

The purpose of this publication is to spread the truth, to sow God's good seed, the Word of God, and to confront religious error for the good of men's souls. Editor: Allen Dvorak

Published weekly by a group of God's people in the Monrovia community and meeting at:
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<http://spreadingtruth.org>

were warned about swearing by God's name falsely (Leviticus 19:12) and *commanded* to swear by His name rather than by other gods (Deuteronomy 6:13). Oaths were not to be taken lightly and one's word confirmed with an oath was not to be broken (Leviticus 5:4; Numbers 30:2, 10-15).

Of course, the Law of Moses was abolished at the cross, but the passages previously referenced indicate that there was nothing inherently sinful in taking an oath under that law.

We have already noted that Jesus answered the high priest while under oath. The apostle Paul also took oaths in his epistles. Consider these passages:

⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you
-- **Romans 1:9; ESV**

²³ But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth.
-- **2 Corinthians 1:23; ESV**

⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for

you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.
-- **Philippians 1:8; ESV**

⁵ For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness.
-- **1 Thessalonians 2:5; ESV**

²⁷ I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.
-- **1 Thessalonians 5:27; ESV**

Some have argued that Paul didn't actually take oaths -- he was merely referring to God as his witness to confirm his teaching, much like we would cite Scripture to support our teaching of another person. Note, however, that Paul was calling God as witness to the truthfulness of his comments about his own behavior, which is, by definition, taking an oath. In First Thessalonians 5:27, Paul actually put his readers under oath "to have [the] letter read to all the brothers."

But what about Jesus' teaching? Either Jesus wasn't forbidding all oaths or Paul violated the Lord's teaching.

[Stay tuned for the exciting finish to this article in next week's bulletin!]

Bible Challenge Question - Answer

Jeremiah was from the tribe of Levi. He was "the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin" (Jeremiah 1:1). A priest would be from Levi, but he might come from a town in any of the tribal land allotments because the priestly tribe was given cities throughout Israel.



Volume 10, Number 19

May 7, 2017

Taking Oaths

By Allen Dvorak

"I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63). So spoke the high priest to Jesus on the night of His arrest and trial. What exactly was the intention of the high priest? The word *adjure* is not one we use frequently. To *adjure* someone is to "command solemnly under or as if under oath or penalty of a curse" (Merriam-webster.com). The word is derived from the Latin verb *jurare*, meaning "to swear." A comparison of Bible translations indicates that the high priest was not taking an oath himself (e.g., HCSB; LEB; NET; NKJV; NRSV); he was demanding that Jesus answer the question "Are you the Christ, the Son of God" under oath. Jesus could have remained silent even as He had done for the high priest's previous question (26:62-63a), but He answered under oath, confirming that He was indeed the Son of God.

Some Bible students might equate taking an oath with swearing in the sense of "an irreverent or blasphemous use of the name of God or anything sacred," which is, in fact,

one of the definitions of our English word *oath* (dictionary.com). But another meaning of *oath* is "a solemn usually formal calling upon God or a god to witness to the truth of what one says or to witness that one sincerely intends to do what one says" (*Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th Ed.). This is the meaning of *oath* as it is typically used in the Scriptures.

Can a Christian take an oath? Can a Christian testify in court under oath to tell the truth? That's a troubling question for some disciples, especially in light of comments made by both Jesus (Matthew 5:33-37; 23:16-18) and James (5:12). In the Sermon on the Mount and in the epistle of James, it sounds as though disciples are forbidden to take an oath under any circumstances.

³³ "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the

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Fighting, Finishing and Keeping

By Allen Dvorak



Text: _____

1) "I have _____."

A _____, not a _____

We battle against _____, _____.

Our warfare is not _____ or _____.

Successful soldier:

C _____

S _____

F _____

R _____

F _____

2) "I have _____."

The emphasis of the figure: _____

A _____, not a _____

Successful runner:

E _____

R _____

S _____

R _____

3) "I have _____."

Do you not know that in a _____ all the runners run, but only _____ receives the _____? So run that you may _____ it.

-- 1 Corinthians 9:____; ESV

"I find that the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have."

-- Thomas Jefferson

"Little minds are tamed and subdued by misfortune; but great minds rise above it."

-- Washington Irving

Lord what you have sworn.'³⁴ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.³⁶ And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.³⁷ Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

-- Matthew 5:33-37; ESV

¹² But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

-- James 5:12; ESV

Jesus was God in human flesh when He answered the high priest under oath, but it wasn't the first time that God confirmed His word or promise with an oath. For example, God confirmed His promise to Abraham with an oath (Genesis 22:16; 26:3; Hebrews 6:13-

17; Luke 1:73). God confirmed His promise to David regarding a son to sit on his throne with an oath (Acts 2:30; Psalm 132:11). Jesus was made a high priest with an oath (Hebrews 7:20-21; Psalm 110:4).

The Law of Moses actually *required* people to take oaths under certain circumstances. For instance, if an Israelite gave an animal to his neighbor for safekeeping and the animal was injured, driven away or died, with no witness to confirm, the neighbor would take an oath that he had not "put his hand to his neighbor's property" and the owner of the animal was to accept the oath and not require restitution from his neighbor (Exodus 22:10-11). It appears that sometimes in Scripture taking an oath involved a curse, i.e., calling for God to punish the oath-taker if his word was not true. In the case of a woman who fell under the suspicion of her husband of having committed adultery, the priest required her to take an oath before she drank the "bitter water," with the consequence that, if her claim of innocence was not true, the water would "pass into [her] bowels and make [her] womb swell and [her] thigh fall away" (Numbers 5; esp. vv. 19-23).

There are numerous passages in the Old Testament that indicate the acceptability of oaths taken by God's people. The Israelites

Bible Challenge Question

Jeremiah was descended from which tribe?

The answer to this question is on the back page.