

## The Story of the Life of Christ – Lesson 17

Date: 28 AD

### The Ministry of Christ in Galilee – Spring 28 AD

In the last lesson, we looked at the calling out of Peter, Andrew, James and John. They were to devote their lives to following Jesus and fishing for men. They were realize that fishing for fish was no longer to be important for them. This occurred after they and Jesus had returned from a ministry of about ten months in Judea, along with a short ministry in Samaria. There followed a ministry of about a year and a half, which was mostly in Galilee, but was interrupted by visits to the northern border of Galilee and the Decapolis east of the Sea of Galilee. Early in this period, the scripture recorded that Jesus delivered what is known as “the Sermon on the Mount.”

#### Sermon on the Mount - Matthew

There are actually two places in scripture where there are messages which are called by scholars, “The Sermon on the Mount.” They occur at Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49. We will study them both.

The Matthew passage below immediately follows the story where Jesus called out Peter, Andrew, James and John. As you will remember, Luke told us of the large crowds that had forced Jesus to preach to them from Peter’s boat. The crowds evidently continued to be a problem, so he delivered this message on the side of a “mountain.” We would think of it as more of a hill. The place in Israel which they have designated as the actual site has significant acoustical advantages if Jesus was addressing the people at the foot of the hill which slopes down toward the Sea of Galilee. It made a sort of natural amphitheater.

Matthew 5:1-2 **“Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:”**

Strictly speaking this was the prelude to “The Sermon on the Mount.” It was delivered on a mountainside.

The Luke sermon has a different context:

Luke 6:12 **“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.**

This message which followed this occasion was not delivered on the mountain, but as we shall see in verse 17, it was delivered on “a level place.” As we shall see, it was delivered just after the calling of the twelve. However, the phrase “one of those days” only tells us that it was delivered during this phase of Jesus’ second ministry in Galilee. It doesn’t tell us how it relates chronologically to the passages around it.

**Luke 6:13-16** When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

We will look at these verses again in another lesson when we will give a thumbnail sketch of the lives of the twelve disciples.

**Luke 6:17-19** He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

**Marl 3:11-12** Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.” But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

This sermon was given, not on a mountain, but on a level place. By this time Jews were coming to hear Jesus, not only from Galilee, but from all over Judea, and even up to the coasts of Phoenicia where there were large colonies of Jews. However, as you saw, this message was delivered on a level plain rather than on a mountain. Clearly the Matthew message is not the same event. Of the two messages, the one in Matthew is by far the longer of the two and was probably delivered earlier.

We should realize that the entire passage in Matthew (Matthew 5:3 through Matthew 7:27) can be read aloud at a moderate pace in thirteen minutes. The passage in Luke can be read in about four minutes. I am sure that Jesus never talked for less than an hour. He would certainly not give a message of four to thirteen minutes to people who had walked for up to seventy miles to see and hear Him. He probably taught for hours. However, in God’s wisdom, the Holy Spirit has recorded only the heart of the messages he delivered on those two days.

The heart of both messages was the same, although there are substantial differences in their wording and order. Since it is almost certain that most of Jesus’ public messages to the multitudes were to entirely different audiences, the heart of most of those messages was probably about the same. It is my belief that these two sermons were put into the Gospels by Matthew and Luke to represent the heart of all of Jesus’ messages. The two occasions they picked to record were not in the same place or on the same day. They were however, both given in Galilee in the first months following His return from Judea in early 28 AD. Many of the sayings in both sermons are also scattered in different time periods in the other two gospels, because they were no doubt repeated time and time again.

The meanings of some of the sayings are readily apparent. Some are prophetic. Some have layers of meaning. Some were parables, where the worldly things on the surface of the story

represented deeper spiritual things. One of the main things to be considered in interpreting them was that Jesus was speaking to a mixed audience:

Some few were His disciples, and had believed in Him already, but did not fully understand what He was on earth to do. Many of those first thought He was there to bring in the Kingdom of God in a materialistic way, which would bring in a new and better political order. However, many of them had a chance to hear Jesus explain some of these things more fully in private.

Some were still unbelievers though sincere seekers of the truth. They had come to find out if Jesus was the Messiah, as John the Baptist had proclaimed, and for which true Israel had been waiting through long centuries.

Some were just excited by the crowds and miracles, and had come to be entertained, healed, or even fed. Many of them did not really listen at all.

Some were the political and religious leaders of the day. Most of those were mainly concerned in finding a way to protect their wealth and prestige. They came to find a way to discredit Him and destroy His ministry. If that meant killing Him, that was a price they thought worth paying. Most of them listened to Jesus carefully, but with a hardened heart, to see if they could catch Him in a mistake which would justify their already established policy of trying to put Him to death.

Some were Gentiles. Galilee, where these sermons were delivered in outdoor settings, had a large Gentile minority population (probably at least 30 to 40 percent). Although most of the listeners were undoubtedly Jews, and Jesus addressed his remarks almost exclusively to them, some were undoubtedly Gentiles and were deeply affected like the Roman Centurion we will see in Matthew 8.

Jesus' words, in one way or another, spoke to each of these groups, some of whom were transitioning from being an unbeliever to being a believer. When you read the passages consider not only what their primary meaning was, but what they would have communicated to each group. During the different spiritual phases of your life, how would you have heard the message if you had been there?

We will begin with the Sermon in Matthew. Matthew 5:3-11 are known as the Beatitudes because they start with the words "blessed are."

### **Sermon on the Mount in Matthew The Beatitudes**

**Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

This is not commending financial poverty nor condemning financial wealth. It was speaking about an attitude of spirit which understands our human weakness before God. Only those who proceed in God's strength and grace can accomplish anything for the kingdom of heaven. The opposite attitude was described of the self-sufficient rich in Revelation and Matthew:

Revelation 3:17-18 "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see."

Matthew 19:23-24 "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.'"

On the other hand, the lasting riches to the grateful recipients of truth are described in Matthew and Mark:

Matthew 19:29 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."

Mark 10:29 "I tell you the truth,' Jesus replied, 'no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.'"

**Matthew 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.**

This looked forward to the time the followers of Jesus would mourn His death. Jesus also spoke of it later.

John 16:19-20 "Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, 'Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'? I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.'"

Zechariah had prophesied the weeping centuries before:

Zechariah 12:10-14 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. The land will mourn, each clan by itself, with their

wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives, the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives, and all the rest of the clans and their wives.”

**Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek (*gentle*), for they will inherit the earth.**

The Greek word translated “meekness” here is *πραύς* {prä-ü's}. This should be better translated as “gentle” here. The English word “meek” has somehow been corrupted to refer to someone who is lacking in confidence. Those who believe in Christ should never be lacking in confidence because they have God on their side. In Colossians the related word *πραότης* {prä-o'-tās} was used and translated “gentleness.” There Paul was describing the kind of people Christians should be:

Colossians 3:12 “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness (*πραότης*) and patience.

**Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**

This doesn’t say that those who hunger for righteousness will achieve it, but only that they would be filled with it. That would happen because Christ’s righteousness would be imputed to them when they had believed in Him.

**Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.**

Those who are followers of Christ should always be happy to give to others the same grace they have so eagerly accepted for themselves:

James 2:12-13 “Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!”

Mercifulness can also be shown by sharing the news of God’s mercy with others.

**Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.**

Those who purify their hearts by daily confessing their sins to Him and seeking His face will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to understand the Word and the will of God. The later New Testament Epistles said much the same:

Philippians 1:9-11 “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and

may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.”

Philippians 2:14-16 “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life--in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.”

1 Timothy 1:5 “The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

James 3:17 “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”

1 John 3:2-3 “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.”

2 Corinthians 7:1 “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

Matthew 5:9 **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.**

The peace Jesus was talking about here was not freedom from human conflict. He was talking about peace with God in the same way as Isaiah had:

Isaiah 27:5 “Or else let them come to me (*the LORD*) for refuge; let them make peace with me, yes, let them make peace with me.”

The peacemakers were those who spread the Gospel news of how to make peace with God. Jerusalem later rejected that peace when they crucified the Son of God:

Luke 19:41-42 “As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes.”

Matthew 5:10 **Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

Jesus later expanded on the kind of persecution they could expect because they had accepted the righteousness God grants through grace:

Luke 21:12-24 “But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will gain life. “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” *(This last indicated he was talking about the near destruction of Israel in 70 AD and not the siege of Jerusalem in the Tribulation.)*

**Matthew 5:11-12** **Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

Those who believed shouldn't be surprised by what would happen to them. Not only were the prophets persecuted, so was their master, the Son of God:

John 15:20-21 “Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me.”

This ended Matthew's list of the Beatitudes. Some of Jesus' sayings were called Similitudes. They are scattered all over his teachings. A Similitude is characterized by teaching a truth by saying that two things are similar. Below are two Similitudes which Jesus taught on this occasion.

**Matthew 5:13** **You (*Israel*) are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men (*the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD*).**

Here Israel was compared to salt. Salt had several useful characteristics. First, it was necessary for life. Second, it made food more savory. Third, it was a useful

preservative. I think here it was speaking the third characteristic. Of old, the LORD had used Israel to preserve the promise of salvation through the Messiah. That promise had preserved the world from judgment. However, if the Messiah had come, and He had, and He was rejected by Israel, and He was, then Israel would have outlasted its usefulness as “the salt of the earth.”

**Matthew 5:14-16** **You (*Israel*) are the light of the world. A city on a hill (*Jerusalem on Mt. Zion*) cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**

Israel was meant to be the light of the world. They were to lift up the light of the Word for all to see. Instead, most of the Jews in the 1st Century not only didn't spread the Word, they failed to believe it. Even worse, the rulers of the Jews did their best to suppress it.

**Matthew 5:17-18** **Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them (*by going to the Cross*). I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.**

Some were claiming that, because Jesus ignored the manmade traditions of the Jews that weren't Scriptural, that He was ignoring the Law and the Prophets. In fact, most of the Scribes and Pharisees didn't understand the Law and the Prophets at all. Jesus did understand the Law and the Prophets. He was not only obeying them, He was fulfilling the prophecies in them and keeping the real Law of Moses perfectly.

**Matthew 5:19a** **Anyone who breaks *annuls* one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven,**

The Greek word translated “breaks” by the NIV is λύω {lü'-ō}. It means to loosen, annul, or destroy.<sup>1</sup> This is not speaking of sinning, but of annulling the scripture and superseding it with the laws of men.

This is comparable to Revelation 22:19 “And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”

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<sup>1</sup> Strong's gives the following shades of meaning: 1) to loose any person (or thing) tied or fastened 3c) to annul, subvert 3d) to do away with, to deprive of authority, whether by precept or act 3h) metaph., to overthrow, to do away with.

**Matthew 5:19b** but whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. CSB

Only Jesus Christ both fulfilled perfectly and taught correctly the Law and the Prophets. He was the one who is called “great in the kingdom of heaven.” When we have been identified with (baptized into) Him, then we also share His greatness.

**Matthew 5: 20** For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

They could surpass the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the law by having the imputed righteousness of Christ through faith. This statement also clearly implied that most of the Pharisees and teachers of the law of Jesus’ day had condemned themselves to an eternal separation from God.

**Matthew 5:21-22a** You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

Here Jesus began to expound on the folly of self-righteousness. Certainly everybody agreed that murder was a sin and therefore was subject to judgment. However, Jesus pointed out that human anger and quarreling was a sin and was also subject to judgment. It had always been a sin and was against the Law of Moses as stated in Leviticus:

Leviticus 19:17-18 “Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

**Matthew 5:22b** Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

“Raca” is a term of uncertain origin but evidently a term of abuse which carried a legal penalty from the Jewish rulers. However, Jesus said that just calling someone “fool” demonstrated a lack of righteousness which was short of the righteousness of God. As Revelation 20:11-15 makes clear, we are ultimately judged on only on our works (human righteousness). Sin is not the issue. Jesus Christ would pay for the sins of the whole world, but only those who would trust in Him would be given His righteousness so that they could stand before God.

The three previous verses had ended with the phrases: ‘you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven,’ ‘subject to judgment,’ and ‘in danger of the fire of hell.’ Therefore I thought this would be a good time to see what the Bible says in Revelation about what is called the Last Judgment, or Great White Throne Judgment.

## The Great White Throne Judgment

**Revelation 20:11** **Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky *heaven* fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.**

This is what is known theologically as the “Great White Throne Judgment.” It will take place at the end of the Millennium. Remember that white stands for the purity and holiness of God. In front of this purity the unregenerate world stands condemned. Believers, on the other hand, wear robes of purest white which they have been given because they stand in the righteousness of Christ. They, however, are not shown as present at this judgment. The One seated on the throne to judge is Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Those standing to be judged are the unbelievers among men.

**Revelation 20:12** **And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.**

Now, in front of the throne the LORD brings an assembly of faithless humanity. Remember, all believers from before the Rapture will have been resurrected, so these dead, great and small, doesn’t refer to them. The dead here are all unbelievers (spiritually dead) of all social categories who had died from the beginning of the world to this time. These dead will be judged by two books, the Book of Life and the Books of Works. The Book of Life is also mentioned in Revelation in Revelation 17:8, 13:8, and 3:5. To summarize, the Book of Life contains the names of all those who have believed in Jesus Christ. When each soul is born, they are enrolled in the Book of Life because of the unlimited atonement of Christ’s death (He died for the sins of the entire world). However, if they die without trusting in Him, their names are erased from Book of Life. This judgment tests to prove that no one at the Great White Throne Judgment is a believer. All believers would still have their names enrolled in the Book of Life.

**Revelation 20:13** **The sea gave up the dead <sup>3</sup> that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to ~~what he had done~~ *their works*.<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> *John 5:22-23* “Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.”

<sup>3</sup> *I think this refers to the fact that the entrance to Hell is said to be in the heart of the sea.*

<sup>4</sup> *The Greek here is τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν which is literally “the works of them.” The Book of Works cannot contain a list of sins, because Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world, and they are no longer an issue.*

Here we learn about second book out of which the dead are judged. It might be called “the Book of Works.” It is important to note that this is not the “Book of Sins.” It is an important distinction because no one, believer or unbeliever, can be judged for their “sins” because Christ already paid the price for the sins of the whole world.<sup>5</sup> See the following verses:

1 John 2:2 “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

1 Timothy 2:3-6 “This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men--the testimony given in its proper time.”

Hebrews 2:9 “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”

Isaiah 25:7-9 “On this mountain (*Mount Zion*) he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. In that day they will say, ‘Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.’”

This Book of Works records our human works of righteousness. This is the work (Greek ἔργον) of which Paul spoke:

Titus 3:5 “Not by works (ἔργον) of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” KJV

Romans 9:11 “That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works (ἔργον), but of him that calleth.” KJV

Galatians 2:16 “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works (ἔργον) of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works (ἔργον) of the law: for by the works (ἔργον) of the law shall no flesh be justified.” KJV

Thus, the unbeliever, being examined by the Book of Works will be shown that his own works of righteousness are not sufficient. As the Bible explained in the Old Testament:

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<sup>5</sup> This is called the doctrine of unlimited atonement.

Isaiah 64:6a “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”

Job 15:14-16 What is man, that he could be pure, or one born of woman, that he could be righteous?

When Jesus was on earth He had explained that there was only one work which could save.

John 6:28-29 “Then they (*the crowd*) asked him (*Jesus*), ‘What must we do to do the works (ἔργον) God requires?’ Jesus answered, ‘The work (ἔργον) of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.’”

Revelation 20:14 **Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.**

Having been condemned by their lack of faith and subsequent absence from the Book of Life, and also condemned by their own works from the Book of Works, the unbelievers standing at the Great White Throne Judgment are justly condemned to be cast out of the presence of the LORD into what is called “the Lake of Fire” to join Satan and his angels. I suspect that the burning “fire” will really be defined by the presence of unrestrained sin and the absence of the God of love. Regardless of a person’s deeds of “human good,” he will be condemned because of his lack of faith and subsequent rejection of the LORD.

Revelation 20:15 **If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

This underscores the tragedy. Everyone’s name was originally written in the Book of Life, but because they rejected God’s gift and God Himself, God will allow their rejection of Him to stand and they will be shut out from the presence of God, which amounts to “everlasting destruction.”

2 Thessalonians 1:8-10 “He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.”

### **Sermon on the Mount (continued)**

Matthew 5:23-24 **“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.**

This refers to anything your brother has against you which is valid. That is to say you have committed a sin against your brother which has not been rectified. God is more interested in the offering of a purified heart than a gift of money or goods. This is comparable to the concept Jesus expressed in Matthew:

Matthew 23:23 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”

**Matthew 5:25-26 “Settle matters quickly with your adversary (God) who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge (Jesus Christ), and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.**

Who is the one who will take them to court, specifically the Great White Throne Judgment? It is God Himself. Who will be the Judge? Jesus gave the answer:

John 5:26-27 “For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.”

They should settle the matter with God while they were on the way (this life) or they would be condemned.

**Matthew 5:27-28 You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

This makes another comparison like the one made in Matthew 5:21-22a of murder and anger. Most people acknowledged adultery as sin, but the Bible had always condemned lust. Even before the Law of Moses was given it was considered unrighteous by Job.

Job 31:1-4 “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. For what is man’s lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high? Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong? Does he not see my ways and count my every step?”

This is making the point that none is righteous before God. Even in the Law of Moses coveting or lusting was considered as a sin:

Exodus 20:17 “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

**Matthew 5:29-30** **If your right eye (*human wisdom*) causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand (*human power and wealth*) causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.**

It is obvious that this is using the hand and eye as metaphors for aspects of human behavior. The right eye speaks of human wisdom. The right hand speaks of human power and wealth. The physical human hand cannot cause sin. Neither can the physical human eye. Sin only arises from the soul which commands those parts of the body. The sin that Jesus was concerned about here was the unforgivable sin of rejecting God’s gracious gift of salvation. This just says that we should rid our souls of worldly wisdom and the greed for power and wealth which often stand in the way of accepting God’s grace. It doesn’t say we should gouge out our literal eye or amputate our literal hand.

**Matthew 5:31-32** **It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital sexual unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the *that* divorced woman commits adultery.<sup>67</sup>**

In that time divorce had degenerated into something the husband could do on almost any complaint. Some taught that divorce was justified if the wife was a bad cook. Jesus wasn’t trying to reform the marriage practices of that generation, but to bring souls to salvation. The point of this teaching wasn’t to raise the bar for righteousness, but to prove that ordinary mankind couldn’t reach the righteousness that God required. Anyone who broke this requirement was guilty of adultery. Remember the Lord had just declared that anyone who lusted was also guilty of adultery. This statement of Jesus would convict many people of their inherent unrighteousness which was the point of what He was teaching.

**Matthew 5:33-36** **Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’<sup>8</sup> But I tell you,**

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<sup>6</sup> *It is worth noticing that this applied to Herod Antipas.*

<sup>7</sup> *See also Mark 10:11-12 He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.” Matthew 19:8-9 Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”*

**Do not swear at all:<sup>9</sup> either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.**

Evidently these were five things by which the Jews swore. These were things which they had no authority over, yet they swore by them as if they did. Jesus was just saying that the oaths they were making were an expression of arrogance and a reliance on their own human righteousness.

**Matthew 5:37 Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.**

Jesus had this advice about vows. He said not to make them at all. He was trying to make them understand that there was nothing that a human could give to the LORD. Jesus advised against taking vows at all. He never advised against appealing to God’s boundless grace. The oaths of the Jews were an expression of arrogance. Arrogance was the prime sin of Satan (the evil one). His sin is described in Isaiah:

Isaiah 14:12-14 “How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star (*Lucifer*),<sup>10</sup> son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the *sides of the north*.<sup>11</sup> I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’”

**Matthew 5:38-39 You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’<sup>12</sup> But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.**

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<sup>8</sup> Numbers 30:2 “When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.”

<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 23:21-23 “If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth.”

<sup>10</sup> “Morning star” is translated “Lucifer” in the King James. It really means “shining one.”

<sup>11</sup> This is the literal translation (and the translation of the KJV). It is also the same Hebrew words used in Psalms 45:2 to describe the northern flank of Mt. Zion, where Jesus Christ was crucified. Why this coincidence? I think the Holy Spirit is using this to connect and thus contrast how Satan sought to achieve rulership (by rebellion and deceit) with how Jesus Christ achieved rulership (by sacrifice and love).

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 21:23-25 “But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

Lest someone still felt they could measure themselves against God, the Lord laid out this standard of mercy and forgiveness. Jesus modelled this righteousness during His trial and crucifixion:

Matthew 26:67-68 “Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, ‘Prophecy to us, Christ. Who hit you?’”

**Matthew 5:40-41** **And if someone wants to sue you take you to judgment and take your tunic (ἱμάτιον), let him have your cloak (χιτών) as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.**

The word translated “tunic” here is the Greek word ἱμάτιον {hē-mä'-tē-on}. The word translated “cloak” is the Greek word χιτών {khē-tō'n}.

Now compare this with that to which Jesus submitted Himself when He was crucified:

John 19:23-24 “When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes (ἱμάτιον) and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic (χιτών); now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.’ This was to fulfill what the scripture says, ‘They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.’”<sup>13</sup> NRSV

As you can see, this perfectly described the forbearance that Jesus would display on the cross as He hung naked. Yet He had at His disposal twelve legions of elect angels if He had chosen to call on them.<sup>14</sup>

**Matthew 5:42** **Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.**

This also reflected the attitude of Jesus to the dying world which He later made clear:

Matthew 7:7-8 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

**Matthew 5:43-45** **You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

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<sup>13</sup> *Psalms 22:18*

<sup>14</sup> *Matthew 25:63*

Jesus demonstrated this all-encompassing grace on the cross:

Luke 23:33-34 “When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’”

**Matthew 5:46-47** **If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?**

Jesus described the typical kind of human love. The standard of love that the LORD required was a far higher kind.

**Matthew 5:48** **Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

The standard of love that the Father required them to have in order to be qualified to stand before Him was set by His own perfect divine love. Jesus Christ was the only human being who ever met that standard. The only way the rest of us can meet that standard is to be identified with Christ through faith.