**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

**Sermon**

**The Incarnation – Part XIV**

***Sermon on the Mount – Salt, Light, Law***

**March 3rd, In the Year of Our Lord 2024**

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted – New American Standard Bible)

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In Mathew’s Gospel, Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is reported in what has been designated as chapters 5-7. In Luke’s Gospel, he records a similar sermon of Jesus in Luke 6:17-49. (17 Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place.) The difference in reporting is in the use of the word mount or level place. Remember, the topography in the Galilee area is not like the Rocky Mountains in America. . . these are hills in the Galilee area. The Greek word “oros” can mean hills or mountains. The description in Luke lends to a similar, if not the same, topography Matthew describes, in that Jesus, after walking down from a higher place. . . spoke from the side of a hill (mountain) where the land started to level. Here, Luke simply gives more detail than Matthew. Both could be reporting the same event or two separate sermons.

Remember, in the three-and-one-half-year ministry of God’s Incarnation as Jesus, He gave several sermons repeating the same teachings over and over again. Therefore, the two Gospels of Matthew and Luke could be reporting two different sermons with substantial similar content. This is why the disciples memorized Jesus’ teaching, because Jesus was repetitive like any good teacher. Americans know where the statement comes and who said, “I have a dream”. Martin Luther King often made this statement that Americans soon memorized and many of MLK’s teaching.

Both Matthew and Luke recorded the start of Jesus’ sermons that began with the traditional Jewish “Blessings” which is called the “Amidah” prayer. We recently reviewed that the “Amidah” prayer was the core of every Jewish worship service. “Amidah” literally means “standing” and refers to a series of blessings recited while standing. So, it makes perfect sense that the “Jew,” Jesus, would start His sermons with a traditional Jewish prayer of Blessings.

The Semon on the Mount in Matthew and the similar sermon in Luke is often quoted in our Christian Witness. There are many passages of Scripture and individual verses that are cited but many are quoted out-of-context. We will move forward with the goal, keeping with the biblical context of the totality of God’s Word.

After the “Blessings”, Jesus highlighted three subjects. . . salt, light and Law. We will look at each one, knowing that Jesus provided more detail further in His sermon.

**Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and Salt**

**Matthew 5**

**13** "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.

Both Mark and Luke record Jesus’ salt teaching at a later time within Jesus’ teaching ministry. This is indicative of Jesus’ repetitiveness in His teaching. Mark’s report is similar to Matthew . . . "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" (Mark 9:50). But Luke is much more explicit in recording. . . "Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? 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." (Luke 14:34-35).

So, why does Jesus, point to salt? Is there a Jewish spiritual understanding of salt?

We know that salt is essential to life on earth. In fact, salt is mandatory for people to sustain life. But we also know salt has to be in the right portions. With this understanding. . .God’s life-plan is for all of us to surrender our hearts to Him so that we may live. This is a life-covenant. Adam was given this choice in Genesis 2:17. God’s *forbidden tree covenant* was a life-covenant. God told Adam if he ate from the forbidden tree he would die. Adam did not physically die right away but he spiritually died and was separated from God, who removed Adam and Eve from Garden. But God does not give-up on His creation and people that He made in His image. God presents all of us with a life-covenant and an opportunity to return to Him. God does not want to lose one person (2 Peter 3:9) and "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED" (Romans 10:13).

How do we call upon the name of the Lord? . . .With a circumcised heart. . . with a surrendered heart. . . God allows us to call upon Him, but it is our free-will-choice. This is God’s love, grace and mercy being extended to all people in every time.

Jesus calls Nicodemus to be reborn of Spirit (John3) which highlights the transformation of a person’s spiritual heart condition. Almost 600 years before the Incarnation, God speaks through His prophet, Ezekiel . . . 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. . . 37 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them: I will increase their men like a flock. (Ezek. 36:2 6,27, 37).

We read God’s offer of His life-covenant within the five (5) books of the Law,

(of Moses) in Deuteronomy 30:6 "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. This is what the Jews, who were part of the mob demanding Jesus be crucified, did in response to Peter’s Holy Spirit preaching after Pentecost. God allows them to respond. God lets them call to Him just like Ezekiel said.

Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

So, what did God’s Holy Spirit tell them through Peter?

38 Peter *said* to them, "Repent, [turn from your sinful heart practices] and each of you be [water] baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, [gentiles] as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself." (Acts 2:38-39)

This life-covenant transformation seals the Believers eternal salvation. God’s Apostle Paul writes to the church in Ephesus.

3 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Therefore, eternal life and God’s life-covenant is linked to salt. How so? We know that the Incarnate God, Jesus, constantly referred back to the Old Testament and in the Sermon on the Mount He points to the Tora, the Law.

**Leviticus 2:13** 'Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

**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."

Remember, God’s prophet Moses wrote the Law given directly to Him by God (Exodus 34:27, Deuteronomy 31:9) in the 15th c. B.C. This was in the time of the Exodus when the people were learning more about being in a covenant relationship with God. From reading the first five (5) books of the Bible (Tora/Law), we see that the Hebrews coming out of Egypt were a rebellious group, especially the older generation. I likened God’s management of the Exodus Hebrews to a 3rd grade teacher giving detailed instructions to seven and eight years olds in order to teach them how to follow the rules. God made it very simple, so they would not forget His life-covenant. Therefore, Jesus’ teaching is simple and refers back to God’s life-saving words to Moses, a spiritual Deliverer of the Hebrew people.

**Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and** **Light**

**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** And He was saying to them, "A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand? **22** "For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light. **23** "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."

**Luke 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. **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.“

Non-believers may ask . . . why did Jesus use the word Light?So, to be clear, in case anyone missed the point. . . Jesus/God is the Light and the application of the Light is achieved by God’s Holy Spirit guiding and functioning in the hearts and minds of Believers. From life experience, confirmed in Scripture, we see that the Light of the World is originated from our God, our Creator. Our experiences in life and the histories of mankind witness and dictate that there is not any Light in the soul of fallen man. Humanity cannot save itself. The Apostle Paul wrote, But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; (2 Corinthians 4:7). Let’s start from the beginning to see where this Light came from.

**Genesis 1:1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep,

and the **Spirit** of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

John’s Gospel does not record a specific sermon of Jesus like the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel but John does open His Good News letter with . . .

**John 1:1** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. . . .

. . .

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Now, it does not take a literary genius to make the direct connection between Gensis 1 and John 1. Jesus is the Creator God who made all things including the Light. This is one 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.

Some may ask. . . Did not God just make the physical lights we see in the sky, like the sun and stars? Yes, but much more.

**Psalm 33:6** By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.

**Psalm 33:9** For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

True, God did make the physical lights, but there is more meaning in Genesis 1:1-4 than a temporal application. 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.

**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 to deceive everyone.

**2 Corinthians 4:4** in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

**2 Corinthians 11:13** No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light

Now that we have a clear understanding to the historical Jewish understanding of Light, we can receive the full meaning of the subject of Light in the Sermon of the Mount and in the rest of the Bible. When Jesus taught that Believers are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14), John was there. . . John was an ear-and-eyewitness to His teachings. Therefore, John writes in his Gospel…

**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** 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.

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

**Philippians 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,

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

**Jesus’ Sermon of the Mount and The Law**

**Matthew 5:17-20**

**17** "Do not think that I came to abolish **the Law** or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

**18** "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from **the Law** until all is accomplished.

**19** "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these **commandments**, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

**20** "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses **[Law]** that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, which is it? Does the Law save or not? What was/is God’s original intent of the Law? God had given the Law (Tora) to Moses, the Deliverer from Egypt, to the Hebrew people over 1,400 years before the Incarnation. For Jesus even to talk about the Law, as if He was the clarifier of the Law, was striking to His Jewish audience. Verse 20 are the stinging words that most likely greatly offended the Jewish religious leaders and caught the attention of everyone. Who has the authority and power to say such a thing?

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 risen Lord (Galatians 1:11-12).

**Romans 2:1** Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

**3** But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

. . .

**11 For there is no partiality with God.**

**12** For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; **13** for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

**14** For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, **15** in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, **16** on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

**17** But if you bear the name "Jew " and rely upon the Law and boast in God, **18** and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, **19** and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, **20** a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,

**21** you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?

**You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal?**

**22** You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

**23** You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God?

**24** For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,"

**just as it is written.**

**25** For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

**26** So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision**?**

**27** And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law**?**

**28** For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

**29** But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

**Chapter 3:19ff**

**3:19** Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

**20** because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

**21** But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, **22** even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; **25** whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; **26** for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

**27** Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

**28** For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

**29** Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, **30** since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

**31** Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.

**AMEN**