

A Principle in Law: Higher Law

Admittedly, in our modern society, this principle is not well understood. However, it can be briefly apprehended by the following passage where the Lord Jesus Christ expounds the principle while taking the scribes and Pharisees to task for their error:

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? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon. (*Matthew 23:16-22*)

Note what the Lord states: It is the temple, not the gold that is greater. When a gift is brought to the altar, it is the altar, not the gift that is greater. The reason for this is as the Lord Jesus stated: It is the altar which sanctifies the gift, and not the other way around. In fact, were it not for the altar, the gift would have very little significance at all. In short, the Lord explains that there is a preeminence in things pertaining to our existence. One of the more important understandings we must have is the understanding that there exists an order and hierarchy to laws and authorities. In this hierarchy, if you violate the law, the law which comes from the highest authority is the law which is applicable to you.

The Lord further validates this with the apostles on the night He was taken by explaining the reason the world would hate them. He also validated this teaching when he instructed His disciples concerning the ministry they were engaging in:

If the world hate you, **ye know that it hated me before it hated you.** If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, **The servant is not greater than his lord.** If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; **if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.**
(John 15:18-20)

The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more *shall they call* them of his household? (Matthew 10:24-25)

Though the above passages impact the principle of agency, they are important in establishing clearly and plainly the principle of higher law, and the fact that if you commit an infraction of a law, in which there is another law also applicable to your action from a higher authority, it is held that you broke the higher law and are held accountable under the law given by the higher authority.

This understanding must be comprehended and held in mind as we deal with the rest of this issue.

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