

THE BOOK OF JAMES

“Any Other Oath”

Scripture Reading: JAMES 5:12

-) **SLIDES 1-6**. Bible Jeopardy!
-) **SLIDES 7**. Read today’s Scripture text.
-) **SLIDE 8**. Today we continue in our expository study in the Book of JAMES. This is week #27. I have titled today’s message “Any Other Oath” (5:12).
-) **SLIDE 9**. If this verse from the Book of JAMES sounds familiar, it’s because his older half-brother, Jesus, used similar words in the Sermon on the Mount in MATTHEW 5:33-37.
-) **SLIDE 10**. Again, here is JAMES 5:12. We can easily see the similarities. I’m convinced that James did learn a lot of good things from his older brother.
-) **SLIDE 11**. There is something very important about swearing and taking oaths. JAMES 5:12. And James says here that it is so important, that he says “*and above all, my brethren*” as if it is of the greatest importance.
-) Out of all the great words and advice and commands he has already given in this book (trials, faith, taming the tongue, quarrels and conflicts, etc.), he says this command is “*above all.*” And he concludes by saying we can fall under judgment.
-) So, let’s take a deeper look into swearing and oaths and exactly what these things meant back then and to us today. And it all begins with the 3rd Commandment.
-) **SLIDE 12**. EXODUS 20:7. There are many things we could list that are direct violations of this third commandment. This morning let’s focus on the name of the Lord our God and how that relates to oaths and swearing.

-) One definition of the word “*swearing*” we use today is to identify the use of bad words, dirty words, or when we say someone has a potty mouth. And we all know the words that fall into this category of bad words, four-letter words, or swear words.
-) **SLIDE 13.** Yes, we are commanded to be careful of the words we speak. EPHESIANS 5:3-4. But this third commandment and JAMES 5:12 is not talking about us speaking bad (dirty) words. Let’s look at another definition of swearing.
-) Have you ever said something like, “*I swear I didn’t eat that last piece of fried chicken.*” You swear. “*I swear on a stack of Bibles that I didn’t eat that last piece of fried chicken.*” And in the Biblical sense, swearing is a part of making or taking oaths and vows.
-) **SLIDE 14.** It is common for people, both today and in the time of the Israelites, to take oaths; to make vows; to swear. And it was not uncommon for an Israelite to swear an oath invoking the name of God. Actually, it was a command. DEUT 6:13.
-) So, the Israelite (man/woman), when taking an oath, was to take the oath in the name of God. Why? Because swearing an oath and invoking the name of God, would bring credibility and honesty to that person swearing the oath. After all, one would dare not lie if one swore by the name of God, would one?
-) **SLIDE 15.** There is a very interesting story in JOSHUA 9. The Israelites had been driving out all the people in the Promised Land, but a tribe of people called the Gibeonites were still living within Israelite territory. So Joshua swears with an oath to make peace with the Gibeonites and not to kill them. JOSHUA 9:15.
-) **SLIDE 16.** But then we find out that the Gibeonites lied to Joshua about where they lived. The Israelites didn’t like this and they wanted to kill the Gibeonites. Here’s how the Israelite leaders responded. JOSHUA 9:19-20.

-) Joshua was not about to break the oath he swore in God's name. Why?
-) **SLIDE 17.** EXODUS 20:7. Because the third commandment says that the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. And breaking an oath would be punished by God. On the other hand, one would not be taking God's name in vain as long as one kept one's oath.
-) **SLIDE 18.** Since the words of James are so similar to the words of Jesus, let's get back to those verses. MATT 5:33-37.
-) We must remember that Jesus' Sermon on the Mount was a call for people to understand the true meaning of the Mosaic Law and to encourage the religious leaders (and everyone else) to quit being self-righteous.
-) In these five verses Jesus tells the people not to even make an oath. Why? Because just like every other part of the Law, the religious leaders managed to corrupt the practice of swearing oaths too. How did they do that? This gets interesting.
-) The religious leaders knew the third commandment. They knew that if they swore an oath by the name of God that they must keep that oath or there would be judgment. BUT if they would swear an oath by something other than the name of God, they could break that oath without any repercussions. And that is exactly what they were doing.
-) **SLIDE 19.** MATT 5:33-37. But Jesus tells them it really doesn't make any difference who or what you swear the oath by. Because everything is God's and is a reflection of His name and His creation.
-) Jerusalem is the city of the Great King. Heaven is God's throne. The earth is God's footstool. Regardless of what you swear by, you are swearing by God. And if you break that oath that you swore, you have just violated the third commandment and are under God's judgment.

-) **SLIDE 20.** So, what's the solution? Jesus and James give the same solution. JAMES 5:12. Let your 'yes' be a 'yes' and your 'no' be a 'no.' No oaths. No swearing.
-) Listen. God knows humans and He knows humans are very good at lying (9th commandment) and have a very difficult time keeping oaths that they swore they would keep.
-) How many couples swore before God and witnesses that they would stay married and take their spouse till death do they part but end up getting divorced? How many people get on a witness stand in a court of law, swear on a Bible they will tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and then lie right through their teeth to protect their own skin?
-) In January of 1998 this question was asked to then President Bill Clinton while he was under oath: "*And so the record is completely clear, have you ever had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky, as that term is defined in Deposition Exhibit 1, as modified by the Court?*" Mr. Clinton's response was, "*I have never had sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky. I've never had an affair with her.*"
-) And I am sure that Bill Clinton is not the only governing official who has lied while under oath.
-) If you have ever watched an episode of Law and Order, you see where people lie under oath all the time. Fictional stories? Yes. But these stories are representations of reality. And reality is that people lie.
-) **SLIDE 21.** Jesus says swearing and then breaking an oath comes from the evil one. Who is the evil one? The devil. JOHN 8:44. Jesus says that the devil is the father of what? Lies. Liars break oaths.
-) **SLIDE 22.** MATTHEW 12:34. If your heart is full of lies, there's a good chance you will swear an oath you cannot keep.

) “*I swear on a stack of Bibles that I didn’t eat that last piece of fried chicken.*” Not good. I better not say it, if I don’t really mean it. Why? Because I am swearing by the name of the Lord.

) **SLIDE 23**. JAMES 5:12. Again, James provides us with a simple solution. Simply let your ‘yes’ be a ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ be a ‘no.’ Be a man of your word. Be a woman of your word. And quit swearing.

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