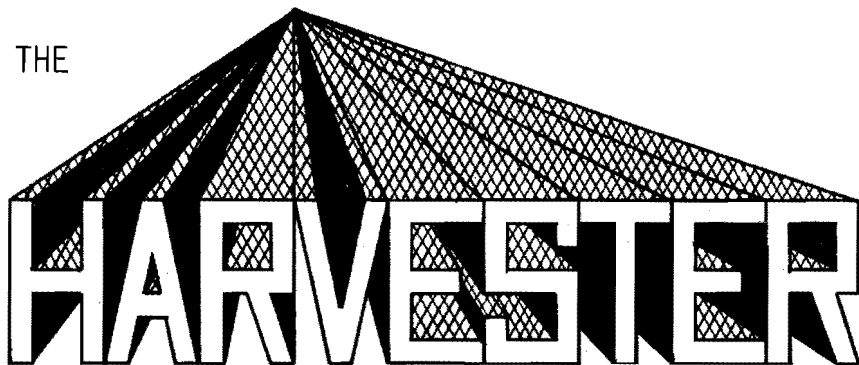


THE



"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

November 1988

No. 035

NOT NECESSARILY A NEW LAW!

From some of the letters received concerning Tony Whiddon's article, "Which Side of the Cross Do You Live On?", several points were made in favor of the "one cause for divorce" view. Due to limited space, we cannot deal with all the points at this particular writing but I feel we can answer one of the major arguments by conducting a brief but careful study of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount.

The passages in question are those where Christ said, *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time ... But I say unto you ..."* Many people think they have a good argument when they claim that in the first part Jesus is stating what the Old Law had to say and in the second

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half of the passage, He is giving a NEW law to His disciples. Thus, they feel that in Matthew 5:32 Christ gives only one reason for divorce which is valid today. In one letter a brother wrote, "To be honest you must admit that when Jesus said, 'AND I SAY' and 'BUT I SAY', can not be Moses' Law but Christ's law." Yet, is it really true that the statement of Christ is a NEW law to be followed only by His disciples?

When the Jewish people had questions concerning matters of the Law, they frequently asked for an interpretation from the scribes and Pharisees, who were supposed to be familiar with the scriptures. However, the scribes and Pharisees were guilty of teaching traditions and false practices to the people. This was pointed out by Jesus in Matthew 15:1-14 where He states they had been "*teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*"(v.9). Similarly, this is what Christ is pointing out to the multitudes and to His disciples throughout most of His Sermon on the Mount.

In Matt. 5:21 the legalistic Jews thought that as long as they did not actually kill anybody, then they were guiltless. "*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you...*" and now Jesus gives, NOT A NEW LAW, but an emphasis on the moral principle behind the original commandment, "*Thou shalt not kill*". "*That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*"(v.22) Jesus teaches here that being angry without a just cause is as evil as killing the person himself. To show that this is NOT a new law, we find the basis of "*agree with thine adversary quickly*"

stated under the OT in Prov. 25:8. *"Go not forth hastily to strive lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbor hath put thee to shame."* Although the wording may not be exact, the same principle is there.

The same understanding applies to Matt. 5:27 and 28. *"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."* Jesus was NOT teaching a new law in verse 28 as some would like to claim. He was merely stressing a general principle already given by God centuries earlier in Job 31:1, *"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"* and in Prov. 6:25, *"Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids".* Does it really look like Jesus is giving us a brand NEW law here? Is it not also possible for a woman to be guilty of committing adultery through lusting? Does it make a difference whether the person is a Jew or a Christian to be guilty of this sin? So we see the broad application of verse 28.

In Matt. 5:33 we hear what the scribes and Pharisees quoted to the people. *"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:"* But in vs. 34-37 Jesus again states the moral principle behind the law of Moses with v.37 being the clincher! *"But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."* Being cautious in speech

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is not a NEW law as can be evidenced through many of the sayings in Proverbs. *"In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise."*(Prov. 10:19)

One brother sent me a tract a few months ago that he had written and it said that Matt. 5:39 was not an explanation of v.38 but a new law from Christ. *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also."* If v.39 is a NEW law, then how shall we explain the thoughts found in Prov. 20:22? *"Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee."* And what about Lam. 3:30? *"He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach."* These were written long before Jesus spoke them in His sermon.

Next we read in Matt. 5:43 that *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy."* Where in the Old Law is it written to *"hate thine enemy"*? Or was this command added by the Jews? *"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"*(v.44) Once again Jesus corrects their false teaching by reminding them what the wise king Solomon wrote in Prov. 25:21-22, *"If*

thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee". Telling them to "love your enemies" was not a NEW law after all!

It is surprising to note that many other teachings by Christ in this Sermon on the Mount are actually found in the OT. But the principles behind each one are not necessarily limited to the Jews or to Christians only. These truths have been applicable to all men, regardless of which dispensation they lived under.

Now we are ready to discuss the controversial verses in Matt. 5:31,32. *"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."*

Again we see how the Jews have twisted the Old Law. According to Deut. 24:1-4, a man could not "put away" his wife until he wrote her a bill of divorcement. This would prevent him from acting too hastily. However, the Jews were divorcing for "every cause"(Matt. 19:3), sometimes without giving the writing of divorcement. Thus they made a traditional law that if a dismissal of a spouse occurred, then it had to be finalized with a writing of divorcement. Under these terms, reconciliation in a marriage became very rare and infrequent.

In v.32 Jesus emphasizes the moral principle behind the original law. It was never God's intent for married people to divorce each other (Matt. 19:6). If a divorce did occur, then the subsequent re-marriages would result in the committing of adultery--a sin which God specifically forbade in the command, *"Thou shalt not*

commit adultery". Therefore, Jesus explains the serious consequences should a man decide to "put away" (i.e., depart, dismiss, cause to leave, etc.) his wife.

When a man separates from his wife for some length of time, she is open to the temptation of having a sexual relationship outside of her marriage due to her lack of self control. Compare this with 1 Cor. 7:5, *"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency (lack of control)."* If she does succumb to the temptation, then her husband is partly responsible for her action. He helped "cause" the adultery by placing her in such a vulnerable position. But if she is already guilty of "fornication" and her husband has separated from her due to that situation, then he can no longer be responsible for "causing" her to have illicit sex forthwith. She had already fallen into Satan's temptation before she was "put away", thus the act of "putting away the wife" can not be the "cause" of her unfaithfulness. She has no one to blame but herself.

In effect, Jesus is teaching that *"whosoever puts away his wife ... causeth* (is also responsible for) *her to commit adultery*". The "exception" would be if there was a case of "fornication" in the wife before she was "put away". Then the husband would not be blamed for the fall of his spouse. In the last part of v.32 Jesus clearly teaches that anyone who marries a divorced person commits adultery. Nowhere in this passage is Christ promoting divorce under ANY circumstances but is showing the unfavorable results if one does "put away". These principles are in direct harmony with what the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 7:10,11. *"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:*

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife."

I realize there will be many brethren upset with the thoughts presented in this particular article but it is the Gospel Truth as I have studied it. My sincerest prayer today is that these comments will now invoke a further understanding among God's people on the evils of divorce.

RAY McMANUS

ONE TALENT

I have no voice for singing;
 I cannot make a speech;
 I have no gift for music;
 I know I cannot teach.
 I am no good at leading;
 I cannot "organize";
 And anything I write
 Would never win a prize.
 But at roll call in the meetings
 I always answer, "Here."
 When others are performing
 I lend a listening ear.
 After service is over
 I praise its every part.
 My words are not to flatter;
 I mean them from the heart.
 It seems my only talent
 Is neither big nor rare;
 Just to listen and encourage,
 And to fill a vacant chair.
 But all the gifted people
 Could not so brightly shine
 Were it not for those who use
 A talent such as mine.

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Nov. 4-6	Mt. Olive Church near Huntsville, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Nov. 11-13 (F-Su)	Pleasant Grove Church near Alex City, AL 7:00 evenings	Rufus Williams (Montgomery, AL)

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. Did anyone go with Saul when he consulted the medium of Endor?
2. Where did Rahab tell the spies to go for three days until the pursuers gave up looking for them?
3. With what attitude should you lend?
4. According to Zephaniah, what kind of bird will inhabit the desolated Nineveh?
5. In which New Testament book does the name "Jesus" not appear?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who advised the Midianite women to turn the Israelites away from their Lord? BALAAM (Num 31:16)
2. How many children did Abraham and his second wife have? SIX (Gen. 25:2)
3. What aspect of heathen worship did God particularly mention and forbid in Deuteronomy 12? BURNING THEIR CHILDREN (Deut. 12:31)
4. Why was Lazarus of Bethany allowed to become sick? FOR THE GLORY OF GOD (John 11:4)
5. Jeremiah bought Hanameel's field. What relationship was Hanameel to Jeremiah? COUSINS (Jer. 32:8)