

# Did Jesus warn His disciples that Scripture was CORRUPTED?

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**Pushback:** *Didn't Jesus say Satan was author of the Oath/Vow laws?*

The passage in question reads like this (Matthew 5:33-37):

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old,  
‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord  
what you have sworn.’ But I say to you, Do not take an  
oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or  
by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is  
the city of the great King. And do not take an oath by your  
head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let  
what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; **anything more than  
this comes from evil.**” [English Standard Version; the ESV  
puts a marginal note at the word ‘evil’ saying that ‘the evil  
one’ was alternative translation of the Greek text.]

The OTHER VOICE asserts that this passage shows that:

1. Jesus said that taking an oath was morally wrong, and that, therefore,
2. the Mosaic legislation that allowed this (and in some cases, required it) ‘came from the evil One.’;
3. Meaning that Satan was the author of those original oath/vow laws.

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When we look closely at this Oath passage, we have to examine **two** aspects: the **prohibition** of oath-taking; and the ascription of 'anything more than YES or NO' as '**coming from evil**'.

**On the first aspect**, we should note that the prohibition is mostly directed against the behavior of the Pharisees, and would not exclude oaths required by law or even 'simple' vows and oaths.

We have seen earlier that **Jesus** did not forbid oaths in his later confrontation with the leaders in Matthew 23:16-22, and when put under oath by the High Priest in 26:65, he did not protest it, but answered as required under law:

**"And the high priest said to him, "I charge you by the living God"** (καὶ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἐξορκίζω σε κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος). Ἐξορκίζω is a legal term, to **"cause someone to swear under oath."** When the high priest adds "by the living God" he is making the most solemn charge possible,<sup>14</sup> with all the authority of his sacred office behind it. **If a person is placed under oath by the divine name, one must respond** (*m. Šeb.* 4:13, so Brown). He is demanding a response." [Grant Osborne]

And **two of the leading apostles** both knew of the 'YES/NO' statement, but did not see this as prohibiting all genuine/righteous oaths and vows:

- **James brother of the Lord:** "YES/NO" – James 5:12; Vows/Oaths – Acts 21.23
- **Paul** – "YES/NO" – 2 Cor 1.17; Vows/Oaths – 1 Thess 5.27 / Acts 18.18

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**On the second aspect**, we should first note that the phrase 'from evil' is too ambiguous to be used as a proof text that the EVIL ONE is involved in this OATH-issue in any way. Scholars are divided on whether it refers to evil-as-a-principle, the "evil inclination" (*yetzer hara*), or 'the Evil One'.

- **"*Tou ponērou*"** could be rendered either "of evil" or "of the evil one" ("the father of lies," Jn 8:44). The same **ambiguity** recurs at 5:39; 6:13; 13:38" [DA Carson]
- **"Anything beyond this stems from the evil one"** (τὸ δὲ περισσὸν τούτων ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐστίν). When Jesus concludes by saying that "anything more" (τὸ περισσόν) has its origin ("from" [ἐκ]) in Satan ("the evil one"), he means that **anyone who centers on more and more oaths rather than personal integrity is following Satan.**" [Osborne]
- "Jesus strongly condemns anything beyond the simple, genuine yes or no as being ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ, "from **the evil one**," the one associated preeminently with deception (cf. John 8:44)" [Hagner]

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- "Anything beyond the bare assertion takes away from the consistent transparent truthfulness to which Jesus calls, and inasmuch as it does this it is the product of **an evil impulse...A reference to the Evil One is less likely, but not impossible.**" [Nolland]
- "The option of translating "from the Evil One" would not essentially change the sense: whether the moral failure is blamed **on an abstract principle of "evil"** or on the personal intervention of the devil (the "father of lies," John 8:44) does not affect its evil character. The context here **gives us no obvious reason for preferring the personal to the abstract sense.** ... ; it makes little difference to the general sense whether the need for safeguards against falsehood is traced to the **wickedness of the world in general** or to the 'Father of lies'." [RT France]
- "His own point is not so much that oaths **are evil** as that the **motivation** for engaging in them is; one should simply tell the truth" [Keener]

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On the second aspect, we should next note that EVEN IF the EVIL ONE is meant by the adjectival phrase (*tou ponerou*), his impact is NOT on the original creation of the texts themselves, but in the intentions and behavior of the people making those oaths:

- “Anything beyond this stems from the evil one (τὸ δὲ περισσὸν τούτων ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐστίν). When Jesus concludes by saying that “anything more” (τὸ περισσόν) has its origin (“from” [ἐκ]) in Satan (“the evil one”), he means that **anyone who centers on more and more oaths rather than personal integrity is following Satan.**” [Osborne]
- “Jesus strongly condemns anything [i.e. statements by the person] beyond the simple, genuine yes or no as being ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ, “from the evil one,” the one associated preeminently with deception (cf. John 8:44)” [Hagner]
- “Anything beyond the bare assertion takes away from the consistent transparent truthfulness to which Jesus calls, and inasmuch as it does this it [i.e. the vow or statement made by the person] is the product of an evil impulse...A reference to the Evil One is less likely, but not impossible.” [Nolland]

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- “The option of translating “from the Evil One” would not essentially change the sense: whether **the moral failure [i.e. the human making a flowery vow]** is blamed **on an abstract principle of “evil”** or on the personal intervention of the devil (the “father of lies,” John 8:44) does not affect its evil character. The context here **gives us no obvious reason for preferring the personal to the abstract sense.** ... ; it makes little difference to the general sense whether the need for safeguards against falsehood (**i.e. vows made by a person**) is traced to the **wickedness of the world in general** or to the ‘Father of lies.’” [RT France]
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False oaths had been a problem from the very beginning (like abuse of the divorce 'allowance'):

- Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?  
4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and **does not swear deceitfully**. [Ps 24.3-4]
- O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? 2  
He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart... **who swears to his own hurt and does not change** [Ps 15.4]
- Do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and **love no false oath, for all these things I hate**, declares the LORD" [ZECH 8.17]
- "I will send it out, declares the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and the house of him **who swears falsely by my name**. And it shall remain in his house and consume it, both timber and stones." Zec 5:4.

And many Jewish leaders of that time recognized these abuses and called for the same simple truthfulness (e.g. Philo, Essenes).

Note, though, that we all might have to make an oath in the New Future—smile. The passages that speak of '**every knee shall bow**' and "**will confess as Lord**" (Rom 14.11 and Philp 2.10f) come from **Isaiah 45.23**:

*"By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: 'To me every knee shall bow, **every tongue shall swear allegiance.**'"*

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So, in light of this, this passage simply CANNOT BE USED as evidence that SATAN authored that passage.

- It might not be speaking of SATAN at all;
- And even if it was, it doesn't discuss authorship of the OT text at all

**Looking at it another way,** had Jesus said THIS instead:

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ But I say to you, **Do not OBEY those Laws at all**, because they were authored and commanded by the Evil One SATAN.”

Then the issue would have been SETTLED right then COMPLETELY. There would have been no need to give any rationale for why using any of the heaven, earth, Jerusalem, or hair-on-head phrases was mistaken! **That argumentation was about implementation of a God-given law, and would not fit in an outright denunciation of the written law as being Satanic.**



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So, in light of this, this passage simply CANNOT BE USED as evidence that SATAN authored that passage.

If this was supposed to be a WARNING to us, then it was certainly NOT “Explicit, Clear, Strong”—and as being the only passage like this, the WARNING was certainly NOT “Frequent” either.

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If this were REALLY true:

1. We would expect several/many **EXPLICIT** and **CLEAR** statements by Jesus **ascribing** specific passages and/or large chunks of the Hebrew Bible to **Satan as author**.
2. We would expect Jesus to issue SEVERAL STRONG and CLEAR statements that the **Law of Moses was illegitimate, evil, and nullified by Him**.
3. We should expect **MANY, STRONG, and CLEAR repudiations**, of major passages stating them to be evil, false, and/or deceitful in written form;

Okay, we basically came up with NOTHING here either.

Jesus consistently does the OPPOSITE – He consistently AFFIRMS and APPLIES the Law in its widest scope and minutest detail. He is very clear that to ignore it or denigrate it is criminal. These statements by Jesus himself must be **reinterpreted COMPLETELY**, if one is continue to believe that **ANY PART of the LAW** was 'evil' and/or satanic in origin.