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You Have Heard That It Was Said: Do Not Murder Matthew 5: 21-26

You have heard that it was said, "Do not murder" DIG: What did pharisaic Judaism do to the Torah? Why? How is Jesus seen as a "new Moses" here? What new standard of right and wrong is Messiah creating? How does He link anger and murder? Why? Why did the Pharisees think they were righteous? How does our Savior's statements underscore the seriousness of harboring and acting on inappropriate anger? What inner attitudes does He stress here?

REFLECT: How do you feel about being held to a high, holy, perfect standard? How can you possibly meet that standard? What kind of news is that? When have you had to postpone partaking of the challah on Shabbat because a brother or sister had something against you, and you had to first go and be reconciled to them? Did you feel better for having done so? Why? Why not? What external things about your faith make you feel good? What is the difference between feeling good about some external observance and thinking that it makes you righteous?

As the perfect interpreter of the Torah, **Yeshua** now addresses several moral issues confronting the people living in biblical times as well as today. Of course the written Torah is set forever as the Word of **God**. But, the process of deriving practical application from the Torah is called "the walk," meaning *halakhah.* **Yeshua** now gives **His** interpretation on various *halakhic* perspectives of **His** day.[521]

What we see next in the Sermon on the Mount are sixteen examples of Yeshua's interpretation of true righteousness in contrast with pharisaic Judaism, which had perverted God's original intent of the Torah. They had taken something that was righteous and holy and perverted it into something that could justify their sin and wickedness. They took something that was intentionally impossible to achieve (keeping the 613 commandments), and distorted it into something they could do to appear righteous (**to see link click Ei – The Oral Law**). In this section **Christ** chooses several commandments from the Torah and

makes a contrast between the Pharisaic interpretation of righteousness and **His** interpretation of righteousness. The contrast between external compliance and internal motivation is seen throughout. **Yeshua** was looking at the heart.

In His first example of true righteousness, **Messiah** shattered the illusion of self-righteousness. Like most people throughout history, the Pharisees and the Torah-teachers thought that if there was any sin that they were clearly not guilty of – it was **murder**. Whatever else they may have done, at least they had never committed **murder**. **Yeshua** starts **His** teaching with this: **You have heard that it was said to the people long ago** through Moses **My** servant: **You shall not murder** (I *strongly* suggest that you read my commentary on **Exodus Dp – You Shall Not Murder**)**, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment (Mattityahu 5:21).** Yet, when we look closer at the words of **Jesus** we can see that **He** was not merely commenting on the written Torah, but also **the tradition of the elders (Mt 15:2; Mk 7;5)**, or **the Oral Law.** The Pharisees said that people were not guilty of **murder** until they actually murdered someone. They reduced this commandment to something merely external. As long as you weren't killing people, you were innocent of any wrongdoing. The difference throughout is between the letter of the commandment and the spirit of the commandment.



But, **the Master** struck at the heart of the issue when **He** said: **But I tell you that anyone who is** even **angry with a brother or sister** (The Greek word for **brother or sister** (*adelphos*) refers here to a fellow disciple, whether man or woman; also in **Matthew 5:23**) **will be subject to judgment. Jesus** said that righteousness could be broken *even before* the act is committed. It was not enough to merely fulfill the mitzvah of not murdering, but we are called to a higher standard of not even being **angry with a brother or sister**. The principles of the Kingdom go beyond external obedience to the motivations and thoughts of the heart.

Of course the act of **murder** has its seeds in ungodly attitudes. Animosity precedes action. One's language can, and often does, reveal attitudes of the heart. Then **Jesus** continued **His** teaching when **He** said: **Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, "You good-for-nothing" will be brought before the Sanhedrin** (see **Lg – The Great Sanhedrin**)**. And anyone who says, "You fool," incurs the penalty of burning in the fire of the valley of Hinnom (Matthew 5:23 CJB)! The former term (Hebrew *reyk*) of "you good-for-nothing" is used in Talmudic literature as an insult meaning *vacant* or *empty-headed*. The latter, "you fool" (Hebrew *eyvil*) has the stronger meaning of *evil*.** So, the righteousness of this command was already broken internally.[522]

The valley of Hinnom (a personal name) is located both then and now just south of the Old City of Jerusalem. Rubbish fires were always burning there; hence its use as a metaphor for **hell**, with its burning fire of punishment for the unrighteous, as taught in **Isaiah 66:24**. Elsewhere in the TaNaKh, **Deuteronomy 32:22** talks about a burning **hell**; **Second Samuel 22:6, Psalm 18:5** and **Psalm 116:3** show that **hell** is a sorrowful place; **Psalm 9:17** says that the wicked go to **hell**; and **Job 26:6** shows that **hell** is a place of destruction. The Hebrew word in all these verses is **sh'ol**. It usually corresponds to the Greek word **hades**. Thus, **hell** is not unique to the B'rit Chadashah.[523]

Undoubtedly, **Jesus'** statements underscore the seriousness of harboring and acting on inappropriate anger. **Therefore, the Messiah** does not leave **His** hearers without a couple of concrete examples of inappropriate anger. First, **if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar.** As long as there is internal sin, outward acts of worship are not acceptable to **God**. **First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift (Mattityahu 5:23-24). The Mishnah says that Yom-Kippur (the Day of Atonement) atones for a person's transgressions against God, but it does not atone for his transgressions against his fellow man until he appeases him (Yoma 8:9).** As important as **offerings** to **the LORD** are, the true spirit behind such a sacrifice requires the person make peace with an offended **brother or sister**. Only after shalom is restored can the sacrifice then be offered.

Secondly, the same principle applies if you happen to be the object of a lawsuit. **The Galilean Rabbi's** directive is to **settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on**

the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny (Matthew 5:25-26). Since the price of ungodly anger is so high, it is to everyone's advantage to seek a peaceful resolution with any offended parties.

In the fullest sense, of course, because no one ever fully has right attitudes towards others, no worship is acceptable. Thus everything **the Rabbi** teaches in this passage, as in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, is to show the absolute perfect standard of **God's** righteousness and the absolutely impossible task of our meeting that standard in our own power apart from **the Lord**. **Christ** shatters our self-righteousness in order to drive us to **His** imputed righteousness (meaning that all of **Messiah's** righteousness that has been transferred to our spiritual account), which alone is acceptable to **ADONAI**.[524]

*Heavenly **Father**, through the work of **the Holy Spirit**, give me the ability to see the angers and resentments I hold toward others. Help me to look across the years to recall the people I have not forgiven, especially my relatives. I ask for the desire and courage to seek reconciliation. Melt my pride and help me to delay no longer. I pray this in the name of **Jesus**. Amen.*[525]