

## Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 6 – January 6<sup>th</sup> – Matthew 5:27-48

### Works frequently referenced in these notes on Matthew

- Hagner, Donald A      *Word Biblical Commentary Vols.33a & 33b: Matthew 1-13 & Matthew 14-28*, Word Books, Dallas, 1993 & 1995
- Morris, Leon          *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1992

#### Verse 27

Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη· Οὐ μοιχεύσεις.

See verse 21 for opening phrase.

Many MSS, including TR, insert τοῖς ἀρχαίοις after ἐρρέθη, conforming to the pattern of vv 21 and 33.

μοιχευω commit adultery

Cf. Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18 also Matt 19:18.

#### Verse 28

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ βλέπων γυναῖκα πρὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμῆσαι αὐτήν ἤδη ἐμοίχευσεν αὐτήν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

βλεπω see, look

γυνη, αικος f woman, wife

ἐπιθυμew long for, desire, lust after

ἤδη adv now, already

μοιχευω commit adultery

Jesus is not saying that there is no difference between the thought and the deed but rather that sin begins in the heart (cf. James 1:14,15 also 2 Pet 2:14).

#### Verses 29, 30

Jesus uses vivid imagery to highlight the importance of dealing with sin in a radical fashion. The eye is the medium through which temptation comes and the hand the instrument through which sin is performed.

#### Verse 29

εἰ δὲ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς σου ὁ δεξιὸς σκανδαλίζει σε, ἔξελε αὐτὸν καὶ βάλε ἀπὸ σοῦ, συμφέρει γάρ σοι ἵνα ἀπόληται ἐν τῶν μελῶν σου καὶ μὴ ὅλον τὸ σῶμά σου βληθῆ εἰς γέενναν.

δεξιος, α, ον right

σκανδαλιζω cause (someone) to sin

ἔξελε Verb, 2 aor act imperat ἐξαιρω pull out

βαλλω throw, throw down

"This picturesque repudiation of a prized part of the body shows vividly that there is to be no compromise with evil." Morris

συμφερω usually impersonal it is better, it is profitable, it is useful

ἀπόληται Verb, aor midd subj ἀπολλυμι destroy; midd be lost, perish, die

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

μελος, ους n member, bodily part

ὅλος, η, ον whole, all, complete

σωμα, τος n body

βληθῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s βαλλω

γεεννα, ης f see v.22

"The discipleship of the kingdom sometimes requires drastic measures." Hagner.

"Better to go limping into heaven than leaping into hell." Bruner.

#### Verse 30

καὶ εἰ ἡ δεξιὰ σου χεὶρ σκανδαλίζει σε, ἔκκοπον αὐτήν καὶ βάλε ἀπὸ σοῦ, συμφέρει γάρ σοι ἵνα ἀπόληται ἐν τῶν μελῶν σου καὶ μὴ ὅλον τὸ σῶμά σου εἰς γέενναν ἀπέλθῃ.

χειρ, χειρος f hand, power

The mention of *right* hand is probably to signify the most valuable and skilled member. The same thought is thereby applied to the eye in the previous verse.

ἐκκοπω cut off, remove

ἀπέλθῃ Verb, aor midd/pass subj, 2 s

ἀπερχομαι

The majority of MSS have βληθῆ instead of ἀπελθῆ here assimilating to the ending of the previous verse.

#### Verses 31, 32

Deut 24:1 required a man who divorced his wife to give her a bill of divorce. The OT law was not intended to establish grounds for divorce but to regulate the abuses that might arise from it. However, it was the *grounds* for divorce that preoccupied Rabbinic discussion in Jesus day.

"The school of Shammai took a hard line and saw the meaning of 'some indecency' (Deut 24:1) as adultery, whereas the school of Hillel allowed a much wider range of interpretation, and, for example, permitted a man to divorce his wife if she spoiled his dinner ... Against such a background Jesus calls on people to appreciate the true meaning and solemnity of marriage. We should bear in mind that he is laying down great principles that should guide conduct; he is not making laws or giving a precise list of occasions when divorce might take place." Morris

### Verse 31

Ἐρρέθη δέ· Ὅς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, δότω αὐτῇ ἀποστάσιον.

ἀπολυω release, set free, dismiss, divorce  
 γυνή, αἰκος f woman, wife  
 δότω Verb, aor act imperat, 3 s δίδωμι  
 ἀποστασιον, ου n written notice of divorce

Cf Deut 24:1; Matt 19:7,8; Mk 10:4

### Verse 32

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι, καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃ μοιχᾶται.

παρεκτος prep with gen except, apart from

Hagner and others suggest that the exception clause was not part of Jesus' teaching since it weakens the antithesis. It reflects, he argues, the view of Matthew's community. Hagner writes, "The radical character of the righteousness of the kingdom demands a return to the standards of the Garden of Eden. The attitude of Jesus in 19:6 (cf. Mark 10:11, which lacks the exception clause) is absolute; it is indeed so stern that the disciples (who were hardly of a Hillelite persuasion on the subject) wonder who can tolerate such a high standard (19:10-11). Here is the antithesis to Deut 24:1... Moses allowed divorce *and* remarriage, without designating the remarried as adulterers – because of the hardness of the hearts of the people. If, as we shall argue in the explanation of the parallel passage in chap. 19, followers of Jesus, recipients of the kingdom, are still not in this new era rid of their hard hearts, divorce and remarriage will continue to occur among them, just as it did among the people of God in the OT (see further comment on 19:3-12). Matthew's own insertion of the exception clauses, modifying the absolute teaching of Jesus, is just such an admission in the church of his day. Still, however, it is worth adding that conceding the hard realities of our continuing fallenness and the reality of forgiveness for those who fail must not allow us to weaken our commitment to continue to strive after the ideal."

πορνεία, ας f sexual immorality  
 μοιχομαι commit adultery

"The word rendered *fornication* strictly denotes sexual intercourse between unmarried people, and some have seen that meaning here. On this view, Jesus is saying that if two people get married and it is subsequently found that prior to the marriage one of them had committed fornication, then the marriage may be dissolved. But that seems to be confining the meaning in a way that is not common in the New Testament; the word is used for all sorts of sexual sins. It is much more likely that in this passage it signifies adultery." Morris.

ὃς ἐὰν see v.19

"The husband who divorces his wife causes her to commit adultery because in the culture of that day, unlike ours, a single woman could hardly survive on her own, except through prostitution. She was therefore bound to take another husband and so be made into an adulteress." Hagner.

ἀπολελυμένην Verb, perf pass ptc, f acc s  
 ἀπολυω  
 γαμήσῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s γαμεω marry

"Among the Jews a man was not held to have committed adultery by engaging in sexual acts outside marriage unless his partner was herself a married woman. But Jesus does not distinguish between the man and the woman; either may commit adultery. It seems to have been a Christian idea that a man could commit adultery; others regarded sexual adventures as a normal part of life for a man. Jesus lays down the highest standards for both sexes. Divorce might happen, but it was not meant to be. Marriage is for life." Morris.

### Verses 33-37

The Mosaic law expressly commanded swearing in the name of God (Deut 6:13; 10:20). Jesus "was interested in the fact that people seemed very ready to swear oaths. He regarded it as important that what his disciples said could always be relied on; it should not be necessary for them to back up their statements with oaths. This is in striking contrast to a good deal of Judaism, in which oaths evidently played a large part in life. The Mishnah has a complete tractate on oaths (Shebu'ot), dividing them into classes, giving examples of valid and invalid oaths etc." Morris Such traditions were concerned with the question of when a person might legitimately break their word.

### Verse 33

Πάλιν ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις· Οὐκ ἐπιорκήσεις, ἀποδώσεις δὲ τῷ κυρίῳ τοὺς ὄρκους σου.

παλιν again, once more

(see v.21 for opening phrase)

ἐπιорκεω break an oath, swear falsely

ἀποδίδωμι give, render, give back, fulfil

ὄρκος, ου m oath, vow

Cf. Ex 20:7; Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; Deut 23:21-24.

### Verse 34

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν μὴ ὁμόσαι ὅλως· μήτε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὅτι θρόνος ἐστὶν τοῦ θεοῦ·

ὁμόσαι Verb, aor act infin ὁμνῶ and

ὁμνυμι swear, vow, make an oath

ὅλως adv at all

"He is not forbidding the taking of an oath in a law court or the like. The law said, "you shall ... swear by his name" (Deut 6:13; 10:20), and Jesus himself responded when the High Priest put him on oath (26:63,64). He is saying in the strongest terms that those who follow him must speak the truth. They must never take the line that only when an oath is sworn need they be truthful." Morris.

μήτε and not; μήτε ... μήτε neither ... nor  
οὐρανός, ου m heaven  
θρόνος, ου m throne

Jews thought that only oaths taken in the name of God were absolutely binding and that by swearing 'by heaven' the oath might later be broken.

### Verse 35

μήτε ἐν τῇ γῇ, ὅτι ὑποπόδιόν ἐστιν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ· μήτε εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, ὅτι πόλις ἐστὶν τοῦ μεγάλου βασιλέως·

γη, γης f earth

ὑποποδιον, ου n footstool

πους, ποδος m foot

πολις, εως f city, town

μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great

βασιλευς, εως m king

### Verse 36

μήτε ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ σου ὁμόσης, ὅτι οὐ δύνασαι μίαν τρίχα λευκὴν ποιῆσαι ἢ μέλαιναν.

κεφαλη, ης f head

ὁμόσης Verb, aor act subj, 2 s ὁμνῶ

δυναμαι can, be able to, be capable of

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

τρίχα Noun, acc s θριξ, τριχος f hair

λευκος, η, ον white, shining

ποιῆσαι Verb, aor act infin ποιῶ

ἢ or

μελας, αινα, αν gen ανος, αινης, ανος black

### Verse 37

ἔστω δὲ ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν ναὶ ναί, οὐ οὐ· τὸ δὲ περισσὸν τούτων ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐστίν.

ἔστω Verb, pres act imperat, 3s εἰμι

ναὶ yes, yes indeed, certainly

Cf. James 5:12

περισσος, η, ον more

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

του πονηρου is ambiguous (as in 5:37; 6:13; 13:38). Lenski and Hagner think it is a reference to the 'evil one', i.e. the devil.

"With the dawn of the new era comes a wholly new standard of righteousness, one in which a yes is really a yes and a no is really a no. It is a mistake, however, to take a biblicist approach to this passage that would disallow Christians from taking an oath, say in a court of justice. The issue is nothing less than and nothing more than truthfulness." Hagner.

**Verses 38-42**

"Jesus is, of course, still dealing with great principles, not laying down rules. We must not think that he held that his followers should never right wrongs, for example, nor that he felt that they must give to every beggar who approaches them. Were this so, all Christians would live under tyranny and in a state of destitution. But the principle that we are to refrain from asserting our own rights and that we should put the needs of others before our own runs through all of life and marks the difference between the servant of God and the worldling." Morris.

**Verse 38**

Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη: Ὁφθαλμὸν ἀντὶ ὀφθαλμοῦ καὶ ὀδόντα ἀντὶ ὀδόντος.

(see v.21 for opening phrase)

ἀντι prep with gen for, in place of  
ὀδους, ὀδόντος m tooth

"This well known principle is found in Ex 21:24; Deut 19:21 and Lev 24:20 and also in the ancient code of Hammurabi. In its original intention the old Hebrew law was restrictive rather than permissive: it was designed to limit revenge and retaliation by fixing an exact compensation for injury. By this humane measure, the law of blood revenge (which could involve the destruction of a whole family in a feud) was greatly limited." Hill. Green says that in Jesus' day only the Saducees followed this rule literally, the Pharisees usually substituted fines.

**Verse 39**

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ πονηρῷ· ἀλλ' ὅστις σε ῥαπίζει εἰς τὴν δεξιάν σιαγόνα, στρέψον αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν ἄλλην·

ἀνθιστημι resist, oppose, withstand  
πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

Here, obviously, a human aggressor. "Jesus is referring to private retaliation, not to public order." Morris.

ὅστις, ἡτις, ὅ τι who, which, whoever  
ῥαπίζω hit, strike  
δεξιός, α, ον right  
σιαγών, ονος f cheek

Suggests insult rather than violence.

στρέψον Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s στρεφω  
turn, turn around  
ἄλλος, η, ο another, other

This injunction is not to be taken literally but asserts that disciples of Jesus are not to behave according to the principles of strict retaliation in asserting legal rights (cf. John 18:22,23 for the example of Jesus and Acts 23:22-25 for Paul – see also Rom 12:18-21).

**Verse 40**

καὶ τῷ θέλοντί σοι κριθῆναι καὶ τὸν χιτῶνά σου λαβεῖν, ἄφες αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ἱμάτιον·

θελω wish, will

κριθῆναι Verb, pres pass infin κρινω judge  
χιτῶν, ονος m tunic, shirt (generally of garment worn next to the skin)

λαβεῖν Verb, aor act infin λαμβανω

ἀφημι allow, let go

ἱματιον, ου n garment, robe, cloak

The ἱματιον was the outer cloak, used also for sleeping in at night. Cf. Ex 22:26-27, Deut 24:13 which forbids a plaintiff from claiming this outer garment. Cf. 1 Cor 6:7 for Paul's similar attitude.

**Verse 41**

καὶ ὅστις σε ἀγγαρεύσει μίλιον ἓν, ὑπάγε μετ' αὐτοῦ δύο.

ἀγγαρευω force, press into service

Used in Mt 27:32; Mk 15:21 of the soldiers forcing Simon of Cyrene to carry Jesus' cross. The verb is used of any compulsory requisition or conscription.

μίλιον, ου n mile (of the Roman mile which was 8 σταδια or about 1618 yards)

εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

ὑπάγω go, go one's way, depart

δύο gen & acc δύο dat δυσιν two

"The first mile renders to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; the second mile, by meeting oppression with kindness, renders to God the things that are God's." Manson.

**Verse 42**

τῷ αἰτοῦντί σε δός, καὶ τὸν θέλοντα ἀπὸ σοῦ δανίσασθαι μὴ ἀποστραφῆς.

αἰτεω ask, request, demand

δός Verb, aor act imperat, 2 s διδωμι

θελω see v.40

δανίσασθαι Verb, aor midd infin δανειζω  
lend; midd borrow

ἀποστραφῆς Verb, aor pass subj, 2 s

ἀποστρεφω turn away

Cf Psalm 37:21 and other portions of this psalm concerning the conduct and consequent reward (land in Ps 37) of the righteous.

**Verses 38-42 Postscript**

"The disciple does not insist on personal rights. Furthermore, the true disciple does more than is expected. He or she is free from society's low standards of expectation, being subject only to the will of the Father. The conduct of the disciple is filled with surprise for those who experience it. This element of surprise relates closely to and reflects the grace that is central to the gospel. It is the unworthy who have experienced the good things of the kingdom; and as they have experienced the surprise of unexpected grace, so they act in a similar manner toward the undeserving among them (cf. Luke 6:34-35)... Kingdom ethics demands not mechanical compliance to rules but a lifestyle governed by the free grace of God." Hagner.

**Verse 43**

Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη· Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου καὶ μισήσεις τὸν ἐχθρόν σου.

(See v.21 for opening phrase)

ἀγαπήσεις Verb, fut act indic, 2 s ἀγαπαω  
love, show love for

πλησίον i) prep with gen near; ii) ὁ π.  
neighbour, fellow man.

μισεω hate, despise, be indifferent to  
ἐχθρος, α, ον enemy, one hated

This latter phrase does not, of course, come from the OT. Some think that it reflects the instruction of the Qumran *Manual of Discipline* which advises the community "to love everyone whom God has elected, and to hate everyone whom God has rejected... to hate the sons of darkness."  
Hagner comments, "Clearly, neither Jesus' listeners nor Matthew's readers would have been surprised by the added words, since the traditional interpretation had become regularly associated with the text. The 'neighbour' meant fellow Jew; the 'enemy' meant Gentile."  
Jesus rejects all restriction of the command.  
Cf. Lk. 10:25-37.

**Verse 44**

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς·

ἀγαπαω love, show love for  
ἐχθρος, α, ον enemy, one hated

The majority of MSS (D L W Θ f<sup>13</sup> TR lat sy<sup>(p,h)</sup>) insert the after ἐχθροὺς (with occasional slight modifications), εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς καταρωμένους ὑμᾶς, καλῶς ποιεῖτε τοὺς μισοῦσιν ὑμᾶς, and after προσεύχεσθε the words ἐπηρεάζοντων ὑμᾶς καὶ. This material is obviously borrowed from the parallel in Luke 6:27-28. The shorter text is supported by x B *et al.*

προσευχομαι pray  
διωκω persecute, seek after

Love, as always in the OT and NT is not mere sentiment and emotion, it involves action.

**Verse 45**

ὅπως γένησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς, ὅτι τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει ἐπὶ πονηροῦ καὶ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ δικαίου καὶ ἀδίκου.

ὅπως (or ὅπως ἂν) that, in order that  
γένησθε Verb, aor midd depo subj, 2 pl  
γίνομαι

Our love is to reflect the quality of God's love. Where would we be if God had loved only those who love him? He loved us while we were enemies (v.44).

ἥλιος, ου m the sun  
ἀνατελλω rise, dawn, shine  
πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked  
ἀγαθος, η, ον good, useful, fitting  
βρεχω rain, send rain  
δικαιος, α, ον righteous  
ἀδικος, ον evil, sinful, unjust

"The different words for 'good' (ἀγαθους, 'good,' and δικαιους, 'just') represent stylistic variations, as does the chiasmic order of the nouns. The 'bad' are, from the context, analogous to the 'enemies' of God. To love one's enemies is, then, to treat them as God treats those who have rebelled against him."  
Hagner.

**Verse 46**

ἐὰν γὰρ ἀγαπήσητε τοὺς ἀγαπῶντας ὑμᾶς, τίνα μισθὸν ἔχετε; οὐχὶ καὶ οἱ τελῶναι τὸ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν;

ἐὰν if  
μισθος, ου m pay, reward, gain  
οὐχὶ (emphatic form of οὐ) not, no; used in questions expecting an affirmative answer.  
τελώνης, ου m tax collector

**Verse 47**

καὶ ἐὰν ἀσπάσησθε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὑμῶν  
μόνον, τί περισσὸν ποιεῖτε; οὐχὶ καὶ οἱ ἔθνη οὖν  
τὸ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν;

ἀσπάσησθε Verb, aor midd dep subj, 2 pl  
ἀσπαζομαι greet, welcome

The salutation is more than a gesture of greeting, it expresses a desire for the peace and welfare of the other.

μονον adv only, alone  
περισσος, η, ον more  
ἔθνηκος, η, ον pagan, heathen, Gentile

Many MSS, including the TR, read τελωναι rather than ἔθνηκοι.

**Verse 48**

Ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν.

Cf. Lk 6:36.

ἔσεσθε Verb, fut indic, 2 pl εἰμι  
τέλειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature

Many MSS, including TR, have the slightly more emphatic ὡσπερ rather than ὡς

πατήρ, πατρος m father  
οὐράνιος, ον heavenly, in heaven, from heaven

"This call does not differ from that in the OT: 'Be holy for I, the Lord God am holy.' (Lev 19:2; cf. 1 Pet 1:16). The LXX even uses the same word (τέλειος, translating קָדוֹשׁ) at one point (Deut 18:13): 'Be perfect before the Lord your God.' The perfection here is the fulfillment of the Mosaic law ... but now according to its definitive interpretation by the Messiah who brings the kingdom. Love for God and one's neighbour (and particularly, love for one's enemies) will be described by Matthew as the commandments upon which thus all the law and the prophets depend (22:40). For Matthew, to be τέλειος means to fulfill the law through the manifestation of an unrestricted love (including even enemies) that is the reflection of God's love. This unrestricted love preeminently embodies ethical perfection. This perfection, and nothing less, is that to which Jesus calls his disciples." Hagner.