



**Matthew 23:16-26**

Matt. 23:16 “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.’

Matt. 23:17 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

Matt. 23:18 And, “Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.’

Matt. 23:19 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?

Matt. 23:20 Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it.

Matt. 23:21 He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it.

Matt. 23:22 And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.

Matt. 23:23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

Matt. 23:24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

Matt. 23:25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

Matt. 23:26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

**Note**

According to Jewish tradition the smallest unclean animal is a gnat, and the largest is a camel. Jewish people do not eat either of them (nor would I...just doesn't sound appetizing!)

## Observations & Discussion

1. In vss. 16-22 Jesus condemned the religious leaders for how they interpreted and applied the Law of Oaths found in Numbers 30:1-2. Compare the scripture in Numbers with Jesus' rebuke in vss. 16-22; what was the problem with how the religious leaders interpreted and applied the Law of Oaths?

2. Read the beatitude in Matthew 5:6. What does it mean to "*hunger and thirst for righteousness*"? How does that attitude differ from the way the religious leaders interpreted Numbers 30:1-2?

3. In vss. 23-24 Jesus rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees for **majoring in the minors** while at the same time neglecting the attitudes that were most important to God. List some examples from the Gospels where we find the religious leaders doing just that.

4. Compare vss. 23-24 with the beatitude in Matthew 5:7. Why is it so important to Jesus that we extend mercy to others? Does that mean we ignore sin?

5. In vss. 25-26 Jesus uses a metaphor of dirty dishes to describe the spiritual condition of the scribes and Pharisees. Based on what Jesus said how would you describe the kind of holiness that pleases God?

6. Read the beatitude on Matthew 5:8. How does this beatitude relate to Jesus' instruction in vs. 26 of our text?

7. What are some examples of people today who use the Bible to justify ungodly behavior?