

A Higher Law

Key Verses:

“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 5:21-26

to the law against killing, Jesus told his Jewish audience there was a greater law than the one given to Moses. All Jews knew killing was a crime, but Jesus expressed a new principle. He told them that if they had made the pilgrimage to the Temple to leave offerings for the priests to sacrifice, and then remembered that they were angry with any of their brethren, they should leave the gift “before the altar,” and first go to be reconciled with their brother. Then they could return to the temple and present their offering acceptably.—Matt. 5:21-24

This higher law of brotherly love is elaborated on by

OFFERING OF SACRIFICES

was an important part of Israel’s worship of Jehovah. The bringing of various offerings to the priests at the Temple in Jerusalem was a requirement of three annual feasts. Every able Jewish male made these pilgrimages for the Feast of Unleavened Bread or Passover, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.—Deut. 16:16

With the importance of these sacrifices in mind, Jesus gave a message to the Jews, as recorded in our Key Verses, which introduced a higher standard than the Law Covenant. Making reference

the Apostle Paul many times in his epistles. For example, in Gal. 5:13,14 he says, “Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Jesus proclaimed this deeper understanding in answer to the question of a Pharisee who asked, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus answered, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”—Matt. 22:37-40

The first commandment Jesus mentions in his answer actually served as a reprimand to the Jews for not appreciating that everything God had done for them was based on love, and they should be faithful in returning that love to him. The second commandment was a reminder that the High Calling of the incoming Gospel Age would require Christ’s followers to serve one another in love. Jesus demonstrated this when he washed his disciples’ feet in the upper room the night before he died. His words that night should inspire all of us to love one another through service.

“When He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.” (John 13:12-17, *New American Standard Bible*) Let us practice the higher law of love through service to our neighbors and even more so to our brethren. ■