

Matt 5:3-10

The Ethics and Morality of Jesus Christ

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for their reward will be great in heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst
for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called the sons of God.
10 Blessed are those who are persecuted
for righteousness,
for their reward will be great in heaven.

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1. The Ethical and Moral Foundation

Jesus came to free the spirit of people from the chains of the flesh that had bound that spirit since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden (Gen 1-3). God had addressed the overt acts of immorality and unethical behavior in the Law of Moses and writings of the prophets. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus extends the letter of the prohibition of sinful acts to the spirit of true disciples, which can overpower the flesh. Paul describes this powerful transformation in Christ in Eph 2:1-5:

2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

The Beatitudes

Matt 5:1-10

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying:

*3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*4 Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

*5 Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.*

*6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

*7 Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

*8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.*

*9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.*

*10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

The first part of the Sermon on the Mount, commonly called the beatitudes, sets forth the spiritual dimensions of the gospel law. The control of the external person depends on the nature and strength of the inward person. The impeding force of God's power moves through people, as they become partakers of these divine qualities. Of these qualities, Peter spoke in 2 Peter 1:3-4:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

A repeated and key word in this text is *blessed*. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, this word indicates the nature of that which is the highest good. Revelation uses *blessed* seven times. The beatitudes describe those who receive this highest nature of goodness—used twice of God. A highest nature, goodness, couples with a divine reward, based on a disposition of heart:

Blessed	the poor in spirit	the kingdom of heaven
Blessed	they who mourn	comforted
Blessed	the meek	inherit the earth
Blessed	hunger and thirst for righteousness	be filled
Blessed	the merciful	shown mercy
Blessed	the pure in heart	see God
Blessed	the peacemakers	called sons of God
Blessed	persecuted because of righteousness	kingdom of heaven

Inward Power Controls Outward Acts

As Christ lives in us, we are able to overcome the world. When people persecute us, we rejoice:

Matt 5:11-12

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

That we will suffer persecution is certain. Paul wrote in 2 Tim 3:12, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." The first response from a human point of view might be to strike back. Yet, with the spirit of the beatitudes living in us, we adopt the spirit of Christ. Peter explained how to do this in 1 Peter 4:1-4:

4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. 2 As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. 4 They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you.

Christ is the example that we should follow. Peter again wrote in 1 Peter 2:21-23:

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22 "He committed no sin,

and no deceit was found in his mouth."

23 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.

The Power of Christian Influence

Matt 5:13-16

"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.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

As we become imitators and servants of Christ, our influence runs like salt throughout the world. We become like a city on a hill. Our influence is there for all to see. We do not need to press to concoct deeds worthy of righteousness; for we are righteous.

Conclusion

Christians are to put on Christ. Paul wrote in Gal 3:27, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." It is in this state that we become new creations according to 2 Cor 5:17-18, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." This power of Christ in us keeps us from sin.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Gen 1-3: When was man bound by sin? What did he do?
2. Eph 2:1-5: In what were the Ephesians dead? What did they follow? What did God do?
3. Matt 5:1-10: What will the poor in spirit receive? What will happen to those who mourn? What will the meek inherit? Who will be filled? What will the merciful receive? Who will see God? Who will be called sons of God? Whose will be the kingdom of God?
4. 2 Peter 1:3-4: What has God's divine power given us? Who called us? How did he call us? Through what do we participate in the divine nature? From what do we escape?
5. Matt 5:11-12: What happens to us when people persecute us? Why should we rejoice when people persecute us?
6. 2 Tim 3:12: Who will be persecuted?
7. 1 Peter 4:1-4: With what attitude are we to arm ourselves? How should we live the rest of our earthly lives? What do pagans choose to do?
8. 1 Peter 2:21-23: In whose footsteps should we follow? To whom did Christ entrust himself?
9. Matt 5:13-16 13: Who is the salt of the earth? Who is the light of the world? If we let our lights shine, what will men see?
10. Gal 3:27: How are we to put on Christ?
11. 2 Cor 5:17-18: What are we, if we are in Christ?

2. Murder and Hate

Jesus describes in Matt 5:17 how the law of the spirit overcomes the law of the flesh. He begins with full assurance that he did not come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them. The moral law delivered in the Law of Moses will remain until everything is accomplished. The New Testament is very clear when this will happen. Paul wrote in Eph 3:10-11:

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is clear that God accomplished His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus. The Revelation speaks clearly on this same subject in Rev 10:7: "But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets." Rev 11:15 tells what happened at the sounding of the seventh trumpet:

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord
and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

What effect did the Lord have on the moral code of the Old Testament? The old was a law of the letter and the new was a law of the spirit. Paul said in 2 Cor 3:6, "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

Righteousness that Surpasses

Matt 5:17-20

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 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.

There is no getting around the moral law of God. Not the Pharisees and the teachers of the law nor the modern councils and governments can set aside God's law. Murder was wrong, and it is wrong; lying and false witnessing were wrong and are wrong. Sexual immorality was wrong, and is wrong. Modern business ethics, situation ethics, political expediency, and religious laxity cannot change what God's law has said is wrong. The righteousness of Christians must surpass all these. Those who break the moral law and teach others to do so "will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." Everything was accomplished when Christ was raised and his kingdom was established. Obedient followers enter the kingdom of heaven while they are on the earth, and remain in that kingdom eternally.

Paul teaches clearly in Col 1:12-14:

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Murder and Anger—the First Application

Matt 5:21-22

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Jesus applied the law of the spirit, as pronounced in the beatitudes, to murder and anger. The law clearly taught, "Do not murder." Christ extended the law against murder into his kingdom and expanded it to include anger, which is the spiritual and mental lust that grows into murder when it is conceived. James 1:13-15 teaches:

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

Murder is condemned throughout the New Testament. The Revelation declares in Rev 21:7-8, at the very end of the accomplishment of all things:

He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the **murderers**, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

The deceitful acts and attitudes—anger in this case—precede murder. When Paul outlined the works of the flesh, he spoke plainly about the precursors to murder. In Gal 5:19-21 he said, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: . . . hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy." These works are a river of sin from which murder flows. Jesus preempted these by saying, "Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." Matt 5:22. This is the same penalty as the one for murder. However, humans cloak their anger and malice in colloquial expressions of spite and hate. Jesus took the argument and penalty to this cultural level of spite, when he said, "Anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin." In other words, the court is also sitting and judging derogatory, hateful slander.

Saying derogatory spiteful words is worse than anger because we aim such words at hurting the spirit and self worth of the other person. *Raca* was a word of contempt very much like the ethnic slurs of today. Persons committing such sin know exactly what they are doing. Jesus then extends the sin of anger to yet another level. "But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell," he said. The moral equivalent to this expression today would be to say, "You moron." Or, "You idiot." Or, "Stupid." These words demean the person's intellect. Such a sin puts a person in danger of hell fire. Erase hate, contempt, and anger, and danger of murder will disappear.

The Lord's Remedy to Anger and Murder

Matt 5:23-24

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

The message is clear: stop anger and that will stop murder. Jesus offers this example to illustrate how he expects us to overcome our anger. We cannot worship or give gifts to God if malice, anger, and hate are standing between our brother and us. We are not getting it straight if we hold something against our brother. In this case, we know our brother has something against us. We are to take the initiative. Paul spoke similarly in 1 Cor 11:28, "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup."

Avoid Legal Judgments

Matt 5:25-26

25 Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Christians should always seek to settle things quickly, avoiding the anger and hate of prosecutions. Rom 12:17-19 teaches:

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

History tells many stories of how hate and rage turn to murder between two people over contentious issues. Business deals, marriages, estranged friendships, all of these and more offer opportunities for hate and anger. We should step back from name-calling and settle issues quickly. They will only get worse. Paul offers a surefire aid to a quick resolution in Phil 2:2-4:

Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Matt 5:17: What does Jesus assure his listeners?
2. Eph 3:10-11: Through whom would the manifold wisdom of God be made known? According to what purpose would this be made known?
3. Rev 10:7: What did God announce through his holy prophets?
4. Rev 11:15: What did the loud voices in heaven announce?
5. 2 Cor 3:6: What is the difference between the old and new covenants?
6. Matt 5:17-20: What did Christ fulfill when he came? Whose righteousness must the righteousness of Christians surpass?

7. Col 1:12-14: Who qualifies us to share in the inheritance in the kingdom of light? Who rescued us from the dominion of darkness? Who brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves? In whom do we have our redemption, the forgiveness of sins?
8. Matt 5:21-22: Who is subject to the judgment? Who is in danger of hell fire?
9. James 1:13-15 teaches: Who does God tempt? How is one tempted? What drags a man away and entices him? What gives birth to sin? What gives birth to death?
10. Rev 21:7-8: What is the fate of the murderers?
11. Gal 5:19-21: What are the acts of a sinful nature that may lead to anger and murder? Who will not enter the kingdom of God?
12. Matt 5:23-24: What must we do before we worship God?
13. 1 Cor 11:28: What are we to do before we take the Lord's Supper?
14. Matt 5:25-26: When and how are we to settle matters with an adversary?
15. Phil 2:2-4: What Christian attitudes help control anger?

3. Adultery

In Matt 5:27, Jesus elevates the command of the law – “Do not commit adultery” – to the level of the mind, spirit, and heart of a man. *Adultery* is a word that describes sexual immorality and infidelity between married people. Under the Old Testament law, God permitted certain relationships where men might have multiple sexual partners. Whether these partners were multiple wives like David or multiple concubines like Solomon, Moses permitted them and multiple divorces, as expressed in Matt 19:4-8.

From the beginning, however, God made one man and one woman to be one flesh. In this passage, Jesus elevates sexual immorality to the fulfillment of willful lust. Modern practices of premarital sex and homosexuality receive the harshest censure, along with modern sins of the mind like pornography. Christ broadens the Old Testament sin of adultery (still sinful under the covenant of Christ) to include sexual immorality of every sort.

Sins of Adultery and Sexual Immorality Are Willful and Avoidable.

Matt 5:27-30

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 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. 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.

A man committing adultery is sinning, and so is a man, looking at a woman lustfully in his heart, sinning. This latter sin is as bad as the first, and it is, in fact, the very same thing as the actual adultery. This description by the Lord encompasses every kind of sexual immorality and promiscuity. The law of Christ tolerates no sexual indiscretions.

What then are men and women so tempted to do? They must control their eyes. They must control their touch. At the core of sexual immorality is the lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh. If one looks on another lustfully and if one touches another unlawfully, the sin is already committed. Symbolically, the eye and the hand must be controlled to save the entire person from going into hell. Sexual encounters begin with the eye, the touch, and minor flirtations and indiscretions.

Jesus and Paul Tell of The Danger Inherent in Sexual Immorality.

Jesus expanded on his teaching in Matt 19, where he had forbidden divorce for any reason except sexual immorality. Therefore, in Matt 19:10-12, Jesus teaching on divorce and remarriage troubled the disciples:

10 The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

11 Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. 12 For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

Christ expects Christians who are single or divorced to choose to live celibate lives, renouncing marriage and sexual immorality. Broad commands prohibiting sexual immorality find little acceptance in the modern world of indiscriminate sex. People often, and perhaps, even generally, reject the teaching of the gospel on single sex, homosexual sex, or multiple wives following multiple divorces. People who choose these life styles, as they are called, cannot “accept the word” of Christ. Single adults have but one choice—abstinence.

Paul wrote on this same subject, leaving no doubt as to what the truth is. In 1 Cor 5:9-11, he addressed the church directly:

9 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. 11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

The teaching is clear. We are not to associate with those who claim to be Christians and practice these sins. As Christians, they are sexually immoral.

Paul delivers an equally strong command against sexual immorality of any kind in 1 Cor 6:9-10:

9 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 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Adultery, single sex, homosexual sex, and pornography are one in the same in the teaching of the Lord and in the teaching of the apostles and prophets.

Sexual Immorality Is a Desecration of the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

In order to commit sexual immorality, people must defile their bodies, overcome the spirit of Christ that dwells within them, and unite with that unlawful sex partner as one flesh. 1 Cor 6:14-19 teaches:

15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

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. 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

Sexual immorality, as no other sin, requires a completed satisfaction of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the vainglory of life. In 1 John 2:16, John wrote:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

Conclusion

Jesus approved the Old Testament law – “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” In his law, Jesus strictly forbids sexual immorality, including the sin of looking to lust. The new law specifically condemns many contemporary sexual practices. The way of escape is to abstain from these sexual evils.

Paul offers a positive approach to these sins of the world in Rom 12:1-2:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Matt 5:27: What did the Law of Moses teach about adultery?
2. Matt 19:4-8: What was God's law from the beginning?
3. Matt 5:27-30: What did Christ teach about adultery in the heart?
4. Matt 19:10-12: What options are available for single adults? Can everyone accept this teaching?
5. 1 Cor 5:9-11: How should the church respond to sexually immoral people who are in the church?
6. 1 Cor 6:9-10: What does Paul identify as sexually immoral?
7. 1 Cor 6:14-19: Should one take a member of Christ and unite it with a prostitute? When does one become one flesh with a prostitute? What are Christians to flee?
8. 1 John 2:16: What is of the world and not of the Father?
9. Rom 12:1-2: How are we to present our bodies to God? How are Christians are to conform themselves? How are they renewed?

4. Divorce

In the previous lesson, the Lord dealt with sexual immorality in a way that settles most modern departures from the word of the Lord. In Matt 5:28, the Lord said, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Single sexual relationships, extra marital or adulterous relationships, homosexuality, and pornography are the results of "the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does," according to 1 John 2:16.

The previous lesson also taught that the New Testament explicitly condemns sexual immorality. See Matt. 15:19, 1 Cor 6:13-18, and Gal 5:19. Divorce may lead to sexual immorality, but it is not immoral in and of itself. The New Testament gives us laws that govern divorce. These laws satisfy most problems created by divorce. Individual Christians must apply these laws to their circumstances. The Lord made it individual and personal, when the apostles asked about difficult situations occurring from divorces where people are unable to remarry in Matt 19:10-12:

10 The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

11 Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. 12 For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

Paul also expressed this individual responsibility when talking about Christians deserted by unbelieving partners in marriage in 1 Cor 7: 24: "Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to."

The Moral Law of Marriage: The Effect of Divorce on the Spouse

Matt 5:31-32:

31 *"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.*

If one puts away his wife, it must be for marital unfaithfulness. This law runs counter to the practices of modern society, where people may put away their spouse for reasons like incompatibility. In fact:

Using a quasi-experimental pre-post intervention design and archival data from the National Center for Health Statistics, a team of researchers at the University of Oklahoma examined the effect adoption of no-fault divorce law had on the divorce rate across the 50 states. Education and income data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and religiosity data from the Glenmary Research Center were used to assess the role of education, median family income and religiosity under the no-fault divorce regime. The researchers found that no-fault divorce laws had a significant positive effect on the divorce rate across the 50 states.

People in America who describe themselves as born-again Christians have the highest divorce rate. In a given year, there are 2,230,000 marriages and approximately 1,300,000 divorces.

If divorces were only for marital unfaithfulness, the problems would diminish. The law of Christ is clear: one can put away a spouse only for marital unfaithfulness.

The Moral Law of Divorce and Remarriage

Some Pharisees came to him to test him in Matt 19:3-13. They asked:

"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

4 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

7 "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

8 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. 9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

10 The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

11 Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. 12 For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."

Jesus had explained in the Sermon on the Mount that anyone puts away his wife except for marital unfaithfulness causes his wife to commit adultery and causes the one who marries the wife to commit adultery. Jesus gives the second law in certain terms: "Anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

The Law of Marriage and the Death of a Spouse

Rom 7:1-3:

1 Do you not know, brothers – for I am speaking to men who know the law – that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? 2 For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. 3 So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man.

The second way to be released from the law of marriage is by the death of a spouse. The first, as we have seen, was marital unfaithfulness. *Released* or *loosed*, as in other versions, comes from the word *eleutheros* (el-yoo'-ther-os) and means unrestrained (to go at pleasure), i.e. (as a citizen) not a slave (whether freeborn or manumitted), or (genitive case) exempt (from obligation or liability); KJV - free (man, woman), at liberty. (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.).

The law of marriage and death binds husbands and wives only so long as they live. Should one die, the other is free to marry. The law is clear: "If her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man."

The Law of Marriage When an Unbeliever Leaves a Believer

1 Cor 7:10-24

10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

12 To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

17 Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. 18 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. 20 Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. 21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you – although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 22 For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. 24 Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.

The law of marriage when an unbeliever leaves a believer is clearly stated: “But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances.” The debate centers on the phrase, *is not bound*. Does this mean a Christian is free to remarry? The word, itself, leaves little room for quarrel. The word is the Greek word *dedoúlootai*, coming from *douloo* (doo-lo'-o); from NT: to enslave (literally or figuratively), Bring into (be under) bondage, given, become (make) servant. (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.).

One gets the meaning of the word fully when viewed in Rom 6:6 in reference to our release from sin: “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” To what degree Christians are not bound to sin, to that degree is a Christian, whose spouse has deserted, not bound to that spouse.

The point of the last paragraph is that Christians have to live in the state that they are called. Paul said, “This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.”

The Law of Marriage and Divorce Governing Elders, Deacons, and Widows Indeed

1 Tim 3:1-2

This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop

then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach . . .

1 Tim 3:12:

12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

1 Tim 5:9:

9 Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man.

On three occasions, Paul specifies that those of the highest office be the husband or wife of one spouse. What does this necessarily infer about the general state of marriage in the early church?

Conclusion

In a world that is not ideal, many come to the gospel with problems created by the former lives they have lived by force or by choice. Husbands have wives, masters have slaves, many have far-reaching family responsibilities, and addicts bring their addictions—these and more complicate the lives of Christians. Jesus said of this complicated problem: “Not everyone can accept this word . . . The one who can accept this should accept it.” Paul also laid down the rule that governs the church in these matters: “Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.”

The rule for all Christians is in 1 Cor 6:18, “Flee from sexual immorality.”

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Matt 5:28: When does one commit adultery in his heart?
2. 1 John 2:16: What three things identify all that is in the world?
3. Matt 19:10-12: How can single people avoid the temptations of sexual immorality?
4. 1 Cor 7: 24: To whom are we responsible for our situation?
5. Matt 5:31-32: What is the effect of divorce, for a reason except sexual immorality, on the wife?
6. Matt 19:3-13: What had Moses allowed regarding divorce? Why did he do that? What is the command of the Lord?
7. Rom 7:1-3: When is one no longer bound to a spouse?
8. 1 Cor 7:10-24: What is the status of believing spouses when an unbelieving spouses desert them?
9. Rom 6:6: How does not bound to sin relate to not being in bondage to a spouse who deserts?
10. 1 Tim 3:1-2: How many wives may an elder have?
11. 1 Cor 6:18: What is the rule for all Christians relating to sexual immorality?

5. Speaking the Truth and Controlling the Tongue

The out-of-control tongue swears and curses. James described our problem in James 3:3-10:

3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and creatures of the sea are being tamed and have been tamed by man, 8 but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord set the standard for clean, moral, and approved speech. If the characteristics taught in the beatitudes are in the heart, controlling the tongue will be easier. Many modern examples illustrate the deceit and danger of an unruly tongue. Political slander, media profanity, and casual cursing and swearing populate our public discourse and our private lives alike.

Your Word Is Your Bond

Matt 5:33-37

33 "Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' 34 But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Our word can only be what it is: *yes* or *no*! To add oaths to it, summoning the power of heaven or earth cannot make *yes*, *no* or *no*, *yes*. Embellishments to pure straight talk are from the evil one. James repeated this admonition of Jesus in James 5:12 and tells us we will be condemned for such language: "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." Religion is worthless if one lets his tongue run wild. James again said in James 1:26, "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." To add an oath to our *yes* and *no* endangers our very soul. Such language comes from the devil.

Lying and Deceiving

Yes cannot be *yes* and *no* cannot be *no* when one is lying and deceiving. There is no room in the Lord's teaching for little lies or white lies. All lies and deceptions are wrong. In 1 Peter 3:1, Peter quotes from the Old Testament to show the sin of deceit and evil speech:

"Whoever would love life

and see good days
 must keep his tongue from evil
 and his lips from deceitful speech.

Paul concurs in Rom 3:10-14, comparing evil deceitful speech to the nastiness of open graves and poison of vipers:

13 "Their throats are open graves;
 their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

Jesus taught that lying, deceitful speech was of the devil – a liar and the father of lies – in John 8:44-45:

44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

45 Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

Those who follow the Lamb of God have no lies in their mouths. The Revelation teaches in Rev 14:4-5:

They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. 5 No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

Contrasted to these followers of the Lamb, are the liars whose place is in the fiery lake in Rev 21:8,

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

To let your *yes* be *yes* and your *no* be *no*, is not to lie or speak deceitfully.

Gossip and Slander

Paul places slanderers and their lies right along side of the grossest moral sins in 1 Cor 6:9-10:

Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards **nor slanderers** nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

In Col 3:8-10, Paul expands this list to include filthy language:

But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

In 2 Cor 12:20, Paul includes gossip with slander, "I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, **gossip**, arrogance, and disorder." To let your *yes* be *yes* and your *no* be *no*, is to refrain from the maliciousness of slander and gossip.

Obscenities, Foolish Talk, and Coarse Joking

Obscenities, foolish talk, and coarse joking, all of these are not to be hinted of in the lives of Christians, leaving no room for dirty jokes, euphemisms, taking the Lord's name in vain, racial jokes and slurs, and demeaning talk about people of the opposite sex. Paul says that they are out of place. Eph 5:3-7 explains that we are not to be partners those who do:

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. 4 Nor should there be **obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking**, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

Our *yes* must be *yes* and our *no* be *no* in all our interactions; and these include discussions and interaction in the locker room, on the golf course, at the water fountain, etc.

Conclusion

Our evil speech does not begin with the *yes* or *no* of our lips, but with our hearts. If we embed the beatitudes in our hearts, our speech will be wholesome. Jesus taught in Matt 12:33-37

34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. 35 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. 36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. 37 For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned."

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. James 3:3-10: What little devices control horses and ships? What little member can control the person? What can corrupt and ruin a person? With what do we praise our Father?
2. Matt 5:33-37: By what may Christians swear? What comes from the evil one?
3. James 5:12: By what will we be condemned? When is religion worthless?
4. James 1:26: Who may consider himself religious?
5. 1 Peter 3:1: Who will love life and see good days?
6. Rom 3:10-14: What is an open grave? Where is the poison of vipers?
7. John 8:44-45: In whom is there no truth? What is the devil's native language?
8. Rev 14:4-5: Who follow the Lamb? What is not found in their mouths?
9. Rev 21:8: Where will liars be found in the last day? Who will be with them?
10. 1 Cor 6:9-10: Will slanderers be found in the kingdom of God?
11. Col 3:8-10: What sins are expressed with language? What have Christians taken off? What are they to put on?
12. 2 Cor 12:20: Is gossip a sin?
13. Eph 5:3-7: What kind of talk is out of place for Christians? Who is an idolater?
14. Matt 12:33-37: From what does the mouth speak? What must men give account of in the day of judgment? What will acquit us? What will condemn us?

6. Retaliation and Retribution

Contemporary society has ingrained retaliation and retribution in our culture. Consider the parent who says, “When you go up to that school, don’t take anything from anybody.” Or, the politician who advocates attacking another country because they just might attack us. Or, the number of people who carry weapons to protect themselves. In the beatitudes, Jesus calls for attitudes and values of the heart that curtail one’s impulse to strike back. For example, one who is *poor in spirit* will not likely strike back. One who is *meek* will place the other person first. If the attack is because of one’s religion, the Lord expressly commanded in Matt 5:11-12:

“11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The Old Testament principle of an *eye for eye, and tooth for a tooth* gives way to the New Testament law of the spirit. [Footnotes for Matt 5:38: Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21.] This rule—an eye for an eye— continues in many religions and cultures today.

Do Not Resist an Evil Person

Matt 5:38-39

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person"

Do not resist an evil person is the crux of the New Testament law restricting retaliation and retribution. In the civil world order approved by God, God himself establishes authorities to deal with evil people, according to Rom 13:1-4:

1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

It is especially important that in the church, members refrain from retaliating and striking back. The meekness and kind spirit taught by Christ will keep us from sudden and bad responses. Paul also instructed on the proper attitude toward one another in Phil 2:2-5:

. . . make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

It is important that Christians rely on God to avenge them their adversaries. Paul taught in 2 Thess 1:6-10:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 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. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

The Right Way Is Opposite to the Way One Might Think

Matt 5:39-42

If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

These are difficult sayings for many people to accept. Our first response very well may be to strike back. However, the sayings are unqualified and have certain meanings. Consider what the Lord did not mean. He did not mean that in some circumstances he will approve striking people. To the contrary, Peter told us not to repay evil with evil in 1 Peter 3:9, "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

The new rule of the gospel must apply to every facet of a Christian's life. 1 Tim 3:3 charges elders to be gentle and not quarrelsome [no striker ASV]. Most violent acts of retaliation and retribution occur among family members and close associates. Husbands who strike out against their wives and wives who will not submit to their husbands become evil people within the family circle. Paul tells each—husband and wife—how to act toward one another in Eph 5:22-31:

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . . 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 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."

Eph 6:4 charges fathers to deal with their children without provocation: "4 Fathers, do not exasperate [provoke to wrath ASV] your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

The Christian is to give way quickly to the evil doer, turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, etc. Even if the Christian has rights under the law, it is often better not to pursue them, settling matters quickly. In Matt 5:25-26, Jesus taught, "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison."

Conclusion

The phrases--*turning the other cheek* and *going the extra mile*—are permanent in the lexicon of our culture. Yet, more often than not, we ignore them. Husbands and wives fight back; employees have altercations at work; children fight at school. The end of violence is to break up a home, to lose a job, or to be kicked out of school. Wars are often a result of retaliation and retribution on an international scale. The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls for a fundamental change in outlook. The *eye for an eye* philosophy pursued by so many is contradictory to *not resisting the evil person*. To be Christ-like is to adopt this spirit. Of Jesus, Peter wrote, 1 Peter 2:21-23:

21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

22 "He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth."

23 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.

In the face of evil people, let us entrust ourselves to God. Imagine a family, a neighborhood, a business, a country, a world where there is no striking back, no getting even, and no retaliation and retribution. Only in Christ can one find such a place. Heb 12:14-15 teaches: "14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." The burden of peace is upon the believer and not on the unbeliever, as Paul expressed in Rom 12:18-20:

18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Matt 5:11-12: How are we to respond when people insult us, persecute us, and say all kind of evil about us?
2. Matt 5:38-39: What law supersedes the law of *eye for eye, and tooth for tooth*?
3. Rom 13:1-4: What is the Christian's relationship to governing authorities? Who establishes governing authorities? What must we do to be free from those in authority? What is the purpose of governing authorities?
4. Phil 2:2-5: What is the Christian attitude toward one another? Whose attitude should we imitate? Whom should we consider better than we consider ourselves?
5. 2 Thess 1:6-10: What will happen to those who trouble Christians? When Jesus comes, whom will he bring with him? Whom will he punish? What will happen to his holy people?
6. Matt 5:39-42: If someone strikes us, how are we to respond? If someone wants to take what we have, what are we to do? If someone wants to borrow money, what are we to do?
7. 1 Peter 3:9: How are we to repay evil? If we do this, what will we inherit?
8. 1 Tim 3:3: What are the qualifications of elders in this passage?

9. Eph 5:22-31: What is the church to Christ? What *did* Christ do for the church? What does Christ *now do* for the church?
10. Eph 6:4: How are fathers to deal with their children?
11. Matt 5:25-26: How soon should you deal with your adversary? 12. Peter 2:21-23: How did Christ give us an example for dealing with adversaries?
13. Heb 12:14-15: What did Paul teach us about being at peace?
14. Rom 12:18-20: Whose is it to avenge? For what must we leave room?

7. Love Your Enemies

Of all the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus, none separates the Christian from all others like Jesus' command in Matt 5:45: "But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." The origin of the statement, "Love your neighbors," was the command in Lev 19:18, "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD." The Jews added the clause—*hate your enemies*— as the logical extension of the teaching. They took the word *neighbors* to mean more than just those who live nearby, including in the word all their fellow Jews. All others were thus to be hated by exclusion.

Now the Lord teaches that Christians are to love even their enemies. What a change in a world where most wars are between religious and philosophical enemies; such as protestant versus catholic, Muslim versus Jew, communist versus Christian—to name only a few. Even American politics has regressed to conflicts between groups holding contrary religious views: right to life versus freedom of choice; same sex marriages versus marriages between men and women; a Zionist view of Christ returning to establish David's earthly kingdom versus an exalted Christ on his throne at the right hand of God. Christians are to love their enemies regardless of their differences. This is a difficult teaching, indeed.

The Enabling Spiritual and Mental Values

Matt 5:43-44

44 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you . . ."

This command of Jesus runs so contrary to human practice and human nature that it requires a fundamental shift in one's moral and ethical values. Jesus provided the basis of that shift in the beatitudes. In Matt 5:10-12, the Lord sets the moral and ethical standard for Christians:

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

No matter what the differences between God's people and their enemies, the Lord has said plainly, "Love your enemies." This love is no mere nod of mental acceptance. It involves action. "Pray for those who persecute you," is a command that requires positive action. In the sermon on the mount, the Lord had already taught Christians not to be angry and not to retaliate, suppressing the evil impulse before evil action gets underway. Now he teaches Christians to perform a positive act of love toward their enemies: **pray for them.**

Some late manuscripts include in verse 44, "*Bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you.*" These two commands add positive steps Christians must take to love their enemies.

A Condition by Which Christians Are Sons of God

Matt 5:45

45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

The teaching—*that you may be sons of your Father in heaven*—requires us to act on our love of our enemies. The highest reward goes only to those who meet this high ethical and moral standard. When one holds the values expressed in the beatitudes, one becomes like the Lord, mentally and spiritually. Symbolically, the New Testament speaks of this as a new birth. John 3:5-7 records Jesus explaining this spiritual birth: “Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again.”’” Paul described how the birth occurs in Rom 6:3-4: “3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

John used love and hate to separate the children of God from the children of the devil. In 1 John 3:10, he wrote: “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.” Even God does not forsake completely those who are evil and unrighteous giving them the sun and rain to sustain their lives. The ethical and moral standard of Jesus is clear, and the result of maintaining it is clear: love your enemies and do good to them.

The Deception of Human Nature

Matt 5:46-47

46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

Human nature deceives us. Certainly, we must love those who love us. And certainly we should greet our brothers. However, if this is all that we do, we are no better than tax collectors—a despised group among the Jews—and pagans—a group to be shunned by the Jews. To be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect is to hold out a benevolent and helping hand to our enemies. After all, God does give all men the sun and the rain alike; and the gospel call of Christ is open to all. Paul explained the degree to which we must go in Rom 12:19-21:

19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

As Perfect as the Heavenly Father

Matt 5:48:

48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The beatitudes dwelling within us open the avenue to the perfection that is of God. Being perfect in this way makes it possible to love and do good to our enemies. The perfection described here—a perfection equal to God’s perfection—is expanded in detail in 2 Peter 1. In 2 Peter 1:4, Peter gives direction on how to participate in the divine nature [the perfection of God]: “Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” In 2 Peter 1:5-7, Peter restated the values delivered by the Lord in the sermon on the mount:

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

The end of these ethical and moral values is the attainment of the divine nature in this life. Peter continues in 2 Peter 1:8-9:

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

Being perfect as God is perfect makes our calling and election sure.

Conclusion

The road to heaven is not what it seems. If we love and do good to our enemies, we will attain a Godlike perfection. That perfection will allow us a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom, according to 2 Peter 1:10-11: “Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Matt 5:45: Who are we to love? For whom are we to pray?
2. Lev 19:18: What does the LORD teach about revenge and bearing a grudge?
3. Matt 5:43-44: How are Christians to treat their enemies and persecutors?
4. Matt 5:10-12: Who are blessed in this passage? What blessing do they receive? What should be the attitude of Christians when they are persecuted?
5. Matt 5:45: Whose sons are Christians? How does the Father bless the unjust like he blesses the just?
6. John 3:5-7: How does a Christian enter the kingdom of God? What are two elements of the new birth.
7. Rom 6:3-4: Into what are Christians baptized? To what are they raised?
8. 1 John 3:10: How do we know who are the children of God? Who are the children of the devil?
9. Matt 5:46-47: What is the reward for loving those who love us? Whom do tax collectors love? Whom do pagans love?
10. Rom 12:19-21: How are Christians to treat enemies in need? What overcomes evil?

11. Matt 5:48: To what standard are Christians held?
12. 2 Peter 1:4: How do Christians participate in the divine nature? From what do they escape?
13. 2 Peter 1:5-7: How does Peter restate the values of the Sermon on the Mount? Can you list them?
14. 2 Peter 1:8-9: Who are ineffectual and unproductive? Who is nearsighted and blind? What do the blind forget?
15. 2 Peter 1:10-11: How do we make our calling and election sure? Into what will those who practice these things enter?

8. Arrogance, Self-Righteousness, and Being Seen of Men

The poor in spirit, the meek, and the merciful find themselves described in the beatitudes. Now Christ describes those who manifest the opposite ethical and moral standards of conduct: the arrogant, the self-righteous, and those who do what they do to be seen of men. The antithesis of this level of self-righteousness is in the description given by Paul in Phil 2:3-4: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." In the 21st century, people often act in their self-interest at the expense of others. Their attitude becomes assuming, self-interested, and self-serving. These attitudes and their concomitant actions are the opposite of what Jesus taught. They are the attitudes and actions of sanctimonious religious people and exploitive business people. They are that part of worldly ethical behavior described in 1 John 2:16 as "the boasting of what he has and does."

The Ethical Standard

Matt 6:1

1 "Be careful not to do your 'acts of righteousness' before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

The principle is clear: If one does acts of righteousness to be seen of men, there is no reward from God. A rich man builds a wing on the local hospital—a righteous act, indeed. He expects to get public notice in the newspaper and his name on the building. He has his reward. A less well-off person gives \$50 to a passing stranger in need. He tells all his friends and neighbors what he has done. He, too, has his reward. When the Lord says, "Be careful," he signals just how tempting it is to take earthly credit and boast about what one has done. The deceit of Satan is to lead us down the road of pride, followed by public declaration where our acts are good and often even great, but the devil steals our everlasting benefit by appealing to our self-righteous ethics, tempting us to take the credit from among men. We think we are so important that we lose everything to vainglory in this life.

The Ethical Standard Applied to Giving Gifts to the Needy

Matt 6:2-4

"So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

The Lord states what is not a command, but a principle eternal: Hypocrites announce their gifts with trumpets; they do this in the synagogues and on the streets; and they have received their reward in full. The command that tells the proper ethical action follows: Do not announce your gift with trumpets. Do not let your left hand know what the right hand is doing. Do your giving in secret. The heavenly father will reward you.

In the church of the Lord, giving is individual and personal, and of one's own free will. Paul teaches that each of us must purpose in our own hearts in 2 Cor 9:7: "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." The church must take care that the public vaunting of the gifts of those better

off does not embarrass members of modest means. Rich or poor, the church is one in Christ Jesus. If we do our gifts in secret, the Father who sees what is done in secret will reward us.

The Ethical Standard Applied to Praying

Matt 6:5-7:\

5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Praying, as in giving, is an area where some publicly vaunt and boast in themselves. The Lord calls the people hypocrites who pray on the street corners and in the synagogues to be seen of men. Today, there are practices of prayer that call attention to those praying in public places, showing off their prayers to others. However, this same act of vainglorious prayer can occur in the assembly where the prayer excludes those around or is worded to show off the skill of the one praying to the congregation making it a mere audience. The Lord gives specific commands about praying: "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen." Personal prayer to God the father is always appropriate, but it must be private. Paul regulates public prayers in the congregation in 1 Cor 14:15-17, "I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind."

These public prayers must not be babbling and wordy.

Matt 6:7-8

7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

The *babbling like pagans* describes prayers that are showing off the speaker's use of words and his ability to use many words. Christians are to remember that our prayers are to God. God knows what we need even before we ask.

The Ethical Standard Applied to Fasting

Matt 6:16-18

16 "When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

The common practice of fasting was an occasion for men to show off their piety with somber looks and disfigured faces. Their vainglory is before men, and they have received their reward. The Lord calls these acts the acts of hypocrites. When Christians perform their religious acts, they are to dress and look normal. It must not be obvious what they are doing. The Father who sees what is done in secret will reward the Christian with this proper attitude.

Conclusion

In the middle of this text, the Lord taught the disciples how to pray. Christians should see this prayer in its simplicity and earnestness as the guide for our prayers--not babbling, not verbose, and not to be heard by men. In the closet of our hearts, we should pray in secret to a

heavenly Father who will reward us. To choose verbose prayers to be heard of men is its own reward. Prayers said to be heard by men please only our lust for vainglory in this life.

Matt 6:9-15

9 *"This, then, is how you should pray:*

*"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
10 your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us today our daily bread.
12 Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.'*

14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Perhaps, the most unethical of standards is to choose to be seen and heard by men for our own vainglory. The ethos of private, unheralded acts of good works or worship empowers us to true greatness.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Phil 2:3-4: What is the opposite attitude to self-righteousness? To whose interest ought Christians to look?
2. 1 John 2:16: The boasting of what one has and does is of what domain—heaven or the world?
3. Matt 6:1: When we do acts to be seen of men, what do we lose?
4. Matt 6:2-4 How secret is our giving to the needy to be? If we give in secret, who will reward us?
5. 1 Cor 9:7: How is it decided what to give? Giving must be free from what constraints? What does God Love?
6. Matt 6:5-7: Where and how are we not to pray? Where and how are we to pray?
7. 1 Cor 14:15-17: What two parts of a person ought to be present in prayer?
8. Matt 6:16-18: How do hypocrites fast? How are Christians to fast? Who will reward them?
9. Matt 6:9-15: How are we to address God in prayer? How are we to address our temporal needs? In order to ask forgiveness, who are we to forgive? How do we regard temptation and the evil one in our prayers? If we fail to forgive those who sin against us, what can we expect from our heavenly Father?

9. Prayer and Forgiveness

In the last lesson, the Lord inserted instruction on how to pray in his teaching against self-righteousness. That prayer—commonly called the Lord’s Prayer—is more truly a disciples’ prayer. The prayer presents the ethical standard, “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” In a world of *an eye for an eye* and *a tooth for a tooth* ethics as the standard of forgiveness, the ethics and morality of Jesus depart from the ethical norms of the day. In the 21st century, this standard contrasts markedly with the *dog eat dog* and *get them before they get you* attitudes. As with all the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus, forgiveness is rooted in the beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount.

The forgiving heart is found only where people manifest mercy, pure hearts, and a will to be peacemakers. The Lord taught in Matt 5:7-9:

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Christians must have these attitudes even when they are under such dire circumstances as persecution. In Matt 5:11-12, the Lord explained: “11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” The beatitudes laid the foundation for the spirit necessary for forgiveness.

The Forgivers Will Be Forgiven

Matt 6:9-15

9“*This, then, is how you should pray:*

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”

14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

In the text of the prayer, the Lord conditions the forgiveness of our debts from the father: “As we also have forgiven our debtors.” This focus on the ethical standard of forgiveness receives emphasis when the Lord concludes by reiterating it twice in verses 14 and 15. God’s forgiveness of us depends on our forgiveness of those who have sinned against us. Yet in daily lives, brothers, spouses, fellow church members, and sure enough enemies go to the grave without forgiving one another. The ethics of forgiveness becomes a true test of who the children of God really are.

Forgiveness Is Unlimited in Number and Scope

The standard of forgiveness is unlimited in the number of times a person is to forgive another. In Matt 18:21-35, Matthew records Peter raising the question of how many times he should forgive his brother:

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?”

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. [Some versions say, "Seventy times seven.]. Matt 18:21-22

After establishing the unlimited frequency of forgiveness, Jesus tells a parable that teaches once again that Christians must forgive one another. In Matt 18:23-35, Jesus tells of a wicked servant who, when his master came to collect his debts, prayed of his master to forgive him. Matt 18:26-27 says: "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

Beginning in Matt 18:28, the servant refused to forgive his fellow servant his debt; and instead, he threw him into prison in Matt 18:30-31:

30 But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

The master's response in Matt 18:32-34—just like God's response to us if we do not forgive—was immediate and certain:

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

Jesus removed all doubt and concluded in verse 35, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Forgiveness Includes All People and All Grievances

Perhaps, humankind is more amenable to forgive a brother than to forgive others. The ethical standard of the Lord required us to forgive all people. In Mark 11:25, the Lord taught, "And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." The word, *anyone*, of this passage, extends our forgiveness to all men. Christians are to forgive all men before they pray asking God to forgive them. In Col 3:13, Paul teaches that we are to forgive whatever grievances we have: "13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

God holds Christians to the high standard where they are to forgive everyone whatever the grievances. Of course, that is exactly what Christians receive from Him.

Forgiveness Does Not Have to Be Asked for

All of us commit sins against one another. A slight, a harsh word, a debt overlooked—all of these and more happen in all human relationships. Often we stand back, offended, waiting for the husband or wife, friend or neighbor, or Christian brother or sister to make the first move. John teaches that we should pray for the one committing the sin and God would forgive him. Do not wait to be asked to forgive is the lesson. John wrote in 1 John 5:16-17

16 If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. 17 All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

The exception to the standard is a sin unto death. The sin unto death is a broad subject for another time. Suffice for this lesson to say, that these sins are willful, continual, and sometimes against the Holy Spirit of God. Consider the following passages, but remember that the focus of John is that if we see a brother sinning a sin not unto death, we are to pray for him: Rom 6:1-3, Heb 6:4-6, Heb 10:26-28, 2 Peter 2:20-22, and Mark 3:28-29.

Conclusion

There is no higher ethical standard than to forgive everyone whatever the grievances. We must strive to achieve the level of ethical behavior achieved so powerfully by the Saviour as he went to the cross. In Luke 23:33-34, he asked the Father to forgive his murderers: "33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals . . . Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Dying at the hand of an angry mob, Stephen prayed in Acts 7:59-60:

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep."

All Christians should be this forgiving in the most difficult of times of our lives.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Matt 5:7-9: What attitudes from the Sermon on the Mount help us have a forgiving spirit?
2. Matt 5:11-12: How should we respond when we are persecuted and falsely accused?
3. Matt 6:9-15: Upon what is our forgiveness based?
4. Matt 18:21-22: How often should we forgive our bother?
5. Matt 18:26-27: How did the master respond to the indebted servant?
6. Matt 18:28: How did the forgiven servant respond to his fellow servant in debt to him?
7. Matt 18:32-34: When the master found ought what the servant did, what did he say? What did he do?
8. Mark 11:25: What must we do before we pray?
9. Col 3:13: What does Paul teach about whatever grievances we have?
10. 1 John 5:16-17: What are we to do when we see a brother sinning a sin that does not lead to death? What is sin?
11. Rom 6:1-3: Shall we continue in sin?

10. Earthly Wealth, Riches, and Anxiety

This study of the morality and ethics of Jesus has based its premise upon the way that Jesus introduced the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, starting in Matthew 5. Jesus predicated a change in moral and ethical behavior based on a change of the heart. The incorporation of the beatitudes into the heart equips us to turn away from immoral and unethical behavior. Nowhere in the Sermon on the Mount is this more important than in these present passages that deal with the temptation of earthly wealth and the anxiety that results from looking to this world for our reward. The true morality and ethics of Jesus lifts one from the snare of greed and covetousness and the anxiety that they create. In a world of “dog eat dog,” “get them before they get you,” “getting and spending,” and “keeping up with the Jones,” it is difficult, indeed, to live free of greed and covetousness. The anxiety comes from thinking that one is nothing without material gains. The Lord presents a set of bipolar directives—eternal principles. They become our topics of study.

Store up Treasures in Heaven

Matt 6:19-21

19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The first directive from the Lord is that we are not to store up treasures on earth. All worldly riches are transient and disappear amid moth, rust, and thieves. The Lord’s positive command is to lay up treasures in heaven where moth and rust will never destroy them, and thieves will never steal them. These commands are counter to the ethics of the 21st century, where materialism reigns and people gain status and recognition from how much earthly wealth they have. The Lord’s final statement in this passage is an eternal principle, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Get the heart right and treasures in heaven will follow.

Fill Your Mind and Body with Light

Matt 6:22-23

22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

The principal—the eye is the lamp of the body—reaffirms that filling our mind with light secures not only the mind of a person, but also the entire body of a person. On the other hand, if one fills the mind with darkness, how great is that darkness. This eternal principle secures once for all time the need to have the Lord dwell in us, and we in him. The ethics and morality of Christ begin from this light within. Paul wrote in Eph 3:16-19:

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19

and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

From the light within, Christians marshal all the fullness of God to overcome darkness.

You Cannot Serve Two Masters

Matt 6:24

24 "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.

The third eternal principle is that "you cannot serve both God and Money." This principle draws its truth from a principle widely misunderstood in the world: "No one can serve two masters." The masters here are either God or Money, a dichotomous choice that leaves no other alternative. It is clearly an *either, or*. Money here was formerly translated *Mammon*, which translators transliterated from *mamonas*, a common Aramaic word for riches. The word personifies money; hence, they capitalize Money. The ethical choice is between God and Money. Who will our master be? The Lord of heaven and earth who promises that we can marshal all of His fullness; or Money, which promises decaying, rusting treasures that thieves break in and steal.

Do Not Worry about Your Life

Matt 6:25-32

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

If God is the master, one need not worry about this life. The Christian is ethically and morally divorced from the treasures of this life. With the divorce, comes the Lord's enunciation of the eternal principle, "Do not worry about your life." Suddenly, it is very clear. The earthly treasures and Money of which the Lord speaks is not just the earthly treasures and money of the truly rich. They are our very own money and riches right down to that which we use to sustain our lives from day to day.

A poor man can serve Money with fervor equal to the fervor of the world's richest tycoon. Therefore, do not worry about what you will eat, drink, or wear. The Fathers knows that we need them. The acceptance of this high ethical standard regarding food, drink, and clothing is a test of the Christian's very faith.

Thus the Lord chastises us, "O you of little faith."

Seek First His Kingdom and His Righteousness

Matt 6:33

33 *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*
 34 *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” and “do not worry about tomorrow” are commands summarizing the entire passage. Eternal principles follow these commands:

- All these things will be added to you
- Tomorrow will worry about itself
- Each day has enough trouble of its own

Fear and anxiety flee the Christian who has God as the one and only Master.

Conclusion:

Rev 21:6-8 presents a striking contrast between those who choose to follow the ethics and morality of Jesus and those who do not:

6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

Let us put aside earthly wealth, riches and anxiety and serve only God, the Father.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Matthew 5: What had to change before there could be a change in the moral nature of man?
2. Matt 6:19-21: What happens to treasures stored up on earth? What happens to treasures stored up in heaven? Where will your heart be?
3. Matt 6:22-23: With what must one fill his eyes? When is a body full of darkness?
4. Eph 3:16-19: Where do Christians find power? How does Christ dwell in our hearts? How does Paul describe the love of Christ? With what are Christians filled?
5. Matt 6:24: How many masters can one serve? What will happen if one tries to serve two masters? If you serve God, what can you not serve?
6. Matt 6:25-27: About what are Christians not to worry? Who cares for the birds of the air? What is the effect of worry on our lives?
7. Matt 6:28-32: Why do you worry about clothes? Who worries about food, drink, and clothing? What does the heavenly father know that we need?
8. Matt 6:33: What are we to seek first? How should we treat tomorrow?
9. Rev 21:6-8: Who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End? Who will be given to drink from the river of the water of life? Whose place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur?

11. Hypocrisy—Unethical and Immoral Acts of Mind and Body

The ethics and morality taught by Jesus begin in the change of heart that comes to those born again (John 3). In Matt 5:3ff, Jesus prescribes certain beatitudes that protect the Christian from the sins of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy itself, like greed and hate, generates yet other evil acts, forbidden of Christian. The beatitudes, which keep us from hypocrisy and these sins of heart, mind, and body, are from among those at the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:3-8:

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

It is impossible to conceive of one's possessing these spiritual qualities and still being beset by hypocrisy and the sins that attend it. Hypocrisy is playacting or pretense in the original form of the word; pretending to be something that we are not; insincere. The sin of hypocrisy brings into question the ability of one to act in moral and ethical ways. Hypocrisy casts doubt on the integrity of one's acts and words.

A Hypocrite Passing Judgment

Matt 7:1-5

1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

A hypocrite will find fault with a brother, even though his own sin is worse. The Lord uses the speck of sawdust to indicate the brother's fault, which is minor in respect to the plank in one's own eye. Every time a Christian judges a brother, he is pretending that he has no equal or greater sin, that he is the judge (God is the judge), and that he would never be like the brother. The plank is the sin of hypocrisy – a sin greater than the sin that a brother might do.

The Lord has already identified some acts of hypocrisy in the sermon. Among them are these. In Matt 6:2, he identified the person who advertises his benevolence as a hypocrite: "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men." In Matt 6:5, he likened those who pray publicly to be seen of men to the hypocrites: "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men."

Christians are not to be overly critical of their brothers and sisters. When one judges a brother, he is usurping the authority and right of God to judge his servant. Paul taught in Rom 14:3-4, "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or

falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand." In Rom 14:10-12, he further explained why such judging should not happen:

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written:

"As surely as I live,' says the Lord,
'every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will confess to God.'"

12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

The Hypocrisy of False Worship and Religious Acts

Those who pervert the teaching of Christ are also hypocrites. In Matt 15:6-9, Jesus applied the word hypocrites to those who are high-minded enough to nullify God's word by their own made-up traditions:

Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 You hypocrites !
Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8 "These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

9 They worship me in vain;

their teachings are but rules taught by men."

Jesus criticized the teachers of the law and the Pharisees and called them hypocrites in Matt 23. Their sins of mind and body came from their hypocritical attitude toward the law of God. Their traditions and rules taught by man replaced God's will, to the jeopardy of the people taught. In Matt 23:23-24, the Lord illustrates how religious people can neglect the important matters of God's law:

23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices – mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

In Matt 23:25-26, Jesus shows that which is on the inside is what matters. A rule that one should apply to all hypocritical thoughts and acts:

25 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

In Matt 23:27-28, the Lord teaches that people who appear to be righteous may be full of hypocrisy and wickedness:

27 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites ! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

In our religious worship and acts, we must allow the word of God to direct us and not our own traditions and teachings. This requires Christians to be alert to the teaching of religious teachers, making sure these teachers teach the true word of God. Paul warns us of this danger in Col 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." All humanly designed religions are hypocritical in concept and application. The ethics and morality of Jesus require that those of the 21st century practice his teachings, just as he delivered them to us in the New Testament.

Conclusion

It is hypocritical for us to pretend that we serve Jesus and turn back to the things of the world, like judging our brethren or following the precepts of men. Jesus concluded his parable of a wicked servant in Matt 24:47-51, placing those who are unfaithful while he is away with the hypocrites:

47 I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' 49 and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. 50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. John 3: 3-5: What is the new birth?
2. Matt 5:3-8: What are five character traits common to Christians not found in hypocrites?
3. Matt 7:1-5: How will we be judged? What does the speck of sawdust and plank illustration mean? Who is the hypocrite in this example?
4. Matt 6:2: What is one called who advertises his benevolence?
5. Matt 6:5: What are those who pray publicly to be seen of men called?
6. Rom 14:3-4: How is one who judges a servant of God a hypocrite?
7. Matt 15:6-9: What does Jesus call those who are high-minded enough to nullify God's word by their own made-up traditions? What did Isaiah say about those follow tradition rather than the word of God?
8. Matt 23:23-24: What did the Pharisees do? What did Jesus call them? What does it mean to "strain out a gnat but swallow a camel"?
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10. Matt 23:27-28: What does "dead men's bones" have to do with hypocrisy?
11. Col 2:8: How are humanly designed religions hypocritical?
12. Matt 24:47-51: What is the place assigned to the hypocrites like?

11. Hypocrisy—Unethical and Immoral Acts of Mind and Body

The ethics and morality taught by Jesus begin in the change of heart that comes to those born again (John 3). In Matt 5:3ff, Jesus prescribes certain beatitudes that protect the Christian from the sins of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy itself, like greed and hate, generates yet other evil acts, forbidden of Christian. The beatitudes, which keep us from hypocrisy and these sins of heart, mind, and body, are from among those at the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:3-8:

- 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

It is impossible to conceive of one's possessing these spiritual qualities and still being beset by hypocrisy and the sins that attend it. Hypocrisy is playacting or pretense in the original form of the word; pretending to be something that we are not; insincere. The sin of hypocrisy brings into question the ability of one to act in moral and ethical ways. Hypocrisy casts doubt on the integrity of one's acts and words.

A Hypocrite Passing Judgment

Matt 7:1-5

1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

A hypocrite will find fault with a brother, even though his own sin is worse. The Lord uses the speck of sawdust to indicate the brother's fault, which is minor in respect to the plank in one's own eye. Every time a Christian judges a brother, he is pretending that he has no equal or greater sin, that he is the judge (God is the judge), and that he would never be like the brother. The plank is the sin of hypocrisy – a sin greater than the sin that a brother might do.

The Lord has already identified some acts of hypocrisy in the sermon. Among them are these. In Matt 6:2, he identified the person who advertises his benevolence as a hypocrite: "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men." In Matt 6:5, he likened those who pray publicly to be seen of men to the hypocrites: "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men."

Christians are not to be overly critical of their brothers and sisters. When one judges a brother, he is usurping the authority and right of God to judge his servant. Paul taught in Rom 14:3-4, "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand." In Rom 14:10-12, he further explained why such judging should not happen:

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written:

"As surely as I live,' says the Lord,
'every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will confess to God.'"

12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

The Hypocrisy of False Worship and Religious Acts

Those who pervert the teaching of Christ are also hypocrites. In Matt 15:6-9, Jesus applied the word hypocrites to those who are high-minded enough to nullify God's word by their own made-up traditions:

Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 You hypocrites !
Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8 "These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

9 They worship me in vain;
their teachings are but rules taught by men."

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in Col 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." All humanly designed religions are hypocritical in concept and application. The ethics and morality of Jesus require that those of the 21st century practice his teachings, just as he delivered them to us in the New Testament.

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11. Col 2:8: How are humanly designed religions hypocritical?
12. Matt 24:47-51: What is the place assigned to the hypocrites like?

12. Unethical and Immoral Nature of False Prophets and Teachers

Nothing is more at odds with the ethical and moral standards of Jesus than the acts of false prophets and false teachers. Peter, in 2 Peter 2:1, places false prophets and false teachers in the same category, "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you." False prophets and false teachers lack the moral and ethical nature of the true follower described in the beatitudes. They are not poor in spirit, meek, or pure in heart. Rather, Peter describes them in a manner consistent with their evil minds and behaviors in 2 Peter 2:10-12:

Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings; 11 yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord. 12 But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

At the end of the Bible in Revelation, God revealed His mystery. There, all unrighteousness dwells in the triad of evil: the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. Their fate in the fiery lake forecasts the end of all false prophets and teachers. In Rev 16:13, John witnessed this triad: "Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet." In Rev 19:20, the beast and his cohort, the false prophet, received eternal punishment:

But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Nothing represents evil more than those who prophesy or teach falsely. They are by nature morally and ethically depraved.

False Prophets Look and Sound Morally and Ethically Upright

Matt 7:15-20

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

The world is full of false prophets and teachers who appear to be morally and ethically upright. This is the secret of their deceit. The Lord's analogy says it all: they appear as innocent sheep, but they are ferocious wolves. "Watch out!" he warns. He tells us that by their fruit we shall know them. We must look beyond the false prophet or teacher to their fruit. What are they teaching? Is it from the word of Christ? Is it in the New Testament? The ethics and morality of false prophets and teachers allow them to teach their own destructive doctrines according to 2 Peter 2:1-3

They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long

been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

John joined the Lord in warning us in 1 John 4:1: "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."

The stakes are high since the work of the false prophets is the work of demons no matter how good and righteous these prophets appear. Paul warned in 1 Tim 4:1-2, "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. 2 Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron."

False Prophets Appear to Do the Right Things

Matt 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

The ethical and moral deceit of the false prophet and false teacher comes from the apparent good that they do and say. They say:

- Lord, Lord.
- Did we not prophesy in your name?
- Did we not drive out demons in your name?
- Did we not perform many miracles?

The litmus test applied to the false prophets and teachers is the one given here by the Lord. Are they doing the will of the Father who is in heaven? God does not allow even small changes in the matter of teaching and doing His will. Such changes and alteration constitute a perversion of the gospel, and with that perversion comes a curse. Paul explains in Gal 1:6-9:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 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! 9 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!

False Prophets Appear to Be Servants of Righteousness

The moral and ethical deceit of false apostles, prophets, and teachers is in their masquerade. They pretend to be something that they are not. Paul relates this great masquerade to the masquerade of the devil himself. In 2 Cor 11:13-15, Paul taught:

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Conclusion

In the grand scheme, the work of false prophets and teachers is the work of Satan. Its purpose is to deceive the righteous and advance wickedness. By nature, it can never be morally and ethically upright. Paul wrote a fitting summary describing the deceit of Satan's work in 2 Thess 2:7-12:

7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. 2 Peter 2:1: Where does one find false prophets and teachers?
2. 2 Peter 2:10-12: What are bold and arrogant men not afraid to do? How do the scriptures describe false teachers?
3. Rev 16:13: How does John describe the three beings of evil?
4. Rev 19:20: What will be the fate of the beast and the false prophet?
5. Matt 7:15-20: For whom are we to watch out? How will they be dressed? How will we recognize them?
6. 2 Peter 2:1-3: How do false prophets introduce their doctrines (heresies)? What is their attitude toward the Lord? What do they do to the truth? What kind of stories do they tell?
7. 1 John 4:1: How are we to treat every spirit?
8. 1 Tim 4:1-2: What did the Spirit clearly say would happen? From where do these teachings come?
9. Matt 7:21-23: What four things do false teachers say? What will the Lord say?
10. Gal 1:6-9: What will happen to a man or angel who perverts the gospel?
12. 2 Cor 11:13-15: How does Satan present himself? How do his servants present themselves?
13. 2 Thess 2:7-12: What will happen to the lawless one? Who is behind the coming of the lawless one? Who will perish? What will happen to those who delight in wickedness?

13. The Unchanging Ethics and Morality of Jesus

The ethical and moral system authored by Jesus, the Christ by the will of Gods the Father, never changes in concept and duration. No synod, convention, council, nor any other body of men can change or alter it. The ethics and morality of Jesus are not situational, to be changed to suit the times or situation. Jesus and the apostles and prophets all affirmed the unchanging nature of the Gospel law of faith and practice. In Jude 3-4, Jude summarized the unchanging nature of the faith: "I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." About this faith once for all delivered, Paul spoke of completeness and all-sufficiency in 2 Tim 3:16-17, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." Jesus, himself, affirmed the fullness and completeness of his authority, prior to his ascension.

Jesus laid the spiritual foundation for appropriate ethical and moral behavior in the beatitudes in Matt 5:3-12. The ethical and moral standards of behavior follow in Matt 5-7. Matthew records in Matt 28:18-20:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Words like *all, in heaven and on earth, and obey everything* leave no room for latter day religions to water down the morality and ethics commanded by Jesus or add new and different teachings and interpretations.

The Unchanging Ethics and Morality of Jesus

Matt 7:24-27:

24" Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 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. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

The first 12 lessons have established the moral and ethical behaviors expected by Christ under the Gospel law of Christ—the New Testament. These commands extend the law of commandments given to Moses to a new level—a spiritual one—controlling even the lusts and thoughts that generate from the spirit, mind, and body. These moral and ethical behaviors are so explicit that we must consider them unequivocal in nature. This lesson draws these behaviors from the past 12 lessons, all of which were taken from Matt 5-7. We must be like the wise man: we must hear the words of Jesus and do them.

Do not murder or hate:

"21 You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." Matt 5:21-22.

Do not commit adultery or lust after another person:

"27 You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 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." Matt 5:27-29.

Do not divorce except for marital unfaithfulness:

"31 'It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' 32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery." Matt 5:31-32.

Speak the truth and do not curse or swear:

"33 Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' 34 But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. 37 Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one." Matt 5:33-37.

Do not retaliate or seek retribution:

"38 You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." Matt 5:38-42.

Love your enemies and do good to those who persecute you:

"43 You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." Matt 5:43-45.

Do not be self-righteous:

"16 When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you." Matt 6:16-18.

Pray for forgiveness and forgive others:

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

Do not serve Money:

"24 No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." Matt 6:24.

Do not be hypocritical:

"7:1 Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

"3 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." Matt 7:1-5.

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The Right of Jesus to Command

Matt 7:28-29

28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

The crowd recognized Jesus as one who had authority. Authority is the right of one whose commands must be obeyed. One cannot accept Jesus and deny his commands. We must obey the moral and ethical commands of Jesus; they are permanent and unchanging; we must hear them and do them.

Conclusion

The ethics and morals of Jesus are for all times. In the 21st century, true Christians will obey them as the Lord gave them. Contemporaries never have the right to change or adjust the ethics and morality of Jesus to suit the times and situation or to justify their own indiscretions.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Jude 3-4: For what are we to contend? How often was the faith entrusted to the saints?
2. 2 Tim 3:16-17: Which scriptures are God breathed? How is the man of God equipped?
3. Matt 28:18-20: How much authority did Jesus receive? What must disciples obey?
4. Matt 7:24-27: Who is like the wise man? Who is like the foolish man?
5. Matt 5:21-22: Who is now subject to the judgment?
6. Matt 5:27-29: When has a man committed adultery in his heart?
7. Matt 5:31-32: What is the only reason for divorce?

8. Matt 5:33-37: By what may we swear? Instead of swearing, what are we to say?
9. Matt 5:38-42: How are we to respond to an evil person?
10. Matt 5:43-45: How are we to treat our enemies? If we do these things, whose sons are we?
11. Matt 6:16-18: Why should our praying and fasting not be before men? Who rewards us for secret deeds?
12. Matt 6:14-15: What will be the result if we do not forgive others?
13. Matt 6:24: Why can we not serve two masters?
14. Matt 7:1-5: Why should we not judge others?
15. Matt 7:15-23: For whom should we watch out? How can we know false prophets?
16. Matt 7:28-29: Why were the crowds amazed?