

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

RLJ-1960

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PART 59: RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

FALSE OATHS

Jesus equated the Pharisees with blind men for their corrupt teaching. They pretended to be spiritual guides, but the irony is that they were just as blind themselves. How can a blind man lead another blind man? **verse 16a**

The Pharisees had devised their own legal system in order to swindle people out of their properties and money. If they made a business deal and closed it by swearing an oath by the temple, that oath had no value and could be broken. **verse 16b**

But any business deal closing with an oath concerning the gold of the temple was legally binding. Such an oath revealed the disposition of these evil men. Gold was the object of their lust. What does it say about these men who considered a metal more valuable than the temple itself? **verse 16c**

Jesus ripped into the Pharisees and asked them if the gold was greater than the temple that sanctified the gold.

The temple was dedicated to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It existed as a place of worship and sacrifice. The holy of holies was reserved for God and the high priest only entered it once a year. To say that the temple was a holy place would not be an understatement. **verse 17a**

Sanctify means to make holy. Gold in and of itself has no holiness. The gold of the temple was considered special because of where it resided; it took on the attributes of the building in which it was housed. If it was kept anywhere else, it would be no different than any other gold. Jesus was implying it was foolish to suggest that the gold was holier than the temple itself. **verse 17b**

MORE OATHS

The Pharisees had yet another corrupt setup. Any business deal sealed by an oath on the altar of the temple had no legal standing if one party broke the promise. But if an oath was sworn on the gift that lay on the altar, then that particular oath was legally binding. Such a course of action was ridiculous because the altar belonged to God even if it resided with men; the sacrifice was also pledged to God and not reversible. In short, it was a play on words. **verse 18**

Jesus asked a rhetorical question. Which is greater, the sacrifice, or the altar that sanctifies the offering? Logic would dictate that the altar, which is dedicated to God, is what sanctifies the sacrifice. The altar is synonymous with holiness and hence it is the altar which furnishes value to the offering. **verse 19**

The Pharisees loved loopholes from which they could escape accountability. Swearing an oath meant nothing to liars. As we have already examined, they swore by the temple or its gold (verse 16), by the altar or the gift laid on it (verse 18), and Jesus circled back



around close the argument. Any man that swears by the altar should realize that his oath is not only binding to the altar, but to the offering laid upon it. God is holy, the altar is holy, and the sacrifice becomes sanctified as well. God will therefore hold a man responsible for any contempt against His divinity. **verse 20**

The temple was God's chosen dwelling place on earth. The holy of holies was where the famous Ark of the Covenant was located and once a year the high priest would enter to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for the sins of the Israelites. How careless and arrogant of the Pharisees to swear an oath by God and not fear reprisal when they broke it. **verse 21**

To swear by heaven is a direct appeal to God. Heaven is where God's throne exists. Anyone that swears by heaven, takes an oath that invokes the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and such a vow is irreversible. **verse 22**

SUMMARY

With this public speech directed to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus made it clear that He was aware of their wickedness; they had been weighed and found wanting. The common people standing around must have been shocked as the God-man boldly told the truth about the corruption within the Jewish leadership.

As the Son of God, Jesus was obviously aware that He had sealed His fate with these immoral men because they would soon demand His crucifixion.

This should serve as an example that we are to call out sin and corruption in our leaders, even if it is not expedient or politically correct to do so.

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?