

- PRAY
- READ Matthew 5:43-48

Theme of Matthew: “Behold your King is coming to you” (Zech.9:9; Mt.21:4-5)

Theme of the Beatitudes: Christ’s Portrait of His People (John Stott)

Theme of the Sermon on the Mount: Life Styles of the Rich and Famous

CHARTING THE COURSE FOR THIS EVENING:

- Review
- Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:43-47)
- Be perfect (Matthew 5:48)

NOTE: Matthew 5:43-48 is the most radical contrast between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees. In fact, it is the hardest teaching of the Sermon on the Mount to reconcile with parts of the Old Testament.

THE LAW AND LOVE OF ENEMIES (vv.43-47//Luke 6:27-36; Leviticus 19:18; cf. Deuteronomy 10:19; Job 31:29-30; Matthew 19:19; 22:37-40; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8)

What is an enemy? (v.44)

“Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, Or exulted when evil befell him? “No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life in a curse. (Job 31:29-30).

What is our response to be when another wrongs us?

Which of the beatitudes does this teaching reflect?

How does the life and death of Jesus exemplify “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”?

“We can no more save ourselves from our enemies than we can save ourselves from sin, but God’s amazing grace offers to save us from both” (John Stoner quoted in Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers* p.263).

How had the scribes and Pharisees “restricted” the meaning of the law in Leviticus 19:18?

How does Jesus “expand” the meaning of the law in Leviticus 19:18? (Matthew 5:43)

Why are we to love our enemies? (Matthew 5:45; cf. Gen.17:20; 39:5; Ps.36:6; 145:9, 15, 16; Jonah 4:10, 11; Mark 8:2; Luke 6:35, 36; Acts 14:16, 17; Rom. 2:4; and I Tim. 4:10)

Jonah 4:10-11

Then the Lord said, “You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work and which you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. 11 “Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?”

What do those Jews who “hate their enemies” or greet only their “brothers” have in common with tax-collectors and Gentiles? (vv.46-47)

Does loving our enemies mean that things will go well for us in this lifetime?

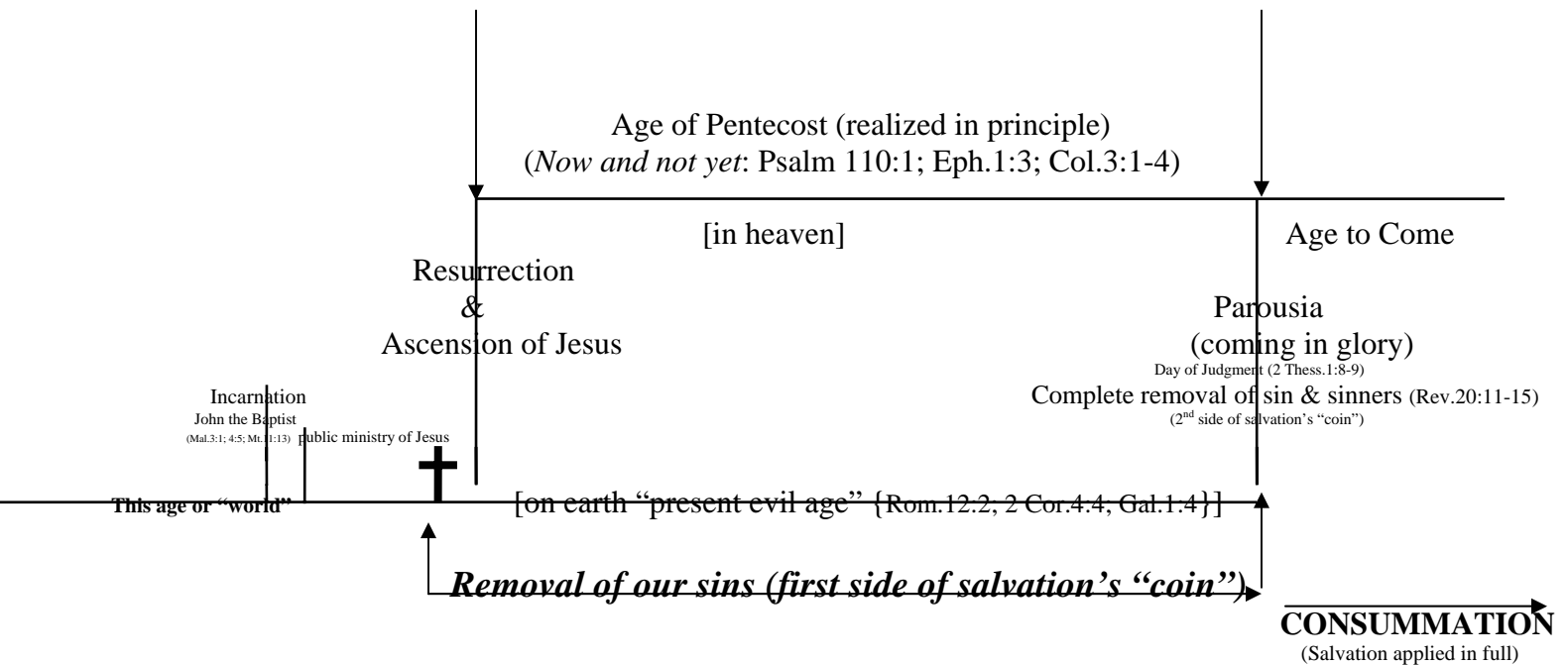
“A Jew sees one of them [Gentiles] fallen into the sea; let him by no means lift him out thence: for it is written, ‘Thou shalt not rise up against the blood of thy neighbour’: but this is not thy neighbour” (John Lightfoot’s Commentary on the New Testament).

The Old Testament contains several beautiful examples of love for enemies (Exodus 23:4-5; 2 Kings 6:8-23 [Elisha]; 2 Chronicles 28:15; Psalm 35:12-14; 109:5; Proverbs 25:21,22).

Why was the Old Testament kingdom manifested through bloodshed and the killing of enemies? For example, David:

- ✓ Defeated the Philistines and subdued them
- ✓ Defeated Moab
- ✓ Defeated Hadadezer, the son of Rehob king of Zobah
- ✓ Killed 22,000 Arameans
- ✓ Made all the Edomites become his servants, etc. (2 Samuel 8)

What is different about the kingdom of heaven in this age from the kingdom in the time of David?



“Two dangers exist in theology regarding the relationship between the Testaments: they are either stated to be identical or to differ substantially” (Richard Kyle, “John Knox: A Man of the Old Testament” *Westminster Theological Journal* 54:66).

SUMMARY

- The 1st century Jewish view of the “kingdom” was and still is wrong. They thought the kingdom would be reestablished by having a Messianic King on earth who would spill the blood of their enemies. Jesus’ view of the Kingdom is far greater. The kingdom would be established by binding up the strong man, crushing his head at the cross, accomplishing redemption, sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven, pouring forth the Spirit upon all flesh, and calling the nations to Himself (see Psalm 22).
- **The Kingdom of heaven is established through violence and bloodshed!** But in this age, it is the violence and bloodshed of the cross. It is established by those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, and being insulted and falsely accused of all kinds of evil because of Jesus (Matthew 5:10-11).
- Just as Jesus was victorious through His blood (Revelation 5:1-7) so the war on earth in this age will be won only by the blood of the saints, “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death” (Revelation 12:11).
- The Judgment Day is coming when Jesus will shed the blood of His enemies (Revelation 19:11-21). But until that Day, we are to take up our crosses, die to ourselves, love our enemies, pray for those who persecute us, and pray “Come quickly Lord Jesus” (Rev.22:20).

My colleague Stanley Hauerwas says that “Methodists have one theological conviction: God is nice. This is followed by an ethical corollary: We ought to be nice too.” One of our challenges in preaching Matt 5:43–48 may be that we contemporary North American followers of Jesus have become so bland and uninteresting that we no longer have enemies to love. So, rather than have the opportunity obediently to love our enemies, all we can do is to be nice to the world that, sensing no threat in us, has been relatively nice to us (Citation: William Willimon Sermon on “Matthew 5:43-48” in *Interpretation*, January 2003 p.62).

THE PROBLEM OF CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY

Traditionally, Reformed theology has heavily emphasized, and as in the case of John Knox, overemphasized the continuity between Old and New Testament:

- ✓ Reformed theology sees continuity in baptism of infants, singing of Psalms, validity of Ten Commandments, etc.
- ✓ John Knox (1513-1574) said that Christians were obligated to revolt against a tyrannical monarch. Knox, and many following in his footsteps failed to understand the discontinuity between the Old and New Testament administration of the covenant.
 - And therefore, yet again, dearly Beloved in oure Savioure Jesus Christ, hope you against hope, and againste all worldly apperaunce. For so assuredly as God is immutable, so assuredly shall he styr up one Jehu or other to execute hys vengeance upon these bloudde-thyrsty tyrauntes and obstinate idolaters.¹
 - God, for his great mercies sake, stirre up some Phinees, Helias [Elijah], or Jehu, that the bloude of abhominable idolaters maye pacifie Goddes wrath, that it consume not the whole multitude. Amen.²
 - Knox, speaking to the Queen of England:
Majesty. “Will ye,” said she “allow that they shall take my word in their hand?” “The Sword of Justice;” said he [Knox], “Madam, is God’s and is given to Princes and rulers for an end, which, if they transgress, sparing the wicked, and oppressing innocents, they that in the fear of God executes judgment where God hath commanded, offends not God, although Kings do it not; neither yet sin they that bridles kings to strike innocent men in their rage. The examples are evident; for Samuel feared not to slay

¹Knox, J. (2003). *The works of John Knox*. Serial. (Vol. 3, Page 247). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

²Knox, J. (2003). *The works of John Knox*. Serial. (Vol. 3, Page 309). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Agag, the fat and delicate king of Amalek, whom king Saul had saved Neither spared Elijah Jezebel's false prophets, and Baal's priests, albeit that king Ahab was present Phineas was no magistrate, and yet feared he not to strike Cozbi and Zimri in the very act of filthy fornication. And so Madam your Grace may see that others than chief magistrates may lawfully punish and hath punished, the vice and crimes that God commands to be punished."³

- "Knox unequivocally identified himself with the prophetic tradition and came to see himself as a latter-day prophet along the line of Isaiah, Elijah, Daniel, Jehu, Amos, or Jeremiah" (Richard Kyle, "John Knox: A Man of the Old Testament" *Westminster Theological Journal* 54:70).

In a meeting John Knox had with Queen Mary, she questioned him about his views which legitimized subjects resisting their princes, "If their princes exceed their bounds, Madam, it is no doubt that they may be resisted even by power", said Knox. When Mary protested that the Apostles had not resisted their persecutors by force, Knox replied that the reason was solely the lack of funds (Roland Bainton, *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century*, Beacon Press, 1952, p. 241).

What would a "Christian" government look like?

BE PERFECT (v.48; Deut.18:13)

Is verse 48 a summary of Jesus' teaching concerning love for enemies or is it a summary of verses 21-47?

Deuteronomy 32:4
"The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.

Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (v.48) – The word "perfect" is the counterpart to "righteous" as explained in 5:17-20 and 6:1. The word refers to ethical uprightness, "integrity of heart" (Psalm 101:2), "holy" (Leviticus 19:2), or blamelessness (see Genesis 6:9; 17:1; Deuteronomy 18:3; 2 Samuel 22:24-27; Job 2:3; 31:6; Psalm 15:2; 18:23; 84:11; 101:2; 119:1,80; Proverbs 11:3-6).

In the Old Testament sacrifices were to be "whole" or "perfect" (Leviticus 22:21; 23:15,30; etc.) and thus Paul's admonition, "present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1).

FOR NEXT WEEK: READ MATTHEW 6

³Knox, J. (2003). *The works of John Knox*. Serial. (Vol. 2, Page 372). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

