the kingdom that thinks that the will of God is being done on earth now just does not understand the message of the scriptures.

This earth now is inhabited by fallen people who live under the rule and reign of the God of this age.

[10 : 41] That's 2 Corinthians 4. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to those whose minds the God of this age has blinded. Satan is about the business of blinding people, keeping them from seeing, keeping them from understanding, keeping them confused, keeping them all mixed up.

That's what he's about. And he is ruling and reigning now on this earth. And Christ recognized that, understood that, declared that. The time is coming when that will not be so.

He will be removed. But now he is having his day. Look, if you will, at verse 19. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and so teaches others shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whosoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. And then verse 20. And this is the key that unlocks the whole of the Sermon on the Mount.

It is verse 20. Christ said, and he's talking about, he's talking about the kingdom of heaven come to earth, which every Jew understood, anticipated, and longed for.

[11:57] The question in the mind of the Jew all through the Old Testament and up into and including all four of the gospels and at least half of the book of Acts was this.

When the kingdom of heaven is set up on earth and the Messiah, God's regent, is ruling and reigning on earth, will I have a place in that kingdom?

Will I be able to enter that kingdom? Or will I be one of those who is referred to as outside in outer darkness? That became the whole issue.

The equal of that for us is, will I go to heaven when I die? Or will I go to a place that is suffering and distant and completely removed from the presence of God?

That's the issue that people ought to be thinking about today. But that was never the concern of the Jew. All through the Old Testament, the anticipation was for the Messiah to come, the Messiah to come.

[13:03] Because when the Messiah comes, he's going to fix the earth and he is going to resurrect everyone who has died. All the graves are going to be opened. Daniel 12 speaks about this, that in that day, the graves will be opened, some to eternal life and peace and some to shame and degradation and loss.

That's what the Jew anticipated. So the burning question when Christ arrived on the scene was as it had always been. It's all about this business, the kingdom of heaven.

Who's going to be in it and who's going to be excluded? And the common opinion during this time would have been, anyone who is a Pharisee or a scribe, I mean, ooh, they are religious.

They are a shoe-in. If there's anybody that's going to be in the kingdom of heaven, those fellows are going to make it. And then our Lord dropped this absolute bombshell in verse 20.

And he says, I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

[14:24] I can just see these people scratching their heads and saying, well, good grief. If they're not going to make it, how can I make it? How can anybody?

They are the religious crowd. They are the ones that are just a quarter of an inch away from God, aren't they? They've got it made. They're a shoe-in. Christ said, no, they're not.

Unless your righteousness is more than theirs, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. That was an absolutely stunning thing.

These people were in shock. We read this, and it doesn't even really register. It's just words. We just read it over and over and over because this is our assigned portion to read on this day, so we read it.

But it doesn't get through to us. It doesn't register. We don't pick up on it. Well, I can assure you they did. So, while the kingdom will benefit and involve the entire world, its establishment will come through Israel and Israel's Messiah.

[15:35] The Sermon on the Mount was given exclusively to the Jew in Jesus' day, and it set forth the qualifications for being in the kingdom, most of whom would enter it after their resurrection.

They all knew they were going to die, and the common concept of the Jew all throughout the Old Testament was Sheol. That's the place of the departed dead. And the place of Sheol or Hades is how it's translated in the New Testament is the place, the holding place, if you will, the intermediate state where people who die go before they are assigned in a final way.

And that will not take place until Revelation chapter 20. So, in the meanwhile, where are all of the millions, no, billions of people who have lived in the past up to this time when their spirits left their body and the body was buried in the ground?

Where did those spirits go? Went to Sheol. Some translate it to grave, but it's not to be understood as physical. The body goes to the grave. Sheol is the place of the departed dead.

And the time is going to come, all of these Jews believe, and the Old Testament teaches it, and Daniel 12 backs it up, that there is coming a time when all of those billions of people who have died are going to come alive.

[17:10] And then there will be a final disposition. Sheol is just a temporary disposition. Then it will be final. So, the Sermon on the Mount was set against the, was established against the expectations the Messiah would erect the kingdom dependent upon Israel's national acceptance of their Messiah.

And we know, of course, they did not. Now, let me follow on with some more propositions. Bear these in mind and bear with me, please. Bear these in mind and bear with me. Bear these in mind and bear with me. Most Christians have missed this entirely, ignoring the kingdom aspects. And then they went on to spiritualize the concept of the kingdom, impose it upon the church, and make the Sermon on the Mount the standard of behavior for going to heaven when they die. That's probably the majority position taken by Catholics and Protestants. The Sermon on the Mount is a code of conduct. And if you live by the Sermon on the Mount, your reward will be heaven. I'm sure that's the majority opinion. And in some respects, it sounds very logical. But it's also very, very wrong. That doesn't even come close to what this is all about.

[18 : 29] Most take the position that the Sermon on the Mount is a set of guidelines that you are to live by.

And if you successfully live by them, you will be rewarded with heaven. Of course, that's a work salvation type thing. In reaching that position, they completely ignore the context and the prophetic announcements of both the Old and New Testament about the kingdom.

And let me just stop here and insert something. Because this too is confusing. This is another reason that I write these things out. The word in the New Testament for kingdom is *basileia*.

And the Bible uses the word kingdom in three different ways. In the first place, kingdom always refers to a realm or an area or a sphere. It may be spiritual.

It may be physical. But it always refers to a certain jurisdiction. That's a kingdom, a realm, a state, whatever. And the Bible uses the word kingdom in three different ways.

[19 : 37] And if you confuse them or try to make one synonymous with another, the confusion is endless. First of all, there is a universal kingdom.

The psalmist speaks of this. And it is referred to as the rule and reign of God over all that God rules and reigns over.

That is called the kingdom of God. That's the universal kingdom. There is no place in all of God's creation where he does not rule and reign.

No place. That is the universal kingdom of God. It is found more often in the Old Testament and particularly in the Psalms.

Then there is a spiritual kingdom. And the spiritual kingdom is not material. It's not physical. It's spiritual. You can't see it. You can't measure it.

[20 : 37] You can't weigh it. Because it is made up of human spirits. You have a human spirit.

It is part of your makeup. Every human being has a human spirit. Even if you're an atheist, you have a human spirit. If you're a Muslim, you have a human spirit.

If you're a Buddhist, you have a human spirit. And when the body dies, that human spirit goes wherever that person's faith assigned it.

If they are a believer in Jesus Christ, they are absent from the body, present with the Lord. That's where that human spirit is. And insofar as Christians are concerned, and the spiritual kingdom, the spiritual kingdom of Christ, it is made up of the spirits, not the bodies.

The spirits of all believers of all ages in the body of Christ. They are part and parcel of that spiritual body.

[21 : 45] This is what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians when he talks about the spirit being the body of Christ and also Colossians and Ephesians. We are members of the body of Christ.

But you must understand there is the physical and there is the spiritual. We are not members of the physical body of Christ. That's nonsensical. But we are members of the spiritual body of Christ.

It is a body. And this, too, sounds like a contradiction in terms. Because when I use the word body, I always think of physicality. Don't you? What is a spiritual body?

Sounds like a contradiction in terms. But it isn't. And it's a very good theological and biblical term. It has to do with every person who is a believer in Christ being a member of the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians address this. When you became a child of God and put your faith in Jesus Christ, at that instant, you were baptized by the Holy Spirit into the spiritual body of Christ.

[22 : 59] And you are in union with him. Members of his body. Each believer is. No believer is more a member than someone else or less a member than someone else.

There is no inequality in the body of Christ. Christ is the head, the spiritual head of that body. When Paul wrote to the Colossians, he talked about believers who are translated from the kingdom of this

world, which is Satan's kingdom, into the kingdom of his dear son.

That's the spiritual kingdom of Christ. When you were born again, your citizenship changed. Your permanent citizenship, Paul tells us in Philippians, is in heaven.

But your temporary citizenship is in the body of Christ. And you moved from spiritual death into spiritual life. And you were placed in union with Christ.

That's the spiritual kingdom. But the vast majority of times the word kingdom is used in the Old and New Testament from Daniel 2 on.

[24 : 22] It refers to the earthly physical kingdom. Now, all three of these are kingdoms. They are all realms. They are all spheres. They are all jurisdictions. But they are different. And when Paul, when the writers of the Gospels talk about the kingdom of heaven, they are talking about that time when Christ returns and establishes the kingdom.

Because when the Messiah comes, he's going to fix everything that's broken, which means he's going to fix everything, including broken hearts, broken lives, broken everything.

So when Jesus was born in Bethlehem and introduced at the age of 30 by John the Baptist as the Messiah, John says, this is the reason I come baptizing.

John chapter 1. That Jesus as the Messiah may be introduced to the nation of Israel. And John the Baptist, who was the second cousin of Jesus, cried out to the population and said, here he is.

Here he is. This is the one we've been waiting for. I indeed baptize you with water. But there comes one after me, mightier than I. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

[25 : 44] It was Jesus that they were. And what were the people thinking? The people were thinking, well, if this is the Messiah, then he's going to do what the Messiah is going to do. That's establish that kingdom.

Oh, boy, we've been waiting for this for thousands of years. And now it's going to really happen. But it didn't. It didn't.

Instead, they crucified him. And as Jesus was walking along on the road to Emmaus, shortly after his resurrection, he confronted two of his disciples that were just plodding along, dragging their heels.

Jesus approached them and says, you guys are really down. What's the problem? And they said, you must be a stranger around here.

Don't you know what's happened here? What are you talking about? Well, we're talking about Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by mighty signs and wonders, which God did by him.

[26 : 56] And we trusted that it was he who would deliver Israel and bring in this wonderful kingdom.

God did not. And we trusted him. But it all came crashing down. They killed him. It's all over. It's all over.

That's why we are so sad. And he confronted them in a saddened state. But the text goes on and says that after they identified Jesus and knew who he was, they knew him and the breaking of the bread.

And they said, did not our hearts burn within us as he opened unto us the scriptures? And Christ revealed himself in all of the Old Testament scriptures and revealed himself to be their Messiah, crucified, raised from the dead, and now stands there before them.

And the text says in Luke, and they went on their way rejoicing. Well, I guess they had something to rejoice about, didn't they? That's this kingdom business.

[28 : 08] That's the backdrop of Matthew. That's the backdrop of the Sermon on the Mount. If you don't see the kingdom in that light, you'll never understand this passage. It's impossible. The Sermon on the Mount must be kept in its historical context and confined in its interpretation to the nation of Israel to whom Christ came as Messiah.

And remember, Christ came to Israel exclusively. But he came to Israel for all the world.

He wasn't just interested in Israel. He came to Israel because they were the spearhead nation.

They were the tip of the spear that was going to lead the reality of that coming kingdom.

And they weren't in favor of it. They wrote it off. He's not the Messiah. He's an imposter.

He's not the one we've been waiting for. And Jesus said, The stone which the builders rejected.

[29 : 20] He was that stone. The same has become the head of the corner, the cornerstone.

Fabulous. And even though we can find the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount to the nation of Israel to whom Christ came as Messiah, and here's where the plot thickens and things get

muddy.

There are, however, abiding spiritual principles found throughout the Sermon on the Mount that are applicable to all believers in all dispensations.

These are applications, but must not be confused with the interpretation or the meaning of the passage. We are now considering what we hold to be.

First, the interpretation and then the application of six specific areas addressed by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. When Jesus said, Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

So what was it about their righteousness that rendered them unacceptable? And what was it about the righteousness of which Christ was speaking that would render those obedient to that acceptable?

[30 : 53] We've got a line of demarcation here. He is going to give six illustrations as to why he said what he did.

He's going to give six examples of the position that the scribes and Pharisees take. Then he's going to give the right interpretation and meaning of that same issue.

And he deals with these that are referred to. I've jotted down all six of them. And if you will look, well, let's just look at the first one here.

It is. It has to do with murder. In verse 21. He says, you have heard that the ancients were told you shall not commit murder.

Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court. But. Now, here he is inserting a real contrast. He is saying what you heard in the past.

[31 : 56] That isn't good enough. That won't suffice. And what he is going to substitute for what they have always been taught and have always heard. What he's going to substitute is the way it's supposed to be.

And that's what he is going to say to them. And if you will look at verse. Twenty seven. You have heard. That it was said.

You shall not commit adultery. But. I say to you that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Okay, man. What are we going to do with this? What are we going to do with this?

It doesn't mean. What most of you think it means. I dare say there is probably not what we would call a normal red blooded male anywhere.

[33 : 01] Who hasn't seen coming down the way a delicious looking dish whom he has not undressed mentally. Now, come on, guys.

Don't give me this baloney. But you never did that. I know what you're made of. Same stuff I'm made of. There is a natural affinity for the male eye gate to admire what he sees.

But I must admit, I would have never thought in a thousand years of tying this in. With David and Bathsheba.

But that's upcoming. We'll have to move on. And then, if you will note. Verse thirty one. This is the third one.

Whoever sends his wife away. It was said, whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But, here he's saying, that's not adequate. You've been hearing wrong.

[34 : 07] But I say unto you. And then he gives the counterpoint. And, in verse thirty three. This is another. Again, you have heard the ancients were told, you shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.

But I say to you, make no oath at all. You see, he's contrasting this. He is contradicting it. He is overriding what they had always heard and always been taught.

And he's saying that's all wrong. And the greatest single thing that differentiated the position the scribes and Pharisees took on everything, as opposed to what Christ took on it, was this.

They interpreted everything in accordance with the letter of the law. And once you do that, it creates all kinds of wiggle room.

Let me give you a case in point. This is just off the top of my head, so it'll probably sound like it. But the law specified a certain amount of distance could be traveled on the Sabbath.

[35 : 14] In other words, if you were going someplace, any day of the week but the Sabbath, you could go as far as your body would carry you, and it didn't make any difference. But if you were walking or traveling on the Sabbath, you were limited as to how far you could go.

It was called a Sabbath day's journey. And the law was rather specific about that. A Sabbath day's journey with so many furlongs, I don't recall what the numbers were, but it would be measurable by our miles.

You could calculate the difference. But then the question arises, well, a Sabbath day's journey from where?

Well, a Sabbath day's journey away from your home, your place of residence. That's what the law says. Hmm. Now comes the creative lawyering.

There are people who examine the laws just for the loopholes they hope to find. And here was another. Sabbath day's journey from your home.

[36 : 26] Okay. So, I traveled as far as I am allowed to go on the Sabbath days. And then I set up a little lean-to station with a couple of posts.

And I put a covering over it to protect me from the sun. And I announce that this is my new home. And I take a half an hour's nap.

And I get up and go another Sabbath day's journey. And I've just relocated my home again. These are called loopholes that enable you to evade the what?

You are evading the spirit and intent of the law. And the scribes and the Pharisees had made this a science.

They had it down pat. They nitpicked. They finagled. They loopholed. They pulled. They squeezed. They did all kinds of gymnastics to get around what the law actually intended.

[37 : 32] And what Jesus is going to do throughout the Sermon on the Mount is reveal to them what the spirit and the intent of the law actually was.

And in order to obey that, you have to have the right condition of heart. You will not be out looking for loopholes and ways around it.

You will respect the intent of the law. And we have a big problem with this today. And everywhere from our Congress on down. Where else are you going to hear somebody say, it all depends on what the meaning of is is.

And nonsense like that. Well, that's essentially what this whole Sermon on the Mount is about. The Pharisaical interpretation versus the intended meaning of the law.

And Christ and this religious crowd are going to be at loggerheads from the early part of his ministry on. And this is going to be the crux of it.

[38 : 43] This is going to be the crux of it. Right here. He's going to live a life of three and a half years in perpetual conflict with the powers that be. Because every time an issue comes up, he always gives it straight.

Really in accordance with the law. And he's going to be accused, repeatedly accused, violating the law. He's breaking the Sabbath. He's healing on the Sabbath. He's doing this on the Sabbath.

Constantly. And Christ clarifies this by assuring the people. He's saying, listen. I don't want you to think for one moment that I have come to overthrow the law.

Look at what he says, if you will, in Matthew chapter 5. Before he even gets into this subject. Verse 17. Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets.

I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. What does that mean? It means that his coming is going to be realized in his absolutely, perfectly fulfilling all that the law requires in every respect.

[39 : 50] And he goes on to say, truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the law until all is accomplished.

Christ came not to remove the law, not to violate the law, but to fulfill the law. And he did in every single respect.

So it is not he who is going to be lacking in diligence or understanding regarding the law. Christ selected these six areas.

Murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, non-retaliation, and love. Question. Why did Jesus select these six? It's almost like these are six miniature test cases.

Why these six? Do you know how many laws there really are in Judaism and system of Judaism? 633.

[41 : 01] 633. Not just 10. 633. Oh, yes, you can go through the Old Testament and add them up and count them.

I think you'll find there are 633. But these six, these six, murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, non-retaliation, and love.

These six are the principal areas that make society and its culture function. These six areas constitute the stuff of life.

Look at them. How important are they? Which of these six could you do away with? Each and every one of them has a vitality of its own. Each and every one of these six is essential to an orderly society.

Murder. Murder. Murder relates to the sanctity and value of life itself. So Christ is coming on here with this law of murder, emphasizing once again the great importance he places upon life and living. [42 : 12] Adultery presupposes that marriage has occurred. The union of man and woman is the basis for orderly society and propagation of the species.

Divorce refers to the dissolution of the marriage union and under what basis it may be dissolved. Divorce or marriage is also a contractual agreement between man and woman.

Number four, oaths. This relates to personal integrity and the sanctity of truth. Men must be truthful with one another and be trusted to make good on their word.

That's what this law of oaths is all about. Reality, upon which our very existence depends, is distorted and sacrificed every time untruth enters the scene.

Lying is an attempt to create one's own reality that is known not to be true, but is intent on making others think it is.

[43 : 28] I don't know if you've been watching anything on TV lately having to do with the hearings. But there is a full frontal application of this principle right there.

Truth sometimes is very, very hard to come by. And number five, this is the law of non-retaliation, which forbids the revenge factor and does not allow for personal retaliation when offended by others.

This is what our Lord meant when he said, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. You are not to take it upon yourself to avenge yourself when someone does you wrong.

And that, by the way, is the application of a principle. And it is cross-cultural, and it is cross-history, and it is cross-everything. It applies to all times.

And number six represents the law of love, and I think it is really neat that our Lord caps it, caps it with the law of love. And it actually encompasses and puts the icing on the cake of the previous five laws.

[44 : 50] It is the underpinning of everything he has spoken. And today, I want to introduce to you, which is all we'll be able to do, the law of murder.

It begins in 521. It is easily understood in 522 through 26.

We can understand that. You read the verses, and I'll not belabor them, because we've already read them a couple of times. But in 522 through 26, I'm sorry, 521 is easy enough to understand. You can just read the verse. But 22 through 26 doesn't make any sense at all. And the reason it doesn't make any sense to us is because it was given against the backdrop of an entirely different culture, entirely different way that people had of assessing things.

The murder of which Christ is speaking appears to be limited to premeditation, and I would say does not include manslaughter. There is a vast difference, and the scriptures recognize the distinction between murder and killing.

[46 : 01] Nowhere in the Bible is man ever told that he is not allowed to kill, because he is. And sometimes killing is justifiable.

Murder is never justifiable. Murder is different. Murder involves premeditation, what we would call malice aforethought.

Nobody ever commits murder accidentally. When we talk about murder being premeditated, that means you meditated on doing it before you did it.

You thought about it. You went over it in your mind. You weighed the pros and cons. You built a case in your mind. You thought about doing this person in before you did it.

That's what Jesus is talking about. This is a premeditated murder. Not to be confused with killing. Terrible translation in the Ten Commandments when it says thou shalt not kill.

[47 : 00] It's not right at all. It is thou shalt do no murder. And the opponents to capital punishment like to appeal to this and say that, well, when the state puts someone to death, they are no better than the murderer who committed the murder.

They're murdering themselves. That's just stuff and nonsense. Don't let anybody sell you that baloney. But 9-6 of Genesis says, Whoso sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.

And that was even before the law. And when Paul said in Romans 13 about the officer of the law does not bear the sword in vain, that means he's not carrying a weapon for nothing. He has the authority to use it. And he may use it in a lethal manner. And when the state executes or puts someone to death, that is not murder.

Don't let anyone tell you it is. It is a law-respecting situation whereby someone has been brought up on charges and has had a trial with the jury of their peers and has been found guilty and sentenced to death.

[48 : 17] And it is wholly subscribed to by the scriptures. So, all of this is going to address the subject of what happens and where murder really starts.

And this, I want you to understand, is the crux of this whole subject of murder. Remember, the prevailing Jewish opinion that was held by the scribes and Pharisees was this.

You were not guilty of murder unless you actually did the crime. No court could ever try you for murder if it could not prove that someone had been murdered and that you were likely the one who did it.

That's a given. But what this is talking about and what Jesus is contradicting is, that's not the way it's supposed to be at all.

And that's not what the law intended. Murder begins not when the axe falls upon someone's neck and takes their life.

[49 : 37] Murder begins in the human heart. And Christ is saying, that's where it has to be dealt with.

The difference is incredible. Mark 7.21, Jesus said, For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts.

Now, there's a key. I want you to understand this. Out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts.

The evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness.

Jesus said, all these things proceed from within and defile the man. Now, listen. They proceed. Proceed.

From where? From the heart. From within the internal makeup and thinking and reasoning of the individual.

[50 : 51] That's where they originate. And they proceed. That means they go forth. They don't stay there. They proceed. Proceed to what?

Proceed to doing it. Proceed to the act. Proceed to putting into motion what has just been in the heart.

What has been premeditated upon. And when they proceed, that's the acting out. You get a gun and you shoot them. Or you stab them. Or whatever. You do away with them.

So where is the real problem? They would have you believe the real problem is in the doing of it. And Christ says, no, no.

No. That's not the real problem. The real problem is the seed that sprouts into the doing of it. It's the seed that has to be dealt with.

[51 : 49] That's where the problem is. It's an attitude of the heart. And then he goes on to tell how that situation is to be diffused. And the illustration he gives is just marvelous.

I'm just going to read it for you and then we'll conclude. Jesus said, verse 22, But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court.

And whoever shall say to his brother, Raka, shall be guilty before the Supreme Court. And whosoever shall say, you fool, shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. Makes no sense at all.

You're going to be in danger of going to hell because you call somebody a fool? It ought to be intuitively obvious that something is really lacking here. And something is. And we'll explain that.

If, therefore, you are presenting your offering at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar. Go your way. Be reconciled to your brother and then come and present your offer.

[52 : 51] What's he talking about? He's talking about hatred in the heart toward another person being resolved. Being dealt with. That's the real key.

Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way. With him on the way. On the way where? On the way what? What does that mean? They had a fascinating way.

The Jews had a fascinating way of getting people to resolve their own differences. And I want to share with you the principles that were involved from the pen of a Syrian.

This is a man who was born and raised in Syria. This is the country where the apostle Paul was converted. And it is Antioch of Syria that became the missionary headquarters from which Paul launched all of his missionary journeys.

It wasn't from Israel. It was from Syria. And the man who wrote the insight regarding this passage and others like it just opened up this thing like a ray of fresh sunlight to me.

[53 : 59] And it all makes so much sense. And it comes together. And the enigma is removed. And this thing will stand on all four legs. And it is beautiful when you see it unfolded.

And along with that, of course, is the doctrine of spit, which we will also get into at that time. Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him in the way in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge and the judge to the officer.

And you'll be thrown into prison. You'll not come out of there until you've paid the very last cent. All of that is culturally conditioned. And once we explain the culture, the passage just lights up. And it is a beautiful thing.

I tell you, you cannot beat. You cannot match. You cannot surpass the nature and the complexity and the simplicity and the wonder of the word of God.

It's just amazing. Well, pray with me if you will. Father, we have just scratched the surface of what is here. There is so much more. And we want it to be understandable, intelligible, and appreciated by those who hear it.

[55 : 05] We are grateful for those whom you have raised up who have helped us to bridge these language and history and geographical and cultural gaps because they are hindrances to a clear understanding of the word.

And yet, along with the word, you've provided the basis for really understanding and appreciating it. We can't be obedient to what we don't understand. We want to understand it.

So we can't be obedient. Nothing honors you more than the obedience of your children. And we want to honor you. Thank you for this passage.

And thank you for that which is to come. In Christ's name. Amen.