

Episode #722 Matthew 5 Part 5-Marriage and Adultery

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord was teaching His disciples on a mountain, what is commonly called the “Sermon on the Mount.” His teaching was for His disciples, every one an Israelite, and regarded the conduct of a disciple and in light of God’s coming kingdom. After assuring them that He had not come to abolish the law but to fill full every part of it, He began to contrast what was taught “of old” in the law with His Own teaching. Of old it was said not to commit murder, but warns that one who is angry with his brother is in danger of judgment, who speaks scornfully to him is in danger of the Sanhedrin, and who calls him a fool is in danger of the Gehenna of fire. Today, we will consider as the Lord expands on this teaching.

III. Murder: Of Old Versus the Lord’s Teaching.

- A. Matthew 5:23. The altar refers to that of burnt offerings before the temple. Note the Israelite character of these commands. The assumption is that the brother has a legitimate complaint against you.
- B. Verse 24. The Lord indicates we should be right with men before we offer Him our gifts. For example, we should not cheat someone and then give money to God without first making it good.
- C. Verse 25. The “adversary” is the opponent in a legal matter. This again assumes the adversary has a legitimate complaint against you. Officer = judge’s assistant, or tax collector (Bullinger).
- D. Verse 26. “Assuredly” is “amen.” By no means = *ou me*, the strongest possible Greek “no.” A lesson here (Otis Sellers): we are still walking about breathing God’s air, but are we living as adversaries to God, as sinners without a Savior? If so, we had better agree with Him and receive the Savior He has provided before we die. Then the chance of entering into an agreement with God is gone, and we will enter instead into judgment, and pay the full penalty.

IV. Adultery: Of Old Versus the Lord’s Teaching.

- A. Verse 27. This was in Exodus 20:14, Deuteronomy 5:18. Besides the obvious, adultery has to do with the adulteration of a family. A child who was supposed to be the heir of his father yet who was not the heir at all would adulterate the family line.
- B. Verse 28. He looks and keeps looking. Of course, this assumes she is married, or he is married himself. This is frightening truth, but consider I Corinthians 6:9-11.
- C. Verse 29. “Causes you to sin” is the Greek *skandalizo*, from which we get “scandalize.” Of course the eye cannot really cause one to sin, but this is put for the thing that the eye is fixated on that is causing one to stumble. Many times people are so fixated on a thing that it draws them away from having any time for God...job, family, entertainment, etc. It is better to pluck such things violently out of the life than to end up cast into Gehenna. Gehenna is again the place where God disposes of worthless people.
- D. Verse 30. The “right hand” is in this case put for any activity. Of course the hand does not really cause us to offend, but the things we do with the hand. We should not have our hands so full that we have no time for God and thus lose out on life.

- E. Verse 31. This was said in Deuteronomy 24:1. Speaks of the bill of “divorcement” or of repudiation. A wife no longer desired could not be kept in the house like a slave, or sent away and then, when she finds a new man, claimed again and accused of adultery! This bill of divorcement would give her freedom to find a new husband and not be taken advantage of. It was for her protection. Yet in Christ’s day they were abusing this to the mistreatment of women.
- F. Verse 32. Sexual immorality = an expression of sexual misconduct. He causes her to do this because she is forced to find a new man. Why the exception for the case of sexual misconduct? Because then she has already defiled herself or committed adultery! The law would have her stoned, but under the Roman Empire the Jews could not just execute when they wanted, any more than they could in the United States. To marry her that was divorced would be adultery because she was previously bound to a man from whom she was loosed for no good reason. But this had to do with the character of marriage in Israel, not just in general. Remember under the law many divorced people today would either be dead according to the law (because of sexual misconduct) or their former partner would be dead, meaning they would be widowed, not divorced.

V. Conclusion: The Lord spoke of what was said “of old” in the Scriptures, then added His words to it as of equal authority! The Lord’s words are of equal authority because He is the God Who wrote all the Scriptures, the Living Word of God Who gives us the Written Word of God. One should not give gifts to God when a brother has a legitimate complaint against you. Agree with your adversary before you get to judgment. Of old, one was not to commit adultery, but the Lord teaches one should not look lustfully on a woman. Of old the law said to give a woman a certificate of divorce, but the Lord says to do this except for causes of sexual misconduct is to cause her to commit adultery. Can we learn to live our lives, not by the standards of our day, but by the higher standards of God’s kingdom?