

“You Fool” Merits Hell Fire

– Matthew 5:22

Matthew 5:22 [New King James] *“But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother **without a cause** shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.”*

This is the first of a series of statements in which Jesus Christ makes the requirements of the Law given by the Eternal God through Moses more radical than the strict letter may indicate.

Having mentioned the law concerning murder, [**Matthew 5:21**] which was a capital offence under the law given through Moses, Jesus Christ continues to talk about the penalty incurred by a person who calls another being “*a fool*.”

Under the Law given to Moses by God the death penalty for murder could not be commuted to a monetary fine such as was payable for the killing of someone’s domestic animal.

Where it could be proved that the killing of another human being was accidental, as when a man’s axe-head flew off the handle and struck his fellow workman on the head, it did not count as murder, [**Deuteronomy 19:1-7**] but even so the owner of the axe-head had to take measures to escape the vengeance of the dead man’s next of kin, otherwise the killer was brought before the village elders and on the testimony of two or three witnesses was sentenced to death.

[Please download and study the article on this website, ‘*Ancient Israel’s Legal System*’ listed under the main heading ‘*Judgement*’.]

The death penalty was carried out by stoning, the witnesses threw the first stones. Then the community joined in, thus associating themselves from the blood-guiltiness and expiating the pollution which it brought on the place.

Joshua 20:1-6 [New King James] *“The LORD also spoke to Joshua, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying: “Appoint for yourselves cities of refuge, of which I spoke to you through Moses, that the slayer who kills a person accidentally or unintentionally may flee there; and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he flees to one of those cities, and stands at the entrance of the gate of the city, and declares his case in the hearing of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city as one of them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. Then if the avenger of blood pursues him, they shall not deliver the slayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbour unintentionally, but did not hate him beforehand. And he shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the slayer may return and come to his own city and his own house, to the city from which he fled.”’”*

These verses explain how these “*cities of refuge*” worked.

Jesus Christ points out that the murderous act that was not an accident springs from the angry thought. It is in the mind that the crime is first committed and judgement is incurred.

An earthly court cannot take action against an angry thought, but the heavenly court can, [Psalms 139:1-4].

The phrase “*without a cause*” is **not** in the original but added to the Greek text designed to make Jesus Christ’s words more tolerable.

Jesus Christ’s words in the original form make no distinction between righteous and unrighteous anger, anyone who is angry with another human being exposes themselves to judgement.

Ephesians 4:26-27 [New King James] “*Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.*”

There is no way of knowing where unchecked anger may end, it can open up our minds to Satan’s influence.

There seems to be an ascending scale of seriousness as Jesus Christ continues to speak on the subject of anger that is not controlled by reconciliation.

Matthew 5:23-26 [NIV] “*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.*”

The “*court*” refers to the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the nation, in contrast to local court.

Evidently, to insult another human being by calling them “*a fool*” is more serious than being angry with them, the word “*raca*” is an Aramaic word meaning something like “*imbecile*,” but to call them “*a fool*” the Greek word is “*mōrōs*” meaning dull or stupid, was liable to the fire of Gehenna.

Gehenna is the valley on the south side of Jerusalem which served as the city’s incinerator for rubbish, after return from Babylonian exile earlier days it had been the site of the worship of Molech where children were offered as sacrifice to this pagan god.

Jesus Christ insisted that whatever word was used that caused offence that behind the offensive word was a hostile thought, and it is in this thought that the guilty process starts.

If this hostile thought is not killed off as soon as the thinker is aware of it, that is what will be the first count in the indictment before the judgement of Jesus Christ, [**2 Corinthians 5:10-12**].

So we need to be judging ourselves now on a moment to moment awareness, [**Matthew 7:1-5; 1 Corinthians 11:31; 1 Peter 4:17**].