

Authentic Christians

Lesson 7 – Matthew 5:21-26

1. Jesus & the Fulfillment of the Old Testament (vv. 17-20)

- Matt. 11:11-15 – the Prophets and the Law “prophesied” until John the Baptist ...
 - Jesus came to fulfill the Old Testament scriptures *in their entirety* ... *not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter would be abolished* ...
 - The OT both predicted the coming of the Messiah (e.g. Micah 5:2) and recorded events that pointed to the life and teaching of the Messiah (e.g. Deut. 8:1-5).
 - Lk. 24:44-45 – It is the entirety of the OT that pointed to Christ (see Jn. 5:39)!
- Jesus was saying that his life and ministry did not signal the abolishment of the OT, or even additional revelation, but it was the fruit of all the OT predicted, taught, and modeled.

“Jesus came not to abolish the Old Testament but to fulfill it – fulfill it in the sense that he himself was the object toward which it pointed. Therefore it is the height of folly not to listen to his commands, the commands of the kingdom.” (Carson, The Sermon on the Mount, pg. 40)

- This is important because Jesus is claiming exclusive rights – no one will be admitted to His kingdom that does not exemplify His characteristics or follow Him exclusively!

Can a person be a genuine believer if he/she is also a follower of Mohammed? Buddha? Dali Lama? Anyone else or something else that offers peace with God and eternal life?

2. Application

- Jesus did not bring a new and different way of relating to God – He modeled the proper way!
- Jesus is the one and only standard of righteousness given to us so that we may be pleasing to God; all other virtuous people and systems are at best copies of the original, and at worst damnable directives that come from the depraved imaginations of the human heart.
- The main theme throughout the rest of the SOTM is obedience to the commands of Christ; He has now positioned Himself as the pivotal point in all history, so His teaching is to be obeyed. (even the Great Commission emphasizes obedience – see Matt. 28:18-20)
- Rom. 3:21 bridges the gap between justification and sanctification ... *“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.”*
- The SOTM ends up demanding a kind of righteousness that can only come through God’s grace in salvation (justification) and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (sanctification).

3. “You have heard it said ... but I say to You” (5:21-26)

- This is the formula Jesus employs to correct his follower’s understanding of the Old Testament.

- Jesus is concerned with 1) overthrowing erroneous traditions, and 2) explaining authoritatively the real direction of OT teaching.
- This formula is repeated in 5:27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44 (6X total)

E. g. ... “Sukkot is a holiday intended for all of mankind, but when Sukkot is over, the Creator invites the Jewish people to stay an extra day, for a more exclusive, intimate celebration.”

- The 1st erroneous teaching that Jesus attacks/clarifies is the 6th Commandment – *You shall not murder.*

Why do you think Jesus started here, with this issue? Why not start with worry, or using oaths, or divorce, or prayer? (this is only an example taken from the teaching of the Law that most conscientious Jews/people would find easy to obey; it may also reflect our unusual acceptance of a lack of self-control over our heart/passions – “pre-murder”)

Why do you think Jesus referred to His disciples as “hearing” the Law instead of “reading” in the Law? (Most could not read Hebrew but depended on the religious leaders to read it to them with interpretation)

- Jesus goes behind the act of murder to the heart condition or spiritual motivation for the action:
 - a. Christ was dealing with the accumulated teaching of the Pharisees and religious rulers - He was attempting to clear away the rubbish of years of misinterpretation.
 - b. The Pharisees wanted to keep the letter of the law by abstaining from the act of murder – doable for most people because they abhor the taking of human life by other humans.
 - c. Christ was calling men and women to a righteousness that superseded that of the Pharisees - the core issues of the heart that gave rise to outward behavior and sinful actions.
 - d. He has already shown them that no one would enter the kingdom he promised unless their righteousness exceeded the most righteous people they knew. (See 5:20)
 - e. The phrase “without a cause” (vs. 22) was probably a scribal insertion intended to soften the statement of Christ (not found in ESV, NIV, NASB); it is not found in the most reliable manuscripts.
- The stark reality is that we can also break the sixth command in our spirit and our speech, both deserving of judgment in the kingdom of God.

How would you define anger? What is it?

What forms might anger take? (temper tantrums, argumentation, disrespect, violence, animosity, cruelty, antagonism, vengeance, malice, bitterness, apathy, indifference)

Biblical data – Prov. 29:22, 22:24-25, 15:18; Gal. 5:19-20; Eph. 4:31 & 6:4; Col. 3:8; James 1:19-20.

Are there legitimate forms of anger? If so, give biblical support.

Where does Eph. 4:25-32 fit into the discussion?

- a. The anger we most often feel is an emotional response to a perceived wrong, and that emotion motivates us to destroy something or someone who gets in our way.
 - b. Anger that is directed toward others because of some personal affront or offence is **unrighteous anger**; anger directed toward sin and injustice done to others is acceptable.
- The point Christ is trying to make is that murder begins, not with the slash of a knife or the impact of a bullet or the strike of blunt object (the sixth command) - it actually begins with a murderous anger toward others that wishes them to be out of our way!
 - The secondary point He makes is this: if murder demanded a severe penalty, then how much more should the judgment be if our heart is saturated with anger! (See Matt. 15:18-19)