





# OATHS PART I

**Ephesians 4:25** *“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.”*

When Jesus says “you have heard that it was said,” what the people have heard is not given as direct Old Testament quotations, but as a summary statement accurately condensing the burden of Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2, and Deuteronomy 5:11; 6:3; 23:21–23. The Mosaic law forbade irreverent oaths, light use of the Lord’s name, and broken vows. Once God’s name was invoked, the vow to which it was attached became a debt that had to be paid to the Lord.

There was a sophisticated hierarchy to making vows and what words were used in Jesus’ day. They would look at how closely it was related to God’s (Yahweh’s) name to determine if you really needed to keep your vow. Incredible distinctions proliferate under such an approach. Swearing by heaven and earth was not binding, nor was swearing by Jerusalem, though swearing *toward* Jerusalem was. An entire mishnaic tract (M *Shebuoth*) is given over to the subject only shows that such distinctions became important and were widely discussed.

What does Jesus do in this climate of broken oaths? Jesus relates it all to the kingdom of God and its righteousness to the Old Testament

If oaths designed to encourage truthfulness become occasions for clever lies and deceit, Jesus will abolish oaths (v. 34). The direction in which the Old Testament points is the fundamental importance of thorough and consistent truthfulness. If one does not swear at all, one does not swear falsely. Not dissimilar reasoning was found among the Essenes, who avoided taking oaths, “regarding it as worse than perjury for they say that one who is not believed without an appeal to God stands condemned already.”

Jesus insists that whatever a man swears by is related to God in some way, and therefore every oath is implicitly in God’s name—heaven, earth, Jerusalem, even the hairs of the head are all under God’s sway and ownership (v. 36).

The Greek might be better translated with, “But let your word be, ‘Yes, Yes; No, No.’” The doubling is probably no more than preacher’s rhetoric. Many groups have understood these verses absolutely literally and have therefore refused to take any oaths. Their zeal to conform to Scripture is commendable, but they have probably not interpreted the text very well.

- The contextual purpose of this passage is to stress the true direction in which the Old Testament points, the importance of truthfulness. Where oaths are not being used evasively and truthfulness is not being threatened, it is not immediately obvious that they require being done away with.
- In the Scriptures God Himself “swears” (Genesis 9:9–11; Luke 1:68, 73; Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:27–31), not because He sometimes lies, but in order to help men believe (Hebrews 6:17). The earliest Christians still took oaths (Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:5, 10), for much the same reason. Jesus himself testified under oath (Matthew 26:63–64).

Jesus’ teaching here is another example of how He fulfills the law, not destroys or gets rid of it. It shows that He is the one who knows it’s true intent and meaning.

Let your yes be yes and your no be no, let your language be an authentic representation of who you are in Christ. Rest in Jesus and trust Him. Be who and what He made you to be and stop being so worried you have to fill the gap with noise. Let the sounds you make, be sounds of grace. The point of language is to communicate honesty...

...Because our God has communicated clearly in the person of Jesus.



## GOSPEL CLASS

Starts Wednesday, July 2nd at 6:30pm  
*Kids Programs through Elementary.*

## STUDENT MINISTRIES CONTACT

eKids! - christie.marangi@ourelement.org  
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## BAPTISM INFO CLASS

July 6th following each service.  
*Baptisms on August 31st*

## SEE ALL UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

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