

# THE LAW AND JESUS: BREAKING THE LAW OF GOD MATHEW 05:17–20

## *Introduction*

Jesus Christ was accused of destroying or abolishing the law of God. He has always been accused of minimising God's law. Every generation has its proponents who feel that Jesus *emphasized* love and de-emphasized the law. Many have felt that the thrust of Jesus is love and forgiveness, and the afterthought is law and justice. As a result, many have felt less obligated to follow God's law. They have felt freer to live a looser life and to do as they wished. The feeling has been that if they keep the law of God in the back of their minds, they have the Christian liberty to interpret behaviour as they see fit (within some reason). After all, it is argued, the "priesthood and security of the believer" are two of the basic teachings of Scripture. Therefore, the law's clear restrictions and obligations and its demand for obedience are minimized, and what is called love and forgiveness are emphasized. Christ pulls no punches and comes straight to the point: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law" (v.17), "anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments...." (v.19), "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law..." (v. 20).

- I A person must know that Christ came to fulfil the law (vv. 17-18).
- II A person must do and teach the law in order to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven (v. 19).
- III A person must have more righteousness than a religionist to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (v. 20).

## MATHEW 05:17–48 JESUS, THE FULFILMENT OF LAW

This Scripture is of critical importance. It is God's Son explaining the law of God.

1. Christ confirmed God's law, all the Scripture of the Old Testament. Christ said He was not abolishing the Law or the Prophets. The term "the Law or the Prophets" was a reference to the whole Old Testament. What Christ said was that He, as God's Son, came to fulfil the law; and His teaching was just as binding as the Old Testament law. (See note, Mt. 5:17-18.)
2. Christ illustrated God's laws, explaining the broad principles which were and still are to be applied to everyday life. He took a few practical laws and showed how a person was to take the broad principle and apply it to his own daily behaviour.
3. Christ condemned the oral or Scribal Law (condemned it rather strongly.) When Jesus Christ and the other New Testament writers condemned the law, it always referred to the oral or Scribal Law, not to God's Law (See note, Mt. 5:17-18). □

## **I. *Mathew 05:17–18 Jesus Fulfils the Law***

A person must know that Christ came to fulfil the law. Jesus said He was neither contradicting nor abolishing the Old Testament Scriptures nor standing against them. He was fulfilling them, completing them, bringing out what was implied. He was showing what the real meaning of the Old Testament Scripture is, its full meaning — all that God intended the Scripture to say. As God’s Son, He is the Revelation of the truth. He is to reveal the true and complete meaning of the Scriptures. There are several ways in which Jesus Christ fulfilled the law.

1. Before Christ, the law described how God wanted man to live. The law was the ideal, the words that told man what he was to do. But Christ fulfilled and completed the law; that is, God gave man more than just mere words to describe how He wants man to live. He gave man the Life, the Person who perfectly pictures and demonstrates the law before the world’s very eyes. Jesus Christ is the Picture, the Living Example, the Pattern, the Demonstration of life as it is to be lived. He is the Perfect Picture of God’s will, the Ideal Man, the Representative Man, the Pattern for all men.

*John 1:14* The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

*John 8:45* “Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!”

*Col 1:15* He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation.

*Heb 1:3* The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

*1 Pet 2:21-23* To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

2. Before Christ, the law was only words and rules. It could only inject the idea of behaviour into the mind of a person. It had no spirit, no life, no power to enable a person to do the law. But Christ fulfilled and completed the law. He was Spirit and Life, so He was able to put spirit and life to the words and rules of the law. He was able to live the life described by the words and rules. As such, He was able to inject both the idea and the power to behave into a person’s mind and life. It is now His life that sets the standard and the rule for the believer; it is His Spirit and life that gives the believer power to obey.

*Rom 8:1-4* Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened

*by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.*

**Gal 2:19-20** *For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

**Gal 5:16-18** *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

**Heb 8:10** *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

3. Before Christ, the law stated only the rule and the principle of behaviour. It did not explain the rule nor the spirit behind the rule. Neither did the law give the full meaning of the rule. The law always had to have an interpreter. But Christ fulfilled and completed the law. He explained the rule and the spirit behind the rule. He interpreted the law. He gave the law its real and full meaning.

**Gal 3:23-24** *Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.*

**Rom 3:20-22** *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.*

4. Before Christ, the law demanded perfect righteousness; it demanded a perfect life. But man failed at certain points. Man just could not obey the law perfectly; he fell short of perfect righteousness. But Christ fulfilled and completed the law. He kept the law in every detail. He secured the perfect righteousness demanded by the law. He fulfilled all the requirements, all the types, and all the ceremonies of the law — perfectly. As such, He became the Perfect Man, the Ideal Man, the Representative Man for all men. As the Ideal Man, He simply embraced all men; He embodied the righteousness that man must now have.

**Rom 3:20-22** *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the*

*Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.*

**2 Cor 5:21** “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

**Heb 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.

**Heb 7:26** Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

**1 Pet 1:18-19** For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

5. Before Christ, the law demanded punishment for disobedience. If a man broke the law, he was to be punished. But Christ fulfilled and completed the law. In fact, He went to the farthest point possible in fulfilling the law. He paid the maximum price, showing the ultimate love. He bore the punishment of the law for every man’s disobedience; He took the punishment of the law upon Himself. As the Ideal Man, He not only embodies the righteousness that must cover all men, He also frees all men from the penalty of the law. And He makes them sons of God. (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 3:13-14; 4:1-7.)

**Thought 1.** Several other passages need to be looked at for a complete understanding of Christ and the law and the believer. (Rom.7:4; 7:14-25; 8:2-4; Gal. 3:10.)

**Thought 2.** Christ speaks to two different types of people.

- 1) The strict religionist or legalist. Christ does not abolish or weaken the law. The liberty He preaches fulfils the law as it should be fulfilled. He is not to be rejected because a person thinks His liberty weakens the law. He is to be acknowledged as God’s Son who is to be followed and obeyed. (Rom.14:1-23; Gal. 5:13; 5:16-18.)
- 2) The carnal or loose religionist. Christ does not weaken the law by allowing a person to live as he wishes — by conscience only. He does not release men from the duty and responsibility of the law. He fulfils and strengthens and even enlarges the law. Liberty does not mean license; it means that a person is now free to serve God in the spirit and life of the law, not just in the letter of the law.

**Thought 3.** The Old Testament is the Word of God — according to Christ. (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:11; 2 Pet. 1:19-21.)

**Thought 4.** Christ considered His coming to be significant — one of the pivotal points of history. The following words show this (see vv. 17-18).

“I have come....”

“I have come...to fulfil.”

*“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear...”*

*“Until everything is accomplished.”*

He speaks as a person whose entrance into the world held great meaning for the world. This fact says something of extreme importance to man: “Hear Him.” What He says is binding. It is *as* binding, if not *more* binding, than the law itself.

**Rom 10:3-4** *Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

**Mat 20:28** *“Just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

**John 3:17** *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

**John 10:10** *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

**John 12:47-48** *“As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.”*

## MATHEW 05:17 THE LAW

The law referred to four different writings to the Jews.

1. It referred to the Ten Commandments.
2. It referred to the first five books of the Bible, that is the Pentateuch.
3. It referred to the law and the prophets, that is, all the Scripture of the Old Testament.
4. It referred to the oral or the Scribal Law.

God’s law, given in the Old Testament, was not enough for the Jews. They reasoned that if the law was really God’s Word, then it must include — have embodied within it — every rule and regulation for conduct. Therefore, they took the great principles of the law and reduced them to thousands upon thousands of rules and regulations. These rules and regulations became the oral or Scribal Law. There were two groups who gave their lives to the teaching and keeping of the law.

1. The Scribes: they were the writers and teachers of the law (Lk. 6:2).
2. The Pharisees: they were the strict followers of the law (Act. 23:8). □

## II. **Mathew 05:19** *Consequences of Disobedience of Law*

A person must do and teach the law in order to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Breaking and doing the law carries with it the idea of continuous action. No person is

perfectly obedient all of the time. Every person fails sometime (Rom. 3:23; Jas. 3:2; 1 Jn. 1:8, 10). But any person who continues to break a commandment, even if it is the least commandment, shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. And the person who continues to obey the commandments shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. A person cannot break a commandment and ask forgiveness, then go out and break another commandment and ask forgiveness over and over. Such a person cannot expect God to think he is serious about the commandments of God. No man would think he is serious - why should God? The person only deceives himself. Note two significant points.

1. Three persons teach the law to others.
  - a. The *keeper* and the *breaker* of the law. A person teaches by what he does. Others see and observe and learn from what he does. If a person repeatedly breaks a law, no matter how small a law, he teaches that the law is not important — not worth enough to be kept.
  - b. The *instructor* of the law. This refers to the teachers of the law and of religion. Each instructor either adheres to or rejects the law. Each instructor teaches his students the truth or else deceives his students into following human reasoning. The person who breaks and teaches the breaking of the law attempts to *void the law*, that is, to do away with it. (Rom. 3:31; Mt.15:3; Psa. 119:126; see 89:39) It would seem that an attempt to void the law is much more serious crime than to disobey a commandment. It must also be noted that continuing to disobey a commandment is denying the commandment — treating it as though it is unimportant and unnecessary. It treats the commandment as though it is not even existing and has no bearing upon a person's life. Such behaviour is consciously or unconsciously teaching men to **void the law**.
2. Christ warned all who break and teach others break the law, even if they break only the least commandment: they shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. There are four persons who are severely warned.
  - a. The worldly or carnal: person who continues to break the commandments of God.
  - b. The teacher or instructor: the person who teaches that the commandment of God is a farce. The person who says there is no such thing as God's law, there are only the commandments of men.
  - c. The person who teaches and encourages others to sin and to disobey the commandments of God — even if the commandment is one of the least. Nothing is more contemptible and nothing will be judged more severely. This is one of the most serious offenses among men. (Rom. 2:17-29.)

*Luke 17:2* “It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.”

*Rom 2:23-24* You who brag about the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? As it is written: “God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

**Rom 14:15** *If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died.*

**Gal 1:8-9** *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!*

- d. The mocker or persecutor: the person who rebels, mocks, and curses God's law and its strictness (and the God and the followers of it).

**Mat 7:26-27** *"But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

**Eph 5:6** *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.*

**2 Th 1:7-9** *And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.*

**Heb 2:2-3** *For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.*

**Jude 1:14-15** *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: "See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him."*

**Thought 1.** Four significant facts are seen in this point.

- 1) All the commandments of God are important, but some are less important than others. The man who breaks the least commandment and continues to break it (teaching men such) shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- 2) Breaking a commandment of God and continuing to break it is serious, even if it is one of the least commandments. Such behaviour teaches men that the commandment is not important. The result is that a person shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- 3) When a commandment is broken, a person is to ask forgiveness and repent. He is not to continue breaking the commandment and asking forgiveness over and over. Continuous disobedience teaches that the commandments of God are not

really all that important. It is that person who will be judged severely (1 Cor. 3:10-17; 2 Cor. 5:10.)

- 4) The obedient person can expect great reward.
  - He shall be called great in heaven.
  - He is loved in a special way by both God and Christ (Jn. 14:10, 14).
  - He receives very special manifestations of Christ's presence (Jn. 14:21).

**Thought 2.** Who fails to do the law? Who breaks the law?

- 1) The person who neglects the law just fails to do it.
- 2) The person who disobeys the law — does what it says not to do.
- 3) The person who does not know the law — cannot do it because he just does not know it.
- 4) The person who narrows the law, that is, limits and weakens the law by making it say less than what it really says. Many make the law apply only to what they want because it allows them to do their own thing and to live as they wish.

**Thought 3.** A person may neglect the law for several reasons.

- 1) He is deceived about the law's importance. Someone has misled him about its importance.
- 2) He is too preoccupied with worldly affairs to place much importance in the law.
- 3) He is reacting against some strict teaching in his past; therefore, he now neglects the law.
- 4) He has not been taught the seriousness of keeping God's law.
- 5) He fears the restrictions the law will place upon his life and behaviour. He does not want to live as the law says, so he neglects it.

**Thought 4.** The law of God is often broken for two tragic reasons.

- 1) Some have never heard about God's law. Believers have failed to take the message of the law to the world.
- 2) Some do not have the law impressed upon their minds enough to worry about keeping it. Believers have not stressed the message with enough conviction and power to show its importance.

### **III. Mathew 05:20 The Value of Righteousness**

A person must have more righteousness than a religionist to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Note three facts.

1. Righteousness is necessary to enter heaven (Mt. 5:6; Rom. 3:21; 4:5; 4:22; 5:1; 10:6; Gal. 2:16).

**Mat 5:20** *“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

**Rom 1:18** *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*

**Rom 3:10, 23** *As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one;”.... “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*

2. The religionists, the Pharisees and the Scribes, had some righteousness. They just did not have enough. They were, in fact, strict religionists. They worked at obeying thousands and thousands of rules and regulations, governing everything ranging from dress and social behaviour to ministry and work. However, they lacked the one essential: loving God so much that they would deny themselves and seek their righteousness in His Son, Jesus Christ.

**Rom 3:20-22** *Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.*

**Rom 10:3-4** *Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*

3. The point is worth thinking: a person must have more righteousness than a strict religionist to enter heaven. Many are religious, but few are strict religionists. What did Christ mean? Who can enter heaven if a strict religionist cannot?

**Rom 4:5** *However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.*

**Eph 2:8-9** *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

**Titus 3:4-5** *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*

**Thought 1.** There are four facts in this verse that must be heeded. They should stir everyone of us, stir us to search our hearts and make sure we are approaching God as we should.

- 1) Many religionists make the same fatal mistake that the Pharisees and Scribes made. They seek acceptance with God...

- by giving God a formal worship instead of giving God a confession of unworthiness and of their need for Him in a personal way.

- by giving God good works instead of giving God their hearts.
  - by giving God a clean and moral body instead of giving God a confession of needing help spiritually.
  - by giving God only a part of their lives, instead of giving God the total abandonment of themselves. (Lk. 9:23.)
- 2) Many make the fatal mistake the religionists made, but to a lesser degree. They worship and do good...
- to be respectable in the community
  - to seek the acceptance of God
  - to have the fellowship of others
  - because they were forced by their parents to do good
  - to feel comfortable within their own consciences
  - to secure the approval of family and friends
  - because they were taught to do good
- 3) Some feel they must do good to be acceptable to God. Their motive in life is to work and work at doing good in order to secure God's acceptance. They have never learned the truth: they cannot do enough good to be perfectly acceptable to God. They must trust His love — that He loves them so much that He will take their trust and count it as righteousness (Mt. 5:6; Rom. 4:5; 4:22; 5:1).
- 4) Many worship and do just enough good to satisfy their consciences. They do just enough good to make them feel comfortable and acceptable to God. But they miss the whole point. What God is after the only thing that makes a person acceptable to God — is the giving of his total being over to God (day and night).
- in unworthiness and confession: that he has need for God in his life now and forever.
  - in trust and love: that he trusts and loves God because God has given His own Son and promised to accept him in His righteousness.
  - in thankfulness and appreciation: because God has accepted and assured abundant life now and eternally.
  - in adoration and praise: because God is God (Elohim) and has revealed His glorious love in Christ who has redeemed him eternally.
  - in worship and service: because the love of Christ compels him (2 Cor. 5:14). ■

# THE REAL MEANING OF MURDER

## MATHEW 05:21–26

### *Introduction: Murder, Anger, Contempt, Cursing*

Civilized societies have always considered murder to be a serious crime worthy of judgment. But anger is a different matter. Few have ever thought of anger as being on the same level as murder and worthy of serious judgment. However, Christ says that unjustified anger is the same as murder and will be subject to the same Judgment from God.

Note the words *brother* and *anyone* (vv. 22, 23, 24). Christ is saying that every human being is a brother under God's creation. Therefore, His words apply universally to every human being.

- I. The law: do not kill (v.21).
- II. The real meaning: anger in the heart (v.22).
- III. The growth of anger (v.22).
- IV. The judgment of anger: hell (v. 22).
- V. The answer to anger: reconciliation with a brother or sister (vv. 23-24).
- VI. The danger or damage of holding anger (v. 25).
- VII. The terrible end of anger: judgment and its surety (v. 26).

### MATHEW 05:21–48 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORDS: “YOU HAVE HEARD,” “IT HAS BEEN SAID”

These words are found in every paragraph or subject of these verses. It is important to understand this: Christ is referring not only to the Ten Commandments, but also to the Scribal Law of the Jewish teachers (See Lk. 6:2; 6:7.) He is directing the listeners' attention to what they had heard from their teachers, that is, to their interpretation of the law. Very simply put, Christ is giving the real meaning of certain laws, just what God originally intended the law to say. □

### **I. *Mathew 05:21 The Law: Do Not Kill***

The law against murder is the sixth commandment (Exo. 20: 13; Dt. 5:17). God's law is given to protect life. Life is to be respected and cherished. No life is to be taken, neither one's own life nor the life of anyone else.

*Exo. 20:13 You shall not murder.*

*Rom 13:9 The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.”*

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*1 Pet 4:15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.*

## **II. *Mathew 05:22 After Effects of Anger***

The real meaning of this law is anger. Note what Christ is saying: He is saying that man has a problem. Man misreads God's law. Man interprets God's law to say what he wishes it to say. He applies it only to the outward act, in this case to the act of murder. He fails to look inward — within himself — to the cause (See Mt. 5:17-18; Mk. 7:14-23).

Murder is deeper than just an outward act. It is an inward act: anger, bitterness, enmity. Murder is born from within, from an uncontrolled spirit, from an unregulated urge, from an inner anger. Anger itself is the real sin, the sin that breaks the law of God. Anger is...

- bitterness and enmity
- striking out against a person
- slandering and destroying a person's image (who is created in God's image)
- rage and fury
- desiring a person's hurt
- indignation and wrath
- a hatred of oneself
- an uncontrolled spirit
- envying and killing a person's happiness

**Thought 1.** Note three facts.

- 1) Jesus speaks to those who know the law. The person who knows the law (the Word) needs this message more than anyone else.
- 2) God's law (Word) existed from the beginning ("long ago"). It will never be annulled or done away with. It is always to govern man. Man is always to heed it.
- 3) Striking out at a person is clearly forbidden, but so are the bad feelings against a person. Anger any bad feelings whatsoever against a person — is sin, serious sin.

## **III. *Mathew 05:22 After Effects of Anger***

The growth of anger is dangerous. Unresolved anger will fester. It can become uncontrollable and give birth to murder. There are three steps in the growth of anger.

1. The anger that broods, that is selfish. It harbours malice; it will not forget; it lingers; it broods; it wills revenge and sometimes seeks revenge.
2. The anger that holds contempt (raca). It despises; it ridicules; it arrogantly exalts self and calls another person empty and useless. This is an anger that is full of malice. It despises and scorns (raca). It arises from pride — a proud wrath (Pro. 21:24). Such feelings or anger walk over and trample a person. It says that whatever ill comes upon a person is deserved.
3. The anger that curses. It seeks to destroy a man and his reputation morally, intellectually, and spiritually.

There is a justified anger. In fact, the believer must be an angry person — angry with those who sin and do wrong, and are unjust and selfish in their behaviour. However, a justified anger is always disciplined and controlled; it is always limited to those who do wrong either against God or against others. The distinguishing mark between justified and unjustified anger is that a justified anger is never selfish; it is never shown because of what has happened to oneself. It is an anger that is purposeful. The believer knows that he is angry for a legitimate reason, and he seeks to correct the situation in the most peaceful way possible.

**Eph 4:26** *“In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.”*

**Rom 12:18** *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*

**John 2:13-16** *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”*

**Thought 1.** Anger is cast against many. Too often hurt feelings exist between those who are supposed to be the closest: husband and wife, parent and child, neighbour and friend, employer and employee. The Lord is clear about the matter: we must never allow anger to take hold of us without just cause.

**Col 3:8** *But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.*

**James 1:19** *My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*

**1 John 3:15** *Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*

**Psa 37:8** *Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret - it leads only to evil.*

**Prov 14:17** *A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated.*

**Prov 16:32** *Better a patient man than a warrior; a man who controls his temper, than one who takes a city.*

**Prov 19:11** *A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.*

**Eccl 7:9** *Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.*

**Thought 2.** There are reasons why people get angry and develop feelings against others:

- To seek revenge and to hurt.
- To show ego or authority..
- To reveal passion or secure some end.

- To show hurt, resentment, and bitterness.
- To express disagreement and displeasure.
- To correct a wrong (a justified anger).
- To give warning.

#### **IV. *Mathew 05:22 Consequences of Anger***

The judgment of anger. It is a serious matter to hold feelings against another person — a very, very serious matter. There is (1) the danger of judgment (2) the danger of having to come before earthly courts, and (3) the danger of hell fire.

*Thought 1* Violence is to be judged — not only before the councils of the world, but before the councils of God.

#### **MATHEW 05:22 HELL FIRE OR GEHENNA (GEENNA)**

The word is used eleven or twelve times in the New Testament, and in every case it is spoken by Jesus except in the Epistle of James. It illustrates the terrible truth of the second death, of man's final separation from God. Jesus pointed to the burning, repulsive rubbish dump outside the city limits of Jerusalem and said that it was exactly what hell was like. The dump was called Gehenna. It was in the Valley of Hinnom which served as a public incinerator. Hanging over it was a layer of thick, smouldering smoke arising from what seemed to be an eternal flame. The smell and filth became a breeding cesspool for a loathsome worm that was difficult to kill (Mk. 9:44). Thus, Jesus found in Gehenna a description of just what it means to be separated from God eternally and to die the second death. Several facts are said about hell or Gehenna:

- It is the same as the lake of fire, a place of torture (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14-15).
- It has to do with the second death (Rev. 21:8; Jn. 8:24).
- It is Hell (5:29-30; 10:28; 23:15, 33; Lk. 12:5).
- It is eternal fire (Mt. 18:8).
- It is the fire of Hell (Mt. 18:9; Jas. 3:6).
- It is unquenchable fire (Mk. 9:43-49).

The teaching of Jesus should always be remembered. Remembrance is critical in determining a person's fate. Hell is a definite place, a real place that is specifically located. It was originally prepared for the devil and his angels. But all men who choose to follow self and evil and to reject God shall also be sent to hell eternally.

*Mat 3:10* "The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

**Mat 5:29-30** *“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”*

**Mat 7:19** *“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

**Mat 10:28** *“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

**Mat 11:23** *“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day.”*

**Mat 13:42, 50** *“They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”... “And throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

**Mat 16:18** *“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”*

**Mat 18:8-9** *“If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.”*

**Mat 23:33** *“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?”*

**Mat 23:15** *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites: You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.”*

**Mat 25:41** *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*

**Mark 9:43-48** *“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.”*

**Luke 3:9** “The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

**Luke 10:15** “And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.”

**Luke 12:5** “But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”

**Luke 16:23-24** “In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ ” □

## V. **Mathew 05:23–24 The Power of Reconciliation**

The answer to anger is reconciliation. Christ had two surprising things to say about this point.

1. The urgency of reconciliation. Reconciliation is always to precede worship. Even when we are entering the church to worship, if there is a problem with a brother, we are to turn around from worship and go to our brother seeking reconciliation. There are four reasons why reconciliation is more important than worship.
  - a. Reconciliation with God is one of the major purposes for worship. A person worships in order to seek reconciliation and fellowship with God and His people. Therefore, God does not accept the worship of a person who holds malice against Him or against any of His people. Statements of the fact make the point perfectly clear.
    - A break with another person means a break with God.
    - Unforgiveness toward another person means unforgiveness by God.
    - Not being right with another person means not being right with God.
    - Broken fellowship with another person means broken fellowship with God.
    - Bad feelings toward another person mean unacceptance by God.
    - Anger against another person means rejection by God.

A person just cannot hope or expect to be right with God if he is not right with his brother (1 Jn. 4:20-21). He must forgive and be reconciled if he expects to be forgiven and reconciled to God.

**Mat 6:12** “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (see Luke 11:4)

**Mat 6:14-15** “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

**1 John 4:20-21** If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he

*has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

- b. A person is to worship, for worship is essential to life and eternity. But worship is unacceptable to God unless a person is reconciled with all his brothers.
- c. Bad feelings between believers hinder worship. Worship is meaningless unless a person is right with his brother. Reconciliation must always precede worship.
- d. Worship is a time for a person to reflect and to examine his heart and life to see if there is “any offensive way” within him (Psa.139:24). It is essential that he search his heart. Worship is not acceptable if bad or offensive feelings against others are within the human heart.

**Thought 1** How deceitful the human heart is!

- 1) Some persons try to worship while there are bad feelings between themselves and other persons
- 2) Some persons try to pray with wrath in their heart (1 Tim. 2:8; Isa.1:15).
- 3) Some persons say, “I love God” while they hate their brother (1 Jn. 4:20). And each person thinks he is acceptable to God!

**Thought 2** Some persons say they stay away from worship because they have something against a brother. The point of Christ is clear: get right with your brother and get *in worship*. One sin heaped upon another is twice as dangerous and shall bring forth double judgment.

2. The time for reconciliation is while some openness still exists between the two parties. Reconciliation should be attempted immediately.
  - while a person is still in a brother’s presence: “While you are still with him” (v. 25).
  - before the sun goes down on a person’s wrath.

**Eph 4:26** *“In your anger do not sin”*: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.

- because a person cannot truly worship with barriers existing in the heart.
- because a person cannot offer acceptable prayers with barriers existing in his heart.
- because a person could die before reconciliation takes place and be forced to face judgment with some unconfessed sin.

**Mark 11:25** *“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”*

**Eph 4:31-32** *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

*Luke 17:4* “If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

*Col 3:13* Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

## **VI. *Mathew 05:25 The Damage of Anger***

The danger or damage of holding anger. The danger is twofold.

1. There is an earthly danger. Barriers can lead to serious action ranging from legal suits to imprisonment. Such action is tragic to God and among God’s people. It is even forbidden among true Christian brothers (1 Cor. 6:1-8). The damage of anger is many-fold:
  - It leads to increased barriers and bitterness.
  - It hurts families.
  - It is costly.
  - It damages the name of Christ and one’s own testimony.
  - It says to unbelievers that Christianity is a sham — no better than any other belief.
  - It takes advantage of another person — always.
  - It can cause an injustice to be done. The law is not always right.
  - It can cause a weak brother to turn away — forever.
  - It can cause fights, wars, suffering, and death.
2. There is an eternal danger. Life does not last, and the day of final judgment is coming. A person’s judgment for holding a grudge against a brother will be severe (Mt. 5:22; 5:25).

## **VII. *Mathew 05:26 The Terrible End of Anger***

The terrible end of anger is sure judgment. Christ made three strong points.

1. Judgment is sure. “The last penny,” the last cent must be paid.
2. There will be no escape. “You will not get out.” There will be nothing and no one to deliver a person from the judgment (2 Cor. 5:10).

*Mat 23:33* “You snakes: You brood of wipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?”

*Rom 2:3* So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment?

*Heb 2:3* How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

*Jer 11:11* Therefore this is what the Lord says: ‘I will bring on them a disaster they cannot escape. Although they cry out to me, I will not listen to them.’

***Amos 5:18-19** Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him.*

3. Reconciliation should be sought quickly: right now — before judgment, for Christ has borne all punishment for every believer (v. 25).

***Eph 2:13-14,16** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,....and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

***Col 1:20** And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

***Heb 2:17** For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. (see 2 Cor 5:1, 21)*

***1 Pet 2:24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ■*

# THE REAL MEANING OF ADULTERY

## MATHEW 05:27–30

### *Introduction: Immorality and Adultery*

Immorality and adultery cause great destruction and hurt and pain — both within and without a person. There are at least three reasons why a person commits an immoral act.

1. The ego: the sense of conquering, taking, capturing, controlling, knowing, seeing, experiencing, enjoying, and on and on — a person's ego is boosted and inflated.
2. The inner need for attention and sharing.
3. The raw lust of the sinful nature or flesh.

Immorality is so common that it is often thought excusable and acceptable if it is agreed to by the partners and if other lives are not directly affected.

Man has always tended to glorify the body and the sinful nature or flesh: exposing the body, dressing the body for sexual attraction, looking at and observing the body and its movements — all are often acceptable practices of society. Inward desire (lust) and the act of sexual pleasure itself are often thought to be so much a part of nature and normality that to restrict them is considered abnormal and straight-laced.

Christ is strong, insistent in His demand for purity — so strong that He insists on radical surgery rather than allowing the hand or eye to sin. “An immoral eye and hand will carry the whole body into hell,” Christ says: “so pluck out the eye; cut off the hand.” But what do we say? “He doesn't mean this literally.” And we use this fact as a way to water down the sharpness and the strictness of His point. However, we ignore and neglect His words to our doom. This is His very point. We might...

- fantasize and lust as a result of reading immoral magazines and books
- lustfully look at the movements of a person walking (and call it recognizing beauty)
- dress to sexually attract
- take pleasure in the stimulation and sensation of sex

But Christ clearly warns: lustful looking, touching, and behaviour will cause the whole body to be cast into hell. The matter is so serious that radical surgery is called for. No diluting, no evading, no explaining of His words and what He means can change the severe judgment that awaits the immoral person.

- I. The law: do not commit adultery (v. 27).
  - II. The real meaning: committed by one of two acts (v. 28).
  - III. The two guilty culprits: the eyes and hands (v. 29).
  - IV. The danger (v. 29).
  - V. The answer (vv. 29-30).
-

## **I. *Mathew 05:27 The Law: Adultery, Immorality***

The law against immorality is the seventh commandment (Exo. 20:14; Deu. 5:18). Note that God's law is given for three reasons.

1. To assure the respect and protection of all families and neighbours. God will take vengeance upon those who destroy families through adultery.

**Exo 20:14** *"You shall not commit adultery."*

**Exo 20:17** *"You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."*

**1 Th 4:3-6** *It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you.*

2. To protect a man from judgment, the judgment of perishing in hell (v. 30).
3. To protect a man from sinning against his own body (See 1 Cor. 6:18).

**1 Cor 6:18** *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.*

## **II. *Mathew 05:27 The Sin of Adultery***

The real meaning of adultery. Adultery (moicheia) is often said to be sexual unfaithfulness by a married person. This is true, but it is much more. Man's idea of adultery is shattered by Christ (See Mt. 19:9). Christ says adultery is not only the actual act, but adultery is committed by any one of five acts:

- A deliberate look.
- Passion within the heart: desiring and lusting.
- The actual act of sex with someone other than one's own spouse.
- Divorce relationships (Mt. 5:32; 19:9-11; Mk.10:11-12; Lk.16:18).
- Spiritual unfaithfulness toward God or apostasy from God (Mt.12:39; 16:4; Mk. 8:38; Jas. 4:4; see Eze. 16:15f; 23:43f).

Simply stated, Christ says there is eye adultery, heart adultery (lust) and body adultery. This is a shattering revelation that strikes at the experience of every young person and adult. There is no question: many dream and imagine, and if they had the opportunity, they would commit the act. All they lack is the chance and a boost to their courage to sin

(Jas. 1:14-15.) The eyes can lead to lust by looking upon persons or pictures or stimulating objects. The eyes can be used sinfully in several ways.

- To look and search for another person in order to lust.
- To let another person know that one is available.
- To attract, suggest and entice.
- To gratify lust where an experience is not possible.

There are two other matters that need to be thought about at this point.

1. Suggestive communication. This can arise from (a) unclean talk such as jokes, foul words, and suggestive statements made in passing; (b) luring talk that arises when sharing with the opposite sex. This tends to lead a person to let down his guard or to play loose with his conviction and mortal commitment. Such sharing often dallies with enticing phrases and suggestive propositions that arouse pleasure. Suggestive conversation can occur anywhere: at work, at school, at parties, over the phone, or just standing around talking.
2. Dress. This arises from exposing parts of the body or from following the latest fad in dress that might be designed to display or attract. (1 Tit. 2:9-10)

There is real danger in using one's eyes sinfully. Peter warns that a person can lose control: "With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning" (2 Pet. 2:14). A person can actually become enslaved and bound by the seriousness adultery is seen by the drastic action suggested by Christ in vs. 29-30. Adultery is a work of the flesh that will not inherit the Kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). It is a serious sin, very serious. There is the possibility of the whole body's being cast into hell (Mt. 5:29-30). The believer can conquer the eyes and lust and can keep from committing adultery by doing a few simple things.

1. ***In relation to others:***

- a. Stay away from places that lend themselves to suggestive lust.
- b. Stay away from persons who might be suggestive and enticing -no matter how enjoyable and pleasing.
- c. Refuse invitations to functions or socials that might lead to suggestive conversation or enticement.

2. ***In relation to self:***

- a. Dress decently: dress to please the Lord (1 Tit. 2:9).
- b. Behave at all times as a genuine Christian believer.
- c. Build a testimony by conversation and behaviour as a Christian believer.

3. *In relation to the eyes and mind:*

- a. Make a covenant not to look at or think about immoral persons, places, or things; and don't look. Job said of himself: "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl." (Job. 31:1).
- b. Keep the eyes and mind upon things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Phil. 4:8). Start immediately: begin to think upon the positive and the moral day by day. Keep the mind upon the positive for the rest of your life.
- c. Learn to captivate every thought (2 Cor. 10:3-5, esp. v. 5).
- d. Resist the first thought — turn the mind and body immediately to other matters. Get busy at something else without hesitating, and stay there — stay busy.

4. *In the presence of others:*

- a. Guard one's self at all times.
- b. Flee when suggestive statements are made: excuse yourself - show displeasure by statements or force if necessary. Get away immediately, not allowing the pleasing words to stimulate and gratify your flesh. The flesh revels in expressions of pleasure and appreciation over the way one looks, dresses, works, serves, performs, and on and on. A person must simply appreciate such and then move on — immediately. Lingering to enjoy and revel in appreciative remarks will lead to attraction. Everyone is human.

*Mat 15:19* "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."

*Gen 6:5* The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

*Prov 15:26* The LORD detests the thoughts of the wicked, but those of the pure are pleasing to him.

### III. *Mathew 05:29 The Culprits in Adultery*

The two guilty culprits in adultery — the eyes and hands. Why did Christ use the eyes and hands to illustrate His point? Probably because a man is moved primarily by thoughts that arise from sight, and a woman is moved primarily by touch. It is the eye and hand that are the culprits in adultery (Mk. 9:43-48)

### IV. *Mathew 05:29 Danger of Adultery*

The danger is twofold.

1. Sinning or stumbling. The phrase "causes you to sin" (*skandalon*) means to stumble; to be baited; to be lured; to be tripped up. The eyes and hands are stumbling blocks.

2. Being condemned to hell. The sin is serious, extremely serious. Unless the sin is dealt with, it will cause a person to be cast into hell (Mt. 5:22).

**1 Cor 6:9-10** *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*

**Gal 5:19, 21** *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;...and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

**Thought 1.** The sin of immorality ruins the body as well as the soul. This is a terrible fact, yet it is a fact that is seldom considered.

**1 Cor 6:18** *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.*

## V. **Mathew 05:29–30 Solutions for Adultery**

The answer to solving the problem of adultery is threefold.

1. **Surgery:** cut out the sinning body member. The lustful look and the lustful touch should be cut out of one's life — completely.

**Prov 10:31** *The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out.*

**Mat 5:30** *“And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”*

**Rom 6:6** *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.*

**Rom 8:13** *For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

**Col 2:11** *In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ.*

**Col 3:5** *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.*

2. **Death:** let the sinning body members perish. What feels good and pleases the flesh is not always good. Self-denial is sometimes called for (Lk. 9:23).

**Rom 6:13** *Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

**Eph 6:13** *Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

**2 Pet 3:17** *Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.*

**Prov 1:10** *My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them.*

**Prov 4:14** *Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men.*

3. *Repentance*: turning from being cast into hell. Note an important fact: Christ does not appeal for a man to forsake adultery; He warns man of the consequences of adultery. Some sins have to be restrained by warning, not by appeal. A man has to be warned about the lust of the flesh (Jas. 4:1-3). Adultery is a sin that feels so good and seems so natural that it can be easily rationalised. The warning given to adulterers is, your whole body will be cast into hell (Mt. 5:30).

**Thought 1.** “Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Gal. 5:16).

**Thought 2.** The members of the body are not to be yielded to sin. The members of the body are to be counted dead with Christ (Rom. 6:11-13).

**Rom 6:11-13** *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.*

**Thought 3.** A man must repent, *turn from* adultery to God. (Mt. 4: 17)

**Luke 13:3** *I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.*

**Acts 2:28** *You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.*

**Acts 3:19** *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*

**Acts 8:22** *Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.*

**Acts 17:30** *In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ■*

# THE REAL MEANING OF DIVORCE

## MATHEW 05:31–32

### *Introduction: Divorce*

Throughout history there have always been two schools of thought when interpreting the laws of society — the strict, conservative interpreters and the broad, liberal interpreters. In Jesus' day, the strict interpreters were known as the school of Shammai; the broad interpreters were known as the school of Hillel. In dealing with the subject of divorce, Shammai said the words “something indecent” found in Deu. 24:1 allowed for divorce, but the words meant adultery and adultery only. Hillel said “something indecent” meant that anything that destroyed unity was a justified reason for divorce; that perfect unity had to be maintained in the marriage state. Such allowance had disintegrated into the position that anything displeasing to a man was reason enough for divorce.

A person can easily see which school was followed by human nature and most societies. Divorce had become so common that society itself was threatened. All a man had to do to divorce his wife was to have a Rabbi write out a bill of divorcement and hand it to his wife in the presence of two witnesses. The divorce was immediate and final (Deu. 24:1-4).

- I. The law: anyone who divorces must give a certificate of divorce (v. 31).
- II. The real meaning: divorce disallowed (v. 32).
- III. The exception: immorality (v. 32).
- IV. The guilty parties (v. 32).

### **I. *Mathew 05:31 Purpose of the Law of Divorce***

The law against divorce was given for three reasons.

1. To protect the family.

**Mark 10: 6-9** “*But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.*”

**Eph 5:31** “*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*”

2. To protect the land or nation, preventing national disintegration.

**Prov 11:11** *Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.*

**Prov 14:34** *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.*

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3. To prevent a person from becoming an adulterer.

**Mat 19:9** “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.” (see Luke 16:18)

**Mark 10:12** “And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

**Eph 5:22** Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

## II. **Mathew 05:32** *Meaning of the Law of Divorce*

The real meaning of the law is that divorce is disallowed. Enormous protection is seen in this pronouncement. There is protection of the family, including the wife, husband and children. There is emotional, physical, mental and spiritual protection — protection against a family’s being ripped apart and having to undergo all the strain and disruption that follows. Divorce is one of the most traumatic experiences of human life. For many, it is the most traumatic experience.

Divorce *touches* so many. It *touches*...

- husbands
- parents
- wives
- friends
- children
- employers and employees

Divorce *affects* each person it touches, affects them ever so deeply. It *affects*...

- mind
- emotions
- spirit
- love
- behaviour
- possessions
- joy
- control
- security
- purpose
- hopes
- plans
- peace
- faith

Divorce drastically *changes* each person’s life. It *changes*...

- personal life
- recreational life
- private life
- social life
- home life
- dream life
- parental life

Because divorce affects human life so much, it is of critical concern to Christ. When anyone hurts, Christ hurts. And because divorce hurts so much and hurts so many, Christ sets out to correct man’s corrupt concept of marriage and easy divorce. (See *Marriage and Divorce: Shammai and Hillel*, Mt. 19:1-12)

**Thought 1.** Teaching, preaching, and living by strict principles takes enormous courage. Christ demonstrated enormous courage by going against the grain of society and demanding strictness in marriage.

**Thought 2.** There are four attitudes to marriage, three of which are *loose attitudes* that often lead to divorce.

- 1) *A back-door marriage*: “If it works, OK; if it doesn’t work, OK.”
- 2) *A cheap, sensual marriage*: based upon some reason other than love, some reason such as attractiveness, sex, or finances.
- 3) *An adventuresome marriage*: the marriage is entered into for the experience and the adventure of being married.
- 4) *A marriage of commitment*: the full conviction of both spouses that they should fulfill the solemn vows taken — a conviction before God.

**Thought 3.** There is only one basis for marriage that can absolutely prevent divorce; a true union, both a spiritual and physical union (see Mt. 19:5; Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Cor. 7:12-16).

**Mark 10:9** “Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

**Eph 5:22, 29** *Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord...After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church.*

**Eph 5:31** “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

### MATHEW 19:01–12 MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE: SHAMMAI AND HILLEL SCHOOLS

The Pharisees came to Jesus tempting Him and saying, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

There is a background to this question. The society of Jesus’ day was very lax in its morals. Marriage was considered nothing more than a piece of paper: if it worked, fine; if it did not work, fine. One could always divorce.

There were two positions or schools of thought on divorce. Moses had said that any man could divorce his wife if “she becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her” (Deu. 24:1).

1. The school of Shammai said that the words *some uncleanness* meant adultery only. A wife could be as loose and mean as Jezebel, but she was not to be divorced unless she committed adultery.
2. The school of Hillel said that the words *some uncleanness* meant anything that was not pleasing to the man. One should remember that women were counted as nothing but *property* to be possessed by men. They had no rights whatsoever except as a man might wish to give. Of course, this was the position followed by society, for it was the position that allowed human nature to run loose. Women were abused: used and discarded, neglected and violated. They were nothing but

chattel property of men and were often considered of less value than property, whether animals or things. Therefore, divorce ran rampant in Christ's day.

The Pharisees wished to embroil Jesus in the controversy between the conservative (Shammai) and liberal view (Hillel). They were simply asking Jesus if He agreed with the school of Hillel: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and *every* reason?" (v. 3). No matter which position He took, He would offend and stir up a large number of people, becoming embroiled in a mean controversy. □

### III. *Mathew 05:32 Adultery – Sexual Immorality*

The exception for divorce is the sin of marital unfaithfulness being committed by one of the spouses. The great tragedy of sexual immorality or adultery is that it breaks the union and attachment between husband and wife. The union and attachment and all that goes with it — faith, hope, love, trust, assurance, confidence and strength — are broken. If the husband and wife are not believers, then the physical union and the mental union of the marriage are broken. If they are believers, then all three unions are broken: the physical, mental and spiritual. (see Mt. 19:5-6). Two facts should be noted in the brief words of Christ here and elsewhere in the gospels. ((see Mt. 19:1-12).

1. Christ does not stand with either the conservative or the liberal school. He does not mention either school or either position.
2. Christ says two things about divorce.
  - a. Divorce is not the purpose of God. This is silent, but clearly understood.
  - b. Divorce is allowed only if one of the spouses has committed adultery.

What Christ is trying to prevent is what history shows. Societies have tragically ignored the command of God. They have planted the seed of national disintegration, that is, broken homes (see Eph. 5:22-33; Mt. 19:9; Mk. 10:12; Lk. 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:12-16). This brief statement on divorce shows the great need to protect men, women, children and the home. It points to the immense value of all three (Mt. 5:32; Mt. 19:1-12).

**1 Cor 6:18** *Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. (see 1 Cor 7:12)*

**Eph 5:3** *But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.*

**Col 3:5** *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. (see 1 Th 4:3)*

**Thought 1.** It should always be remembered that adultery is not the only sin that can break the union of a marriage. Faith, hope, love, trust, assurance, confidence, strength

— all can be dashed upon the rocks of selfishness and meanness (see *Marital Unfaithfulness*, Mt. 19:9)

**MATHEW 19:09 MARITAL UNFAITHFULNESS:  
SEXUAL IMMORALITY, ADULTERY**

*“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Mat 19:09*

A person, especially a Christian believer, needs to think of the meaning of adultery here. Adultery is the turning away from a spouse to another person. Many a person would never think of turning away from their spouse to a third person, yet they readily and willingly turn toward self and toward other things. As God said of the nation Israel. “I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries” (Jer. 3:8). Many a person has done just as Israel did. They refused to surrender to God. They lived in a backslidden state, and day by day they turned more and more away from their spouse and, in many cases, from their children.

Day by day a person can take a spouse and children and...

- be mean and ugly
- be nagging and mentally cruel
- be neglectful and unthoughtful
- be physically abusive and life-threatening
- be deliberately withdrawn and separated

And the truth of the matter is that many live selfishly that way.

=> Some are cruel; others sadistic.

=> Some are critical: others sarcastic; still others *demonic and hellish*.

=> Some are mentally abusive; others physically abusive, *even* to the point of murdering spouse and children — the unthinkable.

The truth of a marriage is known only to God. A husband or a wife can use his or her personality to present a front to the world. Yet within the heart, there can be such a hardness toward a spouse, such an unwillingness to be truly united together, that God just cannot join them together as one flesh. Hardness, very simply, wrecks a marriage. It wrecks a marriage by causing a person to turn away and separate from his or her spouse. If a spouse is not with the other spouse, then the two are separate, not truly united and joined together. There can be no true union if there are not *two* persons together; and as pointed out earlier, being united is the blessing and gift of God. Being united is only possible as each allows God to “join them together.” □

#### IV. *Mathew 05:32 Guilty Parties in Divorce*

The guilty parties in divorce (see Mt.19:5; 19:8; *Marital Unfaithfulness*, Mt. 19:9; *Essentials of Marriage*, Mt. 19:11). ■

#### MATHEW 19:11 ESSENTIALS OF MARRIAGE

*Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given." Mathew 19:11*

"Not everyone can accept this word." What word?

1. The word that a man and wife are "to be united to one another." They are to be totally united together as *one flesh* "So they are no longer two, but one" (vv. 5-6).
2. The word that it is God and God alone who can *join together* a man and a wife (v. 6; see *Unite, Cleave*, Mt. 19:5).

These two things, being united together and God Himself, are the two essentials for a true marriage. Many are living together who refuse *to be united* and refuse to let God join them together. They are not willing to be united, nor are they willing to let God make them as *one flesh*. They are not willing to let God join them together.

(Note: man and woman can only unite and join themselves together physically. God is not needed for a purely physical union. If a married couple wishes more than a physical union, they must turn to God. He alone can "join together" a couple spiritually.) □

# THE REAL MEANING OF OATHS AND SWEARING

## MATHEW 05:33–37

### *Introduction: Swearing, Profanity*

Christ said, “Do not swear at all” (v. 34). He was enlarging the law governing oaths to include all swearing and profanity (see Mt. 5:17f; Jas. 5:12). All conversation should be straight to the point and factual, not injected with oaths or profanity (Mt. 5:34, 37). A man is to be righteous. His word and character are to be his guarantee, the only oath he needs.

- I. The law (v. 33).
- II. The real meaning: do not swear (vv. 34-36).
- III. The ideal oath or guarantee (v. 37).

### MATHEW 05:33–37 TYPES OF SWEARING

There are at least six types of swearing.

1. There is *swearing by oaths*. Jesus was put upon His oath (Mt. 26:63), and Paul swore by taking an oath (2 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20). What then does Christ mean by saying, “Do not swear at all”? Simply that a man’s word should be trustworthy in his day-to-day speech, so trustworthy that no oath is ever necessary. His character should be his guarantee, the only guarantee he needs. A second explanation is also possible. Men are evil, so untrustworthy in their day-to-day dealings that worldly men require oaths. Thus, Paul and Christ were required to take oaths. However, as stated above, the believer’s word and character should be his bond.
2. There is *habitual, frivolous swearing*. The unrighteous are said to have “mouths... full of cursing and bitterness” (Rom. 3:14).
3. There is *hypocritical swearing*. There are some who “praise God” in one breath and turn around and “curse men” in the next breath. “Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing” (Jas. 3:10).
4. There is *silent, universal swearing*. Every man is charged with secretly cursing others within his heart. “You know in your heart that... you yourself have cursed others” (Eccl. 7:22).
5. There is *evasive swearing*. Some do not use words that are foul, dirty, ugly, harsh, or binding. They would never use God’s name in vain. Rather, they choose substitute words — words that are commonly used in everyday conversation, words that would never be considered swearing. Others choose what are thought to be milder curse words. By evading harsh swearing, they feel their word is not so binding. They count themselves less guilty.

6. There is *ego swearing*. Many swear to boost their ego, their manliness around others. They feel an identity with the crowd by crossing over to the forbidden. □

### I. **Mathew 05:33** *Significance of the Law*

The law was based on the third commandment (Exo. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; Deu. 23:23; see Num. 30:2). The law had been interpreted to say, “Do not make false vows”; “Do not swear falsely”; “Do not swear to a lie.” But the law was much too narrow. Man had interpreted it to his own liking which allowed him to swear and curse as much as he wished. Note two significant points about the law:

1. God gave the law to men for several reasons.
  - a. To keep man from dishonouring God by falsely calling upon His name or by cursing Him.
  - b. To keep man from perjuring himself, showing himself to be a liar and an unjust and unstable person.
  - c. To keep man from treating others unjustly.
2. The law was given to govern several things.
  - a. Lying and then swearing that one is telling the truth. This is perjury. How often men perjure themselves — stretching the truth, exaggerating, or lying out rightly — and then swear that they are telling the truth!
  - b. Making a false vow to God. How many vows have been made to God but never kept!
  - c. Making a false vow to another person, promising something and not doing it.
  - d. Using God’s name in vain. So many use God’s name as a *slang* or *curse word*. This person will stand especially guilty before God (Exo. 20:7).

Scripture says that it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay (Eccl. 5:4-5). The reason is clearly understood: a vow makes a person a debtor. The person is in debt to fulfil his vow or promise.

1. A vow to God puts the man in debt to God. To break a vow is an act of lying to God (Acts 5:4).
2. A vow to man puts the man in debt to man. To break his vow is an act of injustice to man.

**Num 30:2** *When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.*

**Deu 23:21** *If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin.*

**Eccl 5:4** *When you make a vow to God, do not delay in fulfilling it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfil your vow.*

**Job 22:27** *You will pray to him, and he will hear you, and you will fulfil your vows.*

*Psa 50:14 Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfil your vows to the Most High.*

*Psa 76:11 Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfil them; let all the neighbouring lands bring gifts to the One to be feared.*

## **II. Mathew 05:34–36 Demerits of Swearing**

The real meaning of the law is this: do not swear *at all*, do not curse *at all*. Do not swear or curse by anything.

1. Do not swear, because all things are sacred.
  - a. Heaven is God’s throne: the place where His glory is manifested (Isa. 66:1). To swear by heaven or to curse heaven is to swear by God and to curse God.
  - b. The earth is God’s footstool: the place He governs and looks over (Isa. 66:1; Psa. 24:1). To swear by earth or to curse earth is to swear by God and to curse God.
  - c. Jerusalem is the city of the great King (Psa. 48:2; Psa. 46:4). He cares deeply for Jerusalem. There is a sense in which God cares deeply for every city and place on earth. He cares about how a place is treated and how it is spoken about (Mt. 10:15; 11:24; Mk. 6:11; Lk. 10:12).
2. Do not swear, because all power belongs to God. In reality, no man has any power to do anything; for example, he cannot change his stature. What power he has is given by God. In fact, the power man thinks he has can be taken away at any moment. Therefore, he really does not have the power to keep oaths. He can be disabled or his power can be snatched away at any moment. The recognition of this reality should cause a man to live so honestly and straightforwardly that his word alone is acceptable. Oaths and vows should not be necessary.

Note this: all power belongs to God; therefore, a man should stand in awe of God, not curse Him. But observe what it is that is usually cursed: God and the things of God, the very things that should not be cursed. This says much about the selfish, depraved nature of man. Cursing God is a terrible sin, so terrible that it is one of the ten commandments. A special judgment is even pronounced upon the curser (Exo. 20:7). Cursing is meaningless, thoughtless, and irreverent.

*Exo 20:7 “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.”*

*Lev 19:12 “Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.”*

*Mat 5:34 But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne.*

*James 3: 8-9 But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness.*

**Rom 3:14** “*Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.*”

**James 5:12** *Above all, my brothers, do not swear — not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your “Yes” be yes, and your “No,” no, or you will be condemned.*

**Psa 10:7** *His mouth is full of curses and lies and threats; trouble and evil are under his tongue.*

**Psa 59:12** *For the sins of their mouths, for the words of their lips, let them be caught in their pride. For the curses and lies they utter,*

**Psa 109:17** *He loved to pronounce a curse — may it come on him; he found no pleasure in blessing — may it be far from him.*

**Eccl 7:22** *For you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.*

**Thought 1.** Cursing has no mask; it cannot be hidden. It is spoken and heard. The problem is that it is often acceptable conversation, and cursing is a problem, for it reveals several things:

- => a graceless heart
- => a thoughtless mind
- => an inconsiderate and selfish spirit
- => a hardness or enmity toward God
- => a lack of individuality and/or independence
- => a foolish regard for judgment and eternity
- => a problem with self-image
- => an inadequate vocabulary

**Thought 2.** There are differences of opinion about legal oaths. Some believe they should never take an oath even for the sake of justice (for example, the Quakers). Others feel they can be called upon to swear for the sake of justice; but they should never swear of themselves, that is, take the initiative in verifying their word. (Gen. 22:16; 26:31; 31:53; 47:31; 50:25; Exo. 22:11; Num. 5:9; Deu. 6:13; Jos. 9:15, 19; 1 Kng. 8:31; 2 Kng. 11:4; Psa. 89:35; 95:11; Isa. 14:24; 62:8; Jer. 12:16; 38:16; Eze. 17:13; Mk. 6:23; Lk. 1:73; Acts 23:21; Heb. 3:11; 6:17).

### MATHEW 05:34 SERIOUSNESS OF PROFANITY

Some passages dealing with swearing are Deu. 6:13; 10:20; Isa. 45:23; Jer. 4:2; Mt. 26:63; Col. 1:23; Gal. 1:20; Jas. 5:12.

Profanity is accepted in most societies. People who curse and use foul words seldom think about the seriousness of profanity. It is serious, a very serious offense. No matter how little the “cursing” is considered, God says He “will not hold anyone guiltless” (Exo. 20:7). □

### MATHEW 05:34 SWEARING

There were two kinds of swearing to the Jews.

1. *Bound swearing.* These were oaths using God's name. When God's name was used, He was considered a partner; therefore, the oath could never be broken.
2. *Unbound swearing.* These were oaths which omitted God's name but used such sacred phrases as "by heaven," "by earth," "by Jerusalem," "by my head," or some other statement to emphasize one's intention or truthfulness. Such oaths were not necessarily binding because God was not considered to be a partner in the oath. What man so often fails to see is that God is always present. He sees and is concerned with all that a man says and does, whether by word or action, by statement or oath, by swearing or profanity. □

### III. *Mathew 05: 37 The Ideal Oath*

There is *only one* ideal oath and guarantee for man: his word. His word should arise from his character. It should be the only oath and guarantee he needs. He should not say more than, "Yes, I will " or "No, I will not." His life should be so honest and straight that no one would ever question his word. When he speaks, everyone should know that it will be done. The reason is simply stated: swearing has its source in evil. Something that is often overlooked is this fact: swearing and cursing do not make a matter more believable; they really make a matter more suspicious. A person swears something because his character or the matter is questionable. What an indictment of depravity! Yet swearing and cursing are the acceptable habits of men.

**Mat 5:13** *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."*

**Mat 5:37** *"Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."*

**Col 4:6** *Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

**2 Tim 1:13** *What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.*

**Titus 2:7-8** *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.*

**Thought 1.** Oaths are required for one reason: men know the deceitfulness of the human heart. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer.

17:9). All men are liars (Psa. 116:11). Just think about how often a person leads others in order to get what he wants.

*Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*

*Psa 116:11 And in my dismay I said, "All men are liars."*

**Thought 2.** Oaths would not be necessary in a perfect world. Everyone would be perfectly honest and righteous. A man's life would speak loudly and clearly. Whatever a man said would be absolutely dependable. Therefore, believers should work to change the world by changing the hearts of men. ■

### MATHEW 05:37 SWEARING AND DEPRAVITY

At least two things are meant here. First, man has to take oaths because the world is evil. Second, man swears because he is evil and knows that he is evil. Therefore, he swears to emphasize the truth in the point he makes. The need for oaths and man's need for swearing to the truth are clear evidence of man's depravity. □