

MAT 5:23 "If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

MAT 5:24 leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.

Comments: In this segment (and through the rest of chapter 5) formulas of contrast are used by our Lord. Jesus uses the expressions "the ancients were told" (verses 21 and 33) and "it was said" (verses 27, 31, 38, 43), and contrasts them with the expression "but I say unto you" (verses 22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). Is He contrasting the teaching of the O.T. with His teaching? Or is He contrasting the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees with His teaching (and that of the O.T.)? From what we have noticed in connection with verses 17-20 it would seem that the latter is the case. Jesus is contrasting the level of the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees with the level of the righteousness of the O.T. and that of His own.

MAT 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery';

MAT 5:28 but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

MAT 5:29 "And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

MAT 5:30 "And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.

Comments: Our Lord introduces the prohibition, "You shall not commit adultery," with the formula, "You have heard that it was said." The prohibition is worded according to the Seventh Commandment; and it therefore looks as though Jesus is contrasting the O.T. with His teaching in a way that clearly implies that the O.T. dealt only with external violations of the sanctity of marriage, whereas His teaching deals with internal transgressions, and is thus a higher standard than that of the O.T. But if we recall the contrast Jesus is making between the Law of God in its O.T. expression (with which He is in total agreement) and the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees, we realize that Jesus is contrasting the interpretive construction placed on the Seventh Commandment by the scribes and Pharisees (which emphasized external conformity to the Law) and the true and original intent of God's Law (which prohibited sinful desires and attitudes and states as well as outward expressions of such internal motions)

Our Lord's exhortation concerning an eye or a hand that causes you to sin correlates with His teaching on the sinfulness of internal adultery. The seemingly drastic ways of dealing with these erring parts of the body (tearing out the right eye, cutting off the right hand), if understood purely in an outward, physical way, do not really solve the problem of bodily members occasioning our stumbling, since we can commit inward adultery by lusting with our left eye, or use our left hand to implement sinful desires.

MAT 5:31 "And it was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce';