**Monday Evening Bible Study**

**February 6, 2023**

**Matthew 5:21-37**

**Immediate Context**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Matthew 5:1-12 Beatitudes | Matthew 6:22-23 The Sound Eye |
| Matthew 5:13-16 Salt and Light | Matthew 6:24 Serving Two Masters |
| Matthew 5:17-20 The Law and the Prophets | Matthew 6:25-34 Do Not Worry |
| **Matthew 5:21-26 Concerning Anger** | Matthew 7:1-5 Judging Others |
| **Matthew 5:27-30 Concerning Adultery** | Matthew 7:6 Profaning the Holy |
| **Matthew 5:31-32 Concerning Divorce** | Matthew 7:7-11 Ask, Search, Knock |
| **Matthew 5:33-37 Concerning Oaths** | Matthew 7:12 The Golden Rule |
| Matthew 5:38-42 Concerning Retaliation | Matthew 7:13-14 The Narrow Gate |
| Matthew 5:43-48 Love for Enemies | Matthew 7:15-20 A Tree and Its Fruit |
| Matthew 6:5-15 Concerning Prayer | Matthew 7:21-23 Concerning Self-Deception |
| Matthew 6:16-18 Concerning Fasting | Matthew 7:24-29 Hearers and Doers |
| Matthew 6:19-21 Concerning Treasures |  |

**Helpful Scriptures**

**ANGER/MURDER** –Exodus 20:13, 21:12; Deuteronomy 5:17, 17:8-13; Numbers 35:16-17; Leviticus 24:17; 2 Kings 23:10; Matthew 15:11-19, 23:15, 17; James 3:5b-10

**ADULTERY** –Exodus 20:14, 17, 21:24; Deuteronomy 5:18, 19:21, 22:22; Leviticus 20:10, 24:20; 2 Samuel 11; Matthew 5:38

**DIVORCE** –Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Matthew 19:3-9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18

**VOWS** –Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 6:13, 23:21-23; Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2; James 5:12

**Key Words/Phrases**

**You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times** –Six times in this chapter, Jesus uses some variant of this formula (vv. 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43)—the first four being in our Gospel lesson.

**Murder** – **φονεύσεις** – The original commandment is found in Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17. In Hebrew, the word used in the commandment is the word רצח which can be translated as “kill, murder, strike down, or slay.” Causing the death of another rendered one liable to death at the hands of legally recognized avengers (Exod. 21:12), but the possibility of asylum was available in cases where the death had been caused accidentally (Exod. 21:13; Deut. 19:15). Such asylum was not, however, available in cases where there had been premeditation (Exod. 21:13) or even previous animosity (Exod. 21:14; Deut. 4:42; 19:4, 6, 11; Josh. 20:5; Num. 35:20). Direct killing with an instrument liable to cause death also took the offender outside the protection of the asylum laws (Num. 35:17–19). Homicide in the course of a sudden quarrel was viewed as comparable to accidental homicide (35:22–23). Still, the protection afforded through asylum was limited. According to one understanding of Deut. 19:6, it commenced only when the offender reached one of the designated cities of refuge, though Num. 35:12 and Josh. 20:9 also seek to protect the accused en route, which accords with the motive of avoiding the shedding of innocent blood (Deut. 19:10). Once the offender reached the city of refuge, there was an adjudication (Num. 35:24); according to Josh. 20:4, it took place at the city gate, and the fugitive would not be admitted to the city in advance of it. If the offender was found to have acted without premeditation, the avenging relative (Heb. go’el haddam, interpreted by some as a public official) would be turned away from the city (Josh. 20:5); if not, the offender would be handed over (Deut. 19:12), to be executed by the relative. Where protection was granted, it extended only within the boundaries of the city of refuge (Num. 35:26–27).

**Anger** – **ὀργιζόμενος** – **from ὀργίζω meaning “to be angry” and related to** Barclay notes that there were two Greek words for anger: thumos, which is a fiery kind of anger that flames up and then dies—and orge, which is a smoldering anger, the kind of anger that a person nurtures and keeps alive. It is orge—the kind of anger that we deliberately harbor in our hearts over long periods of time—that Jesus condemns here.

**Liable** – **ἔνοχος** – liable, guilty. Guilty or liable to punishment because of a misdeed.

In the NT, this adjective refers to a state of being guilty or liable to judgment because of wrongdoing. In some cases, it refers to being guilty or worthy of punishment in a legal sense (Matt 5:21–22; 26:66; Mark 14:64), and in some cases it refers to being guilty before God of a moral offense or sin (Mark 3:29; 1 Cor 11:27; Jas 2:10).

**Judgment** – **κρίσει** – judgment, legal case. Refers to the process, event, or result of legal proceedings intended to evaluate punishment. This noun occurs 47 times in the NT and refers to the process or event of judgment. The noun can refer to a “trial” for a crime in human history (Matt 5:21–22). It can also refer to the evidence brought forth within a trial (John 3:19). It can refer to the positive resulting state after judgment, i.e., “justice” (Matt 12:18–20). To execute judgment is to deliver a verdict (John 5:27). For judgment to be “upon” someone is for the person to be in a time of trial (John 12:31). This is where we get the word “crisis”.

**Council** – **συνεδρίῳ** – the Sanhedrin was the highest Jewish council, exercising jurisdiction in civil and religious matters, but having no power over life and death or over military actions or taxation—‘Sanhedrin, the council of the Jews.’ συνήγαγον οὖν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι συνέδριον ‘then the chief priests and the Pharisees called together a meeting of the Sanhedrin’ Jn 11:47. This word in Greek can also mean a council, tribunal, the smaller tribunals in the cities of Palestine subordinate to the Sanhedrin (cf. Deut. 16:18; 2 Chr. 19:5). These consisted of twenty–three judges, but Josephus expressly says the number was seven when reference is made to the word “judgment [krísis {2920}]” as in Matt. 5:21, 22. This refers to crimes that justified the bringing of the accused before these lower courts known as councils (sunédria) in the pl. (Matt. 10:17; Mark 13:9).

**Insult –** Note the footnote. It says, “say Raca to”.Ρακά (ῥακά) –A word borrowed from Aramaic meaning “empty.” In this case it means one who is totally lacking in understanding – “numbskull, fool.” A derogatory name said to someone. “You empty-headed man!” or “You stupid man!” or “You fool!”

**Fool** – **Μωρέ** – Silly, stupid, foolish, from which the English word “moron” is derived. Used of persons meaning morally worthless (Matt. 5:22). It is a more serious reproach than *raká*, raca, which scorns a man by calling him stupid, whereas *mōrós* scorns him concerning his heart and character. See Matthew 7:26 where Jesus talks about the foolish building their house upon the sand. The word *Raka* and the word *More* are similar in the sense that both are intended to paint someone as empty-headed or foolish. It is clear that Jesus is progressing from one level to the next in the three parts of this verse. The punishments (judgment, council, and hell of fire) are certainly progressive. Incidentally, Jesus calls the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites (Matthew 23:15) and fools using this term in Matthew 23:17.

**Hell** – **γέενναν** – This Greek word, Gehenna, is a transcription of the Aramaic name for one of the valleys outside of Jerusalem—the valley of Hinnom also known as the “valley of the son of Hinnom” (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Neh. 11:30; Jer. 7:31–32; 19:2, 6; 32:35). Located west and south of Jerusalem and running into the Kidron Valley at a point opposite the modern village of Silwan, the valley of Hinnom once formed part of the boundary between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (Josh. 15:8; 18:16; Neh. 11:30). During the monarchic period, it became the site of an infamous high place (called “Topheth” and derived from an Aramaic word meaning “fire place”), where some of the kings of Judah engaged in forbidden religious practices, including human sacrifice by fire (2 Chron. 28:3; 33:6; Jer. 7:31; 32:35). Because of this, Jeremiah spoke of its impending judgment and destruction (7:32; 19:6). King Josiah put an end to these practices by destroying and defiling the high place in the valley of Hinnom (2 Kings 23:10). Probably because of these associations with fiery destruction and judgment, the word “Gehenna” came to be used metaphorically during the Second Temple period to refer to a place of punishment by fire for evil spirits and the wicked dead (1 Enoch 18:11–16; 108:3–7, 15; 2 Esd. 7:36–38). In the New Testament, Gehenna is used for the place souls go for eternal punishment (e.g., Matt 5:29–30; Luke 12:5). Sometimes it is referred to as “Gehenna (geenna) of fire” (e.g., Matt 5:22; 18:9).

**Offering** – **προσφέρῃς** – to bring, to offer. Literally “to bring” or “to bring near” and thus, to offer or present a sacrifice or offering in the temple or to God. This verb generally refers to bringing something to present it to a person or at a place. In sacrificial contexts, it refers to bringing an offering or sacrifice to the temple, to the priest, or to God (e.g. Matt 5:23; Mark 1:44; Heb 5:1). In Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth, the magi presented (prospherō) precious gifts to Jesus (Matt 2:11). In addition, Hebrews describes Christ as the high priest who “offers” (prospherō) himself as a sacrifice once-and-for-all (e.g., Heb 9:14).

**Gift** – **δωρόν** – Used of gifts given as an expression of honor (Matt. 2:11); for support of the temple (Matt. 15:5; Mark 7:11; Luke 21:1, 4); to God (Matt. 5:23).

**Altar** – **θυσιαστήριον** – any type of altar or object where gifts may be placed and ritual observances carried out in honor of supernatural beings. In the NT θυσιαστήριον is employed to refer to a number of different types of altars, including the altar for burnt offerings in the Temple, the altar of incense, the altar which Abraham built, and the heavenly altar mentioned in the book of Revelation. Literally the altars in the temple at Jerusalem, the altar of burnt offering.

**Reconciled** – **διαλλάγηθι** – from *diá*, denoting transition, and *allássō*, to change. To change one’s own feelings towards, to reconcile oneself, become reconciled, to make peace with.

**Come to terms** – ἴσθι εὐνοῶν – Verb ειμι meaning “to come or go” and the noun εὐνόεω which is made up of from *eú*, good, well, and *noús*, mind. Literally, “be of a good mind” or “be well-minded.” It means “come to agree with” or “come to think favorably in trying to find a solution” or “come to a settlement.”

**Accuser** – **ἀντιδίκῳ** – from *antí*, against, and *díkē*, a cause or suit at law. An adversary, enemy, or opponent in a lawsuit. One who brings an accusation against someone.

**Court** – The Greek text lacks the words “to court.” It is implied. The Greek text says “Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way with him…”

**Penny** – **κοδράντην** – a Roman copper coin worth 1/4 of an assarion or 1/64 of a denarius. A denarius is a day’s pay for a common laborer (20:2, 13), so a kodranten would be wages for 1/8th of an hour—the equivalent of a dollar or more today—not the nearly worthless coin that we call a penny today.

**Adultery** – **μοιχεύσεις** – sexual intercourse of a man with a married woman other than his own spouse—‘to commit adultery, adultery.’ From the standpoint of the NT, adultery was normally defined in terms of the married status of the woman involved in any such act. In other words, sexual intercourse of a married man with an unmarried woman would usually be regarded as πορνεία ‘fornication’, but sexual intercourse of either an unmarried or a married man with someone else’s wife was regarded as adultery, both on the part of the man as well as the woman. The seventh commandment is invoked numerous times in the New Testament by Jesus (Mark 10:19 and parallels), Paul (Romans 2:22), and James (James 2:11). Jesus adds stringency to the command by extending it to lust (Matt 5:27–28) and divorce (Matt 5:31–32; Luke 16:18). In Jesus’ dispute with the Pharisees (Matt 19:3–9), he equates remarriage after divorce with committing adultery, attributing the relative laxity of the Mosaic law in allowing divorce to Israelites’ “hardness of heart.” Mark’s version of the same story explicitly makes Jesus’ command against divorce as adultery apply equally to men and women (Mark 10:11–12). In Rom 13:9, several of the Ten Commandments, including “you shall not commit adultery,” are subsumed in the command to love one’s neighbor (Lev 19:18).

**Lust** – **ἐπιθυμῆσαι** – from *epí*, in, and *thumós*, the mind. To have the affections directed toward something, to lust, desire, long after. To desire in a good sense (Matt. 13:17; Luke 22:15; 1 Tim. 3:1; Heb. 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:12); as a result of physical needs (Luke 15:16; 16:21); in a bad sense of coveting and lusting after (Matt. 5:28; Rom. 7:7; 13:9; 1 Cor. 10:6 [cf. James 4:2; Sept.: Ex. 20:17; Deut. 5:21; 14:26; 2 Sam. 3:21; Prov. 21:26]). The story of David and Bathsheba vividly illustrates the connection of lust and adultery (2 Samuel 11). David saw Bathsheba bathing on her rooftop, lusted after her, and committed adultery with her. This placed David on the slippery slope that ended with his engineering the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband—and the death of the first baby born to David and Bathsheba—and an indelible stain on David’s reputation.

**Sin** – **σκανδαλίζει** – from *skándalon*, a trap, stumbling block. To cause to stumble and fall. In the New Testament, figuratively to be a stumbling block to someone, to cause to stumble at or in something, to trip them up. The word *skandalon* can mean the bait in a trap—or a stumbling stone in a pathway—or a camouflaged pit into which an unwary person might fall. The idea here is that our senses and capabilities, given by God for good, become instruments of evil when misused—cause us to stumble and fall.

**Divorce** – **ἀπολύσῃ** – from *apó*, from, and *lúō*, to loose. To let loose from, to loose or unbind a person or thing. Spoken of a wife, to let go free, put away, dismiss, with the presupposition that the dismissed wife is innocent and, according to Deut. 24:1–4, deserves a bill of divorcement which was equivalent to a certificate of innocence (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3). In the case of Matt. 1:19 with Joseph wanting to dismiss Mary secretly, she was indeed not guilty of having had any relations with someone else, although in the mind of Joseph there was a suspicion. The perf. pass. part. fem., *apoleluménēn*, in Matt. 5:32 refers to an innocent, unjustifiably dismissed wife who, because she was not given a bill of divorcement, i.e., a certificate of innocence, had to bear the stigma of guilt as if she were an adulteress. Thus someone marrying her has adultery committed against himself (*moichátai*). The same is the case with *apoleluménēn* of Matt. 19:9. This one is also an innocent, unjustifiably dismissed wife who carries on her the stigma of adultery because her dismissing husband did not give her a bill of divorcement. However, the same part. in Luke 16:18 refers to a guilty wife who unjustifiably dismissed herself from (*apó*) her husband who did nothing to warrant this dismissal. Therefore, he who marries such a woman, a definite bearer of the guilt of adultery in unjustifiably dismissing her husband, commits adultery. The verb in Luke 16:18 is *moicheúei*, the act. pres. tense and not the mid. pass., *moichátai*, as in Matt. 5:32.

**Certificate of divorce** – **ἀποστάσιον** – A document declaring the separation of a husband and wife mandated by Mosaic law (Dt 24:1–4; see Mt 5:31; 19:7; Mk 10:4). The certificate of divorce protected the woman’s rights, providing evidence of her freedom and ensuring that her husband could not claim her dowry. An example of the wording of such a certificate is Hosea 2:2: “She is not my wife, and I am not her husband.” The Old Testament prophets used this statement figuratively to portray God’s desire to separate himself from his rebellious people (Isaiah 50:1; Jeremiah 3:8).

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 allows a husband to divorce his wife if he finds something unseemly (Hebrew: erwah—shameful, disgraceful) about her. It does not give the woman the right to initiate a divorce. The meaning of “something unseemly” was a matter of debate among rabbis. The school of Shammai interpreted this phrase to mean adultery or some equally grievous behavior. The school of Hillel broadened the meaning to the point that a man could divorce his wife if she were guilty of something as simple as burning his dinner. Deuteronomy required the husband to give his wife a certificate of divorce, freeing her to marry. However, the divorced wife would need to find a husband quickly, because women in that time and place had few ways to make a living—prostitution being one possibility. While we would see this situation as unfair to the woman, a certificate of divorce would afford her more protection than she would enjoy in many cultures at that time.

**Swear falsely** – **ἐπιορκήσεις** – from *epí*, against, and *hórkos*, an oath. **ὅρκους** is the word used for “vow” later. A perjured person. To swear that one will do something and then not fulfill the promise.

**The evil one** – **τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐστιν** – connected to the word *ponos*, “labor, sorrow, pain.” Evil in a moral or spiritual sense, wicked, malicious, mischievous. When there is a definite article in front of the word, it means “the evil one.” The one who is essentially evil or in a sense personifies evil. See also its use in the Lord’s prayer in Matthew 6:13.