

Vows & Oaths

QUESTION: Does the marriage vow made during a wedding or marriage ceremony disobey the command of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that says “do not make any vows!”?

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’³⁴ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne;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 swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.³⁷ All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. (Matt 5:33-37 NASB)

ANSWER: Taking a pledge or making a vow is different from taking an oath. It was taking an oath that the Lord spoke against.

The Scribes and Pharisees taught that the only way to insure your word was truthful was by swearing or invoking the name of God, heaven, earth, the temple etc. Our Lord’s intent, in Matthew Chapter 5, was to disrupt this burdensome practice. Not only was it unnecessary it actually resulted in taking the name of the Lord in vain.

Jesus was abolishing this practice because when a believer makes a promise, he does not need anything beyond his word to validate his promise. Your word is enough, no oath is required. The exception would be in legal instances such as sworn testimony or swearing an official into office.

Peter made reference to pledges and oaths. In Luke 22:33 he pledged to stand with the Lord even unto death, which he was not able not do. Then in Matthew 26:72 & 74 he denied knowing Jesus with an oath, and he began to curse and swear.

All believers should uphold all promises, pledges and vows to man or to God. This is an integral part of the integrity of the believer and should set believers apart. You can easily see that it would be unwise to be hasty with any promise. It is even more serious when one breaks a pledge to God (Deut. 23:31, Eccl. 5:4).

The Corinthian church made a vow/pledge to support depraved believers in Jerusalem. The apostle Paul urged them “to finish doing it” (2 Cor. 8:11). In other words fulfill your pledge.

So to answer the initial question, there is nothing sinful about taking a marriage vow. It is simply a pledge/promise that one will honor his/her commitment in marriage.