

Sermon on the Mount Part IV

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 March 2013

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] For a scripture reading this morning, in Gary's absence, if you would turn, please, to the Sermon on the Mount, we will be looking at several verses in chapter 5, where we will be spending the bulk of our time today.

And I want you to be sure to notice the obvious contrast that is being set forth in these verses. And I'll be reading from the New American Standard.

I know there are several different translations out there, so if you will follow along in whatever translation you have as we read, perhaps this will provide some insight into the subject matter even before we get to the message.

So let's look at Matthew 5 and verses 21 and 22. And again, I want to alert you to be noticing for the contrast, see, but I say unto you.

5:21 You have heard that the ancients were told, You shall not commit murder, and whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.

[1 : 07] 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.

Now, let me stop right there and add something, if I may. Part of this verse has to do with cultural conditioning. And if you do not understand the Jewish culture, the backdrop against which this was spoken, this really will not be able to make any sense to us.

Because Raka, we have no idea what that means. And to be able to call someone a fool, how can you possibly be guilty enough to go into fiery hell for calling someone a fool?

If that's the case, we're probably a shoe-in for the eternal state where it is hot and heavy, right? So there is something more involved here, and that ought to be obvious to us.

But I don't want to stop here to explain that now. So we must go on to Matthew chapter 5 and verse 27 and 28. You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery.

[2 : 28] 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.

And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you. For it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you. Now, this seems terribly, terribly extreme, doesn't it?

Just flat out unreasonable. And yet, we are confronted with the problem of charting our Lord Jesus with being unreasonable in what he says. And yet, we cannot detract from what he says.

He says what he says. It is what it is. But again, if you do not understand the Mideastern cultural conditioning that prevails in this verse, the backdrop against which Christ said this, then there's no way that you can understand it.

[3 : 45] Because we cannot impose our Western way of thinking on the Scriptures and interpret these things in terms of our own experience and background.

Because it just escapes us. And it just looks so bizarre on the surface. There isn't anything bizarre about it at all. And I can assure you that when Jesus uttered these statements about if your eye offends you, pluck it out.

If your hand offends you, cut it off. Nobody was raising their eyebrows looking at Jesus and saying, What? This is crazy. Did you hear what he said?

Who's going to do that? Again, we bring to bear the cultural significance upon this. And as I said, if I stop to go into that now, we'll get no further.

But we will get there eventually, and we will explain this against that kind of backdrop. But I want to get more of this whole setting together. So let us continue on, if we may. Verse 31. Another very controversial one.

[4 : 45] And it was said, Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife except for the cause of unchastity or unfaithfulness makes her commit adultery.

And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. And now we've got the law of the vows upcoming in verse 33.

Again, you have heard that 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, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.

Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, Yes, yes, or no, no.

[5 : 59] And anything beyond these is of evil. What in the world does that mean? Now, in the midst of all of this perplexity, that those of us who have been studying the Bible for a significant number of years look upon these verses with real perplexity, Can you imagine where that puts the average person who says, Their philosophy of life is, I just live by the Sermon on the Mount.

Can you imagine? How would they handle something like this? If seasoned saints have difficulty with passages like this, what in the world would the run-of-the-mill guy out on the street who says, Oh, I just live by the Sermon on the Mount, in his dreams.

In his dreams. So, reading on, verse 38, You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But, now you see, this is a contrast.

Jesus is very pointedly, very deliberately, contradicting what up to this time has passed off as the conventional wisdom.

This is what everybody believed. This is what everybody was told. And, by the way, let me inject this again. When I say this is what everybody believed, and everybody was told, I am limiting that everybody to the Jewish community.

[7 : 28] These treatments that we are going over here in Matthew, these were never intended for people other than the Jews. They were never given to the, listen, they were never given to the world at large.

Never then, not now. Now, I know that's a very difficult thing for people to believe. And, I'm not going to try to prove that case again.

We've been there before, and it will come up time and time again. But, when we are talking about our Lord's ministry, and the gospel content that is set forth in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, it was all provided against a Jewish background.

These were for the chosen people of God, who lived in the land of Israel, and were functioning and obligated to function under the law of Moses.

Moses. That's not us. It never was us. We will see that there are moral implications of the law of Moses, and they are reiterated in Paul's epistles.

[8 : 35] All that does is indicate that there are things in the gospels, and in the Old Testament, that are always applicable for all people, for all times.

And, there is no Jewish-Gentile distinction. It's for everybody. It's for everybody. So, these careful distinctions have to be made. Otherwise, otherwise, you'll find yourself offering animal sacrifices, and keeping the Sabbath, and the feast days, and all the rest of it, if you don't make those distinctions.

And, there are clear-cut divisions that can be and should be made, and we'll be making them as we go along. So, we are back again in verse 38, where Jesus has said, You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil, but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him too.

[9 : 46] Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. Are you serious? Aren't there people who have a terrible reputation for never repaying their

debts?

And if one puts the arm on you and says, I'm in a jam, I need a mortgage payment for my house, and I've got to have \$1,000 right away. And you know that this person has never made good on any obligation they've ever had.

They owe you money from three times ago. What are you going to do? Well, if you're going to follow the Sermon on the Mount, you're going to say, do I make the check payable to you or to the mortgage company?

Are you going to do that? But that's what it says. You have heard, verse 43, that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

[10:55] For he causes his Son to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?

Do not even the tax gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers, your brothers only, what do you do more than others?

Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Do you see the classes of people here that he is defining?

Do you see that he is recognizing and reinforcing the idea that this is for the Jewish community?

Do you see when he sets aside the Gentiles and makes them in a different class, he is saying, they don't belong to what you belong to. And they can't not be expected to live by the standards that you are to live by.

They are Gentiles. They have neither the knowledge of God, they do not have the word of God, they do not have the covenants, they do not have the promises, they do not have any of that.

They're Gentiles. But you, it's different with you.

[12:06] You are an inside people. You have privileged information. You have assets that are made available to you that no other nation in the world has.

Therefore, you are to be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect. And we'll look when we get to that term of perfection and precisely what that means against that kind of a backdrop as well.

So, our work is cut out for us. Several things need to be noticed regarding the Sermon on the Mount. And first of all, I want you to just keep in mind the timing of its delivery.

This is very early in our Lord's earthly ministry. This is one reason we find it close to being up front in Matthew's Gospel. This is near the beginning of our Lord's earthly ministry.

Because it was just back in chapter 3 that Jesus was identified by John the Baptizer and baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.

[13:13] That was just in chapter 3. Then immediately after his baptism, he was led of the Spirit of God to go up into the wilderness and there he was tempted by Satan for 40 days.

That is another study in itself. But immediately following his temptation, then he began his ministry in earnest. And what it consisted of was proclaiming the same thing that John had proclaimed, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And if you read back in chapter 4 before we get to the Sermon on the Mount, you will see that Jesus established himself as an extremely notable celebrity very early in his ministry.

Right after his baptism and temptation, he began his ministry of healing and teaching. And he went about, we are told that there were great throngs of people who were healed of all manner of diseases.

And nothing would draw a crowd like that. Nothing would get people talking like that. And they would witness one of these miracles and they would go home and they would tell people, I'm telling you, I never saw anything like it in my life.

[14:23] I was right there. I saw that crippled man get up and walk. I saw the eyes of the blind open. And everybody was talking about Jesus of Nazareth. It was all a buzz.

So, it wasn't long after that and the crowds began to gather wherever he was and they followed him. In fact, this is so early in his ministry, he hasn't even chosen the 12 apostles yet.

That won't come until Matthew chapter 10 when out of this huge throng of disciples, Jesus selects 12.

And he confers upon them a special status of apostleship that they would be with him. And he will give unto them abilities and powers that they did not possess of themselves.

He would delegate his authority to them and he would later send them out to work the same kind of miracles that he was. And it would be a phenomenal thing. But this is ahead of the story.

[15:28] So, it is after many miracles of healing so as to command a great audience and he really had their attention. Now, we have already established the primacy of the kingdom and the kingdom concept and we have described it as God's utopia, God's paradise, the restoration of all things, the times of refreshing from the Lord.

And we talked about how that is what Peter was talking about in Acts chapter 3 and he referred to the two things that needed to be done prior to the kingdom being established on earth.

The first was the Messiah had to die to pay the penalty for reversing the curse to pay the price for God being able to reverse the curse that was placed upon earth and mankind and all the rest.

And then the second thing that had to be done is that Israel had to get online and deliver themselves from their stiff-necked attitude regarding Jesus the Messiah and embrace him as their Messiah and thank God for him.

And when that happens, the kingdom of heaven will come to earth. But that's never happened.

Phase one has been completed. Phase two is still in limbo.

[16:45] Phase two has never happened. That is Israel nationally, corporately, receiving Jesus as their Messiah. We are grateful for individual Jews today who come to faith in Christ, but they represent a minuscule number compared to all of Israel.

It is true, I think, to say, and safe to say, that there have been more Jews come to faith in Jesus as their Messiah over the last 20 years as there have been over the last 200 years.

And I understand, I've been hearing from rumblings in Israel that there is a considerable movement that is taking place among young Jews in the land of Israel today who are coming to faith in Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah.

One cannot help but wonder if this is a harbinger of what is to come. And that this perhaps is going to begin this way and the numbers will increase considerably over the years and then immediately prior to, prior to the coming of the Messiah, and this is not the rapture, this is the second coming, there will be a groundswell of Jews who will embrace Jesus as their Messiah.

And that's the time that Zechariah is speaking of when he says, and they shall look on him when Christ returns. they shall look on him. Israel will look on Christ and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son.

[18:23] They will recognize nationally what they did. You see, when Peter preached his message on the day of Pentecost and told the Jews what they did, only 3,000 believed him.

However many more there were, they didn't. They didn't buy it. And when Peter repeated the message again in Acts chapter 3, only a small number compared to what was available believed. So Israel remains as a nation set aside in judicial unbelief. Blindness in part has happened unto Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

And when that happens, there will be a wholesale turning to Jesus as the Messiah. I don't know how early on in the tribulation period this will be, but it could conceivably come about halfway.

And I attribute that to the ministry, to the ministry of the 144,000, 12,000 Jews from each of the 12 tribes. And they will be proclaiming this gospel.

[19:30] And Jews are going to respond to that. And Gentiles are going to respond to that. And it's going to be a time of incredible conflict and conflagration and confusion because while there will be tremendous strides in evangelism being made and people coming to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the persecution is going to be greater than it has ever been in the world.

And people will receive Christ and take their lives into their hands. This will be during the same time when men will not be able to buy nor sell or transact any business without the mark of the beast, the 666 and so on that's spelled out in Revelation.

So all of this is coming. And all of this is going to tremendously impact the nation of Israel as God moves to fulfill His promise to His people. So, Israel's prayer during the life of Christ, Israel's prayer and earnestness was for the kingdom of heaven to be established.

And the question was whether Jesus of Nazareth was the one whom God sent to do that. Because if He was, that changes everything.

And if He wasn't, it leaves everything as is. Well, He was, but He wasn't received as such. So it did leave many things as they were.

[21 : 00] Questions were, number one, was this one, this Nazarene, the one that the Messiah was promised to be?

And remember Peter's famous confession up at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus said, Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? Peter said, Thou art the Messiah, you are the one, the Son of the living God.

God. And Peter bought into that. And he was convinced of its truthfulness. That was the question. That was not a question during the life and ministry of Christ.

That was not a question. That was the question. And everybody lined up on one side or the other. Because if He was, then it was enormously significant.

If He was, then you were duty bound to submit to Him and to obey Him in every way, shape, and form. And if He wasn't, then you were equally responsible to dismiss Him as a phony and a charlatan.

[22 : 06] It's got to be one way or the other. And another burning question was, and they were very familiar with the kingdom. When John came preaching, Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Nobody said, nobody said, what's that? What's he talking about? Does anybody understand what he means by king? No! You don't find any place in the scriptures where there was ever a response like that.

It's because every Jew knew what that meant. They knew what that meant. That's the time of restoration. That's the time when this old, sin-sick, weary world is going to be righted.

That's the time when justice is going to prevail. That's the time when life is going to be as it was intended to be when God created it. Before the fall, it's a restoration, it's a return. They all knew that.

They all cut their teeth on that. And they knew that when that happens, it will be the Messiah who is going to do it. He's going to be the head of that.

[23 : 08] He's going to be the leader. So repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Men, everything to those people. Now the question is, who's going to be in that kingdom?

Who qualifies for a position in that kingdom? That is going to be the thrust of our Lord's message all throughout the gospels. Who is going to be in this kingdom?

There are parables given about it. There are miracles performed about it. There are discourses given about it. It's all about the kingdom of heaven coming to earth. This is why I titled a message earlier, what everything, what everything is all about.

That's this. It's the planet gets fixed. It gets re-energized. It gets renovated. It gets renewed.

It will be a new heaven and a new earth. And every Jew cut his teeth on that. And their thinking was just, wait, when the Messiah comes, he's going to fix things.

[24 : 12] When the Messiah comes, when the Messiah comes, when the Messiah comes. And every generation that would come by, they would think this would be the generation people die, people are born, people die, people are born, this will be the generation.

It's no different from what we're saying today. Maybe the Lord will come in our lifetime. Maybe today. We anticipate the coming of the Lord and taking away the church, removing us in the rapture.

Maybe this year. Maybe this will be the year. And we think about that the same way the Jew thought about the coming of the kingdom. And never, never once did the Jew look forward to, well, of course, a couple of thousand years from now, there's going to be this thing called the church, and that's going to be in the mix.

No, no, no, no, none of that. None of that. None of that. Didn't have a clue. Never thought of, never dreamt of at all in the Old Testament. Never entered the Jew's mind.

That's why the church, which is the body of Christ, is called the mystery. Never revealed before. Never known, never understood. It's all separate and distinct.

[25 : 19] So, how does one qualify to enter this kingdom? Every Jew knew this, too. Every Jew knew that God is all about holiness and righteousness.

righteousness. Everybody knew that. And those in the kingdom must possess a righteousness that is acceptable to God.

Because when this kingdom is established, there are going to be people admitted to it and people excluded. and on the outside, there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

There will be people who will want to have entrance into the kingdom and they will be denied. Forever denied. So, it becomes a very, very prominent question in the mind of every serious minded Jew, what's required.

What does it take to get into the kingdom? How is God going to grade on this? How do we know who makes it and who doesn't? And this brings us to the key text for the Sermon on the Mount, which is chapter 5 and verse 20.

[26 : 42] This, I want you to recognize, is the pivotal verse. this is the key text. And all that follows are examples that Christ will give to show the inadequacy of pharisaical righteousness.

Now, what in the world was pharisaical righteousness? Let me just be as brief as I can with that. There is a band of people known as the Pharisees.

And the word Pharisee in the Aramaic or Hebrew means the separated ones. It means that they were the recognized authorities among Israel when it came to religious issues.

It came to political issues, it was principally the Sadducees. But the Sadducees were the upper crust of Jewish society.

They were shakers and movers, but they were more politically involved than the Pharisees. Well, let me put it this way. The Sadducees, many of them at least, were in bed with Rome.

[27 : 56] The chief priests, Annas, Caiaphas, men before whom our Lord will stand when they get up this kangaroo court that found Christ guilty, et cetera, and handed him over to Pilate.

All of these people, they were Sadducees. They represented an opposing party to the Pharisees. So the Sadducees were the main machinery of the religious, political aspects of Israel, primarily the political.

They were like shakers and movers. And the Pharisees, the Pharisees were actually laymen. They did not have an official religious status, but they did have a great deal of clout and influence because of their lifestyle, their values, et cetera.

They were often looked upon as the conservatives or the fundamentalists of their religion, and the Sadducees would have been regarded as the liberals of their religion.

And, of course, you know that the Sadducees and the Pharisees had no love lost between them. They were always locking horns because they disagreed.

[29 : 10] about so many things. The Pharisees would be more akin to take the scriptures quite literally and at face value.

The Sadducees wanted to interpret everything away and spiritualize everything so that there were virtually no demands at all left upon anybody. And these were always clashing horns.

Every time they would get together they would have an argument. In fact, the Sadducees were so liberal, they didn't even believe in the resurrection of the body. And they didn't believe in the existence of angels.

Well, you find both of those in scripture, Old and New Testament. Yes, but they had ways of explaining them away. May I say nothing has changed? There are plenty of people who have ways of explaining away these things today too, so nothing has changed.

These Pharisees, as you read in the Old Testament, where do you find them? They aren't there.

[30 : 13] There are no Pharisees in the Old Testament. They are just non-existent. But when you come to the New Testament and open up Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, voila, there they are. Where do these guys come from anyway?

We know that Jesus confronted one, Nicodemus, in chapter three of John's gospel. Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews and he was a Pharisee. So, you've got to realize that between the Old and New Testaments, there were 400 years where no prophet had any word from God at all.

These are called the four silent centuries. God is not revealing or inspiring scripture during these 400 years. When Malachi laid down his pen, that was the end of the Old Testament.

And we don't have anyone taking up a pen again for about four or five hundred years when God starts revealing, inspiring men to write scripture, do we end up with Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, and Romans, and so on.

So, during those 400 years, which was a very volatile time in the history of Israel, called the intertestamental period, a number of things happened.

[31 : 24] Israel was in conflict with different neighbors who devastated them and ruined them and ruled over them. and it was a time of the Maccabees and Judas Maccabeus. And it was during this 400 years that this sect of the Pharisees came into being.

And it came into being primarily to help address the straying from the truth of scripture and the straying from the principles that Israel had been given from time immemorial.

And the Pharisees was kind of like a grassroots movement of determined Jews who were faithful to the Lord and wanted other Jews to be faithful to the Lord and they started this group called the Pharisees.

We don't know how many there were. Safe to say there were probably several hundred, maybe even more than that. But they were regarded as experts in the law and they along with the scribes. The scribes were people who were better educated. The scribes from our word scribble simply means the scribes knew how to read and write and a lot of people didn't.

[32 : 35] And scribes were employed to draw up contracts and to copy scripture and of course it was all done in long hand and anything, any kind of legal document that needed to be drawn up.

And they were also regarded as experts in the law. So the scribes and the Pharisees were pretty much on the same wavelength and they supported each other in most of their endeavors.

And the people pretty much submitted to them because they, like a lot of laymen today, like a lot of laymen in Christianity, consider themselves untrained, uneducated, unworthy, unable, can't do anything of a spiritual nature.

Leave that to all the experts. Leave that to the pastors and the teachers and so on. I'm just an ordinary guy. Well, you're not. You could do a whole lot more and be a whole lot more than you could ever imagine.

But most people are content to be there anyway. And nothing has changed. The Jews were no different. They constituted the mass of humanity in Israel. And these Pharisees were very influential.

[33 : 43] And they would deliver their interpretations of the law of Moses. and they would quote rabbis who had gone on before them. And their word came to the place of where it was virtually law.

And here was the problem. They became so influential and so powerful that they became the authority.

And the interpretations that they rendered of Scripture were looked upon as bona fide and as authoritative as Scripture itself, which was a big, big mistake.

And you know what? That too still goes on today. Because so many people are so much more impressed by what the Reverend Dr. So-and-so says about the Scriptures than he is about what the Scriptures say about themselves.

So that has always been a problem. And it still is today. So, all of these things, must be kept in mind.

[34 : 50] Now, Christ is going to allay any concerns that the Jew may have as to where he stands with the law of Moses.

And he does that right at the outset. And the reason he does, I am convinced, is because those who had been accepted as the authorities up to this time, which was primarily the scribes and the Pharisees, they were going to consistently charge Jesus with this.

He teaches against the law of Moses. Well, he never did. But that's going to be their accusation.

You know, this works well in politics as it does in religion. religion. If you can charge somebody with something and say it enough about them, people start to believe it, even though it doesn't have an iota of truth to it.

Tell a lie. Tell it often enough. And you can get somebody to believe it. Do we ever see that true in politics today? Well, it's always been true.

[36 : 06] It's always been true. Because people are so subject to influence from others. And rather than get it from the horse's mouth, if you will, they get it second, third, fourth hand, and they act like they got it from the horse's mouth, and they don't at all.

That goes on in politics, it goes on in religion, it goes on in every facet of society all over the world. All through history it's been that way. This is the way man operates. And it's part of his fallenness, by the way, is to be loose with the truth.

So, the first thing Christ does is to allay any concerns about where he stands with the law of Moses. And I want you to note that in 517. Matthew 5, in verse 17.

Right at the outset, he wants to allay any fears that anybody might have. I am not some new guru, says Jesus, coming on the scene with new ideas that I am going to fashion and throw out for your consideration.

No, no, no. Not at all. I want you to know I adhere strictly to what Moses and the prophets have written. I am on their side.

[37 : 17] And in verse 17, our Lord says, 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 away from the law until all is fulfilled.

world. And whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and so teaches others 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.

And then verse 20 is the verse that addresses the issue of righteousness and how righteous do you have to be to enter this kingdom of heaven.

verse 20, for I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees and their interpretation of it, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

[38 : 29] Here is where the conflict is going to really begin. Because although we are not told, we are not told that there are scribes and Pharisees here in the audience that Jesus is addressing on the Sermon on the Mount.

Number one, there may very well have been, and I wouldn't be surprised if there were scribes and Pharisees there, because they, like everybody else, would be eager and interested in taking in any kind of new phenomenon that's coming on the scene.

Their curiosity would be piqued as much as anybody else's. They probably were. Maybe a considerable number of them. And you can be sure that those who weren't there, word would get back to them, because any who were would certainly tell them what Jesus said.

And this is going, this is, this has the effect of Christ throwing down the gauntlet, drawing a line in the sand.

And it was with the commonly accepted, entrenched in place establishment of Pharisees and scribes.

[39 : 45] So, can you not see this early on in his ministry, how they are going to be at loggerheads all through the three years that Jesus is ministering? It's going to be a perpetual conflict.

These are the guys who are going to try and trap him with trick questions. They are the ones who are going to try to embarrass him, try to get him to commit himself in some way.

Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not? Thinking that they've got him. Either way, he answers.

And he always manages to make them look bad. And all that does is add to their ire and anger and determination to do him in.

And the time is going to come when this little group of Pharisees going to get together and say, that's it. We need to do away with him.

And they start this conspiracy by appealing to one of his inside men, Judas Iscariot. And they make arrangements to take him early in the morning so as to not cause a stir among the people.

[40 : 57] Everybody will be asleep. And we can have this nasty business over and done with by the time the town wakes up. That's what it's going to culminate into. That's where this thing is going.

And it's going to take about three years for it to develop. And during this time, there will be three years of ongoing hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees.

Every now and then, not often, but every now and then, one of these Pharisees is going to scratch his head and say, I'm not so sure about this.

I got real questions about this Jesus of Nazareth. that I, I, I'm, you know, he says some things that makes a lot of sense.

And, and maybe, maybe it was against the kind of backdrop that I've created for you here that a certain man said to himself, I want to, I want to talk to him.

[42 : 07] I want to, I want to sit down with him. I've got some questions I want to ask him. But I, I don't, I don't want everybody to know about this.

This could be very embarrassing, you know. Maybe, maybe I could, maybe I could catch him at night sometime and just kind of pick his brain a little bit. Could that be Nicodemus?

Because the scriptures make it a point to tell us that he came to Jesus by night. But it never tells us why. And I'm not saying that's why he came. Maybe he had a long hard day and evening was the first time he was free.

I don't know. But, but it, it fits a possible scenario. I'd like to go talk to Jesus, but I don't want my other Pharisee buddies to know I'm doing it. So maybe he got a private audience on that. This is just Wiseman speculation, but it's interesting, isn't it? And then there was another, and maybe, maybe this other guy was someone to whom Nicodemus spoke after he spent this night with Jesus and talked to him about this being born again stuff.

[43 : 18] Maybe, maybe, and yeah, it's speculation, but maybe, maybe Nicodemus says, you know what? I'd like to run this by Joe.

I'd like to see what Joe says about this, what he thinks. Maybe that was Joseph of Arimathea, two Pharisees who are clearly going to be won over by our Lord, and they're going to stick out like a couple of sore thumbs, because they will really be in the minority.

So, the stage is set for conflict, and what I have already given you ought to explain, not as fully as possible, but ought to explain the ongoing running battle that Jesus is going to have with this religious establishment as time goes on.

So, in connection with some of these things, I'm going to share with you from the pen of Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, and let me tell you a little bit about him, because I really respect his insight on these passages, because nobody understands Jewish settings.

like a Jew, and Arnold Fruchtenbaum was born in Siberia, probably in the 1940s, if I'm not mistaken, probably in the 1940s, I don't know this for sure, but he, born in Siberia, and of course was speaking Russian, and due to circumstances, his family moved from Siberia to, I believe it was Hungary, and then from Hungary to Germany, and this, you've got to keep in mind the Second World War settings and all of this stuff, and then eventually I think they went to Great Britain, and of course he was picking up these languages all along the way, learning these additional languages, and finally they found their way to the United States, and as a teenager, I think 18 or 19 years of age, Arnold Fruchtenbaum came to faith in Yeshua,

[45 : 28] Jesus as his Messiah, and he began reading and studying the scriptures, and eventually he found his way to Cedarville College, which was Cedarville University now, and he spent at least a year or two years there, I'm not sure where he went then, but he ended up at Dallas Theological Seminary, and there he got his master's degree in theology and a doctorate in theology, then he went on and got his PhD degree from New York University, and he established himself as quite a scholar, he picked up his Hebrew, of course he already had Hebrew, and picked up the Greek language as well, and he started writing and holding meetings and was quite successful, and Arnold Fruchtenbaum was referred to one time, I know many of you are familiar with Hal Lindsay, and Late Great Planet Earth, which was the bestseller of the decades in the 1970s, and Hal

Lindsay said of Arnold Fruchtenbaum on one of his television programs that he was not aware of any man alive who knew more about ancient Israel or modern Israel than Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, and I suspect that he was probably right, I don't think that was an overstatement.

Well, in 1990, it was Barbara and my privilege to attend a geographical historical survey of the land of Israel for six weeks, and we were there, and our leader was Dr.

Arnold Fruchtenbaum, and he was accustomed to taking no more than 27 people on this Holy Land expedition. It was not a tourist thing, not at all.

We went to places that tourists never imagined or heard of. Tourists just hit all the high spots, you know, but we got into all kinds of situations. It was incredible, indescribable, indescribable.

[47 : 37] Almost six weeks we spent there, and he had ways of just making the scriptures come alive because he could interpret the Bible from a Jewish standpoint, but with a Christian philosophy, and it just made him a double threat when it came to things of spiritual nature.

Just tremendous. So I want to share with you some of his comments regarding the explanation of these passages on the Sermon on the Mount because many of them are just so enigmatic to us, we just don't get it about plucking out your eye and cutting off your hand and all this kind of stuff.

So that's where we will take you in our next session together, and we will open these six areas, one of which we've already touched on, and that is his relationship to the law, and we will look at his explanation for the passages in the law regarding murder and the law of divorce, the law of oaths or swearing, the law of non-retaliation, and the law of love.

And Dr. Fruchtenbaum has insight to offer on each of these, and I am convinced that it is only as a Jew can offer it because it just makes these passages bubble with life, and you can understand and get a handle on it.

So you are able to make the transition from our Western culture and understanding back into theirs. In addition, I have a rare book that's been in my possession for a number of years that was written by an Aramaic scholar by the name of Dr. George Lamza, and he has written a commentary on the Gospels.

[49 : 28] It is unlike anything I've ever seen, and it too is written from the standpoint of an Easterner. Dr. Lamza was born and reared in India, but it is amazing how many of the cultures are a carryover from that part of the world, even into Israel.

And he has a great deal of light to shed on these passages as well, and I am eager to bring that with you because I can just see light bulbs coming on all over the place, and you'll gain a new appreciation for some of these texts that have been so puzzling to so many people for so many years.

Now we've got about five minutes left. Have you a question or comment? Anyone? Oh, by the way, I do have a written question.

I don't have it here with me, but I know the gist of it. Someone had submitted a question about the New Jerusalem, and it's found in Revelation 21, where John says, I beheld and saw New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven like a bride adorned for her husband.

And verse 2, 21, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I take it the question I wanted to know when this is going to transpire. I think that this, appropriately, right near the end of the Revelation, and for that matter, near the end of the whole Bible, I think it is talking about the eternal state.

[51 : 05] And this is going to be what is going to transpire. This is after the tribulation period. This is after Armageddon. This is just about after everything. This is the final eternal state.

This New Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven. And it is going to occupy a 1600 mile cube. 1600 miles long, wide, and 1600 miles high.

I can't begin to imagine anything like that. But that's the description of the dimensions that's given of the New Jerusalem. And it's going to be utterly stunning. I don't think that it has anything particular to do with the millennium.

This is after the millennium. You'll recall that the thousand year reign of Christ is going to be disrupted at the end in Revelation 20 when Satan is loosed from the bottomless pit.

And he goes out to deceive the nations and he will succeed. But this time there will not be a repeat of Armageddon. God will simply deal with them summarily on the spot. And it will be a very literal thing.

[52 : 06] I think the scriptures say that fire comes down from heaven and simply eliminates them. And then that New Jerusalem will come to pass as indicated in Revelation 21.

Okay, I think Gary had a question or comment. Yeah, I guess really as we've learned this and we see what happened with the Sermon on the Mount, and I know there's many other things in scripture as well which shows a difference in the interpretation.

I'd like to know your thoughts on how a lot of the denominations and ministers, how do they resolve that conflict on what we're seeing now and what you're teaching us now about the Sermon on the Mount versus how do they determine that what's their interpretation of that?

And it's difficult to see once you understand that how they resolve that. Well, it's a very, very good question. And it's one that I remember asking myself years ago why this didn't come to light more soon, more quickly than it has.

And the only answer that I can give and the only one that makes any sense to me is this. Too many, too many of my clergy pastor colleagues, well, first of all, many of them, many of them receive the information in the mail or online that they are supposed to preach to their people.

[53 : 37] Many of them are given information as to what Sunday they preach, what on, and that's from their denominational headquarters. And they are pretty much locked into that if they want to be, you know, in good standing with the denomination.

But so many, so many preach on subjects that simply require them to reaching into the scripture and just pulling out a few verses or latching on to a certain subject and just preaching on that within a very small context.

And you can deal with a whole lot of popular themes that way and you'll never run out of material. You can do that for year after year after year and many of them do. And that enables people, that enables people to avoid difficult passages that would be taxing or that might be embarrassing

because they might come to a passage that says, I don't have any idea what that means. You'd be surprised how many people can't say that. But I have had to say it so often I've gotten used to it. But there are a lot of people who have such ego problems.

They don't want their people to think there's anything that they don't know. about the scriptures. And boy, I tell you, you and I wouldn't live long enough for me to sit down and write out a list of things that I don't know and would like to know about the scriptures.

[55 : 13] I mean, the list would just. And if you take the scriptures verse by verse, you've got to deal with it.

You can't escape it. There it is. And I know there are people here and have been over the years that would hold my feet to the fire. If I was exegeting a passage of scripture and deliberately skipped over an important verse, that'd be the first one they'd want to know about when the hands go up in the Q&A.;

What about verse such and such? Why didn't you say anything about that? But when you go verse by verse, you just have to hit it all. And it requires more study. It requires more digging into it because there's so many things when you don't know, you've got to find out.

And the only way to find out is a study. And you develop a library and you develop people who have gone on before, who've written things that you really appreciate and that help you understand the scriptures.

And I've often said some of my very best friends, some of my very best friends are men that I have never met. And their books line my shelves in there.

[56 : 21] There is almost nothing that is original about me or my ministry. Almost nothing is original.

I stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before. I am indebted to them and their expositions of scripture and the commentaries that they've written. And oh yeah, there's a lot of disagreement among them and I disagree with a lot of them about different things.

But they all stimulate me and they all give me some light. And when you go verse by verse, you just have to deal with all the issues. And to me, that's just wonderful.

I've even had preachers ask me, somebody told me that you teach verse by verse? Yeah. Well, why do you do that?

That's the way it was written. Can you believe that? Like a bombshell. Well, whoever thought of that? Just read it, expound it, teach it the way it was written.

[57 : 28] People want to know what the Bible means. You can't live out what you don't understand. You can't put into practice what you don't grasp.

That's why our whole emphasis from our beginning has focused on what the Bible means. We know what it says.

What does it mean? We've got a perfect example here this morning, don't we? Of what it says. But what does that mean? Does that mean you take a meat cleaver and cut off your hand?

Does that mean you pluck out your eye? Well, that's what it says. And this is where interpretation comes in, in the science of hermeneutics.

And we've spent some time on that, too. I'm already over. Is there another question? Real quick. Anybody? Well, we've covered a lot this morning, but we've also set the stage.

[58 : 29] You know, I'm... Yes, you do know. I'm a big one for background, aren't I? Historical background. Because if you don't get the background, you won't get the foreground.

You've got to have the background. And the more background you get, then when we get into it, the more sense it'll make. So, let's stand, shall we? Thank you.

And we want that to be sealed to each and every heart that is here. Thank you for gracious provision that you've made for us more than we could ever comprehend.

And thank you for the privilege of gathering together to focus upon these great truths. And thank you for the manner in which you've given them, even in obscuring them from us, and couching them with riddle and enigma, because it only stimulates us to study.

But the payoff is so incredibly worth it. And we thank you for it in Christ's name. Amen.