

## “But I Say Unto You”

Gary McDade

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells the multitudes that in the Judgment He is going to say to some of them the chilling words, “I never knew you” (Matthew 7:23). Since the pronouncement will result in large measure from their not listening to and doing what He said unto them, perhaps a sampling of what our Lord actually said unto them might be of interest. A favorite phrase of Jesus is “I say unto you.” It is found 123 times in the Bible—once in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 13:28); once used by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:9); and the remaining 121 times it emerges from the lips of Jesus (Matthew-John). In the Sermon on the Mount alone, Jesus used the phrase 13 times.

Jesus is speaking in 107 of the 111 verses in the Sermon on the Mount, but 13 times he begins his remarks with “I say unto you.” What he said in those verses follows:

“For verily **I say unto you**, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18).

“For **I say unto you**, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

“But **I say unto you**, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matthew 5:22).

“But **I say unto you**, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

“But **I say unto you**, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery” (Matthew 5:32).

“But **I say unto you**, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne” (Matthew 5:34).

“But **I say unto you**, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39).

“But **I say unto you**, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

“Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily **I say unto you**, They have their reward” (Matthew 6:20).

“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily **I say unto you**, They have their reward” (Matthew 6:5).

“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily **I say unto you**, They have their reward” (Matthew 6:16).

“Therefore **I say unto you**, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” (Matthew 6:25).

“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet **I say unto you**, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these” (Matthew 6:28-29).

This sampling of what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that bears the added emphasis of His divine authority in the phrase “I say unto you” is enough to indicate the challenge of being a Christian. Perhaps these statements would be a good place to begin a personal evaluation of the degree of importance what Jesus said is having in our life. He was giving the reason when He said, “I never knew you,” for why some would be told, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:23).