

Briefing Document-Matthew Lesson 78 “Are You an Adulterer?”

Sunday AM-August 16, 2026

Executive Summary

The following briefing examines the teachings of Jesus in Matthew 5:27-30, specifically focusing on the internal nature of sin and the true intent of God’s law. The central theme is that God requires a heart-level transformation rather than mere external compliance with rules. While the religious leaders of the time focused on avoiding the physical act of adultery, Jesus taught that lustful intent in the heart is equally damning. This teaching reveals human helplessness and the need for a relationship with God based on love. The Old Testament itself supports this, showing that God first loved and redeemed His people before providing the Law as a guide for living within that relationship.

The Problem of Externalism

In modern society, sexual propaganda and perversions have often replaced genuine relationships and love. This environment mirrors the spiritual challenge addressed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. The Pharisees and scribes of the time had developed a system of self-righteousness based on external behavior.

- **The Pharisaic Standard:** The religious leaders believed they were righteous because they did not physically commit adultery. They relied on an external system of law to secure their place in the kingdom.
- **The Internal Reality:** Jesus shatters this self-confidence by stating that looking at a woman to lust after her is adultery in the heart.
- **The Divine Purpose:** By setting a standard that is impossible to meet through human effort alone, Jesus highlights that men are "helpless, hopeless, and powerless" on their own. This realization is intended to drive individuals to God, who alone can change the human heart.

The "You Have Heard... But I Say" Formula

Throughout Matthew 5, Jesus uses a specific formula to contrast traditional interpretations of the law with the truth of God’s requirements.

- **Traditional Interpretation:** "You have heard" refers to the teachings of the rabbis and traditionalists who reduced God’s law to simple, external actions.
- **Divine Correction:** "But I say" represents the full, intended truth of the law. Jesus does not change the law but clarifies that it always applied to the "secret life" and inner attitudes of the individual.

The Foundation of Old Testament Theology

To understand Jesus’ message, one must look at the structure of the Old Testament, which centers on the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses).

The Role of Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy serves as the summary and high point of the Law. It is the most quoted Old Testament book by Jesus and New Testament writers. It reiterates the standards for living in God's kingdom as the people prepared to enter the Promised Land.

The Economy of Love

Contrary to common belief, the Old Testament relationship with God was not built primarily on law, but on love.

- **Redemption First:** God did not give the Law to Israel so they could earn His love. He first loved them, called them out of Egypt, and redeemed them.
- **Response of Obedience:** The Law was the result of the relationship, not the cause of it. As the source text notes: "We love Him because He first loved us."
- **The Greatest Commandment:** The summary of the entire Bible is found in *Deuteronomy 6:5*: "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*"

Conclusion: What God Requires

The ultimate requirement of God has remained consistent from the time of Moses to the teachings of Jesus. God is not interested in external rituals or sacrifices if the heart is not involved.

According to *Deuteronomy 10:12-13*: "*And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?*"

The call to the believer involves:

- **Humility:** Recognizing that one can do nothing to save themselves.
- **Repentance:** Seeking to be rescued and forgiven.
- **Heart Devotion:** Offering obedience that is driven by love rather than duty.

Greek Terminology Guide

Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
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Deutero	DOO-ter-oh	Second [¹]
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Nomos	NOH-mos	Law [²]
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[¹]: Used in the title of the book "Deuteronomy" to signify the "second" giving or reiteration of the law. [²]: The Greek word for "law," forming the second half of the word "Deuteronomy."