

Obedience To Masters Enjoined

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Obedience to Masters Enjoined (Col. 3:22-23; 1Pet. 2:18).

Obedience Due to God Only (Mt. 4:10; 23:10; 1Cor. 7:23).

In order to correctly understand whether there is a contradiction between any of the scriptures mentioned above, it is important to make a distinction between the words “obedience” and “worship”. The scriptures that some people claim apply to “obedience,” are actually dealing with “worship.” Therefore, there is no contradiction. Instead, these are two separate subjects,

Then Jesus said to him (Satan), ‘Away (get behind me) with you, Satan! For it is written, **‘You shall worship the Lord your God,** and Him only you shall serve’ (Mt. 4:10; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

In the scripture above, Satan was tempting Christ with the goal of having him fall down and worship another god (Mt. 4:9; cf. 2Cor. 4:4). Had Christ succumbed to this temptation, he would have broken the first commandment (Ex. 20:3), and disqualified himself from being a sacrifice for the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29).

The next scripture, that supposedly contradicts one or more of the other scriptures, is actually dealing with how people are to represent themselves. Christ clearly stated that no one should use the title “father” in a religious sense,

Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven (Mt. 23:9; emphasis added).

Therefore, any religious organization that refers to its priests, or pastors, as “father” is breaking a command that is tied intrinsically to Exodus 20:3. The next scripture is dealing with addressing religious teachers,

And do not be called teachers; for one is your teacher, the Christ (Mt. 23:10).

In this last scripture, Jesus Christ was reinforcing what his heavenly Father had stated earlier,

And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, **‘This is My beloved son. Hear Him!** (Mk. 9:7; emphasis added).

In other words, no one else has the right to teach God’s truth with the same authority as Jesus Christ, nor to represent themselves as having that authority. When human beings set themselves up as being God’s representatives in the form of priests and religious

teachers, they can easily mislead those who look up to them. In fact, in some situations these priests and religious instructors become objects of worship by their devotees. When this occurs, the devotees become 'slaves of men' which the apostle Paul warned about,

You were bought at a price; **do not become slaves of men** (1Cor. 7:23; emphasis added).

The remaining scriptures deal with the subject of properly representing God in our conduct at work,

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice (hypocritical, pretentious, or insincere), as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God. ²³ And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men (Col. 3:22-23; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Joseph served his master sincerely, and was obedient in every task he was given. Despite Joseph's good works and loyalty, he ended up being ridiculed and sent to prison for something he did not do (cf. Gen. 39:2-20). However, as everything we do is known to Almighty God (Mt. 6:8; 10:29), Joseph's obedience to Potiphar was eventually honored in a manner that Joseph could never have imagined (Gen. 41:39-45). If we trust God and are obedient to those who are in authority over us, even if we suffer in some way, God is aware and will respond in His time and manner. It is in this context that the subject of obedience is covered in this final scripture,

Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear (respect), not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. ¹⁹ For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. ²⁰ For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. ²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us (you), leaving us (you) an example, that you should follow his steps (1Pet. 2:18-21; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It has been said, humorously at times, that "no good deed goes unpunished." Therefore, we should not be surprised when we are repaid evil for the good works we do. Nevertheless, even when these situations occur, these trials are to our benefit because they help develop important character traits in God's people,

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall unto various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (endurance or perseverance). ⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect (mature) and complete, lacking nothing (Jas. 1:2-4; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In conclusion, the scriptures that are used to claim that God contradicts Himself, are not contradictions at all. Instead, they are dealing with the separate subjects of worship and obedience.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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