

The Fourth Antithesis – Concerning Oaths Matthew 5:33-37

Verse 33 – When Jesus declared, “You have heard that it was said to those of old,” He was not talking specifically about what the Old Testament teaches, but rather what the scribes and Pharisees were teaching in their summary of Old Testament.

Exodus 20:7
Leviticus 19:12
Numbers 30:2
Deuteronomy 10:20
Jeremiah 12:16

Verses 34-36 – See also Matthew 23:16-22.

Verse 37 – There are two questions to answer here.

First, when Jesus said, “do not swear at all” (vs. 34) and “let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’” (vs. 37), did He really intend to prohibit *any* and *all* oaths, or did He intend to prohibit only the kinds of legalistic oaths taught by the scribes and Pharisees?

1. The context seems to indicate that Jesus was only prohibiting the legalistic oaths of the scribes and Pharisees.

2. Scripture elsewhere plainly teaches that God Himself has sworn oaths.

Genesis 22:15-18
Hebrews 6:13-18

3. Scripture also tells us that Jesus Himself testified under oath, such as when he was taken to be tried before the Jewish leaders.

Matthew 26:62-64

4. Scripture also tells us that the Apostle Paul had no problem taking an oath in God's name or making a vow to God.

Acts 18:18
Romans 1:9
2 Corinthians 1:23

Second, what exactly did Jesus mean when He said, “whatever is more than these is from the evil one”?

The text may also be translated, “anything more than this *comes from evil*” (ESV) or “anything beyond these *is of evil*” (NASB).

Jesus is saying that the existence of evil in the world provided the reason for the origin of oaths in the first place.