

COMPARING MOSAIC AND JESUS' ETHICAL TEACHING ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: A PARADIGM FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANS

OLANLEGE, Joshua Olayinka (PhD) & AKABIKE, Gladys Nkechi (PhD)

¹Department of Religions & Peace Studies, Lagos State University, Ojo.

olanlegejoas@gmail.com 08062383033

²Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, University of Nigeria Nsukka

Gladys.akabike@unn.edu.ng 08060477522

Abstract

The study presents an analytical comparison between the Mosaic laws and the ethical teaching of Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:21-48 as a paradigm for the contemporary Christians. The objectives of this study are to reveal the standard of Jesus' teaching over the Old Testament teaching on laws to counter the erroneous belief in the early church that, Christians were not giving standard teachings to their members. That, New Testament is adulteration of the Old Testament. Various teachings, most especially the Mosaic laws in the selected passage revealed that, as Jesus as Rabbi taught his followers strong and hard teachings or doctrines than the Mosaic Rabbis and other religious leaders who claim to be righteous and holier. The methods employed for the study include: historical, narrative and descriptive. The historical method helped the researcher to compare and contrast between the decalogue and Mosaic laws with the sermon on the mount. The narrative method helped to narrate the six antitheses, vis-à-vis; murder, adultery, divorce, retaliation, oath the relevance of the ethical teaching to the contemporary society with emphasis on Christians who are expected to live an outstanding life. The study concluded with emphasis on the necessity of the ethical teaching in the society and church in the contemporary era.

Keywords: Murder, Adultery, Divorce, Retaliation, and Love

Introduction

The beginning of this chapter opens with Jesus going to on the mountain. Hence, it is called sermon on the mount. The sermons cover chapter 5 to 7 of the gospel of Matthew. While sitting down on the mountain, the disciples came to him and he taught them several ethical lessons. The location of the mountain is uncertain, a tradition says, it was Horns of Hattin, (Halley, 1965: 433) but it was likely in the vicinity of Capernaum (since Capernaum was the headquarters of Jesus' ministry). Following the custom of the rabbis, Jesus sat while teaching. The disciples included a wider audience than the disciples. (Hayford, & Chappell, etal. 2002:1296). In this section of the sermon on the Mount, Jesus apparently reinterprets the Mosaic law. He did not actually reinterpret it as much as He clarified the intent behind certain laws. Jesus not only clarified the law but corrected erroneous interpretation by the self-righteous, legalistic Pharisaic establishment (Collin, 2020:1).

This paper examines the Mosaic laws in the selected passage and compare them with the teachings or the laws of Jesus Christ in the New Testament as rightly evaluated by Jesus Christ Himself during his earthly ministry. These teachings are critically applied by the researcher to reveal the efficacy of Jesus' teaching over the Mosaic teaching. It aims at revealing to us the standard of Jesus; teaching over the Old Testament teaching to

counter the erroneous belief in the early church that, Christians were not giving standard teachings to their members. That, New Testament is adulteration of the Old Testament. Various teachings, most especially the Mosaic laws in the selected passage reveal to us that, as Jesus as Rabbi taught his followers strong and hard teachings or doctrines than the Mosaic Rabbis and other religious leaders who claim to be righteous and holier.

The researcher uses the comparing of the two teachings to challenge the contemporary preachers and church leaders not to lower the standard of the scripture as it is a big challenge today. He uses the paper to set a paradigm for the contemporary and compromising society to learn from the teachings of Jesus Christ in setting standard for their Church/ministry in this deplorable era when pews are the one now dictating for the pulpits. This paper intends to challenge both old and new generations in the church to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ on the ethical standard which in turn, it is believed to transform the sacred and secular society of ours.

Matthew has multiple purposes in writing his book. His primary aim was to show that Jesus was Messiah promised by God in the Old Testament. Thus, the various events in the life of Jesus are seen as fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. Matthew also wished to demonstrate the relationship between Jesus' ministry and the Jewish religion. (Quarcoopome, 1985:27). Another aim of this gospel was to satisfy the needs of the church at worship, in matters of discipline and ethics and in her missionary work. (Quarcoopome, 1985:27). Furthermore, the gospel was designed to guide the life of the early church in at least three main areas-worship; discipline and ethical conduct and missionary work. (Quarcoopome,1985: 25). There is much emphasis on the ethical teachings of Jesus to provide instructive and valued guidance and the systematic arrangements of the gospel have made it to be the most useful for teaching.

Ayegboyin (2022) referred to how Guthrie quoted Stendahl who said, "the author of the gospel of Matthew who was a Christian Rabbi produced this book in form of a manual for teaching and administration within the church. (Ayegboyin,2022: 97). It cannot be denied that, there was an apologetic background to this gospel. It provided the church with an indispensable tool in its task of defending its belief against attacks from Jewish opponents. Among the aspects of Jesus' life attacked were; the reality of the birth of Jesus Christ, his resurrection and the allegation of the Jews that Christianity had lowered the standard of morality.

Ayegboyin quoted Tasker who described this gospel as "an early Christian apology". In his further explanation, he said, the ethical teaching of Jesus is also emphasised, to show that contrary to the allegation of the Jews that Christianity had lowered the standard of morality, in actual fact, the Christian rather lived a highly disciplined life of fellowship based on the record of the deeds and words of their Lord which was read to them week by week in the orderly form provided in the gospel. (Ayegboyin, 2022:97). He exhorts the Christians not to relent in their exemplary ethical conduct since the glorious return of Christ is imminent. (Ayegboyin, 2022:104).

This gospel showcased to both the religious and political authority of the first century that Christianity was a disciplined religion. It explained high level of discipline while making allusion to how an erred member should be disciplined. The church authority did not compromise in the area of discipline especially on the extent of excommunicating the

member who could not meet up to the moral standard set by the church. (Matt. 18:15-17) They have the authority to bind and loose, which implies, discipline of the sinned members and the release of the members that repented of their sins.

Theoretical Framework

What really is the proper relation of the Christian today to the law of Moses? This is a question that has been debated interminably. Opposite and extreme positions have been taken; the solution of one party will be rejected by another party. No solution is adequate. In the law of Moses, there is a valid distinction between the moral, the civil or judicial, and the ceremonial legislation given through Moses. (Broomall, 2008:1019). The issue of relation of Christians to law of Moses is not a current issue, it began in the time of Jesus Christ. In addressing the issue, Jesus responded by saying;

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-19)

The statement, “*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil*”, this has been given different interpretations, Holman says, this statement means, he has come to bring to completion everything to which it originally pointed. (Dockery, 2010: 408) Some believe that Jesus demonstrated just the opposite with His contrasts in verses 21-48. These verses make plain, however, that Jesus was setting up dramatic contrasts between His teaching and the typical interpretations of the law. (Dockery, 2010: 408) What actually led to the statement here was that, the religious leaders charged Jesus of abrogating the Law and the Prophets. In response to their allegation, He said, he has come to fulfil the Old Testament which implies, he has come to bring into completion its partial revelation, in bringing to pass its Messianic predictions, and in giving the true interpretation to its moral precepts. (Hayford, & Chappell, etal. 2002: 1297).

By Jesus saying that He has come to “fulfil” the scripture has been given wider interpretations. The Greek word for “fulfil” is *plerosai*. According to Greek scholars, the nuisance and meaning of this word is difficult to express in English, and several possibilities have been offered. These are summarized by four options:

1. Jesus came to accomplish or obey the Holy Scriptures,
2. to bring out the full meaning of the Holy Scriptures,
3. to bring those Scriptures to their intended completion,
4. to emphasize that the Scriptures point to him as Messiah and are fulfilled in His salvation work.

In the Old Testament times, there were about 613 commandments in the Torah, 365 commandments are called negatives because they teach people to abstain from doing bad things while 248 are referred to as positives because they remind us of the good things we need to do. These laws are divided into moral, civil and the ceremonial laws. Jesus obeyed all these laws by paying tax (Matthew 17:24-27, 22:15-22), being circumcised, presented

in the temple on his fortieth day (Luke 3:21, Leviticus 12:1-8) He observed Passover and also encouraged His disciples to do same. (Ukatu, Chukwuemeka, Idih, 2020: 51-52) Besides, he fulfilled and improved on the laws as we shall be learning in this paper. The only laws that seemed not to have been obeyed to the letter was the tradition of the Elders which were human-made and not God-made. These he vehemently condemned. A good example is corban, ceremonial cleansing and selfish sabbath observance.

The Antithetical Analysis of Matthew 5:21-48

Matthew's position vis-à-vis the law remains a debated issue and a challenge in Matthean studies and exegesis. While Matthew's Jesus is adamant about observing the law in some passages (5:17-20; 7:12; 11:3; 22:34-40), he seems at first glance to soften or contradict himself with his interpretation and application (15:1-20), or even set aside specific commandments of the law (5:31-42; 12:1-14; 15:11). Elsewhere in his Gospel, Matthew portrays Jesus frequently in debates with the scribes and Pharisees concerning the law. These include Jesus' lifestyle, views and practices with regard to the Sabbath (12:1-21), fasting (9:14-17), purity (15:10-20), divorce (19:1-12), and association with tax collectors and sinners (9:10-13) differ sharply with many religious teachers and the traditional Jewish interpretation of the law of the day, as illustrated in 5:21-48 (Nguyen, 2020: 1).

These episodes are perceived as attacks against the Law of Moses and infringements of the accepted *halakah*. Furthermore, series of six antitheses in 5:21-48 raises some questions: What was the issue at stake? Did Jesus abolish the law and the prophets? If not, how did he fulfil it? What is the function of the pericope, and subsequently the antitheses, within the Matthean? (Nguyen, 2020: 2). The sermon on the mount was divided by the scholars into three. The idea of the Sermon's division into three has been unquestionably accepted by many scholars. Frederick and Boaheng (2020) quoting Dale C. Allison who opines that, the tripartite division of the Sermon are; Torah (5:17-48), Christian cult (6:1-18) and the Social issues (6:19-7:12). The passage under consideration falls within the second part of the first division which is Matt. 5:21-48 (the so-called Great Antitheses). The Antitheses describe how the righteousness of Jesus' followers can exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. (Frederick & Boaheng, 2020: 3).

The scribes and Pharisees who claimed to be righteous were hypocrites based on the standard of Jesus Christ. People would have noticed their counterfeit righteousness, but nobody could bell the cat until Jesus came to attack them. Contrary to an opinion that Jesus was attacking the Torah, Jesus was not actually attacking the Torah which he was among the parties who gave them to Moses. Rather, he was revealing the secrets of the religious leaders of his time to his followers and audience with the intention to teach them on how their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Scholars refer to this section in Matthew as the 'Antitheses'. An antithesis, which means 'opposite' is a rhetorical device in which two opposite ideas are put together in a sentence to achieve a contrasting effect. Harrington cautions that "When applied to Matt 5:21-48 the word 'antithesis' fits the rhetorical pattern but not the content" (Harrington 1991:90). The method used by Jesus was a conventional approach to teaching in the 1st century AD (Martin,2001:4). We now turn to the analysis of the antitheses of Matthew 5:21-48 to show their function in developing disciples. In this study, we consider the analysis of the six antitheses found in the selected passages. (Moenga,2020:33).

1. Murder and Anger (Matthew 5:21-26): Jesus started with the sixth commandment, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). The Greek word for murder is *phoneuo* which means to kill a man unjustly. Murder is the crime of unlawfully killing a person especially with malice aforethought. In the OT passages (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17) the Hebrew word for “murder” which is *ratsach* refers to pre-meditated, deliberate, intentional murder not accidental killing. It is used while speaking of one human being killing another and never of a person killing an animal. The taking of a human life is the primary concept behind this word. It refers to the premeditated (Dt. 5:17; 1 Kgs. 21:19; Jer. 7:9), or accidental taking of the life of another human being (Nu. 35:11; Josh. 20:3) and includes any unauthorized killing. (Amevenku & Boaheng, 2020:1) Jesus said that in God's sight it was not only the man who committed murder who was guilty, the man who was angry with his brother was also guilty and liable to judgment.

A proper reading of Matt. 5:21–26 reveals that personal anger, whether latent (ὀργιζόμενος) or patent (ῥακά, μωρέ) is expressly prohibited by God. Any offender is as good as a murderer before God (ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει). Personal anger inhibits the bearer from offering acceptable offering and worship as it nonetheless makes one to have death for their desert and hell for their destiny. This study argued that repressed or expressed personal anger, whether mild or severe, innocuous or derogatory, in committed or omitted deeds, is no less than murder before God, and no individual Christian can claim to be justifiably angry with another. (Abuor, 2021:2-3) Jesus agreed with the Torah's commandment of murder, but further stressed that murder is only the tip of an iceberg since, before murder is committed, there should have been a pent-up hatred and anger.

Jesus therefore broadened the law to include prohibition against hatred; anger and abusive words, which he said are as serious violation of God's will for his people as the overt act of murder. He warned; by saying whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, (the act of using insulting word) shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall call his brother a fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. And the act of malice would not make our offering as services acceptable unto God except we reconcile. (Ayegboyin, 2022:36).

2. Adultery (Matthew 5:27-30): The second antithesis, like the first, cited a commandment from the Decalogue, the seventh commandment of Exodus 20:14, and Deut. 5:18 which reads “You shall not commit adultery” (οὐ μοιχεύσεις), Matthew in his characteristic version follows the quotation with its rejoinder, “But I say to you.” Jesus states another antithesis to the divine injunction οὐ μοιχεύσεις, by saying, πᾶς ὁ βλέπων γυναῖκα πρὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμῆσαι αὐτήν ἤδη ἐμοίχευσεν αὐτήν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ (Everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart) (Moenga, 2020: 33-34).

This again demonstrates Jesus' interpretation of the law. Just as attitudes of anger are condemned in the first antithesis. Here Jesus condemns lust which leads to adultery. Jesus' major concern is not the act per se, but the thoughts that bring forth the action. In other words, transformation for a disciple of Jesus must be from inside out and not the other way around. This comes as a result of internalizing the law as interpreted by Jesus. While in the OT, it was the act of adultery that was condemned, Jesus condemns a person's thoughts and desires. Clearly, not only is the deed of the sinful look, but also the perverted will of an individual is the object of Jesus' statement of judgment (Strecker

1988:71). Besides, Jesus' interpretation of the seventh commandment reveals a problem of its full interpretation by the rabbis. The problem of the rabbis was that they provided a convenient definition of adultery at the expense of sexual purity (Stott 1978, 87). The disciple is hereby warned that the law must get its fullest interpretation and application. Strecker rightly argued, "Jesus demands wholeness and undividedness, that is, human perfection" (Strecker 1988:71).

While the verb μοιχεύω (to commit adultery) generally is used in connection with a married spouse whereby both the woman and the desiring man sin against the rights of each other. However, in the context of Matthew, Jesus is against all forms of sexual impropriety. Accordingly, sexual impurity, whether within marriage or outside of marriage is sinful. This is evidenced by the Greek accusative noun γυναῖκα that is used in 5:28 where it refers either to a 'woman' in general or a 'wife.' Jesus' interpretation of the OT injunction shows His concern for proper relationships between man and woman, married or unmarried. Accordingly, in Matthew, Jesus disapproves of any forms of sexual impropriety terming them sinful and that they must be avoided by His disciples. Philo also indicates that violation of this injunction has far-reaching implications in that it can affect even an entire city (The Decalogue. XXIII. 127) (Philo & Yonge 1993: 52)

3. Divorce (Matthew 5:31-32). The third antithesis is simply introduced by the verb ἐπέθη ("It was said ...") unlike the first two antitheses which had a full statement ("You heard that it was said to those of old ..."). The third quotation is not taken from the Decalogue as the first two we have discussed. This time Jesus quotes from the Mosaic Law. The wording of this quotation is not the same as in LXX Deuteronomy where the quotation is taken from. Jesus here summarizes the OT injunction taken from Deuteronomy 24:1. There is also some textual variation between LXX and MT. The LXX's basis of divorce is πορνεία (fornication/prostitution) while in the MT is דָּבָר עָרְוָה (literally; nakedness of a thing, some indecency) (Strecker 1988, 75). One, then, wonders how Jesus' rendering of "indecency" is equivalent to "fornication/prostitution." It should be noted that the two terms πορνεία (fornication) and μοιχεύω (adultery) are not identical in Matthew. Jesus in his response to the Mosaic Law regarding divorce negates what the Law of Moses permitted by pointing out that divorce can only be justified, παρεκτός λόγου πορνείας (except on the ground of infidelity), otherwise if the divorced woman marries both she and the new husband commit adultery. However, this can be resolved through repentance of the spouse and forgiveness by the husband/wife instead of divorce. To Jesus, divorce was not (and still is not) the ideal will of God but only His permissive will. In principle, remarriage is adulterous because God is opposed to divorce (Keener 1997:119).

In Matthew 19, Jesus revisits the issues of divorce and cites Genesis, arguing that it has never been God's intention (Matt. 19:3-9). However, when the Pharisees objected to Jesus' interpretation, citing Moses' consent for issuing a certificate of divorce among dissatisfied couples, Jesus reiterated that divorce is not permitted for His disciples just as God rejected it (Mal. 2:16). Since the bill of divorce was a permissive will of God or Moses' alternative to reduce pressure on him, according to this passage, Jesus vehemently discouraged divorce. Jesus knew that most infidelity leads to death according to Mosaic law and not rightly divorce. (Nmalada, 2016 :33).

4. Oaths (Matthew 5:22-37): The Old Testament says, “You shall not swear falsely but shall perform to the Lord what you sworn.” Here, Jesus gave some new attitudes to replace the old law. He said, “Do not swear at all”. Jesus holds that oaths are an evidence of the loss of truthfulness, and so he charged his audience to speak the truth so that when they say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ everyone will believe them. (Ayegboyin, 2022:37).

5. Retaliation (Matthew 5:38-42): “...*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: ...*” is found in Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20 and Deut. 19:21). This Mosaic law allows personal revenge. The principal of this law was that, the punishment must be equal to the crime and not in excess of it. Jesus on the other hand asked his adherents to do more than what this principle required (Ayegboyin, 2022:38) in practical ways by referring to; slapping, releasing cloak as against the collection of tunics, going to extra mile as against one mile, giving to those who ask and borrowing whoever wants to borrow. Jesus lists four examples of non-retribution. The first of these was turning the other cheek. The back-handed slap was an extreme insult used by a superior on an inferior in Jewish culture: The Jewish law “specifies the various fines for striking an equal: for slugging with a fist, 4 zuz (a zuz was a day’s wage); for slapping, 200 zuz; but ‘if [he struck him] with the back of his hand he must pay him 400 zuz.’ But damages for indignity were not paid to slaves who were struck (Collins, 2020:5). This show the endurance Jesus was teaching His adherents to have.

6. Love for One’s enemy (Matthew 5:43-48): In the six antitheses contained in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave new meaning to the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament. In the first five, he addressed the Laws on murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, and revenge. In the sixth, Matthew 5:43-48, he taught the meaning of God’s love. (Carswell. 2000: 5) It is Jesus’ norm to modify His quotations. Once again in the last antithesis (5:43–44), Jesus cites some parts of Leviticus 19:18 on the commandment to love one’s neighbor. The LXX reads ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτὸν ἐγὼ εἰμι κύριος (You shall love your neighbor as yourself, I am the Lord). Here the LXX is faithful to the MT which also reads: יהוה אֱמַרְי כְמוֹדִי לְרַעְדָּךְ וְאָהַבְתָּ (and you shall love your neighbor as yourself, I am the Lord). This shows that the rest of the words “and hate your enemy” are Jesus’ additions to clarify the meaning of the commandment. Some OT passages intimate to this aspect of ‘hating one’s enemy’ (See 2 Chr. 19:2; Ps 5:5; 139:21) and the story of Elisha calling down bears upon some young men who were mocking him (2 Kgs. 2:23–25). Allison in support states, “The closest parallels occur in the Dead Sea Scroll. (Moenga, 2020: 6).

According to the Torah, Jews were allowed to hate their enemies (non-Jews or the tax collectors) while they should love their neighbors (the fellow Jews who do not support political authority or rule in their time, or the co-party member, for instance, the neighbor of Pharisees is Pharisees and not Sadducees etc) Another key word in these verses is “love.” There were four Greek words for love. The word *storge* referred to family love; *eros* referred to the passionate nature of human love; and, *philia* referred to the feelings between close friends. The word used in these verses was *agape* which means unconquerable benevolence and invincible goodwill. A person can only have agape love through Jesus Christ who enables us to conquer our natural tendency to anger and bitterness. (Carswell. 2000: 6).

The human tendency even today is to respond to hostility and hurt with revenge and bitterness. In addition, racism and prejudice exist today just as they did in Jesus' day. From this standpoint, Jesus' instruction to love everyone, both neighbors and enemies, is just as applicable for modern Christians as it was to the early church. The only way to show the agape form of love to others is through a relationship with Jesus Christ. (Carswell. 2000: 6).

Matthew 5:21-48: A Paradigm for the Contemporary Christians

The intension of Jesus Christ was to teach his audience the necessity to be more righteous than the people in their generation most especially the religious leaders who claimed to be one but they are not. As earlier said in this paper, Matthew, the supposed author of this gospel had the intention of apology by revealing to the Roman government and the adherents of Judaism that, Christianity founded by Jesus was of a high standard than Judaism and other ancient religions contrary to the accusation levelled against them. The teachings of Jesus Christ are expected to be a paradigm for the contemporary Christians. This aspect could be called the moral lessons or recommendations for the readers. The ethical lessons go thus:

- 1) The act of murder goes beyond physical but it begins in the heart. And whoever cannot control his or her anger is liable to commit homicide. To Jesus, an angry and insulting man is a murderer. And their services would not be acceptable to God, then, they would be judged to hell fire. Imbibing this teaching would definitely control malice and incessant killing in our society.
- 2) Sexual immoralities are not committed in the heart as a result of uncontrolled lust against the opposite sex. Adultery, fornication, masturbation, Paedophilia, lesbianism, homosexuality, and all sexual immoralities should be checked mate in the heart. This paper is relevant in this era when there are records of Pastors, lecturers, Bosses, parents, Church departmental heads and members to mention but few are having illicit sex which claims lives, jobs and make some people to lose their dignity. There is a need for sexual purity and discipline in this age.
- 3) The teaching of Jesus Christ is that marriage is sacred and binding. Since God hates divorce, the prospective couples should think very well before entering into marriage. The cases of divorce in our courts today are in thousands without the exemption of Christian families. This paper suggests serious premarital and marital counselling to reduce this menace in the entire society and specifically in the Church. And the causes of infidelity which includes frigidity to sex should be abolished. Then, endurance and perseverance among the Christian couples should be encouraged in this time of economic unsustainability.
- 4) This passage brings out the ethical teaching on truthfulness, honesty and faithfulness. It is not until someone swears, before the society believes him/her. Everyone must strive to build their integrity that would command confidence in this falsehood society. This paper is believed to transform the life of fake witness in our court today.
- 5) This passage teaches people most especially Christian against revenge or retaliation. Retaliation is a product of hatred, anger, unforgiveness. If retaliation is shunned, our society would be peaceful. Forgiveness, endurance, perseverance, patience, meekness and all the fruit of the spirit would be in place and evangelisation of unbelievers becomes easy for the Christians.

- 6) It is inferred from the passage that agape love should be at the right place among the followers of Jesus. Christian's love should not be restricted to the co-Christians but to everybody including notorious unbelievers. This teaching on love agrees on the emphasis of the Jesus Christ that his adherents should display a righteous than the religious leaders and the political leaders of their time. Christians of this age are also expected to show love of Christ to all people through which salvation of souls would be recorded. They should shun hypocritical holiness.

Summary and Conclusion

In summary, our exegetical analysis of Matthew 5:21–48 reveals that the disciple of Jesus was expected to display a high level of righteousness (fulfill the demands of the law). This is because the disciple of Jesus has been divinely empowered to live the Christian life. This is made possible by the disciple entering into a cooperative journey with God as he/she follows the way of Christ.

The distinctive Christian lifestyle of the disciple of Jesus begins with the inner transformation of the heart. Jesus made it vivid that a transformed heart harbors no evil intents and thoughts such as of murder and hatred towards a brother as the first antithesis reveals (Mat 5:21–26). It also combats evils attitudes such as the desire to commit adultery as the second antithesis shows (Mat 5:27–30). In this case, inner transformation influences the behavior of a disciple. The right attitudes in the heart lead to the right actions of a disciple. Therefore, the disciple of Jesus is supposed to guard his heart for, “from it flow the springs of life” (Prov. 4:23). Indeed, the distinctive life upon which the disciple is called to manifest is meant for purposes of witnessing for God through speech and action. This is why in the third antithesis (Mat 5:33–37), the wrong use of speech of oath-taking is discouraged.

Therefore, the disciple of Jesus is expected to demonstrate integrity in the area of speech. The fifth antithesis (5:38–42) further demonstrated the need to lead a life of non-retaliation. The disciple of Jesus is called to do much more than what the law simply demands. He/she is to live beyond the norm having been divinely empowered to witness for God in a world whose morals are quickly eroding. Finally, the sixth antithesis (5:43–48) highlights the guiding principle of fulfilling the demands of law which is obedience to the law of love. The study has also demonstrated that the theme of ethical teaching of Jesus Christ, though implicit in the antitheses which we have analyzed. It has revealed the standard of the New Testament laws over the Old Testament laws. Therefore, Jesus' depiction of the role of standard moral living is evident in Matthew 5:21–48 in this study as against the immoral teaching in the deplorable world.

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