

Forgiving as God's People

Key Verse:

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”
—Matthew 5:23,24

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 5:17-26

world which otherwise would be even more depraved than it is. Since Jesus was that great light that came into the world (John 8:12), individually and collectively believers must let their light shine and, by their good works, emulate the character of the Master and glorify their Heavenly Father.—Matt. 5:13-16

The scribes and the Pharisees may have believed Jesus was attempting to nullify the Law that had been

JESUS' SERMON ON THE

Mount covers a wide range of guidelines and behaviors associated with Christian living during this Gospel Age. It commences with a series of beatitudes illustrating the transformation of character to be manifested by those who would be acceptable to God as participants with Christ in bestowing blessings to the human family during God's kingdom.—Matt. 5:1-12

These disciples of Christ are to be “the salt of the earth.” Their lives should have a preservative influence upon the

given to Israel through Moses as a basis for the covenant relationship they had with the Creator, but such was not the case. Jesus' teaching magnified that Law by acknowledging its righteousness. Through his faithfulness in keeping every feature of the Law perfectly, and by laying down his humanity in sacrifice benefiting the Jews first and later the Gentiles, all who accept the terms of discipleship have an opportunity to become a part of the spiritual seed of Abraham through whom all the families of the earth will receive restitution blessings. (Gal. 3:27,29) A high standard of righteous living is required to participate in this arrangement. "I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. 5:20

It was evident that Jesus' teachings were of a different order than those proclaimed by the self-righteous Pharisees. They held to the letter of the Law, knowing that killing others was forbidden. Jesus, however, equated anger and hatred with murder even if actual killing did not occur. Additionally, the calling of one's brother a fool was an extremely serious matter that could lead to dire consequences for the offender.—vss. 21,22

Our Key Verse underscores the fact that it is of even greater importance to be reconciled to a brother first before attempting to perform some service which otherwise would be acceptable to God. Each true believer who appreciates God's mercy in forgiving him time and again after confessing his sins, and who then earnestly strives to be more diligent in thought, word, or conduct, will surely have as a priority in life the maintenance of a warm and loving relationship with other members of the body of Christ. "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."—Rom. 12:18 ■