

Threats

Under the Mosaic Law, murder was punished by death. In fact, God forbade showing mercy to those who were guilty of murder. They couldn't be pardoned and had to be executed:

Numbers 35:30-31: “Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die. Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.”

But what about attempted murder? Suppose that an assailant shot at someone with the intent to kill them and missed. Was that less serious than actual murder on the grounds that the intended victim didn't actually die? Or what about just *threatening* to kill someone? Death threats are very common today, especially on the internet. Are those even less serious as long as no one is actually killed?

The Bible does address these topics. In the book of Jeremiah there were some people in Anathoth who told the prophet that they would kill him if he didn't stop prophesying:

Jeremiah 11:21: “Therefore thus saith the Lord of the men of Anathoth, that seek thy life, saying, Prophecy not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand:”

These people didn't actually kill Jeremiah. Instead they threatened to kill him if he continued prophesying in the name of the Lord. It doesn't seem they did him any actual physical harm at all.

So how did God respond to this? Well, God put all them to death:

Jeremiah 11:22-23: “Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will punish them: the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine: And there shall be no remnant of them: for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation.”

The fact that these people only threatened Jeremiah and didn't do any physical harm to him didn't save them. God said that He was going to kill all of them. In God's sight, both killing someone *and* threatening to kill them were worthy of death.

Jesus said the same thing in the New Testament. In fact, He went a step further:

Matthew 5:21-22: “Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.”

In this passage Jesus was addressing the situation where someone was angry with another person, but had no good reason to be angry with them. It's a serious offense in God's sight to be angry with someone who's innocent and hasn't done anything wrong. According to Jesus, those who condemn or curse the innocent are in danger of *Hell*. That's how serious it is!

The standard that God has set is a very strict one. God doesn't seem to put any difference between killing someone,

threatening to kill them, and cursing them. To Him they're all exceptionally serious sins. All of them speak to the hate that's in a person's heart – a hate that seeks the injury or death of someone else.

As we saw with the case of Jeremiah, God has put people to death for threatening others. Jesus said that those who curse others without a cause are in danger of judgment and Hell. God doesn't say that if you try kill someone and fail then it's a lesser offense. He also doesn't say that if you just threaten to kill someone and never act on it then that's even less of a big deal.

It's a bad idea to look at the world and use it to determine how serious something is. Just because threats and cursing are commonplace in our society doesn't mean God takes it lightly. God is greatly angered by such things – and He never changes.