

THE HARD SAYINGS OF JESUS

SESSION #5
02.09.11

SESSION #6
02.16.11

THE LAW

- I. “You have heard it said of old...but I say unto you.”
 - A. Matthew 5:17-18—”Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.”
 1. In Jesus there is simultaneously an uncompromising validation of the Mosaic Law and yet a profound radicalizing of the same.
 2. We hear Paul in Romans 10:4 of the Christ who is the end of the law and yet...
 - B. Jesus appears to not have agreed with the rabbinic tradition of his day (Matthew 15:1-9; Matthew 23:1-7).
 1. His radicalizing of the Law seems driven in large part by a witnessed hypocrisy on the part of the religious elite.
 2. He called for a righteousness that exceeds that of the Pharisees and scribes (Matthew 5:20a).
 3. His “but I say unto you” reorients the previous law to Kingdom principles and yet the discomfort in his new teachings and harsh sayings is undeniable.

II. “You have heard it said...but I say unto you.”

A. Matthew 5:21-22—An enlarged concept of murder.

1. Anger toward a brother or sister is cause for divine judgment.
2. Jesus’s harsh saying on “You shall not kill” (the fifth commandment), in response to words spoken and anger exhibited, is designed to confront the assumed innocent and universalize the call to divine mercy and forgiveness.

B. Matthew 5:27-30—An enlarged concept of adultery.

1. Jesus universalizes the adulterous tendency by speaking simply of lusting in the heart.
2. It becomes impossible for Pharisees and scribes to declare their righteousness when Jesus poignantly articulates a general propensity to disobey the sixth commandment.

C. Matthew 5:31-32; Mark 10:2-12; Matthew 19:3-9.

1. Jesus was asked by the Pharisees if it is lawful to divorce. and is confronted by two schools of thought—Shammai, a leading rabbi who lived before him saying a man could divorce his wife if found not to be a virgin; and Hillel, who said that any assumed indecency a husband may find offensive is grounds for divorce.

2. Jesus's first principle is to begin at the beginning, combining Genesis 1 and 2—God meant the male and female to be together as husband and wife.
3. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? “No,” with an exception in Matthew 5:32; but a definite “no” in Matthew 10 and Mark 13.
4. The law was unequally balanced to the disadvantage of the woman. Jesus's ruling, without exceptions, appears to be redressing this imbalance.

D. Matthew 5:38-39.

1. The lifestyle of the kingdom of God is more demanding than the law of Moses laid down (Exodus 21:24).
2. In the Mosaic Law, exact retaliation over against whole tribal assault is an improvement, but Jesus radicalizes.
3. Do not retaliate at all; if he gets some pleasure out of hitting you, then let him hit you again.

E. Matthew 5:43-48.

1. You have heard it said (Leviticus 19:18), “Love you neighbors and hate your enemy...but I say unto you.”
2. Jesus again turns upside down assumed, even accepted behavior.
3. Luke 6:28—Pray for those who persecute you.

Conclusion

Matthew 22:34-40—The radical and reorienting harsh sayings of Jesus are designed to spell out in a significant way from the old to the new, from “you have heard” to “but I say unto you,” an ethic of Kingdom love.