

“HATE THINE ENEMIES”

The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) is best understood when realizing that Jesus was giving sort of a “constitution” for the KINGDOM He planned to build. His teachings were the groundwork or platform for the kingdom. In the beatitudes, He twice referred to the blessings OF the kingdom that can be enjoyed (5:3, 10). His preaching had already begun by His announcement that the KINGDOM was at hand (4:17). Then He spoke of “entering” the kingdom (5:19, 20; cf John 3:3-5). Counting those in the sermon, the word “kingdom” is used 109 times in the gospel narratives, and only 32 times in all the rest of the New Testament. In all this, Jesus said He was “fulfilling” the law, which He took away at the cross (Matt. 5:17, 18; Rom. 7:4; Col. 2:14). Then, Jesus concludes the sermon by emphasizing that in the judgment day He would only recognize those who do the Father's will, and the vain efforts of some who thought they were following JESUS in this life (what Jew would ever think he had been following Jesus while living under the law?). He also talked about doing His “sayings” to build for eternity (NOT keeping Moses' law). The hearers were astonished at “his doctrine”, which was presented with heavenly authority (7:28, 29). In spite of all this, we have often MARVELED to hear some of our preachers and preacher school directors stand before the congregation and say that the Lord was merely correcting the errors and traditions of the Jews (teaching of the scribes and Pharisees) rather than comparing HIS teaching with what the Jews had under the law of that MOSES gave on Mt. Sinai. They even SAY that the quotations were the ideas of the scribes and Pharisees. How can this be?

Jesus' “sayings” (Matt. 7:24) are what anyone should build upon to enter and live IN the kingdom. To enter the kingdom, Jesus' words were, “I say unto you” (John 3:3). His sayings make up His doctrine (Matt. 7:28, where His “sayings” and “His doctrine are used interchangeably. These were His “words”, and we shall be judged by His “words” (John 12:48). We are not to keep a “corrected understanding of Moses' law” in the gospel age. We are not living under the law, or in the Mosaical age. We are to abide IN “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9).

Come to think of it, WHERE did Jesus ever teach the Law of Moses? Did He come into the world to expound on or clarify the law? Did He come to give the true meaning of Moses' law for the benefit of the Jews, OR to bring “His” teaching into the world? True, He DID tell people to keep the law while it was in effect, but His teachings were always on HIS own will. It has been argued that when Jesus said “by them of old time” that the “them” was to the scribes and Pharisees through the years. The KJV uses “by” them, while the NKJ and ASV uses “to” them. “By” suggests the teachers of the law in times before, as based on the text quoted. “To” suggests that the teaching quoted by Jesus was given “to” the people in times past. Neither “by” nor “to” has any bearing on the nature of what was being said—it was **still** the law of Moses.

The thrust of the sermon was a **comparison** of what Moses had taught, and what HE is now teaching—showing the superiority of His teaching. Six times in Matt. 5, Jesus referred to what they had “heard”, or what had been “said”, and EVERY time, he quoted the source of that information, with quotations from Moses' law—ALL quotations coming from the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy. He was NOT referring to what they had heard from the “scribes” or “fathers” IN ERROR, but what had been written in scripture of old time. The quotations are virtually exact, or summarized, as in one instance. What Jesus contrasted His teachings WITH, were those given by **Moses**. Some seem to have no difficulty with this until it comes to 5:43, where the Lord said it had been said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.” Some say God never

did command the Jews to “hate” anyone. It seems ungodly and devilish to some to think that ever happened. BUT IT DID! We have been scorned more than once for saying this.

Look at this text of Deuteronomy 23:3-7. *“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever, because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. Nevertheless the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord your God loves you. You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever. You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land.”*

Let's examine these words of Moses. He spoke of some (the Moabites, and Ammonites) who should be excluded from the assembly forever, and He gave two reasons why: (1) They did not meet the Israelites with bread and water when they came out of Egypt, and (2) Because they hired Balaam to curse them, even though God did not hear Balaam's request. THEN, God said Israel was NOT to “seek peace” or prosperity with these people, but **then** said they were **not** to “abhor” (hate) the Edomites or the Egyptians, and gave the reasons why in v. 7. This action of NOT “abhorring” some people suggests they COULD make “peace and prosperity” with them, while they could NOT do so with their enemies. The implication is that their attitude with the Moabites and Ammonites was just the opposite—they WERE to “abhor” them, or not show kindness to them. Jesus translates this with the word “hate” in the sermon on the mount. “Hatred” is NOT a harsher act toward some (as some have said in an effort to explain Deut. 23) while “abhorance” is a milder action. BOTH ARE SYNONYMOUS for the same action. Brethren, THIS is the basis for what Jesus used in Matt. 5.

The point is, that “hate” can sometimes mean to “love less”. Examples of this abound in scripture. In Deut. 21:15-17, Moses wrote about a man who might have 2 wives, with one was “loved” and the other “unloved”. Going back to Isaac with his 2 wives (Rachel and Leah), Gen. 29:18 states that Isaac “loved” Rachel, and v. 30 states that he loved Rachel MORE than he loved Leah, OR, he loved her “less”. In v. 31 Leah said she was “unloved”. The NKJV has a center column note on this word, and states that it means “hated”. Leah was not his favored wife. In Mal. 1:2, 3, reference is made to Jacob being loved and Esau being hated. Paul quotes this in Rom. 9:11-14, in showing that even before the twins were born, God selected Jacob to be the father of the lineage for the coming Messiah, and rejected Esau in this selection. He then quotes Mal.3:1, 2 as the prophecy behind it. Finally, in v. 14, he declares that God was justified in showing favor to one above the other, by saying God was not unrighteous in the matter. But, the scripture uses the word “hate” in contrast with someone being favored. Did God “sin” by “hating” Esau? Certainly not! He loved him “less”

Let's make a parallel on this point.

- 1) Israel was not to make peace with the Moabites and Ammonites (their enemies).
- 2) Thus, they were to “hate” their enemies, or “love them less”.

The teaching of Christ is to “love our enemies” (make peace with them), yet there will be instances where we have to even love our families “less” than we love God.

It seems the difficulty with some today is that our connotation of “hate” has to do with personal spite and disposition, rather than what the scripture sometimes means.

True, we ARE to really hate, despise, or abhor **evil** in the fullest sense of the word, but the context sometimes suggests that we **are** to hate some people, in the sense of "loving less". In Luke 14:26, Jesus our Lord says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple". The scripture elsewhere tells a man to "love" his wife, yet here we are told to "hate" them. Is this a contradiction, or what? Let scripture explain scripture. In Matt.10:37, we read, "*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*" So, the teaching of the Lord is clear. If one does what his mate or children want done rather than what God says, he is NOT loving them less, but loving them more.

Now, with all this before us, the air is clear for us to accept FULLY what Jesus said in Matt. 5:43 as being another quote from MOSES, rather than from the errors of the scribes and Pharisees. True, Jesus did refer to the scribes and Pharisees in the sermon He gave, to show that if His teachings were followed, they would be different than the scribes and Pharisees. This should help us to better understand the teaching of the Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, as containing HIS teachings for the gospel age.

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