

## THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

### Lesson 16, Chapter 5 Continued 4

Today we continue our careful and deliberate study in Matthew chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount. Last week we spent our entire time together on the pivotal verses 17 - 20 because these form the basis and the backstop for understanding everything that Yeshua will state starting in verse 21 and proceeding until the end of His sermon in chapter 7. Even more, those crucial verses necessarily apply to everything Jesus will say or do during His entire ministry on earth, and when He returns. This is because they are not merely words that add to our understanding; they set down an important governing dynamic around which Christianity and Messianic Judaism must develop its doctrines and faith principles. We'll spend some time reviewing so turn your Bibles to Matthew 5.

#### RE-READ MATTHEW 5:17 - 20

The Early Church Father Chrysostom, who was not a fan of the Jewish element of Scripture, nonetheless was a studious man and so he makes this comment in his ancient Commentary on Matthew.

***"Think not that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets." Matt.5 vs. 17 Why, who suspected this? Or who accused Him, that He should make a defense against this charge? Since surely from what had gone before no such suspicion was generated. For to command men to be meek, and gentle, and merciful, and pure in heart, and to strive for righteousness, indicated no such design, but rather altogether the contrary.***

For a person who was wed to the idea that in some manner or way Christ could on the one hand forcefully and legitimately declare that He did not come to

destroy the Law or the Prophets, but on the other hand proceeded in the remainder of His sermon to issue new and greater laws, this question was not rhetorical. Rather Chrysostom was not only perplexed by Yeshua's statement but also then had to figure out how to defend the already deeply embedded Church doctrine that in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus had indeed created a new Law of Jesus to supersede the Law of Moses. So using Chrysostom's question as our starting point let's discuss how best to answer it.

Typically Christian institutional leaders such as bishops, priests, academics, and Pastors find that their "out" or way around Jesus's statement in Matthew 5:17 is by quoting Paul. It is not my intent to offend; but the evidence is strong that for many centuries the tag line used nearly universally within Christianity that the Church is the Church of Jesus Christ is not really accurate. Rather it is, and has been at least as early as the 4th century, the Church of Paul. It is Paul's words that form the bulk of Church doctrine and are also used (of course) to defend those doctrines. So very often Paul's words get twisted, or taken out of their biblical or historical Jewish context, and applied in inappropriate ways. At other times his words are used as a tool to cancel out or modify Yeshua's words as recorded in the Gospels so that a desired Church doctrine can be maintained. Let me put it another way: the Church has decided that in some cases the conclusions and instructions of the disciple, Paul, are more definitive, correct and of higher value than the conclusions and instructions of his master, Yeshua. My response to this is that even should we find that Paul's words indeed contradict Christ, then it is Christ's words that are to be taken as truth and Paul's words should be dismissed as false. To be clear: in no way am I saying that Paul's words contradict Christ's anywhere in the New Testament nor that his words are sometimes false. I'm only saying that because the Church uses Paul as the vehicle to establish some clearly unbiblical doctrine, then hypothetically if contradiction with Christ was the case (which it is not) then the Church would still be wrong for accepting Paul's words as the source of correct doctrine over and above Yeshua's.

The neutralizer that the Church regularly uses to override Christ's pivotal statement in Matthew 5:17 that utterly destroys perhaps the most central Church doctrine; a doctrine that in practice is second only to Jesus being the divine Messiah, is found in Romans 10:4.

<sup>KJV</sup> **Romans 10:4** *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

So the Church says that this statement of Paul makes it clear that the doctrine that Christ ended (terminated) the law is correct. Generally it is explained that even though Christ didn't abolish the Law, He ended it. If ever there was an excellent example of gibberish, such a position statement as that is the one. So is this really what Paul said and meant? That is, despite what His Master said, he claims that the Law has ended. If this is the case, then as Believers we are put in the uncomfortable position of having to choose between believing and accepting EITHER Matthew 5:17 as truth, or Romans 10:4 as truth. The Church has, for centuries, chosen to believe and accept Romans 10:4 over Matthew 5:17.

In Greek the word in Romans 10:4 that is being translated as "end" is **telos**. It is an interesting word that can indeed mean "end" but is also used to mean a toll or a custom's duty to be paid. In other words a **telos** is paid for merchants bringing their goods to their customers. Even the English word "end" itself can have multiple meanings. In our modern English it can mean to finish, like the words "the end" are meant to convey as a movie concludes and yet not in the sense that the movie is now eliminated or destroyed, but rather its content and purpose has been attained and there is no more. Or "end" can also mean to achieve a goal. We regularly say things to each other like "our end purpose is such and such..." or "the end of all our efforts is to achieve so and so." Those sayings of course do not mean that we intend to terminate something. So how are we to take **telos** as used in Paul's statement regarding the Law?

The Greek philosopher Aristotle who lived 4 centuries before Paul said this about the word **telos**: "human **telos** is our goal to fulfill". The academic field of Teleology is the study of **telos**. And Teleology is defined as a study of people and objects with a view to their aims, purpose, and intentions. Some Greek Lexicons try to best explain the word by saying that **telos** means end in the sense of a attaining a goal or purpose. As you can readily see, the concept of terminating or permanently stopping is simply not part of the meaning of **telos**. I think the CJB has chosen a better word than "end" to translate **telos** because it better fits in with our modern English language in the sense of what words mean to us in our era.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Romans 10:4** *For the goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts.*

This translation (which is known among Bible translators as a dynamic translation) communicates to we moderns what the ancient Paul meant by what

he said, and how others who read or heard his words would have understood it in his day. By merely discarding the word "end" as meaning termination (something which the Greek word **telos** does not intend) and replacing it with the word goal, or aim, or purpose, which is what the word **telos** does intend, suddenly Paul isn't overturning Messiah's words spoken at the Sermon on the Mount. That is, we don't truly have a conflict between Yeshua and Paul; it is that Paul has simply been misinterpreted by the Church or more likely, misrepresented in an effort to prove that the Torah and the Law is not for Gentile Believers.

Now let's try to answer Chrysostom's question from another angle. Is it possible that Christ **could** legitimately overturn the Torah? Or, as some who accept that He didn't abolish the Torah but still try to make a tortured case for a sort of middle ground whereby the Torah Law exists but is not enforced because of Christ. Or that He did override certain earlier commands with like kind ones, but they were higher and greater representing the new and next state of the spiritual world due to His coming. Could either of these be what He did? In a word: no.

**CJB Deuteronomy 4:2 *In order to obey the mitzvot of ADONAI your God which I am giving you, do not add to what I am saying, and do not subtract from it.***

And a little later in Deuteronomy:

**CJB Deuteronomy 13:1 *"Everything I am commanding you, you are to take care to do. Do not add to it or subtract from it.***

In Matthew 5:18 Christ follows up what He had just said in verse 17 (that He did not abolish the Law) so that there could be no misunderstanding.

**CJB Matthew 5:18 *Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened.***

Therefore it cannot be that changing the meaning of the Torah Laws, or adding a few more Torah Laws, is what Christ was doing following His words of Matthew 5:17 and 18 otherwise He is breaking one of the most basic commandments of the Torah as we find in Deuteronomy. If He had tried to do that the crowd He is speaking to would have recognized it immediately and reacted. Assuming that the Apostle John is correct and that Christ is the Word, then Christ would be

going against His own previous Word if He were to add to it or abolish or even embellish parts of it. But even more, if we conclude that Christ, as God on earth, indeed can and did change the supposedly unbreakable divine commands given centuries earlier to Moses, then why couldn't He or someone else come along some day and undo the divine commands that He gave us 2000 years ago with yet newer ones? In a sense that is what the Latter Day Saints claim has happened; something that mainstream Christianity denies is possible.

So in order to comply not with Christian doctrine but rather to comply with plainly read Holy Scripture, then we must find another explanation for Chrysostom of what it was, exactly, that Jesus was doing in His sermon starting at verse 21 and based upon His unequivocal statement of Matthew 5:17 - 19 that He not only didn't come to abolish or destroy the Law in total, but it was also not His purpose that even one letter in one word of it would be changed. We must also answer why Yeshua anticipated that there would be suspicion and accusation by some in the crowd who might think that He was changing the Torah laws, and thus dishonoring Moses. Davies and Allison in their commentary on this matter of critical importance to our faith put it this way:

***"Consequently, (Matthew) 5:17 - 20, by (Jesus) upholding the Law, has a twofold effect. It defends Jesus and Matthew (1) from the accusation, no doubt made by non-Christian Jews, that they had dismissed the Torah and (2) from the claim, certainly made by some early Christians that Jesus had set His followers free from the Law. For our evangelist (Matthew) the Old Testament has not been drained of its ancient life. It is not just a precious cemetery; it is still the living, active word of God."***

To help Chrysostom (and us !) understand exactly what it was that Yeshua did and meant by what He said up on that hill overlooking the Galilee/, let's keep reading in Matthew 5.

### **RE-READ MATTHEW 5:21 - end**

Verse 21 begins by quoting the 6th Commandment (sometimes it is the 5th Commandment depending on who is doing the numbering), "Thou shall not murder". However Yeshua sets up His audience for controversy by prefacing the commandment with the words:

**CJB Matthew 5:21 "You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Do not**

***murder,' and that anyone who commits murder will be subject to judgment.***

In reality the term "our fathers" as used in the CJB is not there in the Greek manuscripts. Rather the literal rendering is:

<sup>YLT</sup> ***Matthew 5:21 'Ye heard that it was said to the ancients: Thou shalt not kill, and whoever may kill shall be in danger of the judgment;***

I think it is mistake to substitute "our fathers" for "the ancients". For one reason, especially gentile Christians think of "our fathers" as meaning people from the not too distant past. But this is speaking about people from a long time ago. In this case it is a general reference to the people who were with Moses at Mt. Sinai and the generations shortly thereafter. The point being that Yeshua is NOT addressing the Traditions of the Elders, which was at the center of what the average Jew was taught at the Synagogue they attended. Rather Yeshua was directing His comments concerning some of the commands of the biblical Torah..... Holy Scripture. However, the people were weak in actual Torah knowledge and like so many Christians that substitute their particular denominational doctrines for biblical instruction they do so believing that the traditions and doctrines they believe are indeed one and the same as what the Bible teaches.

Let me give you a common example of this. Cleanliness is next to godliness. That doesn't exist in the Bible. Spare the rod, spoil the child. That isn't in the Bible, either, but most Christians think that both sayings are. Let me give you another example. Christmas is the holiest day of the year. That also doesn't exist in the Bible. Rather Christmas is another manmade Christian tradition that has been holy-fied by men, not by God. We talked in an earlier lesson about mental filters. The Jews had mental filters that incorporated the Jewish Tradition they had been taught. Thus when Christ begins to speak about the Torah in His sermon, the crowd had little to compare His words to except the hybrid mix of Tradition and Scripture they had been taught at their synagogue; they had no Bibles in their possession.

When I talk to you about Tradition, whether Jewish or Christian, do not think that I'm against Tradition in general. Traditions have their place in our lives. They can be beautiful and appropriate ways to express our faith, help us to remember important tenets of our belief, and they can fill in some large blanks in order to carry out commands to observe biblical festivals (for example) although nearly no



details are provided in Scripture that tells us just how to observe them. Here's the issue: there's nothing wrong with Traditions until they are turned into rigid doctrines and rules, and then inevitably are deemed "God ordained" or "holy" in order to enforce them. Or the Traditions replace command, observance or action that indeed is God ordained. In some ways Yeshua is dealing with that now, in the Sermon on the Mount. He'll do the same in a few other scenarios including the Sabbath Day controversy He had with the Pharisees when His Disciples were picking the heads off wheat while walking through a field on Shabbat (we'll get to that in a few chapters).

So after bringing up the 6th commandment and introducing it as something the ancients were told, Christ says: "But I tell you" and then He elaborates. Here's the rub: the way this phrase is translated it sounds to us like these words mean: "But INSTEAD I tell you". That is, what was said centuries earlier in the Torah ("do not murder") is either a mistake and Yeshua is correcting it, or it is incomplete and needs explanation, or it is being changed. Part of the reason for this misperception is with the Greek word **de** that is regularly translated as "but". This same word can also mean "and yet" or "and" (in the sense of adding something). So Jesus's statement can be taken to mean: "But in addition I tell you". Thus in the first instance the interpretation is that the newer replaces the older, and in the second instance the newer adds to the older. I cannot accept either of these possibilities because both tamper with the original commandment that God gave through Moses, one of which says that the Torah laws are not to be added to or subtracted from. Rather I view Yeshua as doing exactly what He said in verse 17: He came to fulfill the Torah. That is, He came to fill it to the full..... to give us the deepest sense of its intent and meaning. I'll say this slightly differently. When Jesus says "you have heard that it was said to your ancestors", we need to pause and focus on the words "you have heard". The thousands of Jews sitting before Him indeed had heard "do not murder". This was not new to them; they had already heard it... no doubt countless times. So after acknowledging that they had already heard this, Christ now gives them the fuller intent and essence of this 6th commandment.

As we've yet to examine any of the instructions that follow "But I tell you", here's what I want you to have firmly in your minds as we go through the 6 different case examples that Yeshua uses to teach something very important: intent matters as much as the action. That is, in verses 21 - 48 Yeshua is not extending the meaning of the commandment or rule to something else. He is not contradicting the Torah, or criticizing the standard way that the ordinary Jews

sitting before Him think of the command or rule. He's not using His divine authority to add or modify rules. What He **is** doing is telling them (and us) that we are not only to have purity of body (that's easily accomplished), but part and parcel with it also purity of mind and intent (much harder). We are not only to physically and strictly follow the law and command (that can be accomplished with a bit of effort and diligence), but part and parcel with it we are also to let a Godly attitude rule over our behavior (that's more difficult). We are to be obedient to Yehoveh's will while also striving to avoid sin as much as is humanly possible. We are to love God and love our fellow man (friend or enemy) yet it is to be accomplished unselfishly and without regard for "what's in it for us". In other words while the letter of the Law (the Torah) hasn't changed at all..... everything that is written and commanded in the Torah is still expected even of Yeshua's followers.... it is the **spirit** of the Law and the spirit of the God worshipper working together that is the ultimate purpose and essence of The Law. The **letter** of the Law doesn't, of itself, produce life or renewed life; in fact doing all the things that the Torah requires at any given moment, without regard to circumstance, may not always be beneficial.

So, with the first example being the commandment not to murder, then Yeshua is saying that without too much difficulty we can all keep from murdering an individual who has shamed us or perhaps done us harm. But can we refrain from anger, resentment or even hating that same person? The new goal that Yeshua puts before the people listening to Him is not conformity but rather it is perfection. As He says at the end of chapter 5 in verse 48 as He concludes His 6 case examples: ***Therefore, be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*** We can follow rules and do works very well if we put our minds and wills to it; but that won't necessarily produce love or the spirit and attitude that Christ requires of us, and it certainly does not impute the needed righteousness upon us that can only come from God.

Therefore in verse 22 Yeshua says that simply not murdering is insufficient. Do you think yourself Godly because you haven't murdered someone? Well, we must also not have anger in our hearts. Anger is the wellspring of murder; we are to subdue not just our urges but the place deep within us where these wrong urges come from..... the evil inclination. That said, there is an interesting problem in this instruction. If you look at the KJV and perhaps the majority of Bible translations we'll find the phrase "without cause" included. That is, Jesus's instruction is that we are not to be angry with our brother "without cause". The CJB does NOT include this phrase, nor does the NAS, the NAB and other good



Bibles. So does this mean that some translators have added the phrase? Or that others have refused to include the phrase for some reason? Does it mean that some ancient Greek NT manuscripts have the phrase included and others don't? Doesn't it make the anger instruction considerably easier to follow when instead of ANY anger for ANY reason is deemed as wrong, a justifiable anger is allowed as an exception?

This problem has been noticed and researched for a very long time. Without getting into the gory details I can tell you that going back to the 4th century, we find evidence in the form of New Testament fragments that support both readings; that is some manuscripts included "without cause" and others didn't. However, we also find that the Early Church Fathers Origen and Cyprian who lived in the 3rd century had copies of The Gospel of Matthew that included the phrase "without cause". This is the oldest evidence that currently exists to try and come to the bottom of the matter, but that doesn't make it conclusive. In Cyprian's Treatise #12, Book 3:8 he records this:

***Also in the Gospel according to Matthew: You have heard that it was said by the ancients, You shall not kill; and whoever shall kill shall be guilty of the judgment. But I say unto you, That every one who is angry with his brother without cause shall be guilty of the judgment."***

Origen writes a quote from Matthew in his Homilies on the Song of Songs:

***'It was said to them of old, "Thou shalt not kill..." But I say to you, whosoever is angry with his brother without reason shall be held guilty';***

So assuming "without cause" was originally included in Matthew, then what amounts to a justifiable cause for anger against our brother? But even before that question, what does Jesus mean by "brother" (angry with his brother)? Does it mean a follower of His? Does it mean any fellow Jew? Does it mean any human being in general? In the Jewish community the term brother carried a few meanings and it is from the Jewish perspective that we must view it. Although the Greek is ***adelphos*** it is translating the Hebrew ***ach***; the two words are virtually synonymous. They both can mean a biological sibling, a family sibling (a step or adopted brother), a close friend, anyone who is part of a defined community, or similar to the way the Church uses the term brother today it can mean a fellow member of the local spiritual community, or it can be a rather general term of affection. It is my opinion that this is NOT referring to a fellow Believer, because

Yeshua was not speaking to a crowd of Believers. In fact, He hadn't yet made known the fullness of His identity as the God-sent Messiah/Savior; He was currently viewed by the Jewish populace as a **Tzadik**, a miracle working Holy Man. But because this is Matthew the Jew writing this account, and because the crowd was almost exclusively Jews, it is very likely that the Jewish crowd took this to mean "fellow Jews" while Yeshua probably meant "fellow human beings" because certainly the law against murder didn't apply only to Jews and besides... anger is universal to all of mankind.

Going forward, assuming that Christ meant fellow human being when He said "brother" and not just a select few people, then the question is, what amounts to a justifiable cause to have anger with another human being? The standard answer is that a "righteous anger" is justifiable. I want to repeat; it is not certain whether the words "without cause" were even part of what Christ said. Since this is impossible to know for certain, rather than focus on the justifiable vs. unjustifiable anger issue it is more profitable if we focus on the more important matter of someone nursing anger against his fellow, which under certain circumstances (or perhaps under all circumstances) means he faces judgment just as if he had committed actual murder. I will tell you that many commentators feel that this statement has to have been intended as hyperbole ....an intended exaggeration done in order to highlight a point because it seems beyond reasonable or rational that merely being angry without outwardly expressing it in any way should exact the same deadly penalty as when the criminal act of murder occurs.

In verse 22, 3 examples are given where anger must be avoided or remedied as the top priority in Yeshua's eyes, with the penalty for not doing so being to face God's wrath or even being thrown into a fiery Hell (**Gei-Hinnom**). This anger can take the form of name calling (saying **Raca**, probably an Aramaic loan word that best translates to good-for-nothing) or saying to someone "fool". Is this hyperbole?

It seems to me that what Yeshua is doing is essentially creating the bulls-eye in the center of the target of perfection. We're told to be perfect in verse 48, but what **is** perfection? What does it look like? Is it doing the Law flawlessly? Is it having a righteous attitude and mindset? Yeshua is telling His audience that already well knows that from a physical and legal standpoint... the Jewish religious viewpoint.... perfection is defined as following the Law of Moses without blemish. But Christ seems to be telling His audience that while this is good, it isn't

good enough for the kind of righteousness we each must attain in order to avoid God's eternal judgment. Even thinking in a way that is angry, or simply calling someone a fool or good-for-nothing makes one subject to God's wrath. Is that at all fair? Did not God Himself create us as not only sentient but also emotional beings? Can mere human beings possibly achieve such absolute perfection? Theoretically, even spiritually, yes. Practically, humanly, no. Without saying so, Yeshua is building a case for the irreplaceable need for salvation by grace; salvation through Him. No one, not even the original 12 Disciples, could ever meet the standard He is setting out in the Sermon on the Mount even though they and we are encouraged to strive for it. In fact, I imagine many in that crowd on the hill above the Sea of Galilee scoffed at His words or left discouraged; they thought that if He is serious about what He is saying then there is no hope for them because no one could ever meet such a standard. Even the venerated Moses got angry and threw the tablets of the 10 Commandments to the ground, breaking them into pieces.

In verses 23 and 24 Yeshua gives another example of what to do when anger is at work. But this time it is not about anger in you, but rather it is anger in your brother. The idea is that there has been some kind of issue between two people, and while the one seems to have moved on, the other (the one called "brother") has not. The subject, then, is reconciliation. Some go so far as to call this a short parable because it cannot be a real life situation. A worshipper cannot leave a sacrifice at the Temple altar, go away, spend the time to make peace with a fellow Jew, and then come back later to complete the ritual. The point that is being made is that there are higher virtues than making sacrifices; and among those are reconciliation among your fellows and obedience to God.

**CJB 1 Samuel 15:22 *Sh'mu'el said, "Does ADONAI take as much pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying what ADONAI says? Surely obeying is better than sacrifice, and heeding orders than the fat of rams."***

To be clear: nothing Samuel said, or Christ is saying, in any way diminishes the value of Torah ordained Temple worship or sacrifice. Rather it is that it is always better not to sin in the first place, than it is to sin and then need to sacrifice to seek forgiveness.

Who is your brother in this instance? There's no consensus on this but I feel certain that from the simple literal standpoint (**P'shat**) Yeshua can only mean Jews because at this time only Jews could be involved in Temple sacrifices from

His example. From a bit deeper reading, however, there is a hint (**Remez**) that in another sense one's brother is any fellow human being. That is, when one sacrifices, it is for the purpose of atonement..... seeking forgiveness from God. Therefore the principle is that one must reconcile and be at peace with one's fellow man before seeking forgiveness from God. Obviously this has logical limitations (we can only be at peace with those who also agree to be at peace with us). This principle would have rung true to the ears of Yeshua's audience since this concept was already part of the Jewish religious/social fabric.

In the Mishna, Yoma 8:9, we read this;

***"Yom Kippur atones for a person's transgressions against God, but it does not atone for his transgressions against his fellow man until he appeases him".***

Where Yeshua seems to have raised the degree of difficulty for His followers is that in Judaism then and now, it was the offender who was obligated to make peace with the offended. And it seems here that the offended, too, has an obligation to actively seek reconciliation.

Christ completes His treatise on anger and reconciliation with verses 25 and 26 and He does so in a judicial setting. Or better, in a setting that might normally lead to a judicial trial but ought not to. Once again notice the words: it is NOT if YOU sue someone; rather it is if someone sues YOU. Thus it is that someone has something against you. And, there is no language that explains whether one party or the other is at fault, or whether one party is right and the other wrong. Since the last words are "until you have paid the last penny", then clearly the example assumes the matter of an unpaid debt. Under the Torah Law, even under Jewish Law (**Halakah**) one is not to be jailed for defaulting on a debt. However Roman justice was often appealed to by Jews in that era, especially on matters of money and debt. We see a somewhat different example of this appeal to Roman justice when a crowd of Jews appealed to Pontius Pilate to have a murderer released but Jesus crucified. So again some commentators see these verses as a kind of parable and not something that is likely in real life. But the point is once again that reconciliation is better achieved between people than having an outside party impose their view of justice upon them.

The summation of what we need to take away from verses 21 - 26 is this: anger leads to the lack of peace, and therefore the need for reconciliation. Anger (at

least in the way the we humans normally think of it) is wicked in Christ's eyes. But should anger occur, and peace is broken, then reconciliation must be sought even before seeking God for forgiveness for our anger. Further, reconciliation needs to be a transaction between two (or more) willing individuals whereby the reconciliation is reached not so much as an accommodation to avoid the courts as it is the right and Godly attitude that as God worshippers we ought to strive for. Such a Godly attitude gives us all the tools we need to restore peace; or better yet, avoid anger and strife in the first place.

We'll continue with verse 27 and the matter of adultery next time.