

Sunday, March 20, 2022

“Meet Your King”

Summary of Radical Purity

Matthew 5:21-32

Wayne Shelton

Matthew 5:21-32 (focal: v21-22)

In order to make obedience more readily attainable, the scribes and Pharisees would restrict the commandments and extend the permissions of the law. They made the law's demands less demanding and the law's permissions more permissive. What Jesus did was to reverse both tendencies. He insisted instead that the full implications of God's commandments must be accepted without imposing any artificial limits, whereas the limits which God had set to his permissions must also be accepted and not arbitrarily increased. The scribes and Pharisees were evidently restricting the biblical prohibitions of murder and adultery to the act alone; Jesus extended them to include angry thoughts, insulting words, and lustful looks. They restricted the command about swearing to certain oaths only (those involving the divine name) and the command about neighbor-love to certain people only (those of the same race and religion); Jesus said all promises must be kept and all people must be loved, without limitations. But the scribes and Pharisees were not content merely to restrict the commands of the law to suit their convenience; they sought to serve their convenience still further by extending its permissions. Thus, they attempted to widen the permission of divorce beyond the single ground of 'some indecency' to include a husband's every whim, and to widen the permission of retribution beyond the law courts to include personal revenge. Jesus, however, reaffirmed the original restrictions. He called divorce on other grounds 'adultery' and insisted in personal relationships on the renunciation of all revenge. Jesus came to fulfill and/or complete the law; that is, to give its proper explanation and application.