

Matthew: His Life And His Gospel – Part 4

Matthew 5:17 [New King James] *“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil.”*

A fully study of the meaning of this verse can be found on this website under the main heading ‘Covenants’.

Matthew 5:18-19 [New King James] *“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*

The Ten Commandments are eternal, symbolically written by the hand of God on stone, [**Exodus 31:18**].

Matthew 5:20 [New King James] *“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Two things are needed for the righteousness we have to exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

First – faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that will be receiving the imputed [credited] righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:13, 16, 18-24 [New King James] *“For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” ... “Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all 17” ... “who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. **It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,**”*

This is the same faith that Abraham had in the promises that God had made to him; the Greek word used is “*dikaiōs*”.

The Scribes and Pharisees did **not** have this faith in who Jesus Christ was and what He was about to do for all humanity, [**John 3:16-17**].

Second – living by the principles behind the law, the intent of the law which Jesus then expanded on.

The Scribes and Pharisees only kept the letter of the law **not** the intent of each point of the law, [**Matthew 23:1-28**].

Matthew 5:21 [New King James] *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’”*

This was a quote from **Exodus 20:13**.

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.”*

The words “without a cause” are **not** found in many old original scripts.

Jesus Christ is telling us that we should not even out of anger consider killing a fellow human being.

Proverbs 15:1 [New King James] *“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”*

Harsh words such as “raca” that means empty or worthless can provoke anger. “The council” refers to the local judgement court of local elders, [see the article on this website with the title ‘Ancient Israel’s Legal System’ listed under main heading ‘Judgement’.]

Jesus Christ mentions we should never call our fellow human a fool, the Greek word used is “mōrōs” meaning dull or stupid, for this destroys a human’s name or reputation, such judgement will bring judgement of God onto us, [**Romans 2:1-8; James 4:11-12**].

“Hell fire” is the word “gēenna” the Valley of Hinnom all the refuse of Jerusalem was incinerated.

Jesus Christ insists that the gravest thing of all misuse of words is to destroy a person’s reputation and take away their good name.

This makes gossip and malicious tale-bearing deserving eternal death.

Jesus Christ is talking about a person who is a murderer in heart and mind.

Matthew 5:23-24 [New King James] *“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”*

The word “therefore” tells us to look again at what we have just been told when we consider making an approach to the throne of the Eternal Creator God.

The misused words between us and any other human cause us to sin. This breach between us and the Eternal God, [**Isaiah 59:2**] will **not** be healed until the breach between ourselves and our fellow human being has been reconciled.

Until we do this our prayers and sacrifice will not be accepted by the Eternal God.

Matthew 5:25-26 [New King James] *“Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.”*

This is very practical advice from Jesus Christ; delay in sorting out a dispute, which may include a humble apology, will cause any dispute to escalate and be taken out of our hands by public officials.

Matthew 5:27-28 [New King James] *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

Jesus Christ was giving a new standard to the law, “you shall not commit adultery,” [**Exodus 20:14**].

Under Jewish law adultery was punished by death of both people involved, [**Leviticus 20:10**]. **Jesus Christ tells us that even the forbidden thought of adultery is sin in the sight of God.**

In a tempting world there are many things deliberately designed to excite desire: books, pictures, plays, even advertising, and the spirit behind all of this is Satan, who hates faithful marriage of a man and a woman.

Satan knows that it is the spiritual marriage between Jesus Christ and the true Christian Church will take over his present rule of this world, [**Revelation 19:6-9; Revelation 20:1-6, 11-13**] so he hates marriage.

Every physical marriage between a man and a woman is ordained by the Eternal Creator God, [Genesis 2:24] as a training situation for the spiritual marriage with Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ condemns the person who deliberately uses their eyes to stimulate their desires for what is wrong, [**James 1:13-15**].

Matthew 5:29-30 [New King James] *“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”*

Coming directly after the scriptures dealing with our thoughts that causes us to sin, Jesus Christ is telling us how drastic our attack on these wrong thoughts should be. This is not intended to be literal action.

The best way to defeat wrong thoughts is to fill our mind with doing good things, forgetting our own desires by seeking to serve other human beings who are in need of help, physically or spiritually.

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

The Greek word translated “*bodies*” is “*soma*” meaning our whole life, our physical body, our mind and the thoughts it generates, and our human spirit, [**Job 32:8**] through which the Holy Spirit works to bring us in harmony with the Eternal God, [**Proverbs 20:27**] and the way He thinks and acts, [**Galatians 5:22-25**]. Away from the lustful thoughts in this world.

Matthew 5:31-32 [New King James] *“Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”*

God hates divorce, [Malachi 2:16]. This must be foremost in our minds when we think about divorce.

God intends marriage to be a lifetime commitment; people should never even consider divorce an option for solving problems or a way out of a relationship that seems dead.

In these verses Jesus Christ is also attacking those who purposefully abuse the marriage contract, using divorce to satisfy their lustful desire to marry someone else.

Jesus Christ said that divorce is **not** permissible except for unfaithfulness.

This does **not** mean that people should automatically occur when a spouse commits adultery. **The Greek word translated “sexual immorality” is “pōrnēia”** which includes prostitution, adultery, fornication and incest.

Those who discover that their partner has been unfaithful should first make every effort to forgive them, reconcile and restore their relationship.

Matthew 5:33-37 [New King James] *“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ **For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.**”*

One thing that seems to be strange about “the Sermon on the Mount” is the number of occasions that Jesus Christ was recalling to the Jews that which they already knew.

Exodus 20:7 [New King James] *“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”*

This has a twofold meaning, using God’s name as a form of blasphemy, but also adding God’s name to a transaction.

There was a Jewish custom in the time of Jesus Christ which might be called “*evasive swearing.*”

The Jews divided oaths into two classes: those which were absolutely binding and those which were not.

An oath that contained the name of God was absolutely binding, but any oath that succeeded in evading the name of God was held not to be binding, hence the list of objects that did not include God’s name.

Jesus Christ was saying that you cannot keep God out of any transaction so do not swear at all, a simple yes or no should be enough.

The simple truth is that we cannot divide our lives into compartments in which God is or is not involved.

Psalms 139:1-16 [New King James] *“O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall fall on me,’ even the night shall be light about me; indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You. For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.”*

Always have this Psalm foremost in our minds when we make any decisions in life, or allow wrong thoughts to remain in our mind.

“For whatever is more than these is from the evil one,” what does this mean?

If it is necessary to take an oath from a person on certain occasions it arises from the evil in that person. If there was no evil in a person, no oath would be necessary, but we still live in the evil world of Satan, [2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19; John 8:44].

Any true Christian should be living a life of transparent goodness that people will never ask an oath of us.

Matthew 5:38 [New King James] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’”*

The Old Testament laws mentioned here were given to limit vengeance and help the local courts to administer punishment that was not too strict or too lenient, [Exodus 21:23-25; Leviticus 24:19-20; Deuteronomy 19:21].

Matthew 5:39-42 [New King James] *“But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.”*

It will not happen very often, if at all, that someone will slap us on the face, but time and time again life will bring us insults either great or small.

Jesus Christ is saying that a true Christian will not seek retaliation.

The point of these three statements is that a true Christian does not think of their rights, but of their duties, not of their privileges, but of their responsibilities.

Jesus speaks of being compelled to go one mile, a Christian should offer to go two.

This is a picture from an occupied country, any Roman soldier could compel any person to carry his baggage for a mile, a true Christian would go a second mile without being compelled.

Jesus Christ is saying do not always be thinking of our liberty, but of our duty and privilege to be of service to other people.

The inefficient worker, the resentful servant, the ungracious helper, have not even begun to have the right idea of the Christian life.

A true Christian is concerned daily to help, even when the demand for help is discourteous, unreasonable and tyrannical.

Finally, it is Jesus Christ’s demand of a true Christian that we should give to all who ask and never turn away from those who wish to borrow. This is based on:

Deuteronomy 15:7-15 [New King James] *“If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs. Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, ‘The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,’ and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the LORD against you, and it become sin among you. You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand. For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.’ If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty-handed; you shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the LORD has blessed you with, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this thing today.”*

The “seventh year” is referring to the cancellation of all debts, including the bankrupt poor who had served you for food and board. [Please download and study the article ‘*The Effective Alternative To The State Handout Of Benefits!*’ listed under main heading ‘*The World Tomorrow*’.]

Matthew 5:43-48 [New King James] “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*”

The Pharisees interpreted **Leviticus 19:18** as teaching they should love only their own people; also **Psalms 139:19-22** and **Psalms 140:9-11** meaning they should hate their enemies.

The reason we are to love our enemies is to be like our Eternal Creator God, [verses 45 and 48].

The Greek word used for “love” is “*agapé*,” a spontaneous affection and benevolence irrespective of the rights or response of the recipient, [**Romans 5:8**] a sacrificial love, [**John 3:16-17**] that puts aside personal desires, [**Philippians 2:5-8**] to serve the object of that love.

The Greek word translated “perfect” is “*tēlēiōs*” meaning to reach the goal set before us, that goal is Godlike character.

Galatians 5:22-25 [New King James] “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*”

The “fruits” of the Holy Spirit lists the very character of the Eternal Triune God.

This aim for perfection in human beings is the second part of the original reason for the creation of human beings.

Genesis 1:26-27 [New King James] “*Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*”

Notice that only the “*image*” of God is created in human beings both male and female.

The Hebrew word used is “*tselem*” meaning resemblance, shadow or outward form, a material representation.

The other word used as part of this original plan is “*likeness*” a completely different word, in Hebrew, “*demûwth*” meaning manner, attributes, character.

As we know, character comes from spending time with the person whose character we wish to reflect. This is why humans are given time for that character to develop.

Time that every true Christian must spend with God’s Word, the Christian Bible, and Jesus Christ, the Word in flesh, [**1 Timothy 3:16**] and the Holy Spirit, [the Spirit of Christ – **Romans 8:9**].

John 15:4-8 [New King James] “*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and*

throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”

This is the close relationship we have to have with our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, to accomplish the perfection expected by the Eternal Father God.