

## Scripturalism vs Judaism VII Jesus Fulfilled—Completed—the Law

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This week I'm going to stick with the Scriptures. We needed the historical background and also to know what the Jews wrote about themselves and their own religion (referring to #s 5 & 6 in this series). By coming to Matt. 5 we're going to cover some things concerning what it means and what Christ said concerning the Scriptures in relationship to the scribes, Pharisees and so forth. I still didn't completely get around to describing what a church of the Pharisees would be like other than in #6 I read what a community of the Pharisees would be like.

1. they had their own leader who had absolute control
2. everyone had to submit to the leader and follow his rules
3. any transgressions of their laws had to be reported to the leader, and everyone had to be confronted with them so they could repent
4. they were closed communities; you couldn't get into them unless you were initiated in them
5. in order to be initiated into them, you had to have a period of probation and study to make sure that you were acceptable

I think in just mentioning some of these things, some of the past experiences that people have had with the Church of God were really in the Church of the Pharisees. Of course, many of the things were run much like it with their laws and so forth.

I did not get a chance to read anything concerning the *Code of Jewish Law*, but I will try to do that separately.

I'm going to be read in my Interlinear so it may make it little difficult with the *Faithful Version* or the *King James*, but nevertheless you will be able to follow along and get the gist of it. We'll analyze and amplify each one of these verses; here are the teachings of Jesus in what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, which begins with the beatitudes (Matt. 5:1-16).

Matthew 5:17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For **truly I say to you...**" (vs 17-18).

What is the Bible called? *The Word of Truth!*

- Jesus said that He would send the *Spirit of Truth!*

- He said His Words are *Truth!*
- He is the Way, the Life and *the Truth!*

*All the way through here when He says:*

Verse 18: "**For truly I say to you...** [there's a reason why He says it that way] ...until the heaven and the earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the Law **until everything has been fulfilled**" (vs 17-18)—*come to pass!* It is 'fulfilled' in the sense that it takes place, but it's not fulfill in the sense of the same Greek word.

Verse 19: "Therefore, whoever... [here is a very profound section] ...shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called **least** in the Kingdom of Heaven..." *It's interesting, the word 'least' means non-existent!* It's one of those words that is less than zero.

"...but whoever shall **practice and teach them**, this one shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For **I say to you, unless** your righteousness shall exceed... [shall abound above and beyond] ...*the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, there is no way *that* you shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (vs 19-20).

Let's analyze each one of these verses. There's a whole lot more in here than perhaps we've understood:

### Verse 17:

- "**Do not think ...**"—which means *don't even let it enter into your mind!*
- "**...that I have come to abolish the Law...**"—and I'll just add right here, *neither did Paul!*
- "**...or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill**"—the Greek word 'pleroo'—which means *to fulfill, make full, to bring to completion, or to bring to its highest and fullest standard.*

It can mean all of those. In fact, that's what Jesus did with the Law and with the Prophets. This is a prophecy that He would complete the Word of God. The Word of God was not complete in its written form **until Jesus inspired it to be written!** What did He tell the disciples?

John 14:26: "But *when* the Comforter... [the Holy Spirit] ...*comes, even* the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, that one shall teach you all things, and shall **bring to your remembrance** everything that I have told you."

When we come to the last of the book of John, let's see what John says concerning everything that Jesus did. Every time you read this, you wonder what it was that Jesus did.

John 21:25: "But there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I do not suppose that even the world itself could contain the books that would be written. Amen."

You think of all the books that we have in the world today; that's really something! They were eyewitnesses of all of these things. What we have written here is what God wanted us to have in completing the Law and the Prophets. That's what He wanted us to have.

Let's see what the Apostle Paul wrote, how he knew that part of his job was to complete or help finish writing the Word of God.

Colossians 1:24: "Now, I am rejoicing in my sufferings for you, and I am filling up in my flesh that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ... [in his own flesh, Paul was saying] ...for the sake of His Body, which is the Church; of which I became a servant [minister], according to the administration of God that *was given to me for you in order to complete the Word of God*" (vs 24-25).

I think the *King James* says to 'fulfill the Word of God.' *To complete* is 'pleroma' or pleroo'—the same word that Jesus used for "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets... I came to 'pleroo' fulfill."

Paul says here that 'God called me, put me through all of this suffering for the sake of the Church and he became a servant according to the administration that God gave him towards them **"...to complete the Word of God."** Of course, it's amazing that Paul wrote 14 epistles, which are part of the New Testament more than any other writer.

"...to complete the Word of God... [or fulfill the Word of God] ...*even* the mystery that has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to His saints" (vs 25-26).

How are you going to complete the Word of God unless you write it out so that everyone will have everything that God wants you to have? *What we call the Old Testament was not complete!* There were many things missing from the Old Testament. There was not given the Holy Spirit to everyone in general under the Old Covenant for them to understand or to obey.

So, to complete "...this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory; whom we preach, admonishing every man and

teaching every man in all wisdom, **so that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus**" (vs 27-28).

That's the whole purpose of the New Testament; the whole purpose of all of the Word of God. He said that He would *complete the Word of God*.

Colossians 2:9: "For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead [Deity] bodily." *Christ is the fullness of Deity!*

In other words, Christ is God as God *is* God. When you understand it in the context, he's warning against philosophy (v 8) that philosophy had it that you cannot attain the fullness of Deity—according to the philosophical religions—unless you go through the various stages of which there are nine. Even the latest one, Lord Maitreya, the big head. Years ago, he was the 'the messiah coming to end all starvation' and all this sort of thing. Remember that was in the paper.

Benjamin Crème is the spokesman for Lord Maitreya, who is supposed to be one of the messiahs to save the world. He is schooled in the ninth level of philosophy of the Tibetan religion; so therefore, he is higher than Christ, because Christ only got to eight.

Paul was confronted with the same thing with philosophy there. He is saying, after he gave the warning:

Verse 8: "Be on guard [against] so that no one takes you captive... [prey; hunt down as an animal to victimize you] ...through philosophy and vain [empty] deceit, according to the traditions of men..."

You watch some of these television programs and how many of them are based upon eastern mystical philosophies or thought control. All of that comes from the religion of philosophies, of which Paul says, 'Watch out, because that's pretty powerful stuff!' Don't be deceived by it.

"...according to the elements of the world... [the elemental demonic spirits of the world behind it] ...and not according to Christ. For in Him... [now you understand what this statement means] ...**dwells all the fullness** of the Godhead bodily" (vs 8-9).

Fullness here is the noun form of 'pleroo' is 'pleroma'—in other words, Christ is the complete perfection of God—'pleroma.'

Verse 10: "And **you are complete in Him...**"—*you likewise do not need philosophy!*

When I was translating 2-Peter 1, I came

across some very, very interesting things. Paul knew that he was to finish writing up to a certain point. We also know by chronology that he passed this on to Peter through Mark. Then from Peter it went to John, but here in 2-Peter when you read the *King James* you really don't quite get it.

2-Peter 1:15 (KJV): “Moreover, I will endeavor that you may be able, after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance.”

(FV): “But I will make every effort *that*, after my departure, you may always have **a written remembrance of these things in order to practice them for yourselves.**”

- What does that mean?
- How are they going to have them in remembrance?

Jesus said that He was going to ‘fulfill the Law and the Prophets.’ Believe me, the fulfillment of the Law is right here in the New Testament.

The fulfillment of the prophecies is contained not only in the New Testament in Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 & 21; also, you have in 2-Peter 3 part of it and all the book of Revelation.

- Does not the book of Revelation complete the prophecy? *Yes!*
- Do not all the commands of Christ and the apostles complete the Law? *Yes!*

There's a whole lot more to Matt. 5:17 than we've given credit for. When Peter says that ***I want you to have these things in remembrance!***

Verse 16: “For we did not follow cleverly concocted myths *as our authority*, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His magnificent glory; because He received glory and honor from God *the Father* when *the voice* came to Him from the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I am well pleased.’ And this *is the voice* from heaven that we heard when we were with Him on the Holy mountain” (vs 16-18).

Peter mentions this also in 1-Peter 5. So, that had a profound effect on them.

Remember what happened when they went up on the mount. There was Jesus transfigured before them and there appeared the likeness of Elijah and Moses. They said, ‘Let us make three tabernacles here, it's good for us to be here.’ Then they all kind of fell into a heavy sleep and all of a sudden it all cleared up and they looked and they only saw Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus said, ‘Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be raised again.’ As they were going

down they were scratching their heads; they didn't understand what He was saying. This had a profound effect on them.

Verse 19: “We also possess the confirmed prophetic Word to which you do well to pay attention, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and *the morning star* arises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture originated as anyone's own *private* interpretation; because prophecy was not brought at any time by human will, but the Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by *the Holy Spirit*” (vs 19-21).

In doing some research on this, I found out that the Greek word for ‘remembrance’ means a *memorial*. Remember when Jesus castigated the scribes and Pharisees and said, ‘Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, you make the tombs of the Prophets and you were the ones who killed them.’ The ‘tombs’ are the *remembrance written*; put their names on it.

Verse 13, here's the motivation as to why he's saying it: “For I consider it my duty, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by causing *you* to remember *these things*; knowing that shortly the putting off of my tabernacle *will come*, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has signified to me. But I will make every effort *that*, after my departure, you may always **have a written remembrance** of these things *in order to practice them* for yourselves, for we did not follow cleverly concocted myths *as our authority...*” (vs 13-16). **Is that not going back to philosophies, tales of religion? *Yes, it is!***

“...when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His magnificent glory; because He received glory and honor from God *the Father* when *the voice* came to Him from the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I am well pleased.’ And this *is the voice* from heaven that we heard when we were with Him on the Holy mountain. We also **possess the confirmed prophetic Word...**” (vs 16-19).

The meaning is just a little bit different than the *King James* gives. What is the *confirmed prophetic Word*? *The teachings of Christ!* That's what it is! The coming of Christ, the teachings of Christ, *confirmed by Him*.

“...to which you do well to pay attention, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and *the morning star* arises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture originated as **anyone's own private interpretation**; because prophecy...” (vs 19-21).

This is not talking about just prophesying things in the future. This is talking about *inspired writings!* That's what it's talking about. So, it includes the *whole Bible!* How did Christ 'complete the Word'? The Law and the Prophets? *He inspired the apostles to write them! He inspired them to be put in the order that they are!* So, He's not only talking about just the Old Testament, because we're going to see that the word 'old time' is not old time. It is *anytime!*

Verse 21: "Because prophecy was not brought at anytime..." *That includes New Testament and Old Testament;* not just of old time, because he was saying 'we have a more sure Word of prophecy.'

- What did they have?
- What kind of inspired teaching did they have? *They had the Son of God Who taught them!*
- Was He not *more sure?* *Yes, indeed!*

"...by human will, but the Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by *the Holy Spirit*" (v 21).

Did they write these things down? *Yes, they did!* So, Peter is talking about *completing* the Word of God. When Jesus said that He was going 'fulfill' or *finish* the Law and the Prophets, He was referring to *all* of what He would inspire to be preserved in the New Testament.

This is why this warning is at the end of Revelation and not at the end of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. Nor is it at the end of the Prophets. It's not at the end of Malachi. It's not at the end of the Psalms. It is not at the end of the first five books of the Law. Although, he says in the first five books of the Law, 'You shall add to or take away from. You shall not go to the right hand or the left hand.' He does say that.

Revelation 22:18 (KJV): "For I testify unto every man..." The Greek is *for I jointly testify...*—with whom? *God the Father and Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit!* It is a joint testimony. This is just not a certification from John of what he is saying. He is writing the certification because he was the one to write it.

(FV): "For **I jointly testify** to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book..."—*which means that you're going to hear them by reading!* Let's see what is said concerning the book of Revelation.

Revelation 1:3: "Blessed is **the one who reads...** [the Greek is conveying the present tense participle, *the one who is reading*] ...and those who hear the words of this prophecy..."

You read and you hear. When we come back to a lot of the things that Jesus said, 'You have heard it said of old times...' He's not merely saying that you only heard it by the hearing of the ear, but *you heard it because it was read from the Word of God!* When it talks about this, it's talking about in the sense that you hear it and that you read it and it comes from what was written.

"...and who keep the things *that are* written therein; for the time *is* at hand" (v 3).

If you want to, you can go through the whole book of Revelation and go through and write down the first commandment on the top of a page. Next page second commandment, third commandment, etc. all the way down through and then outline all the verses in the book of Revelation that conform to the Ten Commandments of God, and I think you're going to be amazed! *Absolutely amazed!*

Revelation 22:18: "For **I jointly testify** to everyone... [because this is the finality of the New Testament] ...who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, *that* if anyone adds to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book." **Are there other plagues that are written in other parts of the Bible?** *Yes, indeed!*

Verse 19: "And if anyone takes away from the words of *the* book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from *the* book of Life, and from the Holy City, and from the things that are written in this book." *Then we have two Amen verses to conclude it!*

- Wherever you have a double 'Amen' what does that picture?
- Do you know of any place else where there are double Amens?

Go through the book of Psalms, there are five books in the Psalms, each one ending with 'Amen, Amen.' When you have an 'Amen, Amen,' that means **completion!** So, He has two Amen verses here.

Verse 20: "He Who testifies these things says, 'Surely, I am coming quickly.' **Amen.** Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. **Amen.**" (vs 20-21). *Isn't it interesting that it ends with **grace?***

Psalms 41:13: "Blessed is the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. **Amen and Amen!**"

If you've got a commentary that goes into the Psalms at all and studies them, you will see that it tells you that where you have double Amen it ends that portion of it. There are four other places. That signifies a *completion.*

When Jesus said that He prophesied that He came to ‘fulfill’ the Law and the Prophets’ (Matt. 5:17) He was actually prophesying *that He was going to complete it!* He begins with the most fundamental laws of all in Matt. 5, 6 & 7.

Matthew 5:17: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, **but to fulfill**”—*complete!*

He came to fulfill by finishing giving the Law. He didn’t write it Himself. He had His disciples write it. Why did He have the authority to do that? *Because He was God in flesh!* God is Lawgiver! There’s only one Lawgiver—*God!* When He says that He’s going to do this, those Jews who were listening to Him were really awestruck by what He said and did. No man talked like He talked! Who is a man to come and say ‘*I am going to complete the Law and the Prophets!*’ The first presumption you would think is ‘do You think You’re greater than Moses?’ *Yes, He was!*

Let’s notice how profound that was, Matthew 7:28: “Now, it came to pass *that* when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching... [‘didache’—*doctrine*] ...for He taught them **as one Who had authority**, and not as the scribes” (vs 28-29).

Why? *Because the scribes knew better than to say, ‘I’m going to finish the Law! I’m going to write the Law!’*

What is all that a scribe can do? *Transcribe what was said! Authorized to copy the Scriptures!* He had to copy them exactly the way that they were written. What else could a scribe do? *It says Jesus spoke in authority and not as the scribes.’* The scribes could only interpret the Law; **they could not make Law!** When Jesus came and said, ‘I’m going to finish or complete or fulfill the Law,’ that is a very powerful statement, and should not be taken lightly at all.

Matthew 5:18: “For **truly I say to you...**” Why is that profound? *Because the scribes could not say, ‘I say to you...’* They would have to say, ‘*The Scripture says.*’ Let’s go through and count the number of times He says, ‘*Verily, I say to you...*’”

### **Matthew 5:**

- 1) v 18: “For truly I say to you...”
- 2) v 20: “For I say to you...”
- 3) v 22: “But I say to you...”
- 4) v 22: “*you have heard it said and “...But I say to you...”* (these are implied)
- 5) v 26: “Truly I say to you...”
- 6) v 28: “But I say to you...”
- 7) v 32: “But I say to you...”

- 8) v 34: “But I say to you...”
- 9) v 39: “But I say to you...”
- 10) v 44: “But I say to you...”

### **Matthew 6:**

- 11) v 2: “...Truly I say to you...”
- 12) v 5: “...Truly I say to you...”
- 13) v 9: “Therefore, you are to...”
- 14) v 16: “...Truly I say to you...”
- 15) v 25: “Because of this I say to you...”
- 16) v 29: “But I say to you...”

Matthew 5:18: “For truly I say to you, **until the heaven and the earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the Law until everything has been fulfilled.**”

I want to make something very clear here: We need to sort of restructure our terminology just a little bit. Even though God destroyed the temple—which is *abolish*—and with it the Levitical priesthood and all of the ritual that went along with it, we need to view it in the sense that the sacrifice of Christ being the perfect sacrifice and fulfilling all of the physical ritual that was at the temple.

When something that is done physically is fulfilled by something greater spiritually, you are not just doing away, you are superseding with something greater. Which means that because the animal sacrifices were ‘done away’ inasmuch as they were abolished and set aside, **that does not mean that there does not need to be a sacrifice!** We need a sacrifice that is greater—*Christ!*

(go to the next track)

Is commandment-breaking still very important with God? *Yes, it is!* What is commandment-breaking called? *Sin! Transgression! Iniquity!* In varying degrees, whatever it is. He came to the smallest degree. If you say even the ‘least’ or the smallest, the one you would count as nothing—or less than nothing—I’m telling you:

Verse 19: “Therefore, whoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven...”

Very important: **You don’t teach men to break commandments of God,** not even the least of them. If God is going to replace it with something greater, God is the One Who is going to do it. God is the One Who caused the temple to be destroyed. God is the One Who terminated the Levitical priesthood. *No man did!* The Jews wouldn’t destroy their temple. But God used the Romans to do it.

God absolutely abhors the breaking of His commandments and teaching men to do so, “...but

whoever shall **practice**... [something you habitually do] ...and teach *them*, this one shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven” (v 19). *Let’s think about what it’s going to mean to be called “...great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”* I can’t quite answer that question, but let’s look at it this way:

What did Jesus say of John the Baptist? *‘Of those who were born of woman, there is none greater than John the Baptist! And he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven shall be greater than he.’* So, He doesn’t quite tell us, but that sort of opens the mind of all the possibilities that it could be. I mean, that’s quite a profound statement. So, He says here, the one who teaches the least.

- What was the argument of the disciples as they were getting ready for the Passover, and also as they were sitting at the Passover dinner?
- What was the argument?
- Who’s going to be the greatest?

People are always arguing over that! Don’t argue over that! There’s no argument; Christ is going to take care of it! That takes away a lot of the vanity and stupidity we’ve gone through in the past.

He wants us to understand very clearly concerning Judaism. Judaism considered itself, with all of its tradition and all of its written law the perfection of the greatest of God’s laws. They claim that all the laws that they made were really not legislating new laws, but what they were doing was expanding on the Laws of God. So, I’m going to do one sermon and I’m going to read selected things out of the *Code of Jewish Law*—some good, some bad, some funny, some down right disgusting!

Verse 20—Jesus says: “For I say to you, unless your righteousness shall exceed... [abound above and beyond] ...*the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, there is no way that you shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

When you go back, and especially when I read what they had for their laws, it’s going to almost blow your mind how righteous these people considered themselves!

What happened was, the Pharisees being a community of religious separatists said that all of the laws of cleanness—which applied to the priesthood—apply to everyone! *Everyone has to practice those laws relating to the priests!* Therefore, we will tell you how to do it. This one I always recall: Upon rising in the morning the first thing you do is wash your hands immediately before you do anything else, and you are to have by your bed a pitcher of water poured out the night before—covered so no spirits could get into it—and you are

immediately upon rising to wash your hands. The way you do it is you take the pitcher of water in your left hand and you pour it over your right hand and then you take the pitcher in your right hand and pour it over your left hand and alternately do that three times.

This is before you can make any run to anyplace, because it’s a sin, unless it’s an emergency. Upon rising out of bed you must wash your hands this way and do it vigorously. You cannot even go to the bathroom and touch anything else on your body, because when you are sleeping evil spirits descend upon you and they reside in your fingertips in the morning, and you must wash them off. After you hear that, it sounds like it will be easy to have better righteousness than they. But that’s just one of them. The book *Code of Jewish Law* has thousands of those laws!

When Jesus says that your righteousness has to be greater, better, super-abound above and beyond the scribes and Pharisees, what does this first begin with? What does Jesus teach the first way your righteousness goes above and beyond the scribes and Pharisees? *It first begins with attitude!* That’s why I did that sermon, *Love and the New Covenant*, because you can have a legal, lawful relationship, but not have love.

Do you have a legal, lawful relationship with the city, the county, the state, the U.S. government? *Yes, you do!* You’re obeying the laws. You’re a citizen. You have certain obligations to you; you have certain obligations to them. Most of which you don’t care for because they come in the form of taxes and do this and that and not the other thing. Though you have a perfectly legal relationship with the governments:

- Do you love them? *No!*
- Why? *Because their attitude coming down to you is one of taking, robbery, lying, cheating and stealing!*
- Did not Jesus say that the scribes and Pharisees were hypocrites? *Yes!*
- Why were they hypocrites? *Because they only had the outward adornment of what they were doing, but they were like sepulchers within; full of dead men’s bones within!*

When we start seeing what Jesus said here on how we are to keep the laws, He’s making the Law complete by saying the Law does not stand in the letter alone, but the Law stands because of the attitude required to do it properly. That’s how your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

Verse 21: “You have heard that it was said to those *in ancient times...*”—*also written!* When you have something that is said, He’s also talking about something that was written.

“...‘You shall not commit murder; but whoever commits murder shall be subject to judgment.’ But I say to you...” (vs 21-22). *He’s talking greater than just the Law!*

He’s saying I’m saying to you! You’ve heard this in the past. Was this a Law of God? *Yes, still is!* You shall do no murder (6<sup>th</sup> commandment)! He’s getting right into the Laws of God.

- Why is this important?
- Who gave the Laws of God? *God did!*
- Who spoke them? *He did!*

It was so powerful that the people said, after the Ten Commandments, to Moses, ‘Moses! We’re going to die if we hear anymore. **You** speak to God and you tell us and we’ll do what you say.’

Verse 22: “But I say to you, everyone who is angry with his brother **without cause...**” *It doesn’t say you can’t be angry at him if he does something wrong!*

“...shall be subject to judgment. Now *you have heard it said*, ‘Whoever shall say to his brother, “Raca,” shall be subject to *the judgment of the council*.’.... [the Sanhedrin; human judgment] ...**But I say to you**, whoever shall say, ‘*You fool*,’ shall be subject to the fire of Gehenna” (v 22).

Is Gehenna fire much more powerful than the Sanhedrin? *All the Sanhedrin can do is take your life!* But Jesus said not to be afraid of ‘those who can take your life.’ **Be afraid of the One Who can destroy both body and soul in Gehenna!** Is He not hitting right at the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? *We’ll see that He is!*

Verse 23: “For this reason, if you bring your gift to the altar...” *The altar symbolized coming into the very presence of God!*

Bringing something upon which you would offer, the smoke would ascend right up to God as a sweet smelling savor, either as a peace offering, a thank offering, a sin offering or a votive offering, whatever it would be. That’s why He says ‘at the altar.’

“...and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go *your* way; first be reconciled with your brother, and **then** come and offer your gift” (vs 23-24).

Isn’t that something? He starts all of His teaching concerning the individual application of the

Law and the Prophets, that you’ve got to have the right attitude first, and you’d better make peace with your brother.

Why would He say that? *Because later on you’re going to see that if you don’t have peace with your brother, you don’t have peace with God!* What did James say?

This, brethren, I will tell you—and you know and I know from experience—that **this is the hardest thing in the world to do!** That’s why He starts there. The hardest thing in the world to do is *to be at peace with your brother if you’ve had a dispute*. The hardest thing in the world to do is *to hold your tongue*. I know! I’ve stepped on it! Other people have stepped on it! It’s been out there doing its dirty work. Thankfully, God is not there with a big sword to hack it off every time our tongue runs amuck! That wouldn’t solve the problem God wants to change from the inside that controls the tongue.

James 3:8: “But the tongue no human being is able to tame...”—*which means that the only way you’re ever going to succeed is to keep working at and with the Spirit of God get it tamed:*

- conquered
- under control
- not wild
- but domesticated

“...it is an unrestrainable evil, full of death-dealing poison” (v 8). *That’s what it means in the Greek!* I mean, this is sharp! When I’m saying this I’m putting daggers in you and me at the same time.

Here’s the irony of it, v 9: “With it we bless God the Father, and with it we **ourselves...**” *The Greek middle verb, which means you, your own self;* he says **we**.

Is James including himself in it? *Yes!* The very brother of the Lord was admitting the hardest problem in the world.

“...curse people who are made in *the likeness of God*” (v 9). *It becomes a great pain to restrain some things*, so we have to modify that by asking:

- Did Jesus have perfect control of His tongue? *Yes!*
- Did Jesus get angry at times? *Yes! He even healed in anger!*
- Did He speak very sharply at times? *Yes!*
- Did He also condemn, very roundly, at times? *Yes!*

*But He never cursed!* There’s the difference.

“...and with it we ourselves curse people

who are made in *the* likeness of God. From the same mouth comes out blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so!” (vs 9-10).

That’s where Jesus starts. It’s an ongoing lesson all of your life. I think in this situation all of us are going to be at varying levels of accomplishment in it. Sometimes it will vary greatly, depending on whether you”

- have a temper
- are impetuous
- are impulsive
- like to speak

*whatever it may be!*

He’s dealing with that and saying that ‘before you do anything for God or me in keeping the laws which I’m making complete, get everything squared around with your brother and yourself.’

Otherwise, all of your ‘religion’ is worthless! That’s what He’s saying. As I said before, I’m pointing to myself. If this feels like it’s reaching down and grabbing your gut, it is me, too. I have a lot of things that I need to go back and work on and rehash and redo and get taken care of. But I am trying, and I hope you are.

Jesus gives a little sound advice on how to keep yourself out of great, long and protracted disputes.

Matthew 5:25: “Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are in the way with him; lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and you be cast into prison.” *Once you’re in the jug, it’s pretty tough!*

There’s a woman that shot the child molester that molested her son. He was a known child molester—many repeated cases—God would sanction that killing. You go back in the Old Testament. If someone did something worthy of death to some of your family, you could go get them! I just hope that the jury says ‘not guilty.’ That man, when the kid came into testify against him, smiled at the boy and then smirked at the mom with the distinct implication in what he was doing in those behaviors, was ‘I’m going to be out in a couple of years and I’m going to do it again.’ That’s why things are so screwy and upside down in the world today. People are not following even the letter of God’s Laws. I hope she gets off.

Verse 26: “Truly I say to you... [if you’ve taken it that far] ...there is no way that you shall come out of there until you have paid the *very* last coin.”

But if you get yourself in a situation that

you’re going to be fighting and fighting these things, sometimes they try to even agree with your adversary.

Example: Leona Helmsley. She was really made out to be a bad person. She wasn’t! They paid \$5-million in taxes that year and she owed a couple hundred thousand. They paid something like \$20-million over the years and she owed a million. She was willing to pay it but they wouldn’t take it. There are times when you get into situations with your adversary when even your adversary is not going to listen. The Federal government wanted to make an example out of a rich person for not paying their taxes. And guess for what purpose? *So, that when this tax bill came down on the rich, you’d better pay!*

Verse 27: “You have heard that it was said to those *in ancient times*, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you, everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (vs 27-28).

Where does all adultery and rape and child molestation and perversion begin in the first place? *Again, He’s saying to get your mind and your attitude straightened out!*

- What do you need to do that? *You need the Spirit of God!*
- Does that not make the Law of God complete? *He’s saying, ‘In old time you’ve heard it said that you shall not commit adultery.’*

*But everyone would say, ‘That can’t keep me from thinking!’*

So, Christ is saying that *the thought* is what leads to the sin and *the thought itself*—the initializing of the sin—*is sin!* That’s why it says when temptation comes we are to be casting down thoughts and vain imaginations and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (1-Cor. 10). **Is this not the obedience of Christ? Yes! These are the words of Christ!**

Now He shows how hard you’re to work on this, v 29: “So then, if your right eye shall cause you to offend, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is better for you that one of your members should perish than *that* your whole body be cast into Gehenna.”

- What is Gehenna? *The Lake of Fire!*
- What is the Lake of Fire? *The second death!*

*He’s putting this on a level of prime importance! No longer is it that these things are going to result in going to court or going before the Sanhedrin. But*

it's going to be going before God and the ultimate punishment is the second death; that's what He's saying here.

Verse 30: "And if your right hand shall cause you to offend, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is better for you that one of your members should perish than *that* your whole body be cast into Gehenna."

It is literally true, I suppose—it could be literally true—if you don't overcome lusting, taking out your eyes won't help, because you can still see in the eye of your mind. Cutting off your hands because you may be stealing—as some of the more radical Arab countries do; they can always tell a thief because one hand is missing; if habitual he no longer has any hands, but he can still lust, covet and plan for others to steal. So, you can cut off both legs, both arms, cut off the ears and plug them up so you can't hear, pull out your eyes, take out your tongue and lie in bed with a breathing apparatus **and still lust!**

The reason He brings this out is to show that you have got to overcome **from within!** You can't overcome from *without*. You can only overcome and change from **within!**

Verse 31: "It was also said *in ancient times*... [He didn't say who said it; He didn't say it was the ancients that said it] ...'Whoever shall divorce his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.'"

They could do that. A man could say, 'I don't like you' and write it out and 'divorce you and release you as my wife.' She could take that out and go get married again. But Jesus called it a wicked and an adulterous generation.

Verse 32: "But I say to you... [this is pretty powerful legislation here] ...whoever shall divorce his wife, except for the cause of sexual immorality..."—'pornea'—*any kind of sexual behavior that breaks the bond of one flesh being husband and wife!*

Today there are many different avenues and varieties of sin, sexual sins, which are cause for divorce. But the only one who can make the decision is the offended party.

The offended party must say, 'I am going to put you away.' That looses the marriage right there! If the offended party says, 'No, I don't want to put you away, but I want you to change, repent and reform.' If they repent, change and reform and everything is fine from there on, then it's a binding marriage. You can't come along later and say, 'I've changed my mind.'

You think on this: All of what I've said up to this point of what should be the converted mind's approach to keeping the commandments and laws of God, there are some people who have actually said, 'I don't like my wife or husband,' and actually go out and commit adultery so then the other person can have grounds to put them away. Or I like someone else in this other over here rather than my husband or wife, so what I'm going to do is I'm going to make myself so miserable that I'm going to be declared a non-believer.

The ministers, brethren, have done this. I did not realize, but in the so-called largest Church of God organization, 55-58% of all the members have been divorced and remarried within the Church to church members! I never knew that situation existed. I mean, it's unreal! People have done things just as vicious as what I've said. There have even been cases where there was a problem in the marriage and they went to counsel with the minister and the minister told the husband, 'you're not to say a word.' He didn't say word and he listened all that the wife said declared that he was not converted and the marriage was not binding, so therefore, she could leave and marry this other guy.

You see what happens? **These are living words!** Who would have ever thought that we look back on our years in the Church and that thing would be within the Church of God? **Violating exactly what Jesus said with impunity!** There are a lot of people who are going to have to pay for that, because there are a lot of people who are involved in it. Especially when you look back and see where it says, 'Oh My people, those that lead you have led you astray!'

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* (except where noted)

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 5:17-20
- 2) John 14:26
- 3) John 21:25
- 4) Colossians 1:24-28
- 5) Colossians 2:9, 8-10
- 6) 2 Peter 1:15-21, 13-21
- 7) Revelation 22:18
- 8) Revelation 1:3
- 9) Revelation 22:18-21
- 10) Psalm 41:13
- 11) Matthew 5:17
- 12) Matthew 7:28-29
- 13) Matthew 5:18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44
- 14) Matthew 6:2, 5, 9, 16, 25, 29
- 15) Matthew 5:18-24
- 16) James 3:8-10

17) Matthew 5:25-32

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Matthew 5:1-16, 24
- Mark 13
- Luke 17; 21
- 2 Peter 3
- 1 Peter 5
- 2 Corinthians 10

Also referenced:

Sermons:

- *What It Means to be Complete in Christ*
- *Love and the New Covenant*

Sermon Series: *Daniel/Revelation*

Book: *Code of Jewish Law* by Solomon Ganzfried and Hyman Goldin

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