

THE RED LETTER LECTURES

NOTES

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Jesus' Teaching on Anger and Reconciliation
Matthew 5:21—26

I. Anger

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment." — Mt. 5:21

A. *Do not murder . . .*

1. Murder is defined as "to kill someone unjustly."⁷ See Exo. 20:13.
2. Cities of refuge were established to protect those who committed a justifiable murder but were being hunted by the family of the deceased in revenge.

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. — Mt. 5:22

A. *But I tell you . . .*

1. Jesus adds His thoughts according to the Rabbinic oral tradition. See *Talmud in margin*,

B. *who is angry with his brother . . .*

1. Lit., full of wrath toward another.

C. *will be subject to judgment . . .*

1. Wrath will most likely lead to a malicious or violent act, even murder.
2. Most violent crimes are a result of acts of passion, i.e., anger. Read Eph. 4:26; 31-32.

⁷ Zodhaites, *WSDNT*, p.1451

Exo. 20:13: You shall not murder.

Dt. 4:41-42: Then Moses set aside three cities east of the Jordan, to which anyone who had killed a person could flee if he had unintentionally killed his neighbor without malice aforethought. He could flee into one of these cities and save his life.

Talmud: Talmud means *The Teaching*, that is, the doctrinal book which Jews believe alone fully expounds and explains all the knowledge and teaching of the Jewish people. As to the origin of the Talmud, the Rabbis regard Moses as its first author. They hold that, besides the written law which Moses received from God on Mount Sinai on tables of stone, he also received interpretations of it, or the oral law. They say that this is the reason why Moses remained so long on the mountain, as God could have given him the written law in one day.

Moses is said to have transmitted this oral law to Joshua; Joshua in turn to the seventy Elders; the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the Great Synagogue. It is held that it was later transmitted successively to certain Rabbis until it was no longer possible to retain it orally. Schools existed in Palestine in which sacred literature was taught. The commentaries of the Doctors of the law were noted down on charts and lists as an aid to memory, and these, when collected together, formed the beginnings of the Jewish Talmud. — *The Talmud Unmasked*, Rev. I. B. Prainaitis

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D. *Raca* . . .

1. A word of contempt, means "empty head, worthless, foolish."
2. An Aramaic expression not found in the OT. Aramaic was the common language in Palestine.

E. *Sanhedrin* . . . the supreme council of the Jewish nation. This has evolved today into the "Great Synagogue" in Jerusalem, modeled after the Temple.

F. *You fool* . . .

1. From (moros), "moron." Heaps scorn on a person concerning their heart and character—a very demeaning term.

G. *the fire of hell*.

1. This is the first mention of "hell" in the NT. The word used is *gehenna*, the state or place of the lost or condemned.
2. Its etymology comes from the Valley of Hinnom, where human sacrifice, idolatries and worship of Molech and other false gods were carried out by the nation of Israel for centuries, right in sight of Jerusalem. See *2 Kgs. 23:10; Jere. 7:31-33*.
3. During the time of Jesus, all the rubbish from the entire city of Jerusalem was burned there. See *p.21*.

II. Reconciliation

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, LEAVE YOUR GIFT there in front of the altar. First GO* and BE RECONCILED* to your brother; then come and offer your gift.— Mt. 5:23-24*

A. *offering your gift at the altar* . . .

1. The gift in this case was the required sacrifice or free-will offering.

2 Kgs. 23:10: He (King Josiah) desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice his son or daughter in the fire to Molech.

Jere. 7:31-33: They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire—something I did not command, nor did it enter my mind. So beware, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when people will no longer call it Topheth or the Valley of Ben Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter, for they will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room. Then the carcasses of this people will become food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away.

B. *leave your gift . . . don't offer it.*

1. An Imperative Command. How would we apply this command today since we don't offer sacrifices at the altar? See *Rom. 12:1*; *Heb. 13:15-16*.

C. *Go . . . (Lit., "go away.")*

1. An imperative command.
2. Notice who is required to begin the immediate action.

D. *and be reconciled . . .*

1. To change one's feelings toward another. Applies to a quarrel, a disagreement (even contractual) in which the fault may be one or two-sided.

E. *to your brother . . . (Lit., "the brother of you").*

1. Again, in vs. 23.

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. — Mt. 5:25*

A. *Settle matters quickly . . .*

1. An Imperative Command.
2. Lit., "Be well-minded toward."
3. Don't delay or put off until tomorrow. It is imperative that you respond right away when you are aware of the offense. Why? See *Heb. 12:15*.

I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. — Mt. 5:26

III. Summary of Steps to Reconciliation

A. Leave your gift before the altar.

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Rom. 12:1: Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. (NAS)

Heb. 13:15-16: Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Heb. 12:15: See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

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1. We are to offer ourselves as "living sacrifices."
- B. Go and be reconciled to your brother.
1. Personal contact is required, if possible.
- C. Settle the matter quickly.
1. Ask forgiveness and work out your differences before it gets more serious.
- IV. Commandments in this section of study:
- A. **LEAVE YOUR GIFT**
 - B. **BE RECONCILED**
 - C. **GO**
 - D. **SETTLE MATTERS QUICKLY**
- V. Discussion
- A. This last section on "Reconciliation" contains all of the Imperatives in this study. They all have to do with relationships that have gone bad with "your brother."
 1. What does this indicate?
 2. Is 1 Cor. 6:1-6 an appropriate parallel?
 - B. See Boice, *Cure For Anger*, "Sermon on the Mount," pp. 93-96 for his recommendations:
 - a. Admit our anger.
 - b. Correct the injustice.
 - c. Do it now.
 - d. Ask God to change our hearts.

1 Cor. 6:1-6: If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers!

Hinnom Valley Outside Jerusalem Today



In what is known as the *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus warns His disciples about harboring anger and malice toward another person, and openly condemning them:

“But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, *Thou fool*, shall be in danger of hell fire.” — Matthew 5:22)

Although the Greek word *Gehenna* is translated “hell” in this and other passages (Matthew 23:33, Mark 9:43, etc.), its literal meaning is Valley of Hinnom (*Strong’s Concordance* Number G1067). The valley of Hinnom is a deep, narrow ravine on the south end of Jerusalem. Anciently, it was in this valley that idolatrous Israelites worshipped the pagan gods Molech and Baal through the abominable sacrificial practice of burning their own children alive (the Bible call this practice “passing through the fire” - See 2 Kings 16:3, 23:10; 2 Chronicles 28:3, Jeremiah 7:31).

After the return of the Jews from captivity, the valley was held in such abhorrence that it was made the place to throw all the dead carcasses and filth of the city, and was frequently the place of public executions. The valley, therefore, became extremely offensive; the sight was terrific; the air polluted with the foul smell of putrefying animal and human flesh; and to preserve it in any manner pure, it was necessary to keep fires continually burning there (also known as using *unquenched* or *unquenchable* fire).

Jesus used the well-known fires in the valley of Hinnom as an analogy of the fire (lake of fire) to be used by God to kill forever (the punishment of the incorrigibly wicked, those who refuse to repent of hatred, anger and other sins). Some commentaries have suggested that Judas, after he betrayed Jesus, used a tree near a precipice over the valley of Hinnom from which to hang himself.

Sources: *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*; *Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*; *Adam Clark’s Commentary on the Entire Bible*; *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary*