

Sermon on the Mount Part XV - The Law of Oaths

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[0 : 00] Open your Bible to Matthew chapter 5. I think this is our 15th or 16th message, something like that, from the Sermon on the Mount.

I had intended to do all three chapters in less time than that. But suffice it to say that when we get beyond these six areas of treatment, we will be covering the material much more quickly.

So, trust me. Matthew chapter 5 and verse 33. 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.

And anything beyond these is of evil. This is the fourth area in which Christ contradicted the teaching of the religious establishment, as found here in the passages we just read.

[1 : 33] Last week, I called our third study the second. Actually, it was the third, but in a way it was tied to the second, because it was the law of divorce, and actually it was the third.

But yet, the second and the third are so closely entwined. And this is because, according to Christ's expression and teaching, there would be no divorce except for the grounds of adultery.

So, it was virtually impossible to separate them. So, today we want to consider the fourth in this series, which is the law of oaths that is found. And next up, we will look at the law of non-retaliation, and then conclude with the law of love or that of true neighborliness.

So, as I said, the Sermon on the Mount will move along much more quickly once we get beyond these. May I remind you also that this is all about authority.

And I want you to consider the conclusion, if you will jump ahead a little bit, to the end of the sermon. All right, chapter 7 and verse 28 and 29 give us the conclusion of this powerful, very controversial sermon that Christ just delivered.

[2 : 53] And verse 28 says, The result was, and he's talking, of course, about the result of Christ's teaching. And you'll note if you've got a red-letter Bible, which I don't particularly get excited about.

But here it is helpful because it goes back to the black letters, which indicates that Christ is not speaking here. And verse 28 says, The result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at his teaching.

And why were they so amazed? Because the next verse begins with the word for, and it could very well be rendered because. Because he was teaching them as one having authority and not as their scribes.

In other words, what this means is Christ presented himself as the authority for what he was saying. They were accustomed to the scribes and Pharisees presenting the rabbis and teachers that had died centuries earlier as the authorities.

Because these ancient rabbis had written commentaries, etc. on the law of Moses. And these commentaries consisted of their explanations of the law.

[4 : 09] So whenever they would teach, they would always quote a certain rabbi. Maybe it was a rabbi who had lived four, five, six hundred years earlier. Christ never did that. In fact, what he did was completely contradictory and the opposite of what they were accustomed to.

Because they would always say, to quote Rabbi Sheva. To quote Rabbi Maimonides. To quote this one. And then they would go on. Christ never did that.

And each time he said, You have heard that it has been said. He was talking about what one of the rabbis said. That is vastly different from Jesus saying, It has been written.

Then he would be referring to the scriptures. And he never contradicted the scriptures because he came for the exclusive purpose of fulfilling the scriptures.

Including giving himself for the ransom of the world. So this was quite electrifying and the people were listening. And I'm sure some of them were turning to one another and saying, Did you hear what he said?

[5 : 13] Because each time he told them their righteousness had to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. And then he would give an illustration. He gave six of them, in fact.

And this is the fourth one that we'll be looking at. He gave six illustrations. And then he would go on and quote the conventional wisdom saying, You have heard that it has been said.

But! In other words, he is injecting a conjunction there that means, They got it wrong. And they told you wrong. And this is the way it's supposed to be.

Then he would follow that. He would follow that phrase. But I say unto you. Well, anyone. Anyone would have a perfect right. Listening to this.

To say to themselves. But I say unto you. Well, who is he? By this time, he had not gained the notoriety and publicity that he would, As a couple of years went on.

[6 : 15] Because this is very early in Christ's ministry. So he kind of hit the ground running with some very controversial teaching. And he's got everybody talking about this. The whole community is.

And what Christ is actually doing is giving the interpretation of the law As it was originally intended by the giver.

In the spirit. In the intent of the law. Not in the nitpicking little details. That they were so accustomed to utilizing. And this is going to be quite controversial.

So today, we take up the subject of the law of oaths. And it is quite significant. Because today, the truth is in big trouble.

Perhaps like it has never been in the history of civilization. Or at least in the history of Western civilization.

[7 : 13] Where truth is in trouble. And I remember an emphasis on that that was given by Francis Schaeffer back in the 1970s. And by the way, he pretty much was right on track with what he was telling us was coming.

When once abortion on demand became law, he gave us a scenario that is being fulfilled in a very scary kind of way.

Because with that law and abortion on demand, what it does is it demeans and depreciates life itself.

The value of life. And when you do that, there are certain consequences that are going to follow. One of which is the truth. Truth telling. And Francis Schaeffer coined a term that at first I thought, well, what is he talking about?

What other kind of truth is there? But you know what he called it? He called it true truth. What kind of truth is there other than true truth?

[8 : 18] And if you look at the way truth is handled today, it's a very appropriate term. He is talking about truth that corresponds to reality.

The difference in truth telling today, and that in the past, is significant. In times past, we called the opposite of telling the truth.

We called that telling a lie. Today, one prefers to call it not lying per se.

Not really lying. But simply creating one's own reality. The difference? The difference?

The former, one knows he is lying. And the latter, one actually believes it, that he is a creator of his own reality.

[9 : 18] And that's what gets really serious. Because when people think they can create their own reality, they, in fact, bring into play a whole different scenario that has no basis for what is really being discussed.

So in no areas of life is one more likely to confront the false idea of creating one's own reality than in the area of politics and religion.

Now, follow me very closely, because some people have a real problem with this. And I appreciate where they're coming from, because I used to come from the same place. But I've since given that up.

You've heard the expression, the two things you never talk about in public is religion and politics. And frankly, it is the refusal of so many people to talk about those two things in public that is one of the reasons that we're in the grand mess we're in right now.

Not enough people have been talking about it. Politics is all about the temporal issues and their consequences.

[10 : 26] And religion is all about eternal issues and their consequences. Both are important. And when you consider that the politics involving the temporal can also have eternal consequences, that gives it another dimension of seriousness.

I can well remember when I thought it was inappropriate to even think, to talk, or much less express views regarding politics until I had a real wake-up call.

And let me tell you what it is. For those who disdain politics under any circumstances as a dirty business, corrupt, don't have anything to do with it, if you're a Christian, how can you be involved in politics, etc.

You need to understand why politics is really, really important. Very important. Because politics cannot be divorced from moral issues.

It's impossible. Politics involves morality at its deepest level. And I cannot imagine a Christian saying, I don't want to have anything to do with morality.

[11 : 54] I don't have a position on morality or immorality. You don't? Do you realize what you're thinking and what you're saying? And do you realize that it's this kind of attitude that keeps people from going to the polls and voting?

Because I don't want to have anything to do with that ugly business of politics. I'm above that. I'm a Christian. You are also a very deluded Christian.

I know of people who would not even think, would not even consider running for political office. Not even for the school board, because they would almost consider that to be of the devil.

Politics is all about the business of life and living. Romans chapter 10 talks about the powers that be and how we are responsible for recognition of and obedience to the powers that be.

And that we have a system of government that allows us to have input through the ballot box. Woe be unto the believer who thinks he can skip that process. That's not an important thing.

- [13 : 00] It's very important. It's very important. We do ourselves no favors when we try to dissociate ourselves from the reality by saying, well, I'm a Christian.
- And politics is such a corrupt, dirty game. And you know what? It is. It is. It is. Because it is run by people. Of course, politics is corrupt.
- We are dealing with a humanity that is fallen. Do you expect pure politics? We need to be in the fray. We need to speak out.
- We need to do so with honest conviction. And we need to be tolerant. And I'm talking about tolerance in accordance with the dictionary's definition of tolerance, not the way it's been rewritten.
- We need to be kind. And we need to be sensitive to those who differ with us, recognizing that they have honest opinions that don't match ours.
- [13 : 58] But we need to make our position known. We are responsible under God to have a voice. We ought not to be silenced once we walk outside these churches.
- And that's what the opposition would like. It's okay for you to be religious and have your spiritual convictions, but keep them in the church. They have no place out in the marketplace. Well, they do too.
- And Christ is going to correct that. In fact, it's going to be part and parcel with this particular message. Too many Christians have never understood why it's important to be involved in the political process.
- And some even refuse to vote. There was a huge, huge number of evangelicals who did not bother to go to the polls the last presidential election.
- Huge numbers. And there's no excuse for that. If we refuse to involve ourselves in voting and in the political process, it is tantamount to saying, you know what?
- [15 : 06] There is no right and wrong. Do you realize that when our legislatures meet and they pass laws, think about this now.
- Every law that is passed is based upon someone's view of morality. What we are saying is it is based upon someone's view of right and wrong.
- Are you as a Christian saying there is no right and wrong and it doesn't make any difference? We are spoken of as the salt of the earth, the light of the world.
- But if we refuse to allow ourselves to be scattered around by avoiding and ignoring the political process, how's that salt going to be distributed? If we don't let our light shine, how's the world going to see it?
- And they do so by our passionately but respectfully, courageously standing up and saying, this is what I believe.
- [16 : 08] And when these legislators vote on legislation, they vote in accordance with their worldview and their personal viewpoint, their idea and concept of morality and immerse.
- Let me ask you this. How do you think the abortion on demand thing ever got passed? It was because there were more who had that view of morality than there were who had the opposite view of morality.
- And you can say the same thing about the Supreme Court and about the Oval Office. We are not charged by God through our political involvement to produce results or affect outcomes, but we are called upon to participate as a responsible citizen.
- You owe it to your country and you owe it to your fellow man. Our Lord here is talking about the truth. And he's saying, let your yes be yes and your no be no.
- This is all about truth telling. And the manner in which they took oaths to buttress their claims. I was talking just this morning, just a few minutes ago with Keith Steigers, who works in the capacity of a bailiff in Greene County Court.

[17 : 31] And one of his responsibilities is to swear in people when they're going to give their testament. And I asked him, I said, do they use the Bible and put their left hand on the Bible and their right hand extended and say, I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, so help me God.

He said, no. The Bible isn't there. They don't use the Bible anymore. And neither do they say, so help me God. They just say, I do solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

I guess they're saying, so help me me. Now, what that does, legally and officially, it puts them under oath.

Legally, it puts them under oath. So that they can be charged with perjury if they lie. And it is later proven that they lie. And by the way, the court is only concerned about the truth.

And the jury has the often difficult, sometimes almost impossible task of trying to decide who is telling the truth and who is lying.

[18 : 49] Because virtually every trial that is held, somebody is lying. You ever notice that? Can you imagine what a court would be like if the judge and the jury could count on every person who had any input into that case, doing nothing but telling the absolute truth?

Well, if they did, it would be almost a given that justice would be served virtually every time. But we all know there's a great deal of injustice that comes out of our courts on every level from the Supreme Court on down.

And the reason is always the same. Somebody's not telling the truth. So how can you convince somebody that you're really telling the truth? Well, you take an oath.

And the oath was designed to add a degree of seriousness or solemnity to the testimony that was being given. So, if a Jew, and this is in the Jewish context here, of course, of which our Lord is speaking, and he says, in fact, look at these verses, if you will.

You do not swear. You make no oath at all. Verse 34. These are all sacred kind of establishments or concepts.

[20 : 10] And when you invoke one in accordance with what you are saying, it is intended to give a boost or to give additional credibility to what you were saying.

As if you would say, I would swear it on my mother's grave. And somebody would say, wow. Well, for him to say something like that, you can be sure that he's telling the truth.

No, not always. Not even when they swear on their mother's grave. It was designed to be an assurance, a binder, a guarantee that the person who was speaking was telling the absolute truth.

And this often came about in merchandising and in commerce. And someone would go into a shop to buy a particular item, and there would be a price on it.

And, of course, in the East, there's a lot of haggling that goes on, and that's part of the process. We don't do that over here, unless you're maybe going to a garage sale or yard sale, something like that.

[21 : 17] But in the East, it is considered standard operating procedure. In fact, they enjoy that as part of the transaction. And if you don't do that, you eliminate them from part of the pleasure of their salesmanship.

You go into a shop. I remember when we were there in 1990, and our leader, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, said, Now, when you go into these shops, he said, they're called souks, S-O-U-K.

And I guess that's their word for shop. And he said, whatever they tell you the price is, don't pay that price. In the first place, you don't have to pay that price.

And in the second place, they don't want you to pay that price. And I said, well, if that's the highest price, why wouldn't they want you to pay the highest price?

They want to get as much for it as they can get. And he said, yes, of course they do, but that's not part of the deal. Part of the deal is what they call haggling. You have to bargain. Now, we always used a word that goes back to my childhood.

[22 : 21] You can't use it today because it's politically incorrect. But I'm going to use it anyway because I've never been politically correct. So we would say, you go into a store and they're asking such and such, can't you see if you can Jew him down?

Oh, hey, that is a red flag thing today. You can't say that. They'll draw and quarter you. That's highly insensitive. That's offensive and all the rest of that nonsense.

But that's the term that was used. And one of the reasons it was used was because the Jewish people, the Jewish background and the Jewish culture had a history of doing that. It was bargaining. And by the way, if you don't know it or understand it, the Jewish people are the greatest commerce people that the world has ever known.

When it comes to business, industry, commercialism, they wrote the book. Nobody does it as well or as smoothly or as wealthily as do the Jews.

I believe it goes all the way back to Genesis and it's a special provision that God gave them. That's how and why they became bankers in Europe because Gentiles were forbidden. In the Roman Catholic Church, they were forbidden to charge interest.

[23 : 34] So they made the Jews the bankers and the Jews could charge the interest to the Gentiles. And that's how Jewish banking interest got started. But it was kind of forced upon them. And there is a very negative view that is held throughout much of the world about Jewish banking interest and the industry.

And most of it is unjustified. But the Jew has a reputation that is unparalleled when it comes to business and commerce and things like that.

So he would say, this item is so much. Well, how much did you pay for this? And of course, they're supposed to divulge it. And he said, if this did not cost me 25 rubles, I am the son of a dog or an ass.

Well, a man wouldn't say that about himself if what he were telling you wasn't true, would he? Well, people say all kinds of things about all kinds of things when they want to close a deal.

So you swear by something and you include an oath, may this happen to somebody say, if this is not true, may God strike me dead where I live.

[24 : 49] All of this is designed to convince you of the truthfulness of what I'm saying. And we say, oh, we wouldn't say something like that if it weren't true. Well, that's the whole idea. But the point is, people do say things like that, even when they're not true.

So what is our Lord's remedy for it? It's simple. He says, don't swear at all. Now, it isn't that there's something wrong with swearing. And I'm not talking about cursing.

I'm talking about taking an oath. The Old Testament talks repeatedly about making oaths or vows. And we are to pay the vows that we make to God. And God swears oaths a number of times.

Old Testament, New Testament. Surely I have sworn by my name I will not lie unto David. And in the book of Hebrews, Hebrews 6 and in Hebrews 7, God says, I have sworn that I will not lie to Abraham, my servant.

And regarding Christ prophetically, I have sworn unto him thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. And God, because he could swear by none greater, swore by himself.

[26 : 04] And all that means is that he attests to his own character and nature for the standard of truthfulness. And God himself swears and takes oaths.

But the remedy that he gives here is so simple, it is absolutely beautiful. Don't encumber your statements with swearing by the temple, swearing by Jerusalem, swearing by this, swearing by that.

Take a note. Just limited, simply, easily to yes and no. That's it. You mean just a simple yes when your answer is yes or no when your answer is no?

That's right. All this does is it calls for a person of integrity to simply speak the truth. Now, if you can't say yes or no, maybe you'll have to, and I'm not reading this into it because it isn't in the text, but I think it's there by implication.

Maybe you don't know whether the answer is yes or no. And the best you can do is a maybe. Well, if that's all you can muster, that's all you can muster.

[27 : 22] But the idea is there has to be the truthfulness behind it rather than an intent to deceive or to mislead. Let your yes be yes and your no be no.

Just be a person of your word so that whatever answer you give, people can take it to the bank. Can you do that? That's exactly the formula that is given here.

Make no oath at all, either by heaven, the throne of God. Verse 37, let your statement be yes, yes, or no, no. Anything beyond these is of evil because that is an attempt to buttress or to fortify the answer with an additional oath that ought not to be necessary if you are a person of integrity.

So anybody and everybody you know should not have to qualify their answer by swearing. Or when I was a kid, you know, it was if you told somebody something, is that true?

Hey, it's the truth, so help me. How was it we used to put it? Cross my heart and hope to die. Poke a finger in my eye if I'm not telling you the truth.

[28 : 42] And we used to have this cute little thing where you could say anything as long as you had your fingers crossed behind your back so you didn't see it. What that meant was that that canceled it out. And you could tell somebody that that's the truth, but yeah, I had my fingers crossed.

And my mother never took kindly to that. I never really understood why. You know, that's what we're talking about. And really, it is a level of maturity and honesty combined that we're talking about here.

You should not have to equivocate and attach conditions and all the rest to it. Just let it be a simple yes or a simple no. That'll suffice.

If your character and integrity is intact, that's all you need. Don't clutter it up and encumber it by trying to really convince somebody by swearing by this and swearing by that and adding this oath and that oath.

Just make it a simple yes or no. God is committed to truth. One of the characteristics. One of the names that our Lord gave to himself was, I am the way and the truth and the life.

[29 : 53] We've really been enjoying a series that nine o'clock hour and Ravi Zacharias has been speaking, among others, on the subject of truth and the importance of it and the absolute nature of truth so that we can know things.

You can know things only if truth exists. And as surely as truth exists, there is error. And they are often there side by side. Our next vow is, I'm just going to give you this by way of introduction because I wanted some Q&A; this morning and we won't have time to cover all of it, but we'll just approach the surface on it.

Verse 38. 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.

Do not resist him. What about self-defense? Let's read on. Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.

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

[31 : 21] Give to him who asks of you and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. Wow. This is commonly referred to as turn the other cheek theology.

And it is a very controversial passage of scripture. There are those who insist on taking it literally. There are those who insist on taking it figuratively. And there are those who don't know how to take it.

But one thing I can assure you that you really have to pull into the picture. And if you don't, you're going to miss it altogether. And that is you have to pay careful attention to the cultural context in which it is given.

And for me, that is the key. And it just makes it open up something beautifully. But we will reserve that for our next session. Now, we've got ample time. And I want to open it for any Q&A; that you may have.

And we will see what's on your mind. Any thoughts? Anyone?

[32 : 35] I can't believe this. Well, maybe you just want to let your yes be yes.

And you're in a bill. You have bill. OK. Bill and then Dick Jordan. Wait for the mic. We're in Hebrews.

Does it say about the earth and Melchizedek? It's around chapter 7.

I think it's chapter 7 or 8. Let me see here. 7 is the Melchizedek passage, I believe. Yeah. Hebrews. Hebrews 8.

[33 : 39] And I just picked out a couple of selections. Actually, there are several in the Bible. No, it isn't 7 and 8. It's 6 and 7. I'm sorry. Hebrews chapter 6.

And verse 17. In the same way, God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise, the unchangeableness of his purpose, interposed with an oath, in order that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.

And then in Hebrews chapter 6.

Hebrews chapter 6. It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah.

verse 20. Yeah. Verse 20. Yeah. Verse 20. Inasmuch as it was not without an oath, for they indeed became priests without an oath, but he with an oath through the one who said to him, the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, thou art a priest forever.

[35 : 13] And the reason that our Lord did this was actually to accommodate the culture at the time and what these people were steeped in.

And let me give you an example of that. It's back in Genesis. And this is all tied together because it deals with the concept of truthfulness and of people being able to rely on something that someone says.

And that is absolutely critical. And I'm in chapter, let's see. Let's see. Let's see.

Well, I hadn't planned to go there, but it was when God caused the deep sleep to come upon Abraham. Where is it? Yeah, it's chapter 15.

Let's go there for a minute. Chapter 15. In verse 7. This is Abraham in his real infancy of faith.

[36 : 37] Abraham started out with a pretty shaky face. It's going to grow and mature as he lives year by year. And he's going to come to the place where he will actually be willing to offer his son Isaac because he had faith that God was somehow going to take care of the situation, even though he didn't know how.

Now, he could have never done that at the first. Because faith is the kind of thing that grows. In other words, your confidence and ability to trust God tends to grow and mature along with your spirituality.

And after believing the promises and mingling them with your faith, you tend to come to the conviction, you know what?

God really can be trusted. You really can count on him. But you may not always have believed that. And it is characteristic of a young and immature faith to really doubt God.

And that's why Abraham did. That's why Sarah did. God told him, but yeah, but, you know, a baby and at our age and every year that went by and no baby. And then they came up with this Operation Hagar thing.

[37 : 48] God had nothing to do with that. But that was their lack of faith because they just thought that they had a right to give up on God because he hadn't produced yet.

And that meant that he wasn't going to produce. So we find a very, very wonderfully accommodating thing. And God is between a rock and a hard place when he tells Abraham something.

And, you know, it ought to be sufficient for God to just say something and you believe him just because he's God.

And you believe him. And you don't need any other reason. But in our humanness, you know what we want? We want proof. We want evidence. Show me.

And sometimes God really condescends to do that. And here in verse 6, verse 6 of chapter 15, we read that Abraham believed in the Lord.

[38 : 56] That's the beginning of his salvation. Someone has said that the gospel is the end of salvation, but it's the front end.

And nobody is more immature in their faith than a new believer. And Abraham is a new believer. He's a new believer. And God said he reckoned it to him as righteousness.

That means that Abraham believed God. And Abraham did not have the righteousness that God required in order for Abraham to be acceptable to him.

So all Abraham did was believe here what God told him about his eternal life. And Abraham believed that. And God took his faith in him in place of the righteousness that Abraham did not have.

So Abraham believed God. And God counted Abraham's faith as righteousness. Because he didn't have the righteousness that God required. But God counted his faith as righteousness.

[40 : 06] And look at this, verse 7. It's almost embarrassing. The Lord says, I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees to give you this land to possess it.

Now, it would seem that the only right response here would have to be, Well, thank you. Okay. That's wonderful.

I really appreciate that. Thank you so much. And Abraham didn't say that. He said, How may I know that I shall possess it?

I mean, just because you told me so. Does that mean anything, really? Now, it should have. But here we are again with a very immature faith. So, it is remarkable what God does.

Here is the creator of heaven and earth, the maker and sustainer of everything, stooping, graciously condescending and stooping to accommodate a man who is challenging whether or not he is telling them the truth.

[41 : 15] And he is willing to do it by using a cultural method that they use then to establish the truthfulness of a transaction and the integrity of a transaction.

And this is just absolutely wild. Look at what he does. He says in verse 9, Okay, Abraham. He's as much as saying, Okay, Abraham, we'll do this your way.

Well, what was Abraham's way? When two people entered into some kind of a contractual agreement, that was a contract not to be violated, how did they do it?

They didn't go to a lawyer and draw official papers. They used things that they had at hand. So, here's how they did it. And God is addressing this.

And he says to Abraham, Bring me a three-year-old heifer. And a three-year-old female goat. And a three-year-old ram.

[42 : 21] And a turtle dove. And a young pigeon. Now, I don't want to read between the lines unnecessarily, but it's interesting that Abraham didn't say, Huh, what do you want these for?

What's this for? Why should I do that? He didn't. And I think the reason he didn't was because he knew that a covenant was in process of being established, and this is the way his people, in his day, in his place, went about it.

Never mind that God said it. That wasn't good enough. But if we do it the way I'm used to doing it, I can have confidence in that. That's as much as what Abraham was saying.

And God is deeply sighing, Okay, Abraham, we'll do it your way. Bring these animals. And he brought all these animals in.

And he cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other. But he did not cut the birds. And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

[43 : 30] Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.

And God said to Abram, Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed 400 years.

He's talking about Egypt. They're going down to Egypt. This is hundreds of years in advance. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve.

That's Egypt. And afterward, they will come out with many possessions. And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace. You shall be buried at a good old age.

And then, in the fourth generation, they shall return here. That's when they come back, 400 years later, with Joshua. For the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.

[44 : 30] Now look at verse 17. And it came about, when the sun had set, that it was very dark. And behold, there appeared a smoking oven, and a flaming torch, which passed between those pieces.

On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, to your descendants, I have given this land, from the river of Egypt, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, to the Kenite, the Kenazite, the Kadmonite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Rephaim, and so on and so on.

And all the while, this deep sleep that fell upon him, and God passing between those parts. And what all of this symbolized, in Abraham's day was, when you entered into a contractual agreement with someone, you took all of these animals, that are mentioned here, and you cut them in half.

And you put a half of the animal here, and a half of the animal there. And then, the two of you, making the contract, walked arm in arm, between those animal pieces.

That symbolized, the institution of that contract. And what each one was saying to the other, is, if I violate, this contract, may I become, as these animals.

[45 : 57] That was the greatest degree, of seriousness and solemnity, that they could add to that thing. In other words, it was like punishable by death. Punishable by being cleaved in two.

It was a very somber thing. It ought not to have been necessary at all. But God is simply accommodating Abraham's unbelief. He could have said, okay, you won't believe me?

Forget it. I'll find another guy. And go on. But he didn't. He condescended, to accommodate Abraham, in his flimsy faith.

And when the time came, Abraham didn't pass with God, through those burning pieces. Only God did. Abraham was asleep.

What's the significance of all that? The significance is, this is an unconditional covenant. The only one who is under obligation, is God.

[46 : 55] Not Abraham. Abraham. Wow. That is really something. That is the same thing as saying, Abraham, I'm not entering into this contract, charging you, with having to complete, your part of the deal.

So, I will complete, my part of the deal. Now, that's the ordinary term, of a contract. If one violates the contract, then the other, can opt out of it, with just cause.

Because, you didn't keep your word, so, the deal's off. That means, God is telling Abraham, my fulfilling, this contract, this promise to you, and your descendants, to give you this land forever, is not, is not, contingent upon, your, deserving it, earning it, work for it, or anything else.

It is going to be realized, because, I am a God, who cannot lie, and I have promised. It is an, unconditional, covenant.

Now, our friends, who do not, buy this, are referred to, as, replacement, theologians.

[48 : 11] And, they believe, that because, Israel, has been unfaithful, and Israel, crucified their Messiah, God has written them off, completely, and forever.

The deal is off. The crucifixion of the Messiah, was the deal breaker, as far as they're concerned. So, God has written Israel off, and he has turned, to an entirely different people, called the church.

And, in their thinking, the church has replaced Israel, and this is why it's called, replacement theology. The Bible teaches, no such thing. And, this passage here, in Genesis 15, really solidifies, the concept, that it is an, unconditional covenant.

It is based, upon the integrity of God, not upon the performance, or faithfulness, of Israel. That's why, Israel is such a, key figure in prophecy, and why God will make good, on all that he has promised, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their seed.

There was another question. All right. Not a question, just a comment, Mario. Just, make your yes be yes, and your no be no.

[49 : 20] When I was a little boy, my dad told me, and, kind of, it was almost over my head, when he told me, he said, a man is only as good, as his word.

If his word is good, he's good. If his word is no good, he's no good. So, it's, it's the basics, the same thing. Let your yes be yes, and your no be no.

Appreciate that. Words of wisdom, from your father. And, you know, we ought to really, seek to instruct that, and instill that, in our children. Truthfulness, truthfulness, is an incredibly, vital commodity.

And, it's, it's linked, to a person's, integrity. And, and the word, the word, integrity, even comes from the, there's a, there's a mathematical word, the, the integral, integral.

And, we talk about integral, and integrate, and integration. And, it has to do with a oneness, as opposed to a duplicity. And, when we tell, when we tell someone, a lie, do you know what we are telling, ourselves, on the inside?

[50 : 31] We're telling the truth, on the inside. You see, you have to know, what the truth is, before you can tell a lie. And, we're telling ourself, a truth on the inside, but we're telling a lie, to them.

And, that means, we are different on the inside, than we are on the outside. And, we are to be persons, of, integrity. And, that means, we are on the outside, what we are on the inside.

You tell the truth to yourself, on the inside, you tell the truth to others, on the outside. That makes you a whole person. As opposed to, what we might say, two-faced.

Two-faced. Two-faced. Or, speak with a forked tongue. It's, it's a priceless, precious thing. Well, every time, every time a court convenes, every time a court convenes, and on, on any level, the only thing the court is searching for, is truth.

They're just trying to find the truth. Because, once they know the truth, then, they can hand down a ruling. But, you can't hand down a ruling, if you don't know what the truth is. So, they go through all this rigmarole, all of these witnesses, all these testimonies, just trying to arrive at one thing.

[51 : 47] What really happened? What's true? So, people are, urgently dependent, upon being, truthful. We are, Ephesians says, let every man speak, truth, to his neighbor.

And, if we speak truth, to our neighbor, ought we not, do, at least as much, for the one, that we're married to? A marriage, is utterly, dependent, upon truth telling, honesty, openness, above board.

Whatever, a marriage, might have, if it doesn't have truthfulness, whatever it does have, can't count for much, because this is so, absolutely, vital.

We are to be, pursuers of truth, believers in truth, propagators of truth, guard the truth, buy the truth, and sell it not. Truth is the most, priceless, precious commodity, that humanity has.

We need to guard it, guard it carefully. Would you stand, please? Father, we are grateful for, the simplicity of, what is in, a mere affirmation, expressed in a yes, or in a no.

[53 : 08] And, we trust that you will, impress upon the minds, and hearts, of each and every one of us, members of the body of Christ, how absolutely essential it is, that the words we speak, be words, of truth, and honesty, so that when we say something, people can believe it, without wondering, whether or not, it's really true.

Thank you for this passage of scripture, and for the emphasis that it makes. May we take it to heart, in every regard, in Christ's name. Amen.