



THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

UNDERSTANDING WHAT JESUS WANTS HIS FOLLOWERS TO BE AND TO DO

Week 6

A Christian's Righteousness: Interpreting the law in its truth.

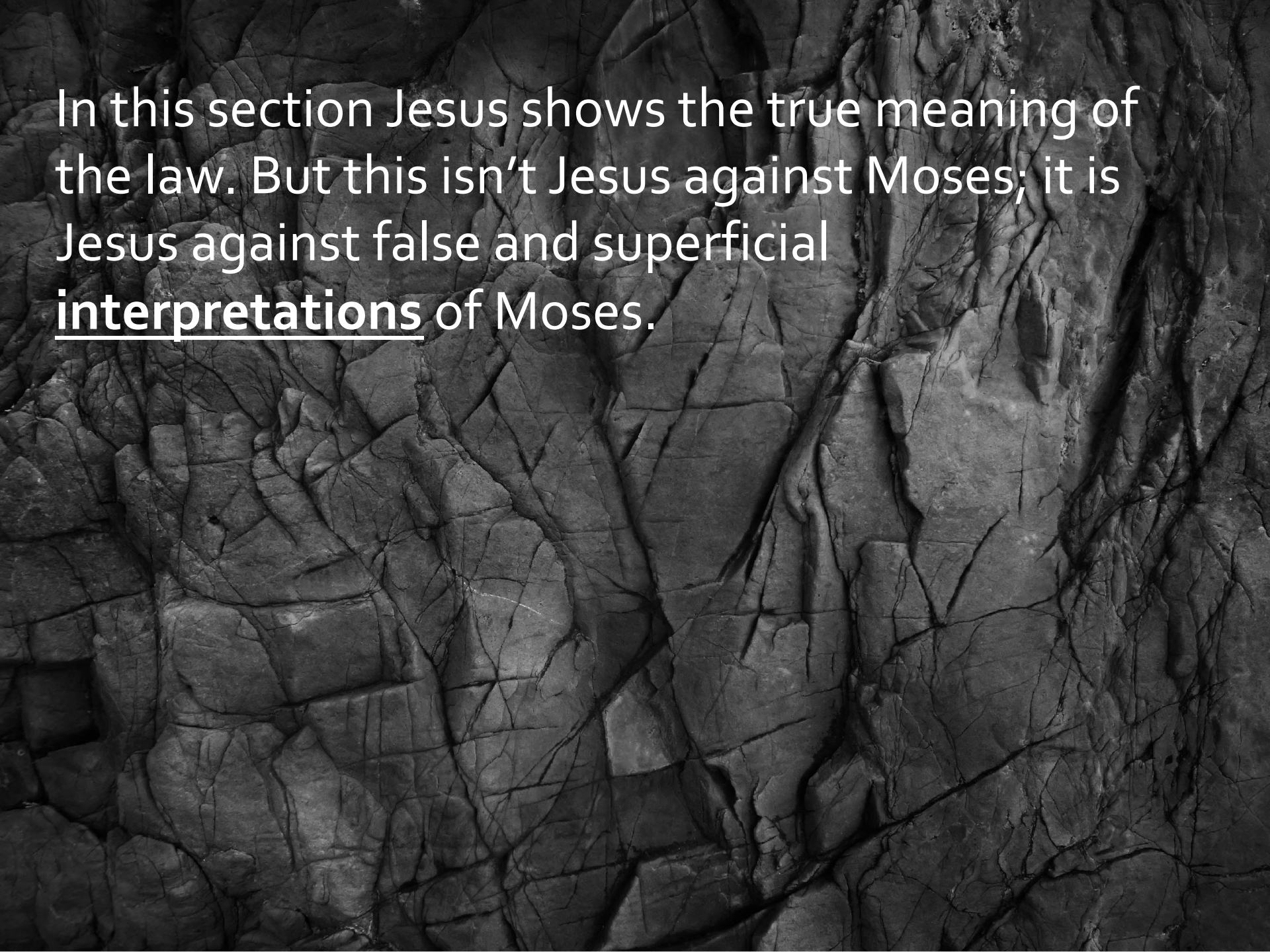


A Christian's Righteousness: Interpreting the law in its truth.

Matthew 5:31:37 NIV

³¹ “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery”.

³³ “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”.



In this section Jesus shows the true meaning of the law. But this isn't Jesus against Moses; it is Jesus against false and superficial interpretations of Moses.

I. Jesus interprets the law concerning divorce.

Matthew 5:31-32 NIV

³¹ “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery”.

Matthew 19:3-9 ESV

³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?” ⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer

two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”⁷ They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?”⁸ He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.”⁹ And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery”.



In that time, the permissible grounds for divorce were debated.

Deuteronomy 24:1a ESV

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house”,

The School of Shammai:

Restricted the "some indecency" in
Deuteronomy 24:1 to refer only to a sexual
immorality authenticated by witnesses.

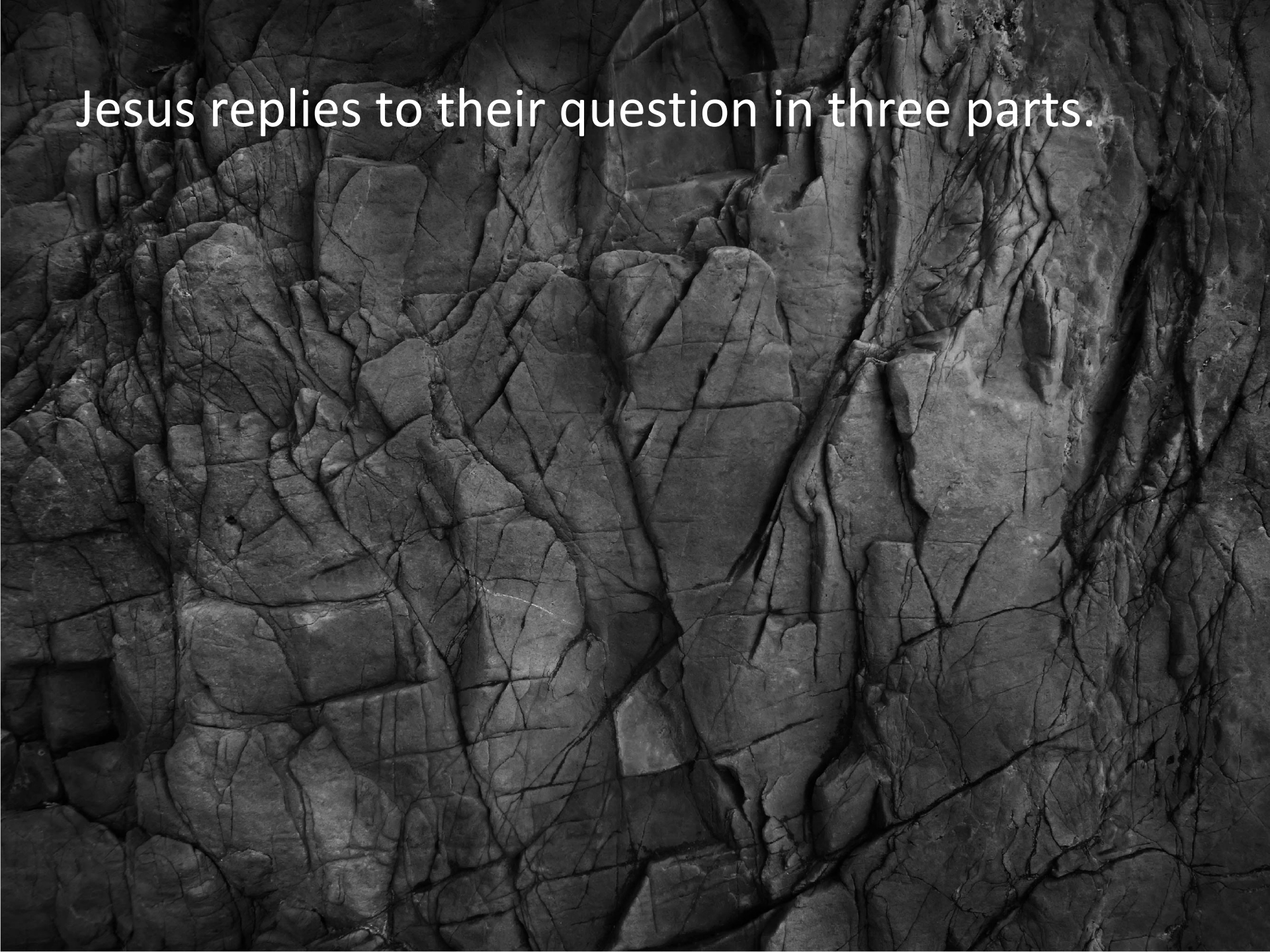
The School of Shammai:

Restricted the "some indecency" in Deuteronomy 24:1 to refer only to a sexual immorality authenticated by witnesses.

The School of Hillel:

Interpreted the term "some indecency" in Deuteronomy 24:1 in the widest possible way to include a wife's most trivial offenses, even including burning the dinner.

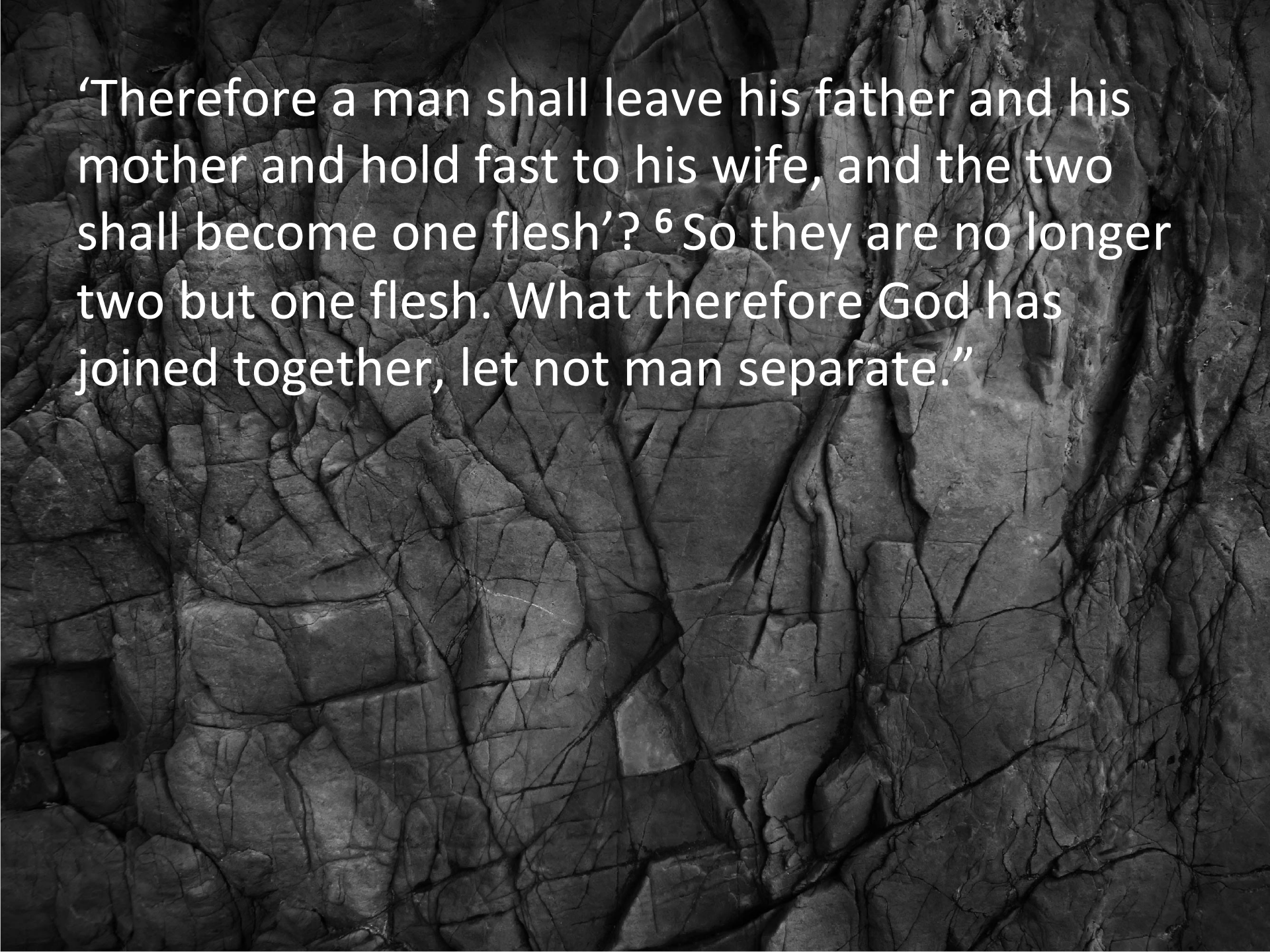
Jesus replies to their question in three parts.



- The Pharisees were preoccupied with the grounds for divorce; Jesus with the institution of marriage.

Matthew 19:3-6 ESV

³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" ⁴ He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said,



‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

- The Pharisees called Moses' provision for divorce a command; Jesus called it a concession to the hardness of human hearts.

Matthew 19:7-8 ESV

⁷ They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” ⁸ He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so”.

- The Pharisees regarded divorce lightly; Jesus took it so seriously that, with only one exception, he called all remarriage after divorce adultery.

Matthew 19:9 ESV

“And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

Lamentations 3:19-23 ESV

¹⁹ Remember my affliction and my wanderings,
the wormwood and the gall!

²⁰ My soul continually remembers it
and is bowed down within me.

²¹ But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:

²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;

²³ they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.



Ephesians 1:7 NLT

⁷ He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.

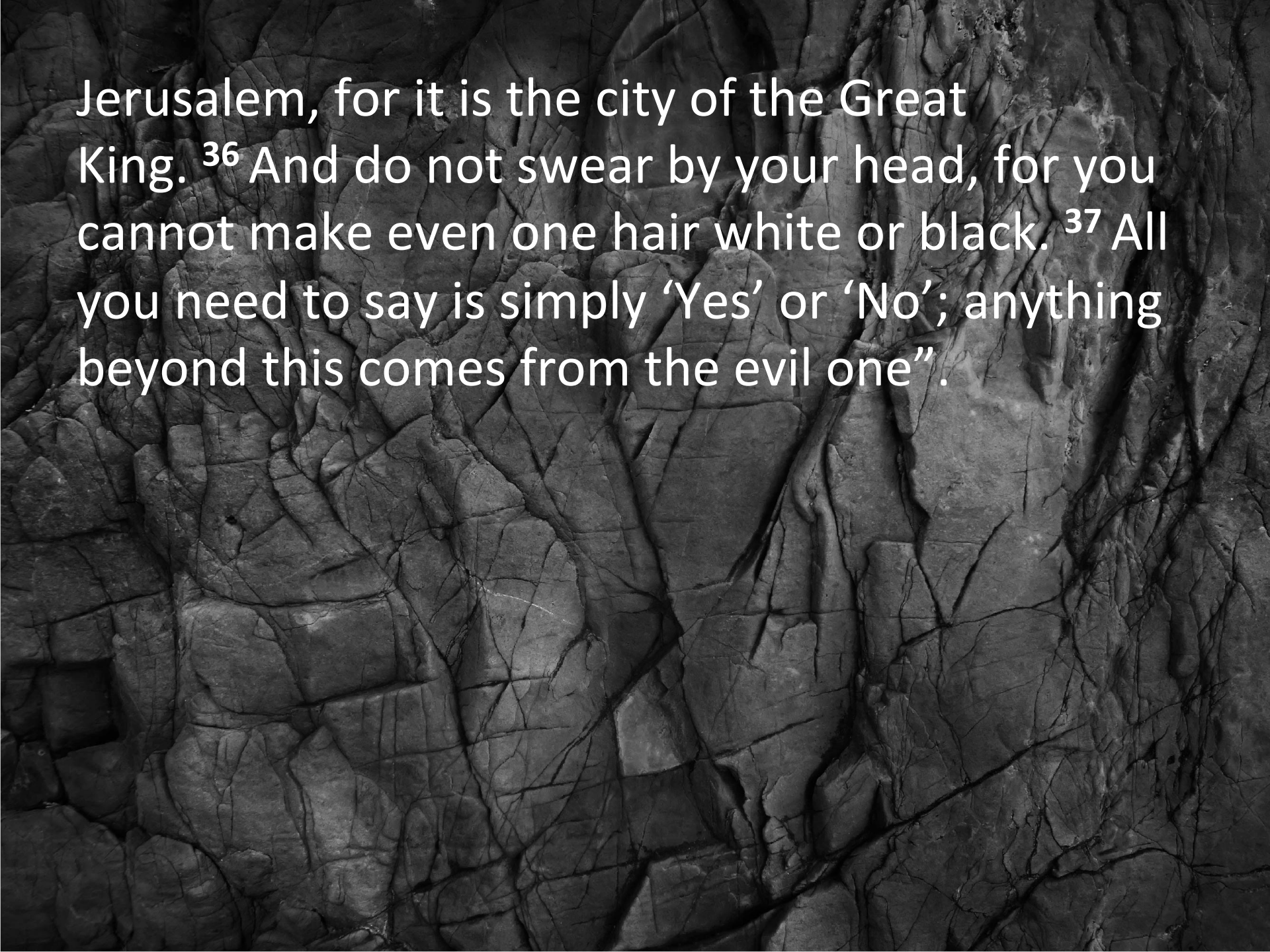
1 John 1:9 NLT

⁹ But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

II. Jesus interprets the law concerning oaths.

Matthew 5:33-37 NIV

³³ “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".



Exodus 20:7 NLT

7 “You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name”.

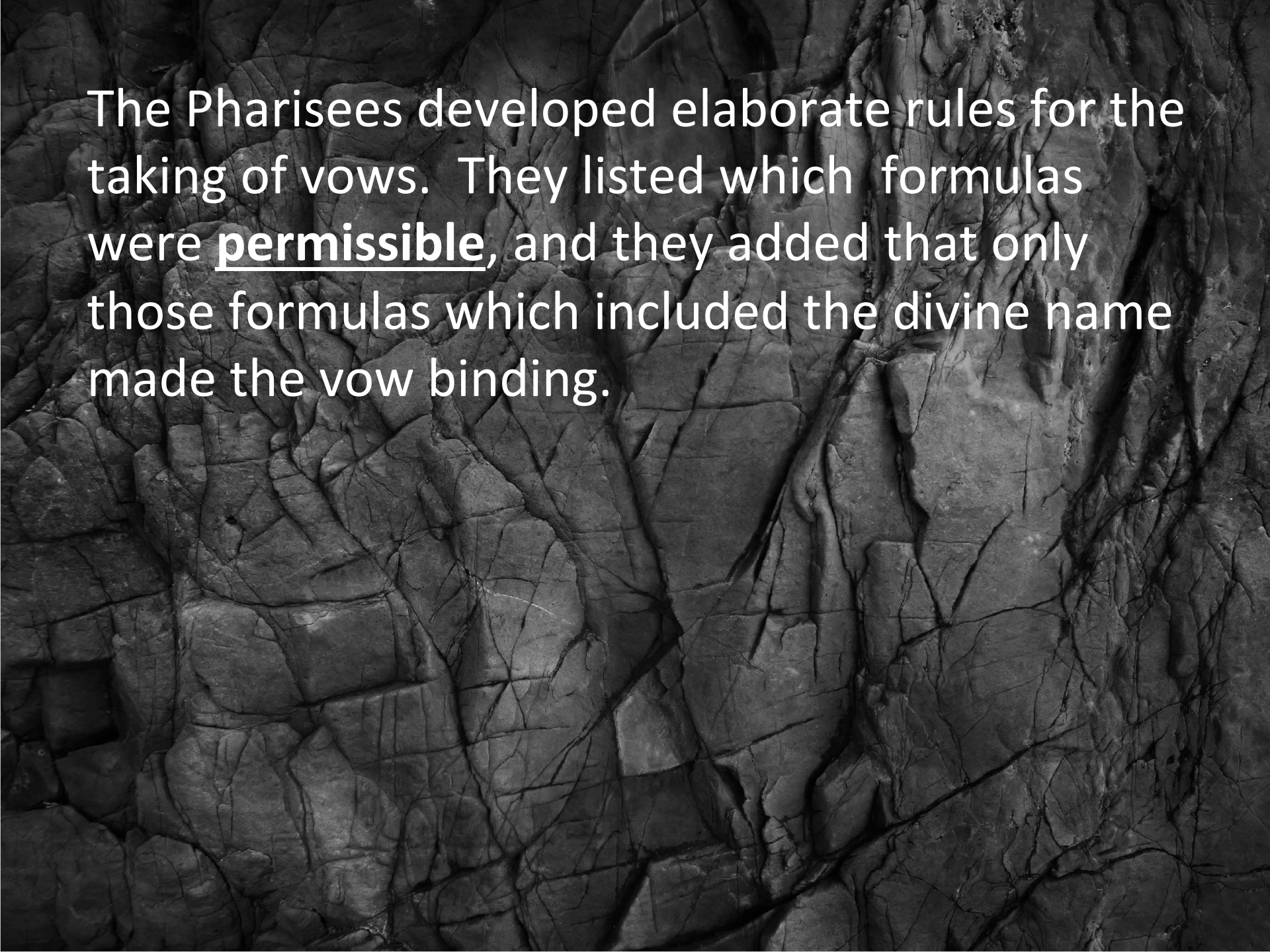
Exodus 20:7 NLT

⁷ “You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The Lord will not let you go unpunished if you misuse his name.

Numbers 30:2 NLT

² A man who makes a vow to the Lord or makes a pledge under oath must never break it. He must do exactly what he said he would do.

These scriptures prohibit false swearing or perjury, that is, making a vow and then breaking it.

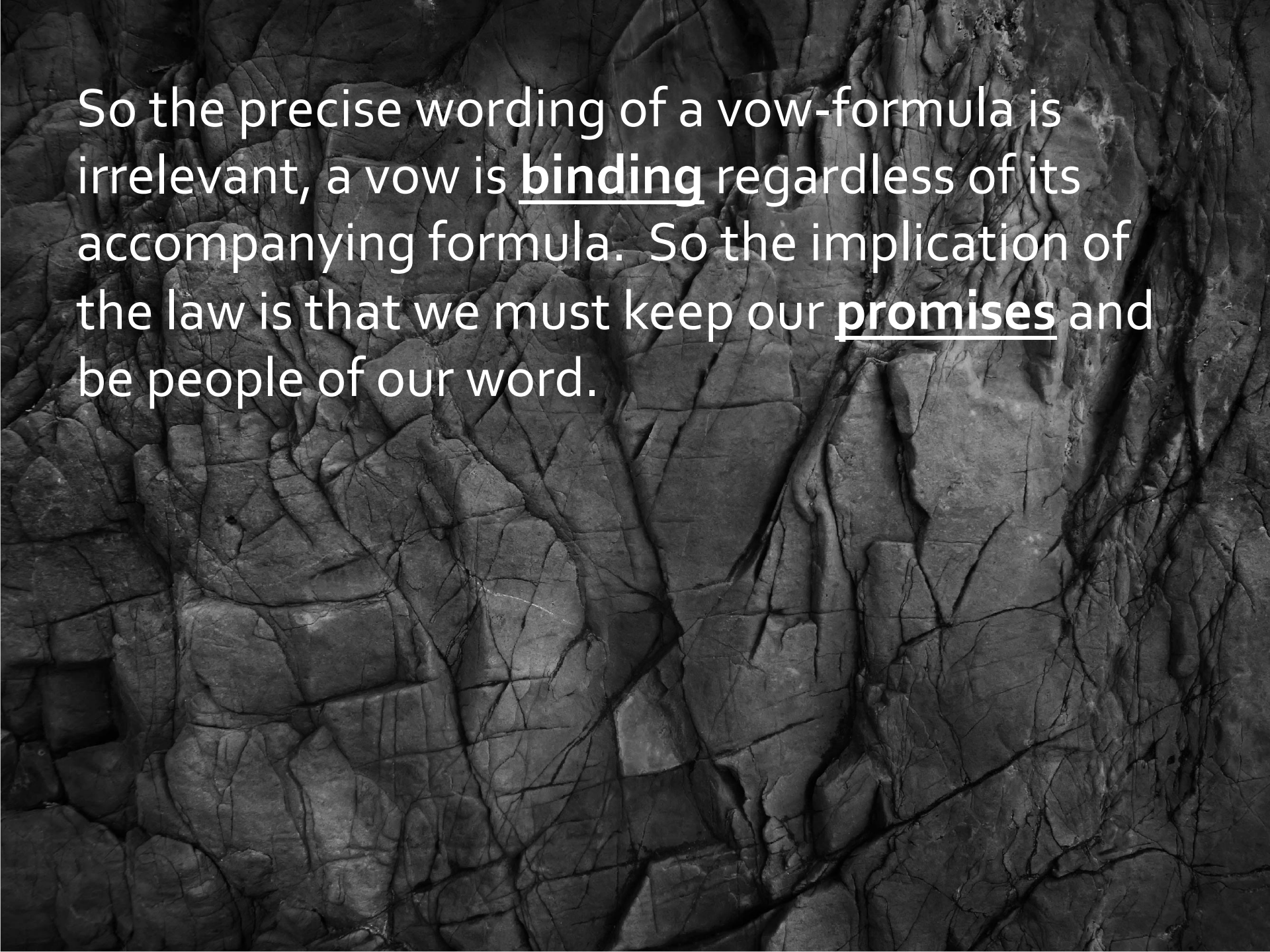


The Pharisees developed elaborate rules for the taking of vows. They listed which formulas were permissible, and they added that only those formulas which included the divine name made the vow binding.

Matthew 23:16-22 NLT

¹⁶ “Blind guides! What sorrow awaits you! For you say that it means nothing to swear ‘by God’s Temple,’ but that it is binding to swear ‘by the gold in the Temple.’¹⁷ Blind fools! Which is more important—the gold or the Temple that makes the gold sacred? ¹⁸ And you say that to swear ‘by the altar’ is not binding, but to swear ‘by the

gifts on the altar' is binding. ¹⁹ How blind! For which is more important—the gift on the altar or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰ When you swear 'by the altar,' you are swearing by it and by everything on it. ²¹ And when you swear 'by the Temple,' you are swearing by it and by God, who lives in it. ²² And when you swear 'by heaven,' you are swearing by the throne of God and by God, who sits on the throne”.



So the precise wording of a vow-formula is irrelevant, a vow is binding regardless of its accompanying formula. So the implication of the law is that we must keep our promises and be people of our word.

