

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

34- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 14
What Jesus Taught about Making and Keeping Vows

Church October 23, 2022

Matthew 5:27-37

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY';

28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

29 "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

30 "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

31 "It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';

32 but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33 "Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.'

34 "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,

35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING.

36 "Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

37 "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Beginning Note: This *perfect* Sermon- that we call, the “*Sermon on the Mount*” is the *first* of five major Sections of Divine Teaching that Matthew wrote in his Gospel Record- which represent the five Books of Moses in the Old Testament (the *Pentateuch*). And that is because, in addition to Matthew wanting the Jews to see Jesus as being the long-awaited “*Mashich*” (*Messiah*); and the promised “*Immanuel*” (*God with us*). He also wants them to also see Jesus as being the “*2nd Moses*”- Who will bring God’s people out from “*spiritual Bondage*” (*Sin*) and lead them into the “*Promised Land*” (*the Kingdom of Heaven*).

So, what this Sermon is illustrating is the Attributes and the Characteristics of the *new* people- that God is raising up; who will inherit this *new* Kingdom of Heaven; which is sovereignly ruled and governed by the *new* King- Jesus Christ- as He ushers in the *New Covenant*.

So, this Sermon is what this “*new chosen people*” look like- AFTER Jesus has “paid for” ALL of their Sins; AFTER God the Father has imputed to them the Righteousness of Jesus Christ (Justification); and as they are actively and continuously “*killing*” the remaining Sin that is in their Flesh (Sanctification).

And so, this part of the “*Sermon on the Mount*” has to do with:

**Jesus illustrating His full Deity- by revealing the deepest meaning of
the Law of God**

So, the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5:21-47**) contains six different Sections of infallible Teaching from Jesus Himself. And today we are going to explore what Jesus meant when He taught the people in verses 33-37- about the *full*; *complete*; and *deepest* Meaning of Making and Keeping Vows. And we will also explore how this Teaching by Jesus *should* affect our Marriages.

The Issue today will be very *narrowly* looking at what Jesus Himself taught about “*Making and Keeping Vows*” and how those Vows should affect our Marriages.

Sadly, telling the Truth; along with making and keeping Vows; or Promises; or Covenants- is at an all-time low in our Country. We all are very familiar with News Agencies, that skew the News, to fit in with their own pre-conceived “*World-View*”- so that it is very hard today to get actual “News” rather than “Opinion”. But telling Lies; and breaking Promises; and trying to get around Covenants; is an every-day occurrence in both the legal and real-estate Professions; as well as Corporate America; and even in Schools and Colleges. You may have been exposed to this form of Lying in your *own* private Lives. You may even have been guilty of it, yourself.

This Country was rocked by the “*Enron*” and “*Worldcom*” Scandals a few years ago, when it became apparent that the financial Statements of these large Corporations had been “cooked” and did NOT tell the Truth about the Condition of those Companies. And many thousands of people lost their entire Life-savings;

and several people were imprisoned because of it. So, the financial Statements of those Companies were blatant and premeditated Lies that caused great Destruction.

One of the largest Accounting Firms in the Country (Arthur Andersen) had to declare Bankruptcy because it was discovered that they knowingly and repeatedly told lies to people about the Condition of the Companies they worked for.

But perhaps the largest case of blatant and premeditating Lying was the financial collapse of 2008, that saw several Banks and Brokerage Houses go into Default or which had to be bailed out by the Federal Government. Four men, Franklin Raines (D. who ran Fanny Mae); Barney Frank (D. the House oversight chairman); Christopher Dodd (D. the Senate Banking chairman); and Christopher Cox (R. the SEC Chairman) lied repeatedly to the American public about the Condition of the Banking Industry just prior to the Collapse. And this was during a time that Mr. Raines was paid tens of millions of dollars and while Mr. Cox received a “sweetheart deal” with Countrywide Corp on his personal Mortgage.¹ These four men should have gone to jail for repeatedly and blatantly lying- even while “under oath”. Instead, they retired with both Honors and full Benefits.

Today, it is common for Politicians to run for Office- telling the Voters outright Lies. And this is excused by the Media and other Politicians as “campaigning”- where it is *assumed* that they are lying.

For some reason, the Congress of the United States seems to think they are above reproach and above even questioning- as they routinely *excuse* themselves from Crimes that those not in Congress would go to jail for committing.

Colleges are routinely expelling students for cheating on exams and Companies suffer billions of dollars in losses every year from people who lie to them and steal from them.

But the one, true, and living God, Who is revealed in both Nature (generally) and in Scripture (specifically)- is a God of “Truth”. Here is a sampling from the Bible about God’s Relationship with Truth:

Jeremiah 10:10

But the LORD is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, And the nations cannot endure His indignation.

John 17:3

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

¹ Mr. Raines finally settled with the Government- paying a \$25 million dollar fine.

God being “*True*” speaks to God’s Own *personal* Integrity. It means that God’s Character is “*Whole*”; “*Flawless*”; and “*Unimpaired*”. It also speaks of God being “*Authentic*”; “*Genuine*”; and “*Real*”. And that means that God is always *exactly* as He reveals Himself to be. This makes God to be Different and Unique from all the other false “gods” of the earth that do not exist; and are the imagination of corrupt and fallen Man and demons. And that is what we mean when we say that God is “*Holy*”. And all of this is summed up in what the writer infallibly wrote down in **Hebrews 6:18**:

so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us.

Now notice that this does NOT say that God *doesn't* lie; or that God *shouldn't* lie. No, this says that God *cannot* lie. In other words, it is *impossible* for God to tell a lie. It simply is NOT *possible* that the God of the Bible could tell a Lie. Another way of understanding this is to say that God does *not* possess the Ability; nor does He have the Power to lie.

Now why is that? If God is absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the Time (which He is)- then does that not mean, by default, that He can do ANYTHING? No, it doesn't. Because God CANNOT think or do ANYTHING that is *contrary* to His Own sinless Character and Nature. So, God *cannot* lie- because, by lying, He would cease to be sinless. And if God ceased to be sinless- then He would cease to be God.

Now why is that? Because God has already determined that Lying is an “*Abomination*”.

Leviticus 19:11

You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another.

Exodus 20:16

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Now a “Sin” is the transgression against God’s Law (either by *Omission* or *Commission*). But an “*Abomination*” is a Sin that has earned and deserves *severe* Condemnation.

Proverbs 12:22

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, But those who deal faithfully are His delight.

... a few other Sins that deserve the title of “*Abomination*” by God in the Bible are:

- A false Balance or Scale (**Proverbs 11:1**)
- Justifying the Wicked or Condemning the Just (**Proverbs 17:15**)
- The Prayers of an unrepentant Rebel (**Proverbs 28:9**)
- Homosexuality (**Leviticus 18:22**)
- Any communication with demons (**Deuteronomy 18:7-12**)
- Transgenderism or Cross-dressers (**Deuteronomy 22:5**)

Proverbs 6:16-19

16 There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood,

18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil,

19 A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.

So, the “*sanctified ones*” (saints) seek to avoid all these things- precisely because they seek to be Obedient to God and be “*Righteous*”.

Proverbs 13:5

A righteous man hates falsehood, But a wicked man acts disgustingly and shamefully.

Now it is true that we are never more like God when we forgive those, who have wronged us. But it is also true that we are never more like satan when we tell Lies.

John 8:44

You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

A lying Nature is part of the sinful, rebellious, and fallen Nature of the “*Lost*”. That is why the Miracle of the New Birth gives us a new Nature that simply tells the Truth.

Colossians 3:9

Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,

So, everyone on earth should *expect* and *demand* that those, who lay claim to be saved, and call themselves, “*Christians*”- should be “*people of the Truth*”, who would rather die than tell a Lie. And so, Christianity is a “*Religion of Truth*” that contains many verifiable Accounts of “true, historical Events” that actually happened in the Lives of every- day people. And God did this because He desires that we know *What* we are to believe and *Why* we are to believe it.

And that is why it is so wrong; so destructive; and so confusing for people to claim that God has spoken directly to them; or that they have been visited by Angels; or even God Himself. Those kinds of Statements attack both the Sufficiency and Completeness of the 66 Books of the Bible. The Temptation to get others to think that the Owner and Creator of the Universe talks directly to them- is simply overwhelming to people, who have a need for people to think of them as some sort of “super-duper” Christian- who has a spiritual “Edge” over more normal people. Plus, it allows other weak-minded people to make much of them and in some cases- these weak-minded people cannot function properly without someone else telling them what God has said recently.

Also, many simply *embellish* a biblical “Leading” of God the Holy Spirit to become an unbiblical- very detailed and long Conversation that begins with Statements like “*God said to me*”; or “*God told me*”; or “*God spoke to me*”.

But even though many of these people actually do love the Lord- what they are doing is Lying and it is Sin. They are *misrepresenting* both themselves and, even worse, they are *misrepresenting* God- Who has already infallibly and FINALLY spoken in Scripture. So, let’s see what the Bible says about itself:

2Timothy 3:16&17

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

Now the word that was translated here into English as “**profitable**” comes from a Greek word (*oofelimos*; Strong’s #5624) that means: *advantage or benefit*. And then please notice the four things that the Bible says that the Bible is “**profitable**” for:

1. Teaching
2. Reproof

3. Correction
4. Training in Righteousness

... and the Context of this verse tells us that these four things are “*all-inclusive*”. So, the Scriptures are advantageous and beneficial for ALL Teaching; ALL Reproof (Rebuke); ALL Correction (Counselling); and ALL training in Righteousness (Bible Study). And that is why, during the Protestant Reformation, the Reformers developed a Latin phrase to illustrate this: “*Sola Scriptura*”- which means that ALL four of these things MUST come “*from the Scriptures and from the Scriptures ALONE!*” So, “*Protestants*” (those who *protest* against Rome’s abuses and transgressions) are those who believe that ONLY the Scriptures have the Authority to “*bind the Conscience*” and to “*determine Divine Truth*”. Now look again at the very next verse:

so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work

Now notice that this verse gives us the Purpose behind WHY we have the Scriptures. The phrase, “**so that**” gives Purpose behind the Statement. So, what is the Purpose behind WHY God gave us the Scriptures?

so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work

... and there is not another thing on the face of the earth; not a Ruling by a Pope; not an official Teaching by a religious group; not a mystical Experience; not a Vision; not even a direct Statement- supposedly by God Himself- that can make this Claim. ONLY Scripture! So, Scripture ALONE causes the “man of God” to be two things:

1. Adequate
2. Equipped for every good work

... and again, NOTHING else can make that Claim except the Bible!

So, what does the Bible teach about Making and Keeping Oaths or Vows?

Job 22:25-27

25 Then the Almighty will be your gold And choice silver to you.

26 "For then you will delight in the Almighty And lift up your face to God.

27 "You will pray to Him, and He will hear you; And you will pay your vows.

Psalm 50:14

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving And pay your vows to the Most High;

Psalms 61:8

8 So I will sing praise to Your name forever, That I may pay my vows day by day.

Psalm 66:13&14

13 I shall come into Your house with burnt offerings; I shall pay You my vows,

14 Which my lips uttered And my mouth spoke when I was in distress.

Psalm 76:11

Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them; Let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared.

... so, a “Summary Statement” about what God said about Vows or Oaths under the Old Covenant is found in **Numbers 30:2:**

If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

... so, under the Blood of bulls and goats- if you made a Vow or you made an Oath (a Promise/Covenant)- you were *expected* to fulfill it. And the Penalty for breaking an Oath; or a Vow; or a Covenant was severe:

Leviticus 26:14-20

14 'But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, 15 if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant, 16 I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up.

17 'I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.

18 'If also after these things you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

19 'I will also break down your pride of power; I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze.

20 'Your strength will be spent uselessly, for your land will not yield its produce and the trees of the land will not yield their fruit.

Now a legal Contract is also a form of a commercial *Covenant*. And the failure of Cities and Municipalities to honor legal Contracts results in real dollar Penalties in Court- because, strangely enough, our Judicial System still regards a Contract (Covenant) to be absolutely “binding”- unless it involved coercion. So, not only do Cities sin against God when they break Contracts- they actually cost the taxpayer real money. And the Lesson for people; as well as Companies; and even Governments is crystal clear:

The Loss of Covenant-Faithfulness Destroys Life

The Problem with this (that is true with ALL Sin) is that breaking a Contract; or a Vow; or an Oath; or a Promise; may very well feel very Good- at that moment. So, the Truth is that NOBODY breaks a Contract or a Marriage Vow because it hurts- at least not at that moment. Covenant-breaking is a way to try to reduce the “Pain” and the “Work” and the “Duty” and the “Joy” of keeping the Oath.

I have spoken with many, who have *willfully* destroyed their Marriage Vows and I listen as they tell me about how “free” they feel. And they are “free”- they have made themselves “free” from the blessedness of keeping Covenant. And, like Adam and Eve after they ate- those who break their Vows may wish to act as though nothing has changed- but EVERYTHING has changed when the Vow is broken. So, in the attempt at reducing their emotional Pain and the Work involved in keeping Covenant- they destroy Life.

But the Reality is that Covenant-breakers are NOT “free” from the Vows they made. And *regardless* of what the Court System; or some Judge; or other people; or even the Law may say- the Vow that was made is STILL binding. And Almighty God expects the Conditions of the Vow to be upheld- NO MATTER WHAT THE COST!

Some have said that the entire Old Testament was written to persuade the world that whatever short term Happiness a person (or a Nation) might get for breaking a Covenant; Vow; Oath; or Promise- the Destruction and Misery that follows is unbearable. The God, Who *cannot* lie said this in **Ezekiel 17:15-20**:

Will he succeed? Will he who does such things escape? Can he indeed break the covenant and escape?

16 'As I live,' declares the Lord God, 'Surely in the country of the king who put him on the throne, whose oath he despised and whose covenant he broke, in Babylon he shall die.

17 'Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company will not help him in the war, when they cast up ramps and build siege walls to cut off many lives.

18 'Now he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, and behold, he pledged his allegiance, yet did all these things; he shall not escape.'"

19 Therefore, thus says the Lord God, "As I live, surely My oath which he despised and My covenant which he broke, I will inflict on his head.

20 "I will spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare. Then I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there regarding the unfaithful act which he has committed against Me.

But here in America a false, man-made religion of “*Self-psychology*” has risen up which makes “*Covenant-Faithfulness*” almost unintelligible. The American Psychologist, Paul Vitz, who spends his time trying to analyze the Relationship between Christianity and Psychology said,

“The Concept of God has evolved to the point where today Man is God. And if the Sacred exists at all- its Center is in the ‘Self’ and the ‘Selves’ of others”

... which means that today, “*Covenant-Commitment*” is *primarily* a Commitment to the “god” of Self. And the *primary* Obligation of this “covenant” is to personally feel “Happy and Fulfilled”- even if Vows are forsaken; Promises are not kept; and Contracts are broken. And that is why you can find mountains of books and articles like, “*Looking out for #1*”; “*Self Creation, Pulling Your Own Strings*”; and “*How to Be Your Own Best Friend*”. And books like that- the Social Scientist, Daniel Yankelovitch said...

“... have spread the “root fallacy, [namely] the assumption that the human Self can be wholly Autonomous, Solitary, Contained, and ‘Self-Created’”

Yet the Truth is that genuine “Selfhood” absolutely *does* emerge in “*Covenant-Faithfulness*”. And by “genuine” I mean “Selfhood” that finds Favor with God and Fulfillment in His Presence. And that is why the psalmist wrote **Psalm 15:1&4:**

1 O Lord, who shall dwell on your holy hill?

4 ...The one who swears to his own hurt and does not change.”

Now what does that mean? It means that the person, who pleases God, takes a Vow; or signs a Contract; or affirms a Covenant- knowing full well that it may personally hurt him to keep it. Yet that Knowledge does NOT cause him to forsake the Vow- so he “**does not change**”.

In other words, a person like this will NOT use Covenant-Breaking as a means of “Pain-reduction”. He will discover what it means to be truly human; yet also truly fulfilled *in God* by accepting the Hurt and the Pain of Covenant-Faithfulness. So, even if he loses all his money; or he lives 50 years with a disheartening Spouse- he will keep his Promise; and he will say, “**I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding Joy**” (Psalm 43:4).

Now the Context of verses 33-37 is *specifically* connected to Marriage Vows. And that is what Mathew had in mind when he wrote this down. And, once again, we see the importance of Jesus’ Words back in verse 20, where He said,

For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

So, this *new* Kingdom of Heaven is going to be populated with a *new* people, whose Righteousness will greatly *surpass* the false and hypocritical “righteousness” of the Scribes and Pharisees. And nowhere will that surpassing Righteousness be manifested greater than in the way that Marriage Vows are upheld and honored.

So, as I have told you during this Series, that back in the 1st Century, the people who were *dishonoring* Marriage the MOST; the people, who were breaking the Marriage Covenant the MOST; the people, who were committing Adultery the MOST; and the people, who were making their Marriage Oaths a dishonoring Mockery the MOST- were the Scribes and the Pharisees! So, throughout all Palestine in the 1st Century- there were a literal sea of ex-Wives of the Scribes and Pharisees- which made a mockery of both Marriage and the Vows they had made. And so, Jesus moves here to stop that “tidal wave” of Sin- by clearly teaching on this in this perfect Sermon.

Now the religious Leaders of the 1st Century were NOT the first group of spiritual Leaders, who had dishonored their Marriage Vows. 400 years earlier, during the time of the Burden of the Prophet Malachi- God said the very same thing about the men, who were supposed to be the most godly men in all of Israel. Look with me at **Malachi 2:13-16:**

13 "This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.

14 "Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

15 "But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.

16 "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

God was not regarding the Sacrifices and Offerings that the religious Leaders of God's people were giving to God. And for the life of them- they couldn't figure out why. So, they complained to the Lord and said, **"For what Reason?"** In other words, *"Why would God not regard our Offerings and Sacrifices? What are we doing that is so displeasing to God that He would withhold His Favor from us?"*

And God answered them, through the Prophet Malachi,

Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

Unfaithfulness; Divorce; and Remarriage was rampant among the Leaders of God's people at this time. And it had become so common that the Leaders no longer thought it was that big of a deal- which is why they honestly had no idea why God was angry with them. So, God had to remind them of His Will concerning this subject when He said,

But not one has done so who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

And now, 400 years later- the Scribes and Pharisees were doing the very same thing- thinking that Marriage was *"Man's Doing"* rather than *"God's Doing"*

and therefore, Man had the Right and Authority to separate the Husband from His Wife. Yet God had already spoken way back- BEFORE THE LAW- in **Genesis 2:23-25**:

23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

... and later on, Jesus added inspired Commentary to what God had spoken to Moses and the Lord Christ said,

Mark 10:9

What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.

So, Marriage is the “*Doing of God*”. And because that is true- no human being has the Right or the Authority to separate a Husband from his Wife and end the Marriage. Jesus said so. Only God has that Right- and He does that ONLY- through the Agency of Death. So, at the Death of one or both Spouses- the Marriage is ended.

And that is *why* when a Man marries a Woman, who has been divorced- he is committing Adultery and causing her to commit Adultery (**Mark 10:11b&12; Luke 16:18**). Since Marriage is the “*Doing of God*” and NOT the “*Doing of Man*”- no human on earth has the Right or Authority to *separate* the Husband from his Wife- the Woman is STILL in Covenant Relationship with her living former Husband and the Husband is STILL in Covenant relationship with his living former Wife. So, the *new* Marriage has been entered into *unbiblically* and therefore, the participants are guilty of Unfaithfulness (Adultery). This is *exactly* what God was talking about back in **Malachi**.

But it gets even worse- because Marriage is also the “*Display of God*”. And so, Marriage is a Sign or Symbol of something *infinitely* more important and more glorious than the Marriage itself. And God used the Apostle Paul to teach about Marriage being the “Display of God” from **Ephesians 5:22-32**, and in verses **31&32** he said,

31 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.

32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

So, Marriage between a Husband and Wife is a tangible, visible, earthly, and temporary “*Display*” of the great Mystery of the Covenant-Love between Jesus Christ and the Church.

But then what are the Vows that the Man and Woman make during the Wedding Ceremony? Those Vows are Oaths or Promises or Covenants that are made between three Parties:

1. Between the Man and Woman
2. Between the Man and Woman and God
3. Between the Man and Woman and the Witnesses

So, even as Marriage is a Sign of something infinitely better and more important than the Marriage itself- so too, the Vows between Man and Wife are Signs or Representations of the Divine Promises that Jesus made to His Church. And like ALL Vows or Oaths or Promises or Covenants- God expects and demands that those Vows be kept- to His Glory.

Now there are many Questions that float around like, “*What if my Husband does this?*” or “*What if my Wife does that?*” that, for some reason have caused many within the modern church to think that these sinful Situations have the Power to, first, break the Marriage Vows; and then enable them to Remarry- without suffering any Penalty. And, whereas there are many, many Questions like that- there really is only a single Answer:

The Grace of both Forgiveness and Forbearance.

As Believers, we are never more like God than when we forgive those who have wronged us. And that is especially true when it comes to an unfaithful Husband or Wife. And Believers have a special Relationship to Forgiveness- precisely because it was God, Who forgave them of Sins that were MUCH WORSE than the Sins they are expected to forgive to others- even their Spouse.

And we also need to remember that, as human beings, we don’t always act the way we should. And so, periodically, we think and speak and act in ways that are unloving; harsh; even cruel. But we ALL do that. And so, we should NEVER

act as though our Spouse has not had to show Forbearance toward us at times, when we are called on to show Forbearance to them.

So, the Grace of both Forgiveness and Forbearance will cover EVERY Issue in a Marriage that can possibly be confronted on this fallen earth. And that means that the ONLY reason for Divorce- is an *unwillingness* to either forgive or forebear. And that should NEVER be said about a genuine Believer.

But if Vows are important and if we are to keep our Vows- then what did Jesus mean in **Matthew 5:33-37**?

Now as we read these words- we need to try to put them into the Context of what Jesus was thinking back in the 1st Century when He spoke them- and NOT what a Statement like this might mean to us today. And when we do that- we find that making Oaths or Vows were not uncommon back then. And, of course, the *supreme* Oath all through the Old Testament was, “*As the Lord lives.*” (35 times). So, this was “swearing” or “making an Oath (Vow)- IN GOD’S NAME.

So, back then, people made Oaths or Vows:

1. ONLY in God’s Name
2. ONLY on Special Occasions

... that’s what the Old Testament taught.

Now there were other Occasions (OT) where people took “rash Oaths”. But they had no business taking them; or they took them at the wrong time for stupid things; and then they were bound by them. And of course, one of the most notorious rash Oaths was made by Jephthah over in **Judges 11:30&31** where it says,

**30 Jephthah made a vow to the Lord and said, "If You will indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand,
31 then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the Lord's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."**

... and the first thing to meet him was his daughter.

We also see Joshua in **Joshua 9**; Saul in **1Samuel 1**; and even Herod in **Matthew 14**- all taking rash; or ridiculous; or stupid Oaths that should have NEVER been made- but then having to bear the Consequence of keeping that Vow- because, even with pagans, it was *unthinkable* that you could make an Oath or take a Vow and NOT keep it.

But then we also see “*Oaths of Loveliness*” given by Ruth and

Samuel and David and others at the right time for the right reasons, and God honored them. So, the Old Testament taught two things about Oaths or Vows: ALL of them were to be “*in God’s Name*” and they were ONLY to be made “*at special times*” and for “*very serious occasions*”.

Deuteronomy 6:13

You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

Deuteronomy 10:20

You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name.

Isaiah 65:16

he who is blessed in the earth Will be blessed by the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Will swear by the God of truth;

... so, the ONLY Object ever to be sworn by- was God Himself.

So, back then, the people had a very high and healthy “*Fear of God*”² that *permeated* their minds and hearts. So, when they called God to witness something- it bound their hearts. So, when David was describing what a “righteous Man” looked like in **Psalm 15**- he said, in part,
... He swears to his own hurt and does not change

... and then God Himself told Moses in **Exodus 20:7**:

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

... so that was the Principle about Oaths and Vows back under the Mosaic Law.

But then we see how the Rabbis perverted what God said. And by the time that Jesus walked the earth, the Jewish Leaders were teaching what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:33**:

... YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.'

... which sounds great. But like everything else they did- this was ALL

² A “*reverential Respect*”

an Illusion. And so, if you will examine what they taught closely- you will notice two things:

1. A missing Ingredient
2. A misplaced Emphasis

The missing Ingredient in their Man-made religious System was it never told them when Oaths were correct or proper. And so, this missing Ingredient led the people to “frivolous Swearing”. So, they were swearing Oaths and making Vows for every little thing through every day. So, in the 1st Century, based on an incomplete Teaching by the Scribes and Pharisees, the Jews were *constantly* “swearing *by* this”; and “swearing *by* that”; and “swearing *to* this”; and “swearing *to* that”. And the net Result was that Swearing and taking Oaths *indiscriminately* like this- made Oaths and Vows no more reliable than any other type of Conversation.

Researchers have found Information in the ancient Writings (extra-biblical) of the complexity and the elaborate network of Swearing and Oaths and Curses that they had developed. They used them constantly for everything.

So, you see in the Statement there in verse 33, that there’s no Qualification. It just says this: “*Be sure when you perform an Oath to the Lord that you keep it.*” Which sounds *similar* to the Old Testament because it has a “religious ring” to it. But it doesn’t say anything about WHEN you should do that. So, the net Result was the people were just swearing by EVERYTHING!

And that drew people in. I mean if a guy came up to you and said, “*I want you to know, my friend, that I will keep my word to you. I swear by heaven and earth, and I swear by my own head, and I swear by Jerusalem, and I swear by the Altar, and I swear by the Temple I’ll do it,*” you’d probably say, “*Alright.*” But then they wouldn’t do it. So, by swearing to *everything* like that- it *cheapened* the Oath or the Vow or the Promise.

The second thing is a misplaced Emphasis. Notice the phrase, “***To the Lord.***” in verse 33. That was their catch. As long as you swore, “*To the Lord*”, you had to do it. But if you swore to anything else- you *didn’t* have to. So, people were swearing by anything; and everything EXCEPT to the Lord. Which meant they didn’t have to keep their Vow. So, they swore- and it all sounded so religious and so righteous- but they had their fingers crossed behind their back.

So, because of this misplaced Emphasis in the Man-made religion of the Jews- people were saying, “*I swear by Heaven; I swear by Earth; I swear by Jerusalem; I swear by my Head; I swear by the Temple; I swear on my mother’s Life; I swear on my children’s eyes*”; and they go right out and just do the very

opposite. And they didn't have any sense of guilt, because they didn't swear by the "Name of the Lord". So, all it did was make everybody a Liar, who bore no shame- simply because they didn't say the correct words.

So, the Man-made religion of the Pharisees hid the Fact that God is a God of Truth and He expects those who are His- to be people of Truth. And one way we prove that we are people of Truth is by NOT seeking ways to get out from doing what we promised.

You see, if you're going to be righteous on your own; and you're going to make yourself righteous- you've got to invent a religious System that you can keep in your own Power and to your own Glory. And so, the Scribes and Pharisees, being dominated by Hypocrisy- and NOT by honestly trying to follow God- *wanted* to lie- because they were Liars. And lost Sinners can't help but to lie. So, they just fit their Lies into a nice, comfortable Category in their Make-believe Religion. If you didn't say the words, "*In the Lord's Name,*" you could make an Oath and take a Vow- and still lie and it was okay. That's how they twisted the Scripture! No wonder Jesus despised them.

But that is the background behind *why* Jesus said,

34 "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,

35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING.

36 "Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

37 "But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil.

William Barclay said,

"Here is a great eternal truth. Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which God is involved, and in others of which He is not involved. There cannot be one kind of language in the church and another kind of language in the home. There cannot be one kind of standard of conduct in the church and another standard of conduct in the business world. The fact is that God does not need to be invited into certain departments of life and kept out of others, He is everywhere, all through life, and every activity of life. He hears not only the words which are spoken in His name, He hears all words, and there cannot be any such thing as a form of words which evades bringing God into any transaction. We will regard all promises as sacred if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God,"

My friends, Truth knows no degrees and has no grays. Truth is ONLY black and white- which means that “half-truths” are “whole lies”. So, any Statement; any Oath; any Vow that is designed to deceive; or to get around the Truth- is Evil and Sinful and not of God- no matter how religious it may sound. But if you’re going to lie- you will find a way. But if you’re going to tell the Truth- all you need to say is, “Yes” or “No”.

Because in **The Revelation 21:8** it says,

But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

So, Jesus is saying, *“You cannot enter this new Kingdom of Heaven if you tell lies. So, keep your Vows and perform your Oaths.”*

And this also means that those, like the Jehovah’s Witnesses and other fringe groups, that supposedly use what Jesus said here in verses 34-37 so they don’t have to take Oaths- they are taking this Statement out of Context. Oaths and Vows are useful and needed. But they all hinge on us telling the Truth. So, instead of trying to avoid making an Oath- all you have to do is to tell the Truth and you’re fine -whether you make an Oath or not.

And that is why, at the Marriage Ceremony- as the Vows are read- the only response needed is, “*I do*”; or “*Yes!*” or “*I will*”. There is no elaborate Swearing or detailed Oaths or long, drawn- out Vows. The Marriage Vows are very short; very simple and very beautiful. But make no mistake about it- they are Oaths and they are Vows and they are Promises and they constitute a Covenant. And you are either a Liar or you tell the Truth when you say, “*I do*” or “*Yes*” or “*I will*” to those Vows.

Today, with the help of a weak and emasculated Ministry in the modern church- Marriage Vows are almost meaningless. People, who lay claim to be saved can violate them- with the full knowledge of the Leaders of the Church- divorce their wives unbiblically; and then marry another (while the first Wife is still living)- with the full Blessings of the Church! And nobody says anything! It is a scandal of epic proportions.

And my Question is this: *“If God’s people are not going to uphold Marriage- who will? If the Church of Jesus does not teach and hold people accountable to the Vows they made- who will?”* But thanks be to God that the Covenant of Peace Church will. And May God help us that, here- we will *always* see Marriage Vows and Marriage itself as something worth *admiring* and something worth *defending*.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone