

Matthew 5  
Part 2 (21-48)  
Jesus contrasts the Old Testament with Jewish traditions

II. Initial observations:

- A. Jewish traditions were often not what the scriptures taught.
- B. What the Jews “have heard” was not what Moses had said.
- C. Jesus exposes Jewish traditions and contrasts them to truth.
- D. Jesus uses “I (myself) say” emphasizing His authority over that tradition. (cf. 7:28, 29)

III. God’s law concerning murder. (21-26)

- A. Tradition taught that one could treat another as harshly as they desired so long as murder was not committed. (21)
  - 1. “Kill” means murder or intentionally killing an innocent human.
    - a. This was punishable under God’s law by death. (cf. Gen. 9:6; Ex. 21:12; Num. 35:16)
    - b. This does not include self-defense.
    - c. God authorized self, family and national defense.
  - 2. “In danger” is a legal term, which means to be liable, answerable or guilty.
  - 3. “The judgement” may refer to the last day (cf. 5:22) or it may refer to a human court.
    - a. Matthew does not use this Greek word elsewhere to refer to human courts.
    - b. In either case, the murderer will be held accountable for the action.
- B. Truth teaches that murder begins with an attitude of anger or hatred. (22)
  - 1. “Brother” probably has reference to a fellow human.
    - a. “Raca” a term of abuse, probably from an Aramaic expression for “empty headed”.
    - b. “Council” is the Sanhedrin, supreme council of the Jews.
    - c. “Thou fool” must be kept in context of unjust anger. (cf. Lk. 12:20)
  - 2. “Hell fire” Lit. Gehenna of fire. A place of eternal punishment. (cf. 5:29, 30; 10:28; 18:9)
- C. Since such anger is incompatible with God, having this type of anger makes our worship unacceptable. (23, 24)
  - 1. Here, the worshipper is at fault and has the power to make it right.
  - 2. The proper act of worship must correspond with the right attitude. (cf. Jn 4:24; Isa 1:11-17)
  - 3. Restoring harmony with a brother is most urgent. (cf. 18:15-17)
- D. The importance of human harmony is further emphasized. (25, 26)
  - 1. A friendly relationship should not be delayed.
  - 2. “Adversary” is an opponent in a lawsuit. (cf. Lk 12:58; 18:3)
  - 3. “Quickly” shows us the importance of haste.
  - 4. “Whiles thou art in the way” teaches not to let it go to court. Get the problem settled.

IV. God’s law concerning adultery. (27-30)

- A. According to some, in the ancient world it was generally understood that a married man could have sexual contact with other women so long as the women was not married. (27, 28)
  - 1. Adultery is sexual activity involving a married person or married people.
    - a. Not necessarily two married people.
    - b. By definition the word here means to have intercourse with another man's wife.
  - 2. Truth teaches the adultery begins with a lustful attitude. (cf. James 1:14, 15)
    - a. Lust is generally a desire for something forbidden.
    - b. It has always been wrong to covet another man's wife. (cf. Mk. 10:6-9)
- B. This is to be understood as a hyperbole. (Exaggerated for effect) (29, 30)
  - 1. Jesus is not advocating self-mutilation.
  - 2. It does teach us that avoidance of temptations may involve drastic measures.
  - 3. If necessary, use those measures to stay free from the temptation.
- V. God's law concerning divorce and remarriage. (31, 32)
  - A. Tradition taught a man could divorce his wife for any reason and remarry with God's approval. (31)
    - 1. "Put away," means to let go, send away, to be dismissed.
    - 2. "Writing of divorcement" is a legal term used in the sense of relinquishment of property.
    - 3. This "writing" was allowed to protect the ex-wife from a double-minded husband.
      - a. He could drive her away and then claim she was still his wife.
      - b. In this condition, another man could not care her for.
  - B. Truth teaches that there is one reason for a God-approved divorce. (32)
    - 1. "Save for the cause of fornication" this is the only exception for divorce.
    - 2. Notice: Jesus switches here to the word "fornication". This is significant.
    - 3. "Fornication" is any sexual immorality. Much broader than adultery.
  - C. "Caused her to commit adultery" because she is put away she is vulnerable.
    - 1. A woman would naturally seek remarriage. For vindication from 1<sup>st</sup> husband and protection.
    - 2. The second marriage is adultery, and her 1<sup>st</sup> husband, indirectly, caused the crime.
  - D. The one who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.
    - 1. "Committeth adultery" is present tense, continuous action. Thus, as long as the relationship lasts, the adultery lasts.
    - 2. He commits adultery not because her husband put her away, but because she still belongs to the husband who put her away. (cf. 19:3-9; Gen. 2:18-25 the one flesh relationship)
- VI. God's law concerning oath making. (33-37)
  - A. Tradition taught that some oaths were not as binding as others. (33)
    - 1. "Forswear" is to swear falsely or to break ones oath.
    - 2. This was true, but Jesus says they did not practice it.
  - B. Truth teaches that we must keep our word. (34-37)
    - 1. "Swear not at all" is limited to the four kinds of oaths listed in verses 34 through 36.
    - 2. Tradition taught that if an oath did not contain the name of God it was not binding. (cf. 23:16-22)

3. All oaths are not forbidden. (cf. 26:63-64; Lev 19:12; Deut 6:13; 2 Cor 1:23)
- VII. God's law concerning personal retaliation. (38-42)
- A. Tradition taught that an individual could retaliate against one who mistreated them as long as the retaliation did not exceed the original wrong. (38) (cf. Ex 21:24, 25; Deut 19:21)
    1. The law of retaliation was older and wider spread than the Law of Moses.
    2. It was found in the Code of Hammurabi dating to 18<sup>th</sup> century BC.
    3. The intent of this law was not to sanction retaliation, but to prevent unjust retaliation.
  - B. Truth teaches that one should give up their rights rather than to retaliate. (39-42)
    1. "Resist" means to set oneself against another. (cf. Lk. 21:15; Acts 6:10; Rom 9:19)
    2. "Turn the other cheek" does not mean to be a total pacifist. (cf. Jn. 18:22, 23; Acts 16:37; 22:25)
    3. But, it does mean not to seek retaliation for ourselves.
    4. "Smite" means to slap. More of an insult than a damaging blow.
    5. Hence, the lesson: when insulted don't insult back. (cf. Prov 26:4)
- VIII. God's law concerning love. (43-48)
- A. Tradition taught that love was limited only to those who qualified. (43)
    1. "Love your neighbor" is found in Lev 19:18, but tradition left off "as thyself".
    2. "Hate thine enemy" is not found in OT.
  - B. Truth teaches that love is to be extended even to our enemies. (44)
    1. "Love" means an earnest desire for another's good and well being.
    2. "Enemy" is one who opposes God and His people.
  - C. To love in this fashion is to imitate the Father. (45)
    1. God gives good gifts to all. (cf. James 1:17)
    2. Universal salvation is not taught here, we still must be in Christ to gain salvation.
  - D. There is no reward for discriminate love. (46-47)
    1. "Publicans" were the tax collectors. The term came to mean an undesirable.
    2. "Salute" is a simple greeting. There is no reward for doing the expected.
  - E. God is the example to which one must strive, in love and in all things. (48)
    1. "Perfect" means to have attained. Accomplish that which is desired.
    2. Some take this verse to modify all the subjects in 5:21-47.

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