

## Jesus Taught About Making Promises

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the reason that we are to forgive. We also saw that Jesus explained the full meaning of some of the commandments. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus continued to explain the full meaning of some additional commandments.

In our last topic, we saw that sin begins in the heart and that the actions of a person are the result of what is in his or her heart. We begin this topic by seeing what Jesus said about taking vows or making oaths. Matthew 5:33-37 says, “‘Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.” But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No.” For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.’” The Jews had made oaths something that was done regularly as a part of their casual talk and then were not keeping those casual promises.

As a result, we see that Jesus explained that a person was not to make casual promises that they did not intend to keep. There were several statements in the books written by Moses about vows and oaths. In Numbers 30:2, we read, “‘If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.’” In this verse, and the rest of the chapter, it talks about making vows to the Lord. If a man made a vow to the Lord, we see that he was to keep that vow. If an unmarried woman made a vow to God and her father heard her make the vow, the father could disallow the vow if he did it that day. The same was true if a husband heard his wife make a vow and disallowed it that day. Otherwise, all vows to the Lord were to be obeyed.

Then, Deuteronomy 23:21-23 says, “‘When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you. But if you abstain from vowing, it shall not be sin to you. That which has gone from your lips you shall keep and perform, for you voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God what you have promised with your mouth.’” In these verses, we see that no one had to make vows to the Lord. However, if a person did make a vow to the Lord, that person was to keep that vow. Moses wrote that any oath or vow that a person made to the Lord must be kept or it would be a sin to that person. When Jesus was commanded to take an oath, Matthew 26:63-64 says, “‘But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, ‘I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘*It is as you said.* Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’” Here, we see that Jesus spoke under oath.

However, the Jews were doing something that was probably related to their interpretation of Leviticus 19:12, which reads, “‘“And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I *am* the LORD.’”” This verse made it clear that they would profane the name of God if they made a vow or an oath using His name, and did not keep that vow. As a result, we see that they substituted several other words instead of using the name of God. They felt it was all right to make a casual oath and not keep it if they swore by heaven, by earth, by the city of Jerusalem or even by ones’ own head, as long as they avoided using the name of God.

In these verses, we see that Jesus is telling the people that they are not to make casual vows by other things because all things have been created by God. To make an oath in the name of heaven, was to swear by the throne of God. To make an oath in the name of the earth, was to swear by the footstool of God. To swear by the city of Jerusalem, was to swear by the city of the great King. In a passage that talks about Christ, Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:15, “which He will manifest in His own time, *He who is* the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.” Jesus is the King of kings who will one day rule in Jerusalem for a thousand years. That would make an oath using Jerusalem, an oath involving Jesus. Jesus told the people not even to swear by their own head because they could not change the color of one hair from black to white.

As a result, Jesus said that true obedience to the law would mean that they did not make any casual oaths at all. The Jews had a fear of God whether or not they had a true faith. As a result, they thought that if they swore by something other than the name of God, they were free to break their oath because they did not need to fear God. Jesus made it clear that to use something that God created to make an oath and then break the oath was just a way to cover the sinful desires of the heart. As a result, Jesus told the people that they should avoid the casual oaths. Instead, Jesus said to say “yes” and mean it from the heart, or to say “no” and mean it from the heart. Jesus said that to say anything more than that was to speak words that came from the evil one. In John 8:44, Jesus said, “You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it.” A casual oath that was broken just followed the example of Satan.

Jesus then told the people how to respond to those who did evil to them. Matthew 5:38-42 says, “You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.” We see that the religious leaders actually taught the people to take personal revenge when someone did something to them. Jesus again explained the true meaning of the law.

The statement, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” is written three times in the law. Those verses are Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20 and Deuteronomy 19:21. In Deuteronomy 19:18-21, we read, “And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, *if* the witness *is* a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother, then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you. And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity: life *shall be* for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” In this case, we see that a person might bring a charge against a person before the judges.

The first responsibility of the judges was to make a careful investigation to see if the charge was true. If the investigation showed that the charge was true, the judges would make a judicial decision and give a punishment that would fit the crime. However, if the judges found out that the person had made a false charge, then the judges were to order the one who gave false testimony to receive the punishment that he had hoped to see carried out against the other person. The purpose of God was to make sure that there was an official investigation. Then, God said that the punishment should fit the crime against the person who actually committed the crime. That is very different than taking personal revenge. Here, we see that the judges were to make a decision based on evidence.

Jesus went on to teach that instead of taking personal revenge, they were not to resist the evil person. Anything that needed a judgment needed to be turned over to the judges so that they could make a judgment based on evidence. Jesus said that if we love others, we will give up our personal rights. Instead of taking personal revenge, Jesus said that we should respond to others with love. If a person slaps you on the side of the face, Jesus said to just turn the other cheek. Romans 12:21 says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

The second illustration Jesus used was someone who wants to sue you to take your personal clothing. Jesus said that instead of fighting for your clothing, to instead even let them have your coat. Later, Paul would write in 1 Corinthians 6:6-7, “But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers! Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated?” In this case, we see that it better to be cheated than to even take the case to court.

The third illustration Jesus gave was, “And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.” The Roman soldiers could force a person to carry a load for a mile. Matthew 27:32 says, “Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross.” Here, we see that the Roman soldiers forced Simon of Cyrene to carry the cross of Jesus to the place where Jesus was crucified. Jesus said that in such situations they were to offer to carry the load a second mile, instead of trying to take personal revenge.

Then, Jesus said, “Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.” Here, we see that we are to be willing to share what we have with others who are in need. The apostles encouraged Paul, in Galatians 2:10, “*They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.” We also want to teach our physical and spiritual children to love their neighbor as they love themselves, instead of taking revenge. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to follow the example of Jesus.