

>>>>>> Matthew – Lesson 11 <<<<<<<

- 1) As we move forward, I need to make one other comment regarding the oral tradition vs. written Torah which we have been talking about.
 - a) Again, Jesus is speaking about the oral tradition, that fence or hedge built around the Torah.
 - b) However, in many of these upcoming passages, He actually does quote portions of the Torah.
 - c) However, He still prefaces these quotes with the words “you have heard it said” or something similar.
 - i) This is still I think indicating not only the quoted Torah passages but the oral tradition that surrounds it, all of which is integral to how the Jewish people saw the Law at this point.
 - d) So, moving on ...

- 2) Jesus weighs in on divorce next ...

Matthew 5:31-32 (NASB 2020)

³¹ “Now it was said, ‘WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY IS TO GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE’; ³² but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

- 3) This subject of divorce was hotly debated among the Jews during Jesus’ time.

- 4) The original law stated ...

Deuteronomy 24:1 (NASB 2020)

¹ “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens, if she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, that he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand ...

- 5) There were two distinct schools of thought on divorce.

- a) Rabbi Hillel represented one stand on the subject and Rabbi Shammai the other.
 - i) Hillel said that a man could divorce his wife for basically any reason.
 - ii) This is a very liberal interpretation of the original law as laid down in Deuteronomy.
 - iii) The phrases “she finds no favor in his eyes” and “some indecency in her” stated here meant for Hillel virtually anything from a burnt dinner to the way she wore her hair to sexual immorality or adultery.
 - iv) Shammai on the other hand insisted that divorce could only be granted for reasons of adultery.
 - b) Obviously, there is quite a difference in the way folks looked at the subject.
 - c) Jesus is very clear on the subject – He is definitely not in Hillel’s camp.
- 6) In fact, when we look at what Jesus is saying, we can clearly see divorce cannot be a frivolous thing.
 - a) Jesus as the knower of all things understood the truth behind the original law and therefore makes the statement that He makes.

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

- 7) One other uniqueness of divorce in the 1st century was that women were not able to divorce men.
 - a) According to one source I read, men could commit adultery with an unmarried woman and it would not be considered adultery at all.
 - i) True or not, there was a major inequality in all this.
 - b) Women in those times were unfortunately really considered property.
- 8) Another factor that figured into the divorce equation was the monies which were exchanged when the marriage took place.
 - a) In case of a divorce, depending on the reasons, the dowry could go with the wife making this one thing that perhaps would cause the husband to have second thoughts before frivolously divorcing his wife.
- 9) By observation, today's society is definitely more in Hillel's camp than Shammai's.

Questions, Comments, things you want to discuss?

- 1) Continuing in chapter 5 we read ...

Matthew 5:33-37 (NASB 2020)

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, take no oath at all, neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, nor by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. ³⁶ Nor shall you take an oath by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. ³⁷ But make sure your statement is, ‘Yes, yes *or* ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil *origin*.

- 2) We actually talked at some length about this when we studied James.
- 3) So, we will do a quick review of this and perhaps hit a couple of new points.
- 4) In our society today, at least in the US, there are several times one is required to take an oath:
 - a) In court when we are testifying.
 - i) Even in this situation today, most courts are offering alternatives moving toward generic oaths or affirmations without any religious text or context involved.
 - b) Oaths are required when we enter the military, sworn into an office, and the codes for some professions.
- 5) This situation is really in stark contrast to the 1st century.
 - a) In the 1st century, oaths were very highly regarded at all levels.
 - b) They were most always connected to religious beliefs and even specific deities.
 - i) Many oaths were required to be sworn by the Emperor who was most often deified.
 - c) People took oaths as witnesses and guarantors of their promises and in legal proceedings.

- i) Oaths were crucial and were used in both social and political contexts, to solidify agreements, alliances, and loyalties.
- d) Most 1st century societies, including the Romans and it seems especially the ancient Israelites placed a high value on the sanctity of oaths.
- 6) The Jewish people were especially keen on personal oaths, and they added their own special twist to them. They set up a hierarchy, how binding things were vs. the object you swore by..
 - a) The objects of their oaths were:
 - i) **God's name**
 - ii) **The temple**
 - iii) **The altar**
 - iv) **Heaven**
 - v) **Earth**
 - vi) **Jerusalem**
 - vii) **One's own head**
 - viii) **The Law/Torah**
 - ix) **The lives of your children**
 - x) **By one's own life**
 - b) The hierarchy was:
 - i) Most Binding – Direct oaths using God's name.
 - ii) Highly Binding – Oaths made using sacred objects (Temple, altar, sacrifices).
 - iii) Binding (avoided using God's name) – Oaths by natural elements (heaven, earth)
 - iv) Obligatory (less formal) – Personal oaths were more easily broken.
- 7) Jesus and James are addressing the same set of problems.
 - a) First, one of the biggest issues here is the third commandment.

Exodus 20:7 (NASB 2020)

- 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.
- b) Going back to Jesus' teachings, we can see the problem clearly when we look closely at Jesus' teaching on the same thing.
 - c) If we look at verses 34-37 again, we see that He directly gets rid of 8 out of the 10 of the objects that are on the list we just read.
 - i) In truth, I think the other two go away by association as well.
 - d) This of course also gets rid of the hierarchial system they had in place.
 - 8) Many scholars do not really see this as an issue of what you are swearing by.
 - a) Instead, they put forth that the real problem being addressed is one of honesty.
 - b) I definitely agree that honesty is a major thing that is being addressed here.
 - c) In considering that, we must realize that honesty is in actuality, a two-way street,
 - i) When we obey Jesus' command to let our yes be yes and no be no, it is inferred that as the hearer, we must do the same.
 - ii) In other words, we must believe what our brothers and sisters say and not require an oath.

- (1) This is truly not how things were being done in the first century!
- 9) However, in addition, if we really look at what both Jesus and James are saying, the recipients of this teaching have another problem, and it is a BIG PROBLEM!
- 10) Their brothers and sisters might accept their yes or no, but Rome would not accept a simple yes or no.
- 11) If, by law, you were required to swear an oath to a specific deity including the Emperor, you were also being required to break this teaching.
- 12) There were probably many 1st century Christians who were martyred for that very reason – they would not break this teaching.
- 13) I know this is a lot of repeats of what we studied in James, but truth is they are really and truly addressing the exact same issue that Jesus is teaching here.

So, what are our takeaways? What does this command say to you and me today right here in Ft. Worth at the corner of Altamesa and Hulen?

- a) Obvious #1 – Be truthful in all things and all ways – “yes be yes and no be no”.
- b) Obvious #2 – Not to take the Lord’s name in vain.
- c) Obvious #3 – Do not swear frivolously.
- d) Obvious #4 – Do not swear by other things.
- e) NOT so obvious #5– What about oaths of office, witnesses, etc.?