

Shall we call people names?

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In the Freethinker's "non-tract" (No. 5) the atheists claim that the following is a contradiction in the Bible:

Shall we call people names?

Matt. 5:22

Whosoever shall say Thou fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.

Matt. 23:17

(Jesus said) Ye fools and blind.

The following are the full texts of the verses supposedly in contradiction.

Matthew 5:22

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Matthew 23:17

Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

Now the following are the actual full sentences (or contextual passages) of Scripture in which the texts that are supposedly in contradiction are found.

Matthew 5:21-22

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Matthew 23:15-17

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?

One of the first problems noted with this comparison is the use of the word "we" as if there is some equivalency between the Lord Jesus Christ and us. To assume this is to ignore the plain passages of Scripture that declare that the Lord Jesus Christ is Almighty God manifest in the flesh. Plainly He is Emmanuel, meaning "God with us." which declares implicitly that He is God. Moreover, since the Lord Jesus Christ is called the "Son of God" numerous times in the Gospel of John, we can apply two further passages to Him from other books in the New Testament.

In Philippians, Chapter Two we find the following statement:

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was

made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (*Philippians 2:4-8*)

And also in Hebrews, Chapter One it is declared:

But unto the Son *he saith*, Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness *is* the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, *even* thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (*Hebrews 1:8-9*)

Now then, if the Lord Jesus Christ is Almighty God, is He the same as us? Is there even any equivalency between what He does and declares, and what we do and declare?

Well then, one may say that Jesus Christ did not know He was God in the flesh. However, this also is manifestly not the case. In John, chapter 8, the Lord Jesus declares to the Jews who He is, and as a result they immediately attempt to stone Him.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and

went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (*John 8:51-59*)

The reason the Jews immediately attempted to kill Him was because they understood plainly that His statement "Before Abraham was, I am." was a direct claim to being the very one that spoke to Moses from the burning bush as recorded in Exodus.

And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. (*Exodus 3:13-14*)

Now then that it is established that the Lord Jesus Christ knows exactly who He is, and who we are, we can ask the question: Is He qualified to say what He said, both at the Sermon on the Mount, and to the Scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem, without being in contradiction?

The Scriptures record the following so that we may understand who it is that will judge all men for the things that we say and do. However, in beginning to understand this, we must go to the Old Testament. It is here that we find that, in the end, we will all be judged for what we do.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil. (*Ecclesiastics 12:13-14*)

This is confirmed in the New Testament as well.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of

many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (*Hebrews 9:27-28*)

In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself confirmed this with the following statement:

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (*Matthew 12:36-37*)

Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ stated plainly how one is supposed to judge. In the context of instructing those around Him, specifically the Scribes and Pharisees as to what was wrong about their judgment, He rebuked them in the following manner:

Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. (*John 7:21-24*)

However, judging righteously requires that one properly know the motivation and effects of another's actions. The Scripture is quite plain in this as well – that only the LORD God knows the heart of man. This is made clear in Jeremiah, chapter 17:

I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings. (*Jeremiah 17:10*)

Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ, being God manifest in the flesh, knows the motivation of all those around Him, including the Scribes and Pharisees, even as He knows the thoughts and intents of men's hearts today.

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man. (*John 2:23-25*)

So then, by virtue of the fact that He is God, and that He does know the hearts of individuals, and He has a common experience with us, having walked in this world for 33 years, yet having never deviated from the will and commandment of the Father; the Lord Jesus Christ, unlike us, is perfectly qualified to judge whether or not someone is a fool. By this then He is not "name-calling," rather, He is stating the truth of that person's condition.

Yet, the Lord Jesus Christ would never take the position of Judge upon Himself, but was given that position and honor by the Father. In this the Scripture is express as well.

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all *men* should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. (*John 5:22-23*)

I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me. (*John 5:30*)

Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ does not judge by an arbitrary, concealed standard, rather, the standard by which the Lord Jesus shall judge every man is plainly revealed:

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his

commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak. (*John 12:47-50*)

Now then, we find that the Scripture has been express all along – that every person will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus it is that the LORD who suffered and died on the cross for man – so that man could be free from sin is also the very one that is man's judge. Lost or saved, all will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the standard of the Scripture.

For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (*Hebrews 10:30-31*)

Though the Lord shall judge His people, which are those who have obeyed, or believed the Gospel; yet this judgment is not to condemnation. Rather, it is a judgment of service, and for standing in heaven. Assuredly we can understand that if one serves another willingly, then they are to be motivated by the highest of motivations? If they are not, what does that state about their service? Thus, the Lord Jesus will judge His children based upon their motivation of service, and the propriety of their witness before men, as it is written:

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (*I*

Corinthians 3:10-15)

For those who are called the “lost,” which are those who have not believed the Gospel, they also will be judged. Yet, their judgement is not for how good they lived their life, but for whether they have followed the commandment given by the Lord Jesus when He began His ministry, which was:

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (*Mark 1:14-15*)

Since it is a published command, and the Lord Jesus Christ is both the justifier of man, and man’s judge – it is only fitting that we be held guilty for failure to obey. In so doing, all those who have not obeyed will face the Lord Jesus Christ at the last judgment, which is described in Revelation, Chapter 20:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (*Revelation 20:11-15*)

Conclusion

It should be plain to see that a just and totally righteous Judge, who is also the Creator of all things, is not in contradiction when He commands that men are not to call other

men fools, but Himself, knowing the thoughts and intents of the Scribes and Pharisees, calls them fools for their perversion of the truth that He gave them.

For all of us, myself included, the instruction of the above discussion ought to be clear – we are not the judges of our condition before God. Rather, it is the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is God Himself, that lived as a plain and poor man for 33 years on this earth, that is fully qualified to be our judge.

In leaving off, I have one final thing for those who call themselves Christians, who say that God commands every man to not sin. It is the Endnote in the booklet [The Impossible Command](#).

Here we may find an objection by some who would say that God commands everyone (particularly the lost) not to sin. However, the Scriptures make very plain; it is not possible that anyone cannot sin. There are numerous places in Scripture that insure we understand that by our works and our power we will not maintain nor regain righteousness at all. This applies across the board to everyone who has ever lived since Adam (excepting the Lord Jesus Christ) and that ever will live. It is interesting that the following passage occurs three times in Scripture. Truly, the LORD God is very aware; man cannot help but sin.

The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (Psalm 14:2-3)

Now, God does command all men everywhere to repent and obey the Gospel. What may not be well understood is what is implicit in the command to repent and obey the Gospel. However, in posing the following questions what is implicit within the command should be come clear.

What are we repenting of?

Why do we need to repent anyway?

Why do we need to believe, or obey the Gospel?

The answer is clear: WE ARE SINNERS! And, we sin because we are sinners. Moreover, we know that we are sinners because God put the knowledge of His law in every one of us, as it is written:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) (Romans 2:14-15)

Now, who wrote the law into the heart of each and every one of us? Is it not the very same one who created us? The Scripture also reveals that we know the wrath of God is against us for our sin.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (Romans 1:18-20)

Thus, without God commanding us to not sin, He reveals that we are sinners and in need of redemption. Moreover, by commanding each and every one to repent and obey the Gospel, the Lord is implicitly stating that we are contrary to His express will and in sin, and thus condemned.

We must understand that inherent in the command to repent and believe the Gospel is a condemnation if we fail to follow this positive command of the Lord. Just as a negative command

such as "Thou shalt not steal." incurs the condemnation of God, likewise the failure to repent and obey the Gospel. It is essential that we fully understand; all that is required to condemn us to Hell for all eternity is a single sin, regardless of how "minute" it may be, or what it even is. Failure to do is just as much sin as failure to not do.

Additionally inherent in the command to repent and believe the Gospel is the fact that if we fail to comply, we condemn ourselves and reveal that we are indeed sinners. Thus, the simple act of giving this express command reveals that, whether anyone complies or not, they are guilty just because the command is given. The issuance of the command carries the presumption (which is entirely true) that everyone is a sinner and guilty before God. Else He would have never issued the command. If it were possible that someone throughout man's history could stand against their nature and not rebel against God, then God would have commanded that we not sin. After all, what is the point of sacrificing oneself for a creature that could be righteous, if only he would try? Why suffer to make man righteous when he could be righteous by his own merit and effort?

Therefore, God's righteousness is manifest in the structure and issuance of just such a command as repent and believe (or obey) the Gospel. Hence it is unnecessary for God to command the lost (in fact everyone) to not sin as it has been encompassed and superseded by the command to "Repent and believe the Gospel.'

Now, there are those who will point to the Old Testament and to the Lord's commands to Israel and show where He told them to not sin, and to abide by the covenant He had with them. If we are careful to note, we find that the context of this command to not sin is strictly within the covenant God had with Israel and was not applicable generally. In other words, it applied to the outward requirements Israel was to fulfill in the covenant. If we study, we find that a majority of

Israel was probably never saved, but when they were obedient to the covenant and honored the Lord, He blessed them. Thus, the issue is not one of sin in the sense of justification before God; rather, it is sin in the sense of failing to uphold a covenant they had with the Lord.

Thus it is plain in Scripture: It would not be reasonable to assert that God demands of everyone on the earth that we not sin. Since we are born with a nature to rebel against God, and we follow that nature and openly rebel as soon as we have cognizance of God's commands, God would be asking of us the impossible. Rather, God commands everyone to "repent and believe the gospel," which is an entirely attainable command for everyone.

A Final Thought

The following is an item to consider concerning the nature and character of any person in a position of authority.

What does it state about the character of a person who gives a command to those under him, knowing full well that it is entirely impossible for those under him to accomplish the command – and then destroying them for failure to keep the command? Would this not be entirely cruel? Of a certainty, it would be. It would be a monstrously cruel joke that would not be funny at all to those creatures subject to it. It certainly would be worse than muzzling the ox that is used to tread out the corn. We would think it entirely cruel of an owner to muzzle his beast of burden while it is being used to grind the grain he eats, and thus tempt the animal every moment, but make it impossible for the animal to taste even one single grain. Rather, we find an illustration of part of the character and nature of the Lord in the command the Lord gave to the children of Israel concerning their beasts of burden:

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

(Deuteronomy 25:4)

Now, this command is tied in the New Testament to rewarding the laborer for his labor. However, the same kind of character that commands that the laborer enjoy the fruits of his labor, is the same kind of character that would not delight in giving an impossible command and then condemning those who cannot fulfill it. The character of the LORD God is such that He would never demand of us something we could not do. Incidentally, we see this same character trait in the commands the Lord gives His children, as He always makes a way for His children to fulfill His command to them.

Why then would the Lord command all men to repent and believe the Gospel, and deny any number of them the ability to fulfill that command (except for egregious cause, such as blaspheming the Holy Ghost) when the Lord cares far more for man than for an ox?

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