

Sermon on the Mount Part XI - MurderII

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[0 : 00] Needless to say, this is a very puzzling, problematic passage, and the reason for that is because there are items in it that can be understood only in connection with the prevailing culture that existed at the time our Lord made these statements.

And when you try to impose our culture upon this culture, you really don't get anywhere, because it just doesn't make a lot of sense. And we will see that as we get into the text.

But before we do, I want to get on the table some remarks by way of preface or introduction. I call them some propositions that I want you to consider before we come into the text itself, because the Sermon on the Mount is set in a certain historical context, even though it is in the life of our Lord, and that's not hard to place.

But you've got to understand that the cultural gap exists as you read the Bible. That's because these people lived under different customs, traditions, et cetera, than what we do today.

There is a historical gap. We've got 2,000 years that separate them from us. There is a geographical gap. We've got an ocean that separates them from us. So all of these gaps have to be bridged if you're going to understand the passage.

[1 : 21] So let me get a few things on the table at the beginning and give these consideration, and then we'll move into the text. This is Sermon on the Mount, I think it's number 11 or 12, is it something like that?

But we are considering the Law of Murder, Part 2. For several years preceding the birth of Christ, the people of Israel, those to whom God gave the Law, had been existing under terribly distorted interpretations of that Law.

These distortions were perpetrated by none other than those who were positioned as their spiritual leaders, commonly called the chief priests and Pharisees.

They were the so-called experts as regarding everything about the Law God gave through Moses. We saw early on in the Sermon on the Mount that Christ said the righteousness possessed by the scribes and Pharisees was not adequate.

Anyone who wished to enter the kingdom of heaven when it would be established on the earth would have to possess a righteousness that exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees.

[2 : 39] That's in Matthew 5.20, and it is the key verse for the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. In other words, he's going to say, you are all familiar with the quality of righteousness that the scribes and Pharisees have and the people were.

And then he's going to tell them, that isn't good enough. You've got to have a righteousness that is more than that. And that would have been found very puzzling to the people because most of them would have been thinking, what, gee, wow.

If the scribes and Pharisees and the priests, if their righteousness isn't good enough, they are the most holy that there are. If theirs isn't good enough, there's no way possible that I could make it.

And then Christ goes on in the balance of the sermon consisting of the balance of chapter 5, all of 6, and all of 7 to explain to them what kind of righteousness it is that is required that would exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

And near the very end of our Lord's life, after having done battle with this religious establishment for three years, it was apparent they were not any closer to agreement, but rather the gap between the establishment, the establishment's position, and that of Christ's position, had even widened.

[4 : 09] And this, of course, was a large reason for the animosity that existed between them and this state of rivalry that was just ongoing.

And it started very early. Actually, it started even before Christ arrived on the scene. It started in the person of John the Baptist. And he rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, calling them.

This is John before Jesus ever came on the scene and was baptized. And John called them a brood of vipers and said, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth the fruits, meet for repentance, etc.

And John, a man of God, he knew. He knew the religious position of the authorities who were in power.

And he rejected it completely. And he knew and understood that all they did was oppress the people and use their position as an advantage over the common people. And I want you to see if you'll keep your place here in Matthew 5 and come back with me to chapter 23.

[5 : 14] And the reason I'm selecting this is because the conflict that Christ had with the religious establishment was obvious from his earliest introduction to Israel.

And we are going now to Matthew 23 because this is near the end of his earthly ministry. And it will encapsulate the conflict that has been taking place for over the last three years.

This has just been an ongoing battle between Jesus and the religious establishment. The common people heard Christ gladly. He was a breath of fresh air to them.

But the religious people saw Jesus as a threat to their position, to their perks, to their policies and everything. And not only that, but he consistently showed them up.

And he wasn't trying to show them up. But every time they asked for it. And he would come back with an answer that was just so simple and so logical and so compelling that it just left the religious establishment red faced.

[6 : 25] And the common people would look at each other and smile and say, wow, how about that? You know what? This man speaks with authority.

Not like the scribes and the Pharisees. Now, how do you think the scribes and the Pharisees took to that? They were jealous. They were angry.

They were vindictive. On at least one occasion that we know of in John, they got together and said, he's got to go. We've got to kill him.

That was the degree of animosity that they had against Jesus Christ. And that's what led to this whole scheme of Judas in the middle of the night leading them there so that they could take him captive without a big hubbub from the public because everybody would be in bed.

It would be about two o'clock in the morning and they're going to take advantage of that setting. So here in Matthew 23. And this is, as I mentioned, this is very near the end of our Lord's earthly ministry here in Matthew 23.

[7 : 31] And this is what we read. I'm not going to read all of it, but I just start in verse 13. 23, 13. How did they do that?

How did they shut off the king? What Jesus is saying here is, you have made the kingdom of heaven inaccessible to people.

Actually, it is inaccessible to you. And you are making it inaccessible to them. By your distorted, warped interpretations of the law, your nitpicking, your dissecting, your literalizing, you have reduced the law of Moses to nothing but tradition.

By your interpretation. Let's read on. Woe, verse 14. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses.

Even while for a pretense you make long prayers, therefore you shall receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourself.

[9 : 02] Folks, this is not politically correct language. This is a real readout. But it is all based upon the truth of what Christ is saying.

And you've heard the expression, sometimes the truth hurts. Well, if you're on the wrong side of it, it'll hurt. And they were on the wrong side of it.

Christ, listen, Christ was not being unkind. He was not being rude. He was being factual and calling a spade a spade.

He was speaking truth to the situation that existed. And even though it may sound harsh and unloving, I can assure you it is nothing but tough, tough love.

Any one of these whom he is condemning here because of their behavior, any one of them could repent of their sin and turn around, and the forgiveness that God has for everybody else would be just as available to them.

[10 : 06] But they demonstrate, of course, that they are not going to do that. Look, if you will, at... Well, I've just got to pick and choose here because it's...

Well, we won't go there, but it's Mark 7 that I was thinking of where he said, By your traditions, you make the word of God of none effect.

Your traditions, your interpretations that you impose upon the word of God that are a far cry from what God ever intended, but it's what you have twisted and warped and made out of it, you have neutralized the word of God.

You have robbed it of its power that God put in it. You have so obfuscated the truth with your nitpicking details and all the rest that you've added to it that you've reduced the word of God to no value to the people at all.

And when Christ stated what he did about their response and their interpretation, he does this repeatedly at least six times in the Sermon on the Mount. You have heard that it has been said of them of old.

[11 : 21] Who were them of old? They were the various rabbis who had lived for the previous several hundred years who wrote interpretations and commentaries on the law.

And these in the Jewish society were called the Mishnah, the M-I-S-H-N-A-H, the Mishnah and the Gemara. And these were Pharisaical, rabbinical interpretations of the law, and some of them were so nonsensical and ridiculous that they shouldn't have been, shouldn't have wasted the paper that they were written on.

But they became instilled in the history of Israel as authoritative documents to be appealed to and to be obeyed. And they were nothing but the traditions of these rabbis.

And instead of a rabbi giving a biblical answer from the law of Moses, they would give what some rabbi said about it that lived a couple of hundred years ago or 600 years ago.

And that became their authority. That's what Christ was condemning rather than going to the scriptures themselves. So as you can see, all through Matthew 23 here, near the end of the Lord's ministry, we find this strong language in verse 31 of chapter 23.

[12 : 39] You bear witness against yourselves that you are the sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up them the measure. Verse 33, you serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape? This is really, really tough stuff, tough language.

And he wasn't pulling any punches. And you know why he wasn't? Because he knew and understood what was at stake. And when there are really, really important issues at stake, I'll tell you what you do.

You speak so clearly that nobody can misunderstand. And that's what he's doing. This is no time for roundabout talk.

This is no time for vague, uncertain assertions. This is no time for, I'm going to say this, read into it whatever you want to. No, no, no. Our Lord did not speak that way.

He spoke very plainly, very bluntly, very forthrightly, so that there was little misunderstanding. Jesus Christ would have made a lousy politician.

[13 : 47] Because one of the principal rules of politics is you don't go around saying to people what you really think. You say to people what you think they want you to think.

That's the game of politics. And it smells to high heaven, doesn't it? Well, back to Matthew 5 and the Sermon on the Mount and the specific areas that Christ used to illustrate the moral and spiritual gap that existed between the law as interpreted by the scribes and Pharisees, contrasted with his revealing the true interpretation of the laws.

And there were six specific areas that Christ addressed. Six times he's going to say, you have heard that it has been said, but I say unto you.

And what he was doing was contrabanding that, contradicting that. He's saying, I know this is what you've heard in the past. It isn't right. This is what's right.

I say unto you. Well, what gave him the authority to countermand the collective wisdom of all these ancient rabbis who had gone before?

[15 : 02] What made what he had to say so special and so compelling? And the answer is simple. Just his identity. That's all. It's because he was who he was.

He spoke with the very authority of the God whom he was. And he was not out of line in countermanding them. In fact, he was right on target, as we well know.

These six areas that Christ addresses is first the law of murder in verses 21 through 26, the law of adultery in 27 through 30, the law of divorce in verses 31 and 32, the law of oaths in 33 through 37, and the law of love, the last one he dealt with in verse 43 through 48.

And currently, we are just treating the first, which is the law of murder. The religious establishment taught.

Now, here's where the contrast comes from. Here's where Christ is going to differ with him. This was the position of the religious establishment at the time regarding the law of murder.

[16 : 13] They taught that the only, that it was only the actual act of murder that constituted murder. And technically, this was true.

No one could be tried for murder who had not actually committed murder. But the problem was really what was in the heart of the person before he actually did the deed.

Whenever someone commits murder, the murder they commit is never the beginning of the thing. It's the end of the thing.

The beginning was constructed in the mind before they actually committed the murder. And this is why there is a vast difference between killing and murder.

When you go to war, you don't murder people. You kill people. Well, I guess there are circumstances under which you can murder people. Even in war, when a soldier takes it upon himself to execute civilians.

[17 : 27] And we've had instances in all the wars we have been in, we have had instances of murder in addition to killing.

And murder is never justifiable. Sometimes killing is. And legally, it's referred to as justifiable homicide.

It reminds me of one of my favorite movies of John Wayne. I think it was True Grit. He was standing before this judge.

And this judge says, Now, Reuben, that was his Reuben, what?

Thank you. Thank you. Reuben Cogburn. This judge says, Now, Reuben, I've got down here on this record that you have killed, I think he said, six men, something like that. Well, Your Honor, I didn't ever kill nobody that didn't need killing.

[18 : 31] And sometimes people need killing, especially when you go to war. You know, that's the way, that's the way it works. The problem was really what was in the heart of the person before he actually did the deed.

You may kill someone in your heart. Not literally, but figuratively. You may be so angry with someone, you want them dead.

And there are people who can be so angry with another individual, they just glare at them. And you could almost read their facial expression. And they may well be saying in their mind, I wish you were dead.

I wish, I wish I could kill you. That's what he's talking about. That's where murder begins. It begins with the thinking, the animosity, the bitterness, the revenge factor.

This is where murder begins. And God sees this. God sees someone killing someone by the thoughts in their heart before they actually do the deed.

[19 : 49] And this is the real problem. It is a heart condition that is in danger of being acted upon. And we're talking about premeditated murder.

We're not talking about the killing that comes about from passion that may be classified as manslaughter, which is a different thing when it lacks the premeditation or the malice of forethought, as they refer to it.

Here in the heart is where the issue needs to be resolved. And if it is, there will be no actual murder committed, literally.

if this murderous thought is able to be overcome and set aside because the basis for the anger is no longer there, and there's only one basis for anger not being there, and that is the issue is resolved.

And that's what we're going to be talking about as upcoming in this passage. The law can only be enacted upon deeds actually committed before one can be tried for it.

[20 : 59] But God sees and knows beyond the law. He reads the hatred in the heart. And look at verse 21 of chapter 5 and verse 23.

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 shall say to his brother, Raca, I'm reading this from the New American Standard. Some of you have different translations. R-A-C-A, Raca.

What in the world is that? We'll tell you in a moment. Shall be guilty before the Supreme Court. And whoever shall say, You fool, shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

Now does that make sense? No. It doesn't make sense. Call somebody a fool and you're in danger of going to hell?

[22 : 07] Is that what this means? Well, that's what it says. But we will dissect that momentarily. There are literary and cultural considerations.

The literary has to do with intended hyperbole, or intentional exaggeration understood by his audience. And Jesus uses this language repeatedly.

And so do all the Bible writers. Hyperbole is a legitimate literary tool. It is an intentional, understood exaggeration. It is a deliberate exaggeration.

It is not lying. Lying is when you deceive somebody, but when you use hyperbole, you exaggerate intentionally, but the audience knows that you are exaggerating, and they're not going to accuse you of lying.

As I've said, when someone says, We had a big party last night. Man, it was a blast. We had a great time. Really. Who all was there? Everybody was there. Well, everybody wasn't there.

[23 : 13] But who's going to stand up and say, Now, wait a minute. This is a very untruthful person. He's lying. Because I wasn't there. So everybody wasn't there. So he's a liar.

Well, he's speaking. He's speaking with hyperbole. Hyperbole means you overstate the situation, but everybody knows you're overstating the situations.

And it's just a method of communication. And we use it, and we do it all the time, like raining cats and dogs. Does this mean that canines and felines are falling out of the sky? No.

Well, you're going to say, Well, you're not a very truthful person. You said it was raining cats and dogs. I never saw a dog. Never saw a cat of any breed. No. You know exactly. Well, sometimes that's exactly what our Lord's talking about.

And what the Apostle Paul is talking about. And all the gospel. And the Old Testament is loaded with hyperbole, as well as other figures of speech. Raka and you fool are indications of extreme internal anger.

[24 : 17] which, if not checked, can lead to actually committing murder. That is, doing the deed. The formula for resolving the issues that cause the anger follows in verse 23 through 26.

And this is what our Lord is saying must be implemented if you're going to reverse this tendency or this desire to commit murder. If you're actually thinking about doing away with someone.

And you know, more often, it has to do with this person whom you hate so terribly is someone who has wronged you terribly.

Offended you deeply. So you could just wish them dead. Do you have any idea how many people have not acted upon their hatred and done away with somebody and there was only one thing that kept them from doing it?

Only one thing. And that is, they didn't think they could get away with it. But if they had any idea that they could get away with it and wouldn't go to jail, wouldn't be found out, they would snuff that person in a heartbeat.

[25 : 39] And it's only the fear of getting caught that keeps them from doing the deed. And sometimes, the hatred and the anger is so overwhelming, they don't even care if they get caught.

they've got to do away with that person. That's what Jesus is saying is the real problem. And that's why he's going to go on and give the formula for heading that off.

And it has to do with reconciliation. And it's a beautiful thing. That follows in verse 23 through 26.

Let's read 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 and go your way.

First, be reconciled to your brother and then come and present your offering. Now, this is in a strictly Jewish setting. This is a temple setting. This is under the Mosaic law. This has nothing to do in actuality with this dispensation in which we live.

[26 : 48] But there are principles involved that are abiding and are cross-dispensational. And they're not limited to just one dispensation. And the principle here is don't think for a moment that you can serve the Lord or give to God or be pleasing to the Lord when you have animosity and murderous thoughts in your heart toward another human being.

Don't come around asking God to bless anything or to be involved in anything or to do anything for Him. He's not interested.

God has made it clear that He is very, very, very much into relationships. And a relationship that is not what it ought to be should be subjected to the steps that are required to make it what it ought to be.

And provision is made for that. As a believer in Jesus Christ, now let me say this as clearly as I know how. And it's not going to go over very well with some people.

A believer in Jesus Christ has no business being on the outs with anyone. You have no business harboring murderous, venomous, vindictive thoughts toward anyone.

[28 : 21] There's no place for it. And there is provision for removing it if it exists. Christians can engage in hatred and animosity just as much as non-Christians.

And almost always it's the result of, but you don't know what they did to me. And we justify it with that. But it is not justifiable.

Now, we'll also deal with this when we get to it. There are ways in which differences can be and should be reconciled, but there are some situations that are irreconcilable.

And the reason they are irreconcilable is because you've got to have two parties to have a conflict and you've got to have two parties to have a reconciliation. And you have no control over the other party.

You only have control over you and your attitude. So, that's upcoming. Raka, is an Aramaic term that is transliterated into King James.

[29 : 37] And what I mean by that is, let me say a little bit about Aramaic. And I can't speak with any real authority on this, and scholars are divided.

Most people, most scholars are of the opinion that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were all originally written in Greek. Certainly, that's the majority opinion.

And they may well have all been written in Greek. I'm talking about the original autographs. The one that was the one that Matthew wrote as God inspired him to write it.

The original document of which there is only one. And so far as we know, it either doesn't exist or we don't have any idea where it is.

And that's true of most of the Bible. But other scholars, and granted, they are of a minority, are convinced that the New Testament gospel books, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were originally written in Aramaic and were later translated into Greek.

[30 : 48] Now, I'm not saying that that's the case. I'm just saying that's one of the disputed opinions. I don't know. I suspect there are going to be a lot of surprises like that. Aramaic was a very common language and many scholars believe that Jesus spoke Aramaic.

There is a nation just to the north, a little bit to the northeast of Israel, that is called Syria. It's very much in the news today because there's a huge conflict going on there between the insurgents, the people who have risen up in rebellion against the totalitarian regime of Bashar, who is the prime minister of Syria.

And Syria goes way, way back. You remember Naaman the Syrian? He was the commanding officer of the Syrian troops. Israel and Syria share a border.

and much of the culture and ways of living and doing things is the same in Syria as it is in Israel or at least was back in Bible days.

A lot of the same terms, they ate a lot of the same kind of food, they wore the same kind of clothes, they enjoyed the same kind of work and activities, etc. There was very little difference between them and if you look in the Bible, the name sometimes Aram, A-R-A-M from which of course the word Aramaic is taken is synonymous with Syria and it's a very, very ancient country.

[32 : 24] The Damascus capital is the oldest continuing existing lived-in city in the entire world. This is where the Apostle Paul had his conversion on the road to Damascus. So it's a very significant area and the Syrian language was Aramaic and Aramaic was spoken all throughout the region and it's entirely possible that our Lord spoke Aramaic probably spoke Hebrew and Greek as well or any other language that he wanted to.

But there are certain terms that are in the Aramaic language that are transliterated and brought over into the English and what they did was they kept the word from the Aramaic because they didn't have an English equivalent.

And some feel that that's what the Greeks did too. They kept the Aramaic word and put it into the Greek New Testament because they didn't have a Greek equivalent so they just brought the word over wholesale from the Aramaic language.

And one of those words is right here in verse 22. Raca. R-A-C-A. Raca. There's another, I think it's in Mark 7 where Jesus said instead of using your resources to take care of your mother and father in their time of need, you say korban.

C-O-R-B-A-N. Well, what in the world does that mean? That's an Aramaic word too. And it means all that I have is dedicated to God. And this, by the way, was a convenient loophole that the scribes and Pharisees had created for people who wanted to conserve their own assets rather than spend their money for the care of honoring their mother and father.

[34 : 13] Like the commandment reads, thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother. Well, how do you honor them? You honor them by providing for them in a time of need just as they provided for you as a child.

And when your parents are elderly and they need assistance or they need money or whatever, and you have the wherewithal to help them, you say, gee, mom and dad, I'd love to help you, but I'm in a Corban situation, which means all of my assets are already dedicated to God.

I don't have anything to give you. Sorry, you wouldn't want me to rob God to meet your needs, would you? And Jesus tells them in Mark 7 that you dishonor the law and you dishonor your parents by pleading this phony, put-up job of Corban.

It was nothing but a convenient loophole that was used. And that's the thing that Jesus despised, and he soundly criticized. I want to introduce you to a book that I'm sure is not available, is not in print.

I got this years ago in a used bookstore, I think, in Seattle, Washington. Interestingly enough, there is some Aramaic writing in it, and it says, in English it says, to Ellen B.

[35 : 38] Mussons, with sincerest appreciation of your kind interest in my Aramaic work. And it is dated July 7, 1936, one year and one day after yours truly was born.

And then he signs his name in Aramaic. The book is entitled Gospel Light, comments on the teachings of Jesus from Aramaic and Unchanged Eastern Customs by George M.

Lamza. He is an ethnologist and an Aramaic language expert. And I have found this book to be absolutely fascinating. And no, don't ask to borrow it because it will not be available.

You might find one online, though, but listen to this. This is his explanation of Raqqa. And bear in mind, he is speaking as Syrian or as an Aramaic.

And he says, Raqqa is a noun derived from the Aramaic word Raqq, R-A-K. What does Raqq, R-A-K, in Aramaic mean?

[36 : 48] It means spit. I wouldn't get the connection, would you? This word was not translated into Greek.

Now, he is assuming, and he is one who holds a position, that the Gospels were originally written in Aramaic and later translated into Greek. And he says, This word was not translated into Greek.

Perhaps the translator could not find a similar habit of spitting among Greek people as among Semites, or he may not have known the meaning of the word. During heated arguments and controversies, Easterners often spit in each other's face when they fail to agree.

I don't know about you, but that makes me madder than hops. Is there anything as despicable as spitting in someone's face? I mean, how vulgar?

health. Yeah. During heated arguments and controversies, Easterners often spit in each other's face.

[38 : 02] Merchants and prospective customers, after long bargaining and arguments concerning price, spit in each other's face when they fail to agree. well, can you imagine two grown people standing there exchanging spit?

I mean, if this is a romantic situation between a man and woman, and you're sucking face, exchanging spit, that's a little different, isn't it? But that's not what they're talking about.

Okay? Nearly all quarrels are started by spitting. One often says, I will spit in your face.

Spitting is the most contemptible thing in the East, and is still practiced in Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. That is, today, it's still practiced.

Not even priests and rabbis are free from this insulting habit. Hmm. spit. Well, where did that come from?

[39 : 18] And we need to journey back. Let's quickly go back to the first spitting incident in Deuteronomy chapter 25, and you will get, I think, a new appreciation of something that I have often said over the years, how that the Bible is its own best interpreter, chapter, and you use the Bible to interpret the Bible.

And we've got a very interesting situation that develops here. In Deuteronomy 25, there was a law that existed, and by the way, I also want to use this as an example to demonstrate to you that not only are Gentiles not under the Mosaic law, we never were.

We never were under the Mosaic law, and we still aren't. We are not under law, we are under grace. The law was never given to Gentiles. The law of God contained in the 39 books of the Old Testament was never given to the Egyptians, was never given to the Assyrians, was never given to the Babylonians.

It was given exclusively to the people of Israel. And one of their provisions of the law was called the Levirate law, taken from the name of Levi. The Levirate law said, now this is very strange, we just find this culturally, socially unacceptable.

But this was the law that was given to Israel. And it had to do with property rights and the maintenance of estates and things of that nature.

[40 : 51] If a man married and died before he had any children, children, so that he had no one to carry on his name, no one to carry on the family line, it was considered the legal responsibility, the moral responsibility, the social responsibility, for the dead man's brother, if he had one, to go in to his widow and impregnate her, father, so that she would have a child to carry on the family.

Now we find that utterly unacceptable. But you're not in that culture and you're not in that circumstance. This, as I said, had to do with the maintenance of property rights and everything, and this was exclusively for Israel, the children of Israel in the land.

and it was considered a solemn obligation to do that. You may remember, I don't know where it is, it's in Genesis, a man by the name of Onan, O-N-A-N, was supposed to fulfill this Leveret Law to his, it would have been his sister-in-law, and her husband had died, and he went into her, and he engaged in sexual relations with her, but the text says that when he was ready to deposit his sperm in her body, he withdrew, and he spilled his sperm on the ground.

Rather than impregnate this woman, who was his sister-in-law, he refused to do that, and his name was Onan, and he spilled his sperm on the ground, and God struck him dead, right there on the spot.

So the Leveret Law was in place, and was a very serious thing, and I want to begin reading in Deuteronomy 25, and verse 5.

[43 : 05] Follow me if you will. When brothers live together, and one of them dies and has no sons, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man.

Her husband's brother shall go into her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And it shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out from Israel.

In other words, that he'll not be remembered, the name won't be carried on any longer. But, if the man dies, if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, now this is in any city, it was the gate of the elders that was the place of government in the town.

This is where the local honchos met and did business and heard cases, etc. This was the place of authority in each town. She would go up to the gate to the elders and say, my husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel.

He is not willing to perform the duty of the husband's brother to me. Now you see, you need to understand that. This was looked upon as a duty, as an obligation. Then the elders of his city shall summon him, call him on the carpet, and speak to him, and you know what they're going to say.

[44 : 40] Is it true that you're not willing to go, you know you're supposed to do this, this is what the lever law requires, you've got to be responsible now and do the right thing. And he says, no, I'm not going to do it.

And if he persists and says, I do not desire to take her. Now look, folks, I don't know how else to put this, but this proposition is just strictly business.

Okay? There isn't any romance, there isn't any necessary sexual feelings required or anything like that. As I said, this is strictly business.

Now it may be difficult for most men to think of sexual relations as business, but business is business under these circumstances. All right? Then, if he says, I do not desire to take her, then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders.

What that means is, this is public. This is out in the open. And she will pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face.

[45 : 54] I bet he wasn't looking forward to that. And she shall declare, thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.

And in Israel his name shall be called the house of him whose sandal is removed. So, what could a woman do under the circumstances short of murder to disgrace, to punish, to make a public example of this man?

What would be the very worst thing that she could do to him in public? She spit in his face. That is an expression of absolute contempt, disgust, hatred, venom, whatever.

She just spits in his face. This has got absolutely nothing to do with our culture. It's got everything to do with their culture.

We cannot transfer our culture back into the Bible and expect to understand the Bible based on our mores, customs, culture, etc.

[47 : 22] You've got to let the Bible have its customs as they do. And there's another. Come with me to Job. Job chapter 30. Job chapter 30 and verse 9 and 10.

This is Job in one of his laments, you know, with his miserable friends and all the suffering and everything. And Job says in verse 9, Now I have become their taunt.

I have even become a byword to them. They abhor me and stand aloof from me, and they do not refrain from spitting at my face.

Because Job all the while is protesting his innocence. He is saying, Look, I haven't done anything. I don't know why all this adversity is coming upon me.

I don't know why God allowed me to lose all my children. I don't know how God, why he took all my property and all my wealth away. Why he took all my animals away. I didn't do anything. I'm innocent.

[48 : 29] Yeah, you rotten light. You. And that's how Job was treated. By how many people we don't know, but he makes it very clear.

They do not refrain from spitting at my face. This is the thing you did for the person who was regarded as the most contemptible, despicable individual that you've ever met.

You spit in his face. Well, the plot thickens. Matthew 26. We're already in Matthew 5. Come back to Matthew 26.

verse 65.

Then the high priest tore his robes. This is as Jesus is being examined by the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The high priest tore his robes, saying, he has blasphemed.

[49 : 26] What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy. What do you think? They answered and said, he is deserving of death.

And then they spat in his face and beat him with their fists, and others slapped him. When they spit in the face of someone, it was the equivalent of saying, you deserve to die, you scum, you, you no good, you deserve to die.

And he probably lined up, walked by him to spit in his face. You see, under this culture, under these traditions, the spitting in one's face, raka, is not far removed from taking their life.

And that's actually what was going to happen in the case of our Lord. And in 2730, still in Matthew, and they spat on him, and took the reed, and began to beat him on the head, and they mocked him.

Well, that's okay. Everybody just lines up and spits on this guy who's going to the cross anyway, because the spit in the face is what he deserves.

[50 : 54] He's going to die. And the spitting is very proper, very appropriate. You see, back in Matthew 5, when Jesus said, whoever says to his brother, raka, or I spit in your face, he's saying, these are the seeds of murder.

That kind of hatred and animosity that is harbored in the heart, if not checked, it will become an actual outward act. That's where it all begins.

All premeditated murder, all hatred, animosity, vindictiveness, revenge, motivation against people who've offended us or wronged us, it all begins in a thinking process, a thinking and hating process, and we build a case, and finally, it may culminate in murder.

And Jesus is saying, that's the problem. That's where the problem begins. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

If you think murder, and everybody who murders always thinks murder before they murder, our Lord is saying, the only cure for that is to be headed off in the heart, so that it doesn't become an outward act of actuality.

[52 : 27] And the Jew always interpreted that as meaning, well, it doesn't make any difference what you think, or how you think, or how you hate somebody, or what you could wish them dead, or just as long as you don't do it.

Jesus is saying, no. You miss the whole point. It's got to be stopped where it starts. That way, it will never become an outward act.

And how does it stop? It stops by reconciliation. It stops by making that enemy a friend.

Now, let me tell you something. That is a really tall order. order. And a lot of people would be quick to say, not only a tall order, it's an impossible order, because you don't know that dirty so-and-so that's...

Well, there is a remedy. There is a remedy for that. And it's upcoming in the verses that has us agreeing with the enemy in the way.

[53 : 34] And I just want to read the verses and leave you with a couple of questions. And I trust stimulate your appetite for what is coming, because it certainly has stimulated mine. Verse 25, Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way.

What's that about? With him? I don't want to be with this guy. I hate his guts. I don't want to be with him. What does this mean, be with him? Well, in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

Now, don't take our present jurisprudence system of jail and prison, etc., and try to read it back into this, because it won't work. It won't fit. It's not supposed to fit.

This is ours. This is theirs. And we've got to look at what theirs was. And then, in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, the judge to the officer, you be thrown into prison.

Truly, I say to you, you shall not come out of there until you have paid the last cent. Well, that is just fascinating. And I will share that with you from the pen of Dr.

[54 : 42] George Lamza, and how they actually resolved conflicts back in those days, and it would be a wonderful thing if we would try to make this work today in our culture.

I'm not going to hold my breath for it, but you realize how many people are on the outs with how many people? How many people have grudges and hurts and defenses and vindictiveness towards mates, toward former mates, toward parents, toward children, toward neighbors, toward employers?

Why? It is rampant. And you know, one of the things that the United States of America has been dealing with for decades that doesn't even come close to being touched by any other nation, that's our murder rate.

We Americans murder each other at a rate that is unparalleled anywhere in the world. We have a prison population that is amazing, and the vast majority of those people who are in prison are so filled with hatred and spite and animosity and grudges.

Some of them can't wait to get out just so they can get even with that so-and-so. Isn't that something? Now, I'm happy to tell you these principles that we're going to see develop are not limited to the dispensation of Israel.

[56 : 21] They are cross-dispensational. There are applications here for us, and I am eager to bring them to you. We'll start unpacking them next week.

Would you pray with me? Father, we are really grateful for the manner in which your word is put together. And there are times when it seems so disconnected and so puzzling, and yet when we look deeper and we discover things like we've just noted this morning, we are once again reminded that there is a singular source for this book.

You yourself authored it, and it is all connected, interconnected. All of Scripture explains all of Scripture.

We are grateful for what we've learned this morning, and we trust that you will enable us to develop this and get to the meat of what Jesus is talking about, and then seek to apply it in our own lives today.

Thank you most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ being the very means, the vehicle, the principal tool for effecting reconciliation.

[57 : 35] We don't have to hate anybody. We really can love everybody when we implement what you've provided. We look forward to that in Christ's wonderful name.

Amen.