**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**The Incarnation – Part XV**

***Sermon on the Mount – Clarifications***

 **March 10th, In the Year of Our Lord 2024**

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(Unless otherwise noted, ESV is quoted – English Standard Version)

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We move forward in our sermon series about the life and times of Jesus Christ, with a particular focus on His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5). By the time Jesus preached this sermon, we have observed, in the Gospel of Matthew, that Jesus has already called some of His disciples and has purposely exposed the devil in the wilderness to be an inferior being using Scripture to highlight the devil’s inferior status.

 I see that it is spiritually profitable for us to review last week’s sermon and add to some of our observations. Let’s start by studying Jesus’ use of salt and the Law.

We have noted that Jesus, being a Jew, opened His sermon with the traditional Jewish “blessing” (Amidah) as His audience was accustom to hearing. Then Jesus’ sermon brought forth a reminder of the salt covenant in the Law (Numbers 18:19) of which He stated He did not come to abolish but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17).

**Numbers 18:19** "All the offerings of the holy *gifts*, which the sons of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and your daughters with you, as a perpetual allotment. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the LORD to you and your descendants with you." (see also Leviticus 2:13)

. . . God had given to the Hebrew people through His prophet and Deliverer, Moses, by saying. . . "You are the **salt of the earth**; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men (Matthew 5:13).

 Jesus used known Jewish understandings (regarding Salt, Light, Law) to communicate simple truths that have not changed then or in our present day.

But Jesus’ teaching. . . accurately taught the Law and exposed the false understanding the Jews had. Jesus ultimately fulfills the Law by being that one perfect, sinless, unblemished sacrifice (*propitiation* Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2, 4:10) the Law requires to atone for all the world’s sin.

So, where in the Bible (New Testament) does God clarify this teaching? The whole letter to the Hebrews (written by an unknown writer, but authored by God) clarifies the purpose and intent of the Law and the Incarnation. I encourage all to read and study the book of Hebrews. If anyone asks you. . . “What book in the New Testament teaches the reason for God’s Incarnation?” . . . you can cite the book of Hebrews and particularly chapter ten (10). Below is Hebrews 10:1-18. God has not changed His offering or the faith-path for salvation from the time Adam and Eve sinned. Remember, the Law was given about 1400 years prior to the Incarnation. And, remember, Abel, and all the Believers from the beginning were saved (approved/justified) by faith to God (Hebrews 11).

**Hebrews 10:1** For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins?

 3 But in these sacrifices, there is a reminder of sins every year.

 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

 5 Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me;

 6 in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.

 7 Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'"

 8 When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law),

 9 then he added, "Behold, I have come to do your will." He does away with the first in order to establish the second.

 10 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

 11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,

 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

 15 And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

 16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,"

 17 then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more."

 18 Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

 Man’s salvation has always totally depended on God extending His grace, in that He loved us first (1 John 4:19). Hebrews 10:18 refutes any teaching that fallen man’s merit can be an offering for sin. So, all the *penance* prescribed by any religious organization to atone for sin is a lie and against God’s Holy Scripture. Christ did not “cry-out” from the Cross. . . through His pain and suffering. . . “My sacrifice is not enough to save you. . . you must add your good works to mine”.

After Jesus references the salt tied to God’s covenant, He highlights the

Light in Matthew 5.

**14** "You are the **light of the world**. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;

**15** nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

**16** "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

 Once again, we see that Mark and Luke record Jesus’ teaching but from a time when He taught the same teaching later in His ministry years (Mark 4:21, Luke 11:33).

From our biblical observations, we see that Jesus/God created all things (Genesis 1:1-4 and John 1:1-5, 14) and that He not only created the physical lights in the heavens (Psalm 33:6, 9) but that He is the spiritual light of man. These are some of the verses from which the word “Trintiy” is derived. The word “Trinity” is not in the Bible but is used to express the reality of God’s singular Divine nature. God’s Apostle Paul, recruited by God from the depths of Pharisee-ism, who knew the Tora more than any of his contemporaries. . .explains to the Believers in Corinth the truth of God’s creative powers and purpose. Regarding Jesus as the Light, we read. . .

 **2 Corinthians 4:6** For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

And conversely. . . there is the enemy of the Light. God created all humanity and the angels with free-will-choice. We know that Satan exercised God’s gift of free-will-choice and chose to rebel against Him and is now here on earth (Job 1, Revelation 12). Satan is not the *angel of light,* but he disguises himself (1 Cor. 11:13) to deceive everyone and is referred to by Paul as the “*god of this world*” (**2 Corinthians 4:4).**

 Our eyewitness to Jesus’ teaching is John, who wrote. . . **John 12:35-36**

35 So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36 "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

New Testament letters written by Luke and Paul report the reality of the spiritual ramifications of the Light (Acts 26:18, Ephesians 5:8, Philippians 2:15, 1Thessalonians 5:5).

**Transitioning within the Sermon on the Mount**

Continuing our observations in Jesus’ sermon. . . we see that after He pointed to the salt, light and Law, He went directly into correcting Jewish misunderstandings of the Law. It is revealing that Jesus says that He did not come to change the Law, and, at the same time, points to the religious leaders and states that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20). This was a surprising and condemning statement from Jesus, who just pointed to the Law as the foundation of God’s intent and plan for people, but then Jesus directs attention to the scribes and Pharisees who were believed to be community pillars in the keeping the Law and say that you have to be better that them. This must have been confusing to the common Jew. The obvious answer. . . is that whatever the scribes and Pharisees were teaching and doing was not an accurate portrayal of the Law.

 Therefore, starting in **Matthew 5:21** Jesus identifies **seven** areas of the Law that were in need of clarification. Again, Jesus did not come to change the Law but to fulfill. In these **clarifications**, Jesus is teaching the people how they can keep God’s original intent of the Law. . . which is in contrast to what the scribes and Pharisees were teaching and doing.

 In **Matthew 23:23,24** (part of the seven woes against the scribes and Pharisees), we have additional insight into Jesus’ confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees. Jesus acknowledges the Law and differentiates the weightier matters of the Law of which the scribes and Pharisees ignored.

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have **neglected the weightier matters of the law**: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. 24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

 So, we see here in the “seven clarifications”, Jesus points to the weightier provisions (matters) of the Law.

**# 1 Clarification – Murder/Anger**

**21** "**You have heard that it was said** **to those of old,**

'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.'

(Exodus 20:13, 21:12, Deuteronomy 5:17, Numbers 35:16)

 **22 But I say to you**

that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; (Psalm 37:8)

whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council;

and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. (Ecclesiastes 7:9)

**23** So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go.

First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

**25** Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court,

lest your accuser hand you over to the judge,

and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.

**26** Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

**# 2 Clarification – Adultery/ Lustful Intent**

**27** **"You have heard that it was said**,

 'You shall not commit adultery.' (Exodus 20:14, Deut. 5:18, Lev. 20:10)

 **28 But I say to you**

 that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent (Job 31:1, Prov. 6:25, Ex. 20:17)

has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

 **29** If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

 For it is better that you lose one of your members

than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

 For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

**# 3 Clarification – Divorce Responsibility**

 **31** **"It was also said,**

'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'(Deut. 24:1)

 **32 But I say to you** (Matthew 19:8, Mark 10:1-9)

that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality,

makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

**# 4 Clarification – Swear Falsely on God**

 **33** **"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old**,

'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' (Lev. 19:12)

**34 But I say to you,** (Num. 30:2)Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,35 or by the earth, for

it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

 (Isaiah 66:1, Psalms 103:19, Exodus 20:7, Matthew 23:16-22)

36 And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

37 Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

 (Proverbs 10:19)

**# 5 Clarification** – **Personal Revenge / God Vindicates**
**38** "**You have heard that it was said,**

'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

(Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:19,20, Deuteronomy 19:19,21)

 **39 But I say to you,** (Proverbs 24:17,29, 20:22, Leviticus 19:18)

Do not resist the one who is evil. (Lamentations 3:30)

But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

 **Isaiah 50:4-10**

 4 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary. Morning by morning he awakens; he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.

 5 The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious; I turned not backward.

 6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.

 7 But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore, I have not been disgraced; therefore, I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

 8 He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

 9 Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

10 Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.

**# 6 Clarification – Hate Enemy / Love and Pray for your Enemy**

 **43 "You have heard that it was said**,

'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' (Leviticus 19:18)

18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Note: Hate your enemy is not part of Leviticus 19:18 . . . the Law.

Biblical scholars note that “hate your enemy was traditionally added because “neighbor” became only those in you camp (other Hebrews).

Example: Deuteronomy 23:3-6 No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD,

 **44 But I say to you**,

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, (Proverbs 20:22, 24:17)

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others?

 Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

(Exodus 23:4,5, 2 Kings 6:22, Job 31:29, Proverbs 24:17, 25:21,22)

**# 7 Clarification – Perfection**

**48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Leviticus 19:2)**

This last clarification (# 7) is very challenging. I have preached on this verse in the past. This one verse can be a stumbling block to non-believers and Believers alike. We all know that we have made many mistakes in life and cannot live a perfect life using the Bible or any code as our base-line. So, how can “The just God”, who created us in His image, with free will to choose Him, but knew that we would fall/fail. . . now demand us to be perfect? This is not fair/just. Or maybe, perhaps, Matthew got it wrong? Are there any other Scriptures that say the same thing, like in the Old Testament? I looked . . . here they are. . .

**Old Testament**

**Genesis 17:1** Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless.

**Leviticus 19:2** "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

**Deuteronomy 18:13** "You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.

**New Testament**

**Matthew 19:21** Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

**Colossians 1:28** We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

**Colossians 4:12** Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.

**1 Peter 1:16** because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY." (Levitcus.19:2)

**So, what is the answer? JESUS!**

**Isaiah 53:5** But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, ‎ שְׁלוֹמֵ֙נוּ (Shalom: completeness) and with his wounds we are healed.

Once again, God’s chosen disciple, Paul, the Pharisee of Pharisees, writes to the churches in Corinth, Phillipi and Galatia explaining God’s goal for Believers to become perfect/complete but only possible through surrendering faith in Jesus.

 For your Greek language gurus. . .here are the Greek dictionary definitions for the English (perfect/complete).

Perfect: **Gingrich,** *Greek NT Lexicon (GIN)*

**τέλειος (teleios)** *having attained the end* or *purpose,* ***complete****,* ***perfect***—

*perfect, fully developed* in a moral sense Matthew 5:48,19:21; Colossians 4:12; James 1:4, 3:2. andof God as absolutely *perfect* Matthew 5:48.

 **Complete: Friberg,** *Analytical Greek Lexicon*

**ἄρτιος**, (artios)one able to meet all demands *qualified, fully ready, perfectly fit* (2 Timothy 3:17)

 **Gingrich,** *Greek NT Lexicon (GIN)*

**ὁλόκληροi (holokleroi)** *whole, complete, intact* 1 Thess. 5:23; James 1:4

 We see these words (perfect/complete) used by, James, the head of the Church in Jerusalem.

**James 1:4** And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

We conclude today’s sermon with Paul’s letters witnessing that he has not attained perfection but is being perfected.

**2 Corinthians 7:1** Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

**Philippians 3:12** **Not** that I have **already** **obtained** it or have already become **perfect**, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

**Galatians 3:16-29**

16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

 17 This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.

 18 For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

 19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

 20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

 21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

 22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

 23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,

 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

**Jude testifies to the truth of Matthew 5:48**

 **Jude 1:24-25**

24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. **Amen.**

For example. . . "Do not judge so that you will not be judged” end of quote. But that is totally misleading. If this were true, the whole of the Western’s world judicial system is not in-line with this abbreviated quote. And no one could make a moral decision because moral decisions require a judgment call. Reading the rest of Jesus’ teaching, He is conveying to His steeped in the Jewish Tora (Law) audience, of which, they misunderstood. . . we receive. . . "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you (Matthew 7:1-2). Therefore, Jesus knew that ever Jew listening to His Words are fully aware they have broken the Law at some point in their life and seek mercy from God. Jesus is teaching them that they do not want to be judged strictly by the Law in an effort to justify themselves to God.

**Luke 6:37-42**

37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.

 38 "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure-- pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

 39 And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?

 40 "A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.

 41 "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

42 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

We see the same teaching of Jesus recorded in John 8:7. Here, Jesus challenges the mob of Jewish men who were about to stone to death a woman caught in adultery. . . “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

 The Apostle Paul, the Pharisee of Pharisees, who surrendered to Jesus Christ, explains this truth of Jesus’ words in Romans chapters 2 and 3. No preacher can explain this truth better than God’s Apostle Paul, who learned directly from the resin Lord (Galatians 1:11-12).

33 "No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.

 34 "The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness.

 35 "Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness.

 36 "If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays."

 (Lk. 11:33-36 NAU)

**Luk 14:34** "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?

**Luk 14:35** "It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

16 "The Law and the Prophets *were proclaimed* until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

 17 "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.

 (Lk. 16:16-17 NAU)

 50 "Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty *again*? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." (Mk. 9:50 NAU)

**Col 4:6** Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

**Joh 8:12** Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

**Phi 2:15** so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,

**Joh 12:36** "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

**Eph 5:8** for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

**Pro 4:18** But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.

**1Th 5:5** for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;

**Joh 5:35** "He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.

**Joh 9:5** "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world."

**Less frequently cited refs**

**Luk 11:33** "No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.

**Act 26:18** to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.

**Mat 11:13** "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

**Mat 20:28** just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

**Luk 16:17** "But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.

**Rom 8:4** so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

**Rom 10:4** For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

**Mat 9:13** "But go and learn what this means: I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."