

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository  
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

35- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 15  
The Rights of Man and  
the Supremacy of Jesus Christ- Part 1

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Church November 06, 2022

**Matthew 5:38-48**

**38 "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.'**

**39 "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.**

**40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.**

**41 "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.**

**42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.**

**43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'**

**44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

**46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?**

**47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?**

**48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;  
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

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**Beginning Note:** This *perfect* Sermon- that we call, the “*Sermon on the Mount*” is the *first* of five major Sections of Divine Teaching that Matthew wrote in his Gospel Record- which represent the five Books of Moses in the Old Testament (the *Pentateuch*). And that is because, in addition to Matthew wanting the Jews to see Jesus as being the long-awaited “*Mashich*”

(*Messiah*); and the promised “*Immanuel*” (*God with us*). He also wants them to also see Jesus as being the “*2<sup>nd</sup> Moses*”- Who will bring God’s people out from “*spiritual Bondage*” (*Sin*) and lead them into the “*Promised Land*” (*the Kingdom of Heaven*).

So, what this Sermon is illustrating is the Attributes and the Characteristics of the *new* people- that God is raising up; who will inherit this *new* Kingdom of Heaven; which is sovereignly ruled and governed by the *new* King- Jesus Christ- as He ushers in the *New Covenant*.

So, this Sermon is what this “*new chosen people*” look like- AFTER Jesus has “paid for” ALL of their Sins; AFTER God the Father has imputed to them the Righteousness of Jesus Christ (Justification); and as they are actively and continuously “*kill*” the remaining Sin that is in their Flesh (Sanctification).

And so, this part of the “*Sermon on the Mount*” has to do with:

### **Jesus illustrating His full Deity- by revealing the deepest meaning of the Law of God**

So, this part of the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5:21-48**) contains six different Sections of infallible Teaching from Jesus Himself. And today we are going to explore what Jesus meant when He taught the people in verses 38-48- about the *full*; *complete*; and *deepest* Meaning of Man’s Rights when pitted against the Supremacy of Jesus Christ.

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Now, once again, we open the Word of God and look at the infallible Teaching that was given by the Lord Christ Himself. And this time, we want to look at what Jesus meant when He taught in verses 38-48 of **Matthew 5**.

Now during the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic hierarchy warned the Protestants that they were unleashing something on the people that the people were ill-equipped to handle. And what they were unleashing was the Power to interpret the Bible.

You see, even though the Scriptures are the inspired; inerrant; and infallible Word of the living God- that Word MUST be interpreted. And *how* the Bible is interpreted is where both the Danger and the Reward lies- because it is in the Interpretation of the Word of God where most people either get to the Truth or get off base. So, unless the interpretation of a Verse or Passage is correct and complete- then it is wrong and misleading- even when those trying to interpret it are very sincere.

And that is what the Apostle was talking about when he was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write this to his “*Son in the Faith*”, Timothy, from **2Timothy 2:15**, that says:

**Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.**

... and the phrase, “**accurately handling the word of Truth**” in this Verse is talking about *rightly* and *fully* interpreting the Scriptures.

So, Paul said that in order for Timothy, who was the Pastor of the Church at Ephesus, to rightly and fully interpret the Word of Truth- he needed to do four things:

1. Be diligent
2. Present himself approved of God (rather than approved of Man)
3. As a Workman (a skilled Craftsman)
4. Who does not need to be ashamed (Condemned)

... and he is to do all four of these things- SO THAT he might,

**... accurately handle the word of truth**

In other words, it takes all four of these things to be able to accurately handle the Word of Truth. So, if a person skips one or more of these Steps- he will NOT interpret the Bible correctly or fully. And that means that when he doesn't complete all four of these Steps- he WILL mislead people- whether that is *knowingly* or *unknowingly*.

Now the Reality is that most people are lazy. Most Christians are lazy; and even most Church Leaders are lazy. And that means that most people will skip one or more of these Steps in their Preparation of their Sermon or their Bible Study. And most of the people of the Church will never notice that, whoever is teaching them, has NOT been thorough in his Preparation. But, over time, this lack of “*Doctrinal Precision*” shows itself in the Understanding of the Church becoming more and more Shallow; and Surface; and Man-centered.

So, in His Mercy to His Church- God the Spirit “moved” on people to develop what is called, “*Hermeneutics*”. And Hermeneutics comes from a Greek word (*hermeneuo*), that means: *to translate or interpret*. So, Hermeneutics is the “*Science of*”; or the “*Manner*” or the “*Way in which the Scriptures are interpreted*”. And this involves Steps that are taken and other things that are utilized (Dictionaries; Thesaurus; Encyclopedias; etc.) that help us to rightly and fully interpret the Word of Truth.

And two of the most important Hermeneutic tools are:

1. Getting the correct Context of a Verse or Passage
2. Utilizing the original Languages

You see, the Bible was not written in English. And the biblical writers knew nothing of things that we take for granted every day- like the “*United States*” or

“Democracy” or “Capitalism” or the “Law of Supply and Demand”; or of “Voting”; or “Libraries”; or “Antibiotics” or even “Western Civilization”. Yet these things color our Ideas; and our Opinions; and the way we understand Truth.

So, when reading and interpreting the Bible- we need to make sure that we find out what that Verse or Passage meant to the Man who originally wrote it- and NOT what it means to us. Because God the Holy Spirit “moved” on the writer- because he had something very specific in mind when he wrote that verse down. So, unless we understand the original Language; and the Customs; and Colloquialisms; and the Laws of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews living in Roman occupied Palestine- we will interpret that Verse or Passage in a way that is completely foreign to what the writer had in mind. And that would be a *fabricated* Understanding of the Bible; but it would NOT be the Truth.

Now up to about 150 years ago, every major Christian Denomination *required* that those, who led in the Church be able to read, write, and speak fluent Greek; Hebrew; and Aramaic- which are the biblical Languages. And as I began this Church in the summer of 2000- I was faced with a choice:

- I had to go back to school to learn to read, write, and speak Greek; Hebrew; and Aramaic
- I had to purchase Software that did it for me

... and not knowing even where to go to school at that time- I chose the latter.

Now I’m not saying that is what others need to do- I’m simply telling you that it is what I did. So, I invested about \$40,000 in Software and Books that help me to actually conjugate the Greek; Hebrew; or Aramaic verbs and diagram the sentences in the original Languages.

Now it turns out that the Romans were correct in their Warning. So, today, there are about 45,000 different Protestant Denominations- all claiming to have and to believe and preach the Truth.<sup>1</sup> And the *primary* Difference between them all is in *how* the verses and Passages of the Bible are interpreted. And many people decry that. And we should NEVER be “okay” with that kind of Schism and Division within the Body of Jesus Christ. It is the Product of people either not knowing about or not being willing to adhere to a biblical Hermeneutic.

Now it is true that the overwhelming Majority of these Divisions have to do with secondary Issues- that do NOT determine whether somebody is saved or not.

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<sup>1</sup> What is not usually discussed is that there are also over 2,000 versions of *Catholicism*- who are divided and separated from the official Version of Catholicism taught by the Vatican.

But, even at that- we should all pray and work hard to eliminate these Divisions- every time we find them.

Now the Answer to this great Division is NOT to go back to keeping the people in Ignorance. These Divisions are the Price of Freedom. But the Answer is that those who interpret the Bible simply need to do a much better job. And part of that “better job” is that they must utilize the original Languages- so they can arrive at the correct Meaning; and they must get the correct Context of the Verse or Passage they are dealing with. Because if they just corrected those two Issues- Language and Context- we could drastically *eliminate* tens of thousands of those Denominations almost overnight.

So, what we need to say is that the overwhelming Reason as to why there are so many Denominations in 21<sup>st</sup> Century- is that people are using a very lousy Hermeneutic; or not using one at all. And that is *why* there is so much Disagreement about what the Bible means by what it says.

So, as we look at what Jesus taught about Issues like Love; and Forgiveness; and Vengeance; and the Rights of Man pitted against the Supremacy of Jesus Christ in these verses- we need to get the correct Context of what Jesus was operating in and with- as He made these Statements back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Because, like I said, it doesn't matter what verses 38-48 mean to *us*. ALL that matters is what these verses meant to Jesus when He spoke them on that mountainside that day.

And part of doing that- part of getting a correct Hermeneutic; part of understanding what Jesus had in His Mind when He spoke these words- is getting the correct Context. But it is also understanding the *Aramaic* Language in which Jesus originally spoke these words. But then it is also understanding the *Hebrew* language in which Matthew originally wrote the spoken words of Jesus down. But we can't even stop there- because we also need to know the *Greek* Language in which these words were translated; before they were translated into *Latin*; which was before they were translated into *English*. And that is why we MUST have a correct and biblical Hermeneutic.

So, let's do that. The correct Context of what was going on when Jesus originally spoke verses 38-48- is wrapped up with the Roman occupation of the Nation that Rome called, “*Palestine*” back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. So, unless we get that Situation in our minds- we will completely miss why Jesus said what He said here.

As far as Rome (back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century) was concerned, the Nation of the Jews was nothing more than a wholly owned and conquered “*Province*” of the Roman Empire- that was occupied; governed; and controlled by Romans and NOT by the Jews. And even though Rome recognized that the History of the Jews was important to the Jews- it was NOT important to them. But

in order to maintain *some* semblance of Peace- Rome allowed *some* Jewish Control over *some* areas of Jewish Life- mostly religious. But even that area of Jewish Life was heavily governed by the pagan Romans and NOT by the Jews. And that is why, when they captured Jesus- both the Romans and the Jews had to sign off on His Execution.

But as far as the Jews were concerned- the Romans were wicked pagans, who were nothing more than “spiritual dogs”. So, the average Jew *despised* the Romans as well as their Occupation. And even though they couldn’t have cared less about the spiritual Welfare of the Romans- they DID pray that God would raise up the Messiah- so He would come and utterly vanquish the hated pagans; and restore Israel back to the Jews- the people of God.

This was the “*Salvation*” that the Jews wanted back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. They were already the “Sons and Daughters of Abraham by Birth- and they knew it. God had already elected them- TO THE EXCLUSION OF EVERY OTHER NATION on earth- and they knew it. They were already the “chosen people”- and they knew it. God had already “set His Love” on them- and them ALONE- and they knew it. So, they sensed NO Need to be “saved”- in the sense that we understand that term today. They were already “saved” by simply being born Jewish. All they needed God to do- was to raise up the Messiah- so He would destroy the pagans; end their Occupation; and give the Jews their Land back. So, the average Jew had no desire to learn how to live side-by-side with the Romans- or to see any of them repent and trust in Jesus and go to Heaven. They simply wanted them to all die and get out of their way- so the “*promised Land*” that God gave to them- might return under their Control.

But many of the Roman soldiers also despised the Jews. They saw the Jews as incredibly Self-righteous people, who cared for nobody but themselves. And whereas the Jewish Religion itself was truly a Marvel to see and learn- the average Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century didn’t know much about their own Religion. And they weren’t being taught much about their Religion- either. Instead, the Jews of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century were being fed a steady diet of the Man-made and false Religion of the Scribes and Pharisees that had almost NOTHING in common with either historic Judaism or the Old Testament. And that is the SAME Religion that we see today in the Jewish Synagogues around the world.

The Reality is that modern Judaism is NOT faithful to the Old Testament Scriptures. It is faithful, *primarily*, to the Man-made and false Religion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Scribes and Pharisees. And because that is true- we should look at modern Judaism as being a “false Religion” that doesn’t have the Ability to forgive a single Sin or save a single soul. Modern Judaism *hinders* Jewish people from coming to Salvation in Jesus Christ. And so, from that Standpoint- the Jewish people are the “*Enemies*” of the Gospel. And yet- from the Standpoint of the Old

Testament Fathers- who DID love God and who WERE saved- the Jewish people are “*Beloved*”. Look at what the Apostle Paul taught about the Mystery of this “dual Status” from **Romans 11:28&29**:

**28 From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.**

Now this is a great Mystery, but we must NOT ignore that this Teaching is as Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible as **John 3:16**.

So, we must NEVER hate the Jews. We must NOT wish for their Destruction or their Harm. But we should pray for their Salvation. Because unless they come to Jesus- they will burn in Hell forever. But as we do that- we MUST preach the Gospel to them- as much as we preach it to any other lost group. Because nobody is saved absent hearing and believing and obeying the Gospel. And that is true about the Jews even as it is true about everybody else.

But as we do that- we MUST acknowledge that the Jewish people are *unique*. And so, we must take heed of what the Apostle taught in **Romans 11:18-21**, when he wrote:

**18 do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. 19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; 21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.**

So, what I say and teach is NOT being “*Antisemitic*”. It is being Truthful; and it is being Biblical. I do NOT wish for any Harm to come to the Jews. I wish them to be saved. So, because I want the Jews to be saved and go to Heaven- I have zero Interest in helping Jews remain “Jewish”. I have zero Interest in helping Jews maintain the false Religion of “Judaism”. But because I want the Jews to be saved- I have a great Interest in helping Jews hear and believe the biblical Gospel- so they may repent of their false Religion; completely ABANDON their false Religion; and fully embrace the Truth of biblical Christianity and Salvation in Jesus Christ.

And we also must realize that the political Nation of Israel is NOT the Focus of God under the New Covenant. The Focus of God under the New Covenant- is

the One; Holy; Universal; and Apostolic Church. The New Testament teaches that Jesus lived and died and rose again for His Church- NOT Israel. The New Testament teaches that Jesus is building His Church- but He is NOT building Israel.

And the New Testament teaches that as we go out into the world- in the Name of Jesus- and to His Glory- and we *aggressively*- but *spiritually* overthrow all peoples and all Nations and all Agencies and all Powers that seek to exalt themselves above God- the very Gates of Hades that keep souls enslaved- will NOT be able to prevail against us and keep us out. And so, the Church- NOT Israel- will march right into the devil's Territory and we will steal souls away from satan and deliver them to God! And the New Testament teaches that Jesus is coming back for His Church- and NOT for Israel.

And as I say these things- I realize that some of you may have never heard this before- and you are tempted to reject it. But I beg you to simply study the Bible and see what it actually teaches- rather than simply agree with the prevailing Sentiment of our Age. So, we should look at the Nation of Israel today as we do any other Nation and pray for its Success and its Safety and that its people will be Godly and Saved.

Now what Jesus is teaching in this Passage involves two groups of people:

1. The lost and unsaved Roman Occupiers
2. The lost and unsaved Jews

... and neither one of them is right with God- but BOTH groups are important to Jesus- even though the Romans were NOT important to the Jews; and the Jews were NOT important to the Romans.

But then we must understand that at the time that Jesus spoke these words- neither one of these Groups were obeying the Old Testament Scriptures. Why do I know this? Because both Groups hated each other. Both Groups wanted the other Group to lose; to be diminished; to fade away; and to die. So, not only are both Groups rejecting the spirit *behind* the Old Testament Scriptures- neither Group is even obeying the literal Scriptures either.

But between the two Groups- the Romans had the better Excuse. If Excuses mattered to God (they don't)- the Romans *could* say, "*We have never been taught the Old Testament Scriptures. We weren't raised as thinking we are beloved of God. We don't think we're special to God. We aren't like the Jews. What we have- we have fought for and conquered.*" So, it is understandable that the Romans don't really know (or believe) what the Old Testament taught.



But the Jews did. They had been taught the Scriptures- at least to *some* degree- their whole Lives. And they DID think they were favored by God. And they knew they were *unique* among the other Nations of the world. So, the Jews had NO Excuse as to *why* they were operating in abject Hatred toward the pagan Romans; and *why* they prayed and worked hard for their Destruction.

Yet the Old Testament did NOT teach what the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews were doing. Look at what Jesus said again in verse **43**:

**"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'**

Now this is one reason why I love the NASB95. Because when a New Testament Speaker is quoting from the Old Testament- the NASB95 puts that quote in all capital letters. So, please notice that the *first* part of verse 43 is from the Old Testament. And there are at least 20 different Old Testament References about how the Jews were to treat their "Neighbors". And NONE of them said to hate them.

So, the *second* part of verse 43 is a Teaching from the Scribes and Pharisees and NOT from the Old Testament. So, the Teaching that told the Jew to love their Neighbor- was from the Old Testament. But the Teaching that told the Jew to hate their Enemy was a fabrication of the unsaved Scribes and Pharisees and was NEVER God's Will.

Now over in Dr. Luke's Record- you can find a great Discussion about just who constitutes a "Neighbor". And it is from that effort to excuse themselves from having to actually obey the Scriptures that Jesus gave us the "*Parable of the Good Samaritan*"- which was a Rebuke against the Self-righteousness of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Covenant-breakers.

But as Jesus walked through the Nation of Palestine- back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- He saw this sinful Hatred up close. It was way beyond a simple "Dislike". It was a Seething; a Despising; a deep-seated and profound Hatred that colored every area of Jewish Life in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. And this Hatred was manifested in the Jewish Prayers; and in their Discussions; and in their Worship of God. No area of Jewish Life in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century was free from this Hatred.

And like all who hate- the Jews felt completely *vindicated* in their Despising of the Romans. I mean, after all- the Romans had repeatedly desecrated The Jewish Temple- sacrificing pigs on the Altar and urinating all over the holy Instruments of Jewish Worship. So, to them- the Romans had "asked for it".

But even from a spiritual Stand-point- the Jews wanted the Romans to stop belittling their Worship; their mocking of God; and their abuse of their fellow-Jews. And the average Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century could not imagine that

God would want to save a pagan Roman. They were brutal and violent and, above all- they were the very worst of the Pagans- worshipping a plethora of deities. So, the Jews knew in the very core of their being that the End for the Romans was ONLY Damnation. And they were all-too happy to help God bring about that Damnation.

So, how could they just stand by and tolerate what the Romans were doing? To do so- would make them complicit in the Romans Wickedness. So, they cried out to God- for the Destruction of the Romans and they worked hard to do what they could to help that Divine Judgment come quickly.

So, because the Jews felt completely *justified* in their Hatred and Unforgiveness against the Romans- one of the “Proofs” of whoever the Messiah would be- would be that He MUST hate the Romans as much as they did. He MUST speak out against their Evil and their Paganism; and their Abuse of both the Temple and the Jews themselves.

And so, in their minds, the *primary* Act of whoever the Messiah would be- MUST be- that He raise up a literal Army of followers, who would wage War against the sinful Occupiers- so He could turn the Nation of Israel back over to the Jews and restore the Nation to its previous Majesty and Glory that it enjoyed under its beloved King- David. And once that Deliverance was complete- this Warrior/King would parade down Main Street in downtown Jerusalem- with great fanfare- and Messiah would then walk into David’s Palace and sit down on the Throne and from there- he would rule the world- with a Rod of Iron. And all the Nations of the world would periodically come to Jerusalem and pay homage to this Messiah and marvel at his Glory.

This was the Universal and most popular *Eschatology* of the Jews in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. They *believed* it; they *taught* it; they *expected* it; and they were actively looking for somebody to fulfill it. And during the 400 years of Silence in between **Malachi** and **Matthew**- as each *false* Messiah rose up- they compared what he taught; and what he did- to their “*already worked out*” Belief about what the Messiah would do; what he would teach; and what would happen- when he got here. And after the Resurrection, one of the respected Jewish Leaders (who had trained Paul; and who probably became a Believer) mentioned all of this as recorded by Dr. Luke in **The Acts 5:33-39**:

**33 But when they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them.**

**34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time.**

**35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men.**

**36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.**

**37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered.**

**38 "So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown;**

**39 but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."**

Now the Reason that both Theudas and Judas of Galilee had attracted hundreds of people to follow after them- was because the Jews were actively looking for the Messiah to come. But what the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jews wanted the Messiah to do; and what they wanted him to teach was NOT what God wanted. But by this time- their Hatred of the Romans had caused the Jews to want what they wanted- even though what they wanted was Sin. So, they didn't care what the Old Testament taught- they already had their minds made up what the messiah would do and what he would teach- even though it was ALL Wrong.

So, here is the incarnate God- Jesus Christ- having already taught perfectly about Marriage and Divorce and Re-Marriage and making Vows. And now He is going to teach them about several other Issues that really matter to God like:

- Love
- Mercy
- Forgiveness
- Vengeance
- Hatred

... and as He teaches- *especially* in this Part- many Jews will categorically *reject* Jesus as not qualifying as the Messiah- precisely because what He teaches here is so different; so opposite of what they wanted in their Messiah. So, Jesus begins this Section of His perfect Sermon by saying this in **Matthew 5:38**:

**You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.'**

Now the Words of Jesus here is a *Summary* of what God the Holy Spirit had “moved” on Moses to write in **Exodus 21:22-25** that says,

**22 "If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide.**

**23 "But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life,**

**24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,**

**25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.**

... and from **Leviticus 24:19&20** that says,

**19 'If a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him:**

**20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him.**

.. and from **Deuteronomy 19:16-21** that says,

**16 "If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, 17 then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who will be in office in those days.**

**18 "The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness and he has accused his brother falsely,**

**19 then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.**

**20 "The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you.**

**21 "Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.**

... which teach the “*Law of Rights*” and the “*Lex Talionis*” (the Law of Retaliation).

And we are very Familiar with “*Rights*” because, part of what it means to be an “*American*” with a “*Western*” mind-set- is that we, *instinctively*, believe that we have certain “*Rights*” and that those Rights come from God and NOT from the Government. So, the founding Fathers called them, “*Inalienable Rights*” or basic, “*Self-evident*” Rights that *originate* from God and Rights which Government CANNOT take away from us.

Now some call these things, “*Human Rights*”. And they have been *codified* in our Constitution; and have become *foundational* to our way of living and thinking. So, attached to the Constitution are the first Ten “*Amendments*”, that we call, the “*Bill of Rights*”- which *limit* what the Federal Government can do. So, what makes the Bill of Rights as well as the entire American Constitution so amazing and so unique among all the Documents of the Nations of the world- is that it is what is called, a “*Negative Document*”. So, instead of articulating what the Government CAN do- it tells us what it CANNOT do. So, the ONLY Entity that is limited in the Constitution is Government- specifically the three Branches of the Executive; the Legislative; and the Judicial.

So, for example, we find in this amazing Document the “*Right to Free Speech*” which gives us the Right to criticize the most powerful man on earth- the President- without being arrested and put in jail. And it also guarantees that I can get on the radio and preach the Gospel. We have the “*Right*” to peacefully Assemble together- and that is true whether we are assembling to worship God or to plan to vote the President out of Office. That piece of paper *forbids* the Congress to create a “*National Religion*”; but neither can Congress pass a Law that *prohibits* or *restricts* our Worship of God- as we are led by God.

God Almighty gave me the Right to own as many weapons as I choose. And I can own as many different *kinds* of weapons- so I can protect my Family and go hunting- or, if necessary, stop an illegal and unconstitutional Government. And the Constitution agrees with that. If the Police or the FBI wants to tap my phones; go through my mail; or inspect my computers- that piece of paper says they MUST get a Court Order signed by a Judge first.

If the Military of the United States comes to my front door- with all their might and firepower- that piece of paper called, the “*Constitution*” forbids them to walk across the threshold of my front door- unless they have a search warrant. And if they desire to turn my home into a military barrack- that piece of paper says that, if I so choose- I can tell them, “*No!*” and the Military of the United States- has to turn around and go back home. It is truly amazing!

Now I realize that the Constitution is being abused and is being ignored far too often every day- and that is wrong. But that 240+ year-old Document says that every single Government employee from the President on down to the janitor works for me. I am their Boss. I do not serve them- they serve me. And I must approve of how they are doing their job, or I can vote them out of Office.

The Point I am making is that we are one of only about twelve Countries in the History of the world that has every had this much Freedom; this much Liberty; and this many Rights. And so, we should be very grateful; and thankful; and we should teach our Children about all of this; and we should celebrate all of this- because we could so quickly lose it all.

But as Good and Wonderful as all of this is- there is a drawback to it. Because of the *abundance* of Freedom and Liberty that we have- we tend to allow these “Rights” to spread further and involve more Issues than they actually do. So, one Passage that we need to burn into our hearts is what the Apostle Paul said in **1Corinthians 10:23:**

**All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify.**

Simply because we CAN do something doesn’t mean we SHOULD. Simply because something is Legal does NOT- by itself- mean that it is godly. So, simply because we have the “Right” to think or act in certain Ways doesn’t mean that those Rights always glorify God. Because as Believers, we have another layer of Truth that we must apply on top of all of the Rights and Privileges we have been granted in the Constitution as Americans. And that additional layer is called, the “*Glory of God*”. **1Corinthians10:31** says,

**Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God**

And so, as followers of Jesus- our *primary* Determination as to whether we say something; or do something; or become part of something- is NOT that we have the “Right” to do it- but whether saying that; or doing that; or becoming part of that- will bring Honor and Glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. So, I may well have the “Right” to sin against God- but as a “*bought-and-paid-for*” bond-slave of Jesus- I should *forgo* that Right and *willingly* and *joyfully* NOT engage in that Activity- so that Jesus may be pleased.

And so, as soon as He *summarized* what Moses infallibly taught under the Old Covenant in verse 38- Jesus, acting in His Authority as God Almighty in human flesh, said this in verses 39-42:

**39 "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.**

**40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.**

**41 "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.**

**42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.**

.. which completely undermines the Jewish Concept of the “*Law of Rights*” and the Roman Concept of the “*Law of Retaliation*” (*Lex Talionis*).

Now to make matters even worse- these were not abstract Examples that Jesus was giving here. These were real, actual Examples of what the Roman soldiers and Authorities were doing to the Jews every single day.

So, a Jewish man would walk down the street with his wife and children and a Roman soldier would walk up to him and slap him down to the ground. And not only was this humiliating- the Jew had the perfect Right, under the “*Law of Rights*”- to defend himself and his family from this unprovoked assault- even to the point of using Violence. Yet Jesus said,

**... whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also**

Now keep in mind that this Statement is NOT some symbolic Statement about Humility. This was literal. The Roman soldiers were actually slapping Jewish men across the mouth- knocking them down to the ground. And from the soldier’s perspective- he was daring the Jew to respond. Because under Herod and Antipas and Pontus Pilate- the soldiers had a standing Order (*Lex Talionis*) that if a Jew raised his hand against *any* soldier; at *any* time- for *any* reason- the soldier had the Right to kill him on the spot. And the fact that the soldier had provoked the Jew to begin with didn’t matter. If the Jew fought back- which he had the Right to do so under Jewish law- he was a dead man.

Now what Jesus did not specifically address here was the fact that Roman soldiers were also walking up to Jewish women and were molesting them- once again, *daring* the Jewish man to respond- so the soldier could kill him- and then molest his Wife.

Another Jew would walk down the street with his Wife and Children and a Roman soldier would walk up to him and rip his clothes off and keep them for himself. Now the soldier didn’t do this because he was cold- he did this, again, to humiliate the Jew and so he could goad the Jew into utilizing the “*Law of Rights*” that had been codified into Jewish law- to defend himself and his family- even to the point of using Violence. And this is Jesus’ Divine Statement about that:

**If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.**

... again, this was NOT a benign Example. This was really happening all the time.

Another Jew would walk down the street and a Roman would walk up beside him- speaking horrible words to him or even blaspheming God. And the Jew would try his best to go to the other side of the street to avoid him or to end his journey and just go back home. So, what did the incarnate God tell the Jews to do?

## Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two

Now right about now- as the Jews were sitting on the mountainside that day listening to Jesus teach- they were not only completely shocked at what Jesus was saying- but most of them would have been very upset- even angry- that any Jewish Teacher worth his salt would suggest that a Jew, who had Rights under the “*Law of Rights*” that had been codified-in the Law of Moses- that had come to Moses from God Himself- should be such a Pacifist and a “non-violent Objector”.

I mean God is the One, Who had told Joshua to kill Man, Woman, Child and Animal in the “*Canaanite Holocaust*” (**Deuteronomy 19:16**). Their most beloved King- David- was known to have “*killed his ten-thousands*” (**1Samuel 18:7**). The entire History of the Jewish people was one of Violence. But besides that- they had Rights! God Himself had spoken through Moses- that it was okay with God if they defended themselves. So, what was Jesus talking about?

Did it matter to Jesus that the Romans were evil pagans? Did it matter that they didn’t love God at all? Did it matter to Him that, most of the time- the Romans were the ones who instigated the altercations? It sure didn’t look like it in this Passage.

So, Jesus thinks it is okay for a pagan to just slap one of God’s children down to the ground? And He thinks it’s just fine for a violent soldier to just rip the clothes off of one of God’s people? And, evidently, Jesus thinks that a Husband should just allow an evil Idolator to molest his Wife. What could Jesus possibly use as Justification for such a weak; unworkable Teaching? He certainly could NOT use the Old Testament- because those 39 Books gave the Jew the Right to defend himself. So, why was Jesus talking like this?

Was Jesus promoting “*Pacifism*” as the Amish and the Mennonites and the Anabaptists teach He was? Was Jesus condemning any effort that a Man made to defend himself? And who in the world did Jesus think would be willing to follow Him; and embrace Him as the Messiah- if He was going to be so weak and so unwilling to allow Jews to defend themselves?

Now the Statements by Jesus here are almost universally praised today- even from those who despise almost everything else Jesus taught. These peaceful; gentle; non-violent Statements; these Pacifist Statements by the Lord here are almost *universally* recognized in our day- as being some of the most beautiful and lovely and godly Statements found anywhere else. And Jesus is compared to others like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. and they are praised- specifically- because of their “non-violent” tone. And this is true in spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of those, who praise these Statements, do NOT apply them to their own Lives.



But to the average Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- Jesus words here were *despised*; and almost *universally* rejected as being the dribble of a mad-man- who could certainly NOT be the Messiah. You see, because the average Jew of that day hated the Romans- they naturally thought that the Messiah would hate them too. Because the average Jew of that day prayed that the Romans would all die- they naturally thought that the Messiah would make that happen. And because the average Jew of that day would be happy to join in with whoever the Messiah would be- as long as that man would form an Army to slaughter the pagans- they naturally thought that forming that Army to do precisely that- would be the top Priority to whoever the Messiah would be.

And yet Jesus is teaching here to “*turn the other cheek*”; and “*give him your coat also*”; and “*walk with him two miles*”. And, in Context- He is talking about evil Pagans! Dirty Gentiles! So, in the mind of any *thinking* Jew of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- it is obvious that Jesus could NOT be the Messiah. And it is also obvious that Jesus was not even a good Jew.

But just in case, there might be some misunderstanding about what Jesus was Teaching here- He said this in verse 42:

**Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.**

So, it was obvious to the Jews that Jesus was a weak and foolish Sap, who was ripe to be taken advantage of. In their mind- Jesus was a sucker, who was begging people to use Him. And, based on His words here- Jesus wasn't a very good businessman either- because if you're not careful about loaning your money- you won't have any money to loan in short order.

There is not a single person in the Banking or the Financial disciplines today that would agree with this verse. Not one. And even though I have been in the Church for over 51 years- I have never met the first person, who actually obeys the words of Jesus here on any regular Basis. And I must confess that, I myself, have not obeyed Jesus about these Issues, to any great degree, either.

Now, maybe these Words have been mistranslated. Maybe Jesus didn't actually say what we think He said. But that would mean that Matthew was also fooled- because he was the one, who wrote these words down. And that would mean that we really can't trust the Bible. So, we have to rule that one out. So, what do we have left to go on? Four things:

1. Jesus actually spoke these words
2. He meant what He said
3. He expects Obedience

#### 4. He was NOT a Pacifist

... but that would mean that there is a much deeper and a much more important Reason why Jesus said these things.

Now keep in mind, as you struggle with this- that Jesus was NOT promoting “*Pacifism*”. And He wasn’t even advocating that His Church be “*Non-violent*” nor to think or operate in a “Self-defeating” mode.

And as you struggle with this Passage this week- also keep in mind that it doesn’t matter what this Passage means to you today- in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, American, Church. All that matters here is what Jesus had in mind when He spoke these words. And the ONLY way to arrive at that- is to utilize the Language in which Jesus *originally* spoke these words (Aramaic); and in which Matthew *originally* wrote them down (Hebrew); and NOT in our Language (English). And then *combine* that Information with the correct Context of the Passage.

But I do want to give you a huge Hint: Part of the correct Understanding of **Matthew 5:39-42** lies in the correct Understanding of verses 29&30.

But this is why all this matters: We love Jesus. And we seek to worship Jesus by struggling to obey what He said. But in order to do that- we must understand what He *meant* by what He said. And that requires that we “**accurately handle the Word of Truth**” (2Timothy 2:15). And that means that it isn’t enough that we *have* the Bible. It isn’t enough that we *believe* the Bible is the Word of God. It isn’t enough that we *read* the Bible. And it isn’t enough that we *study* the Bible. We MUST rightly and fully; correctly and completely **INTERPRET** the Bible- so that we come to the one, single, correct Meaning of every verse.

And, *how* you go about to interpret the Bible is where the “*rubber meets the road*”. How you interpret the Bible is the Difference between baptizing babies and baptizing Believers. It is the Difference in Justification being by Grace through Faith or Justification being by Grace through Faith-ALONE! It is the Difference between Man’s Will being important- but not Sovereign and God’s Will being important but not Sovereign. And how you interpret the Bible is the Difference between **Matthew 5:39-42** being a literal Commandment or a symbolic Example.

So, please pray about this Passage. And, if you can, try to work this Passage out this week- so that it remains true- but is not contradictory to any other Passage. And Lord willing, we will meet together again next Lord’s Day; and we will discover what the one single correct Meaning of this Passage really is.

Amen. Let’s pray.

*Enjoying God Ministries, Inc.* PO Box 147 Saucier, Mississippi 39574 [www.covenantofpeace.net](http://www.covenantofpeace.net)  
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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone