

# Matthew 23:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

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**Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?**—Jesus uses *mōroi kai typhloi* (μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοί, fools and blind) to describe moral and spiritual stupidity, not intellectual deficiency. The Pharisees' casuistry about oaths inverted reality: they claimed swearing by Temple gold was binding, but swearing by the Temple itself was not. Jesus exposes this as absurdly irrational.

The verb *hagiazōn* (ἀγιάζων, sanctifying) reveals the theological error: the Temple, as God's dwelling place, consecrates everything in it—not vice versa. The gold derives its holiness from the Temple, which derives its holiness from God's presence. By prioritizing gold over Temple, they valued material wealth over divine presence. This materialistic reversal characterized Pharisaic theology: form over substance, ritual over righteousness, money over God. Their 'blindness' was willful ignorance of obvious truth.

## Historical Context

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Pharisaic tradition developed elaborate casuistry about which oaths were binding. This allowed them to make promises while leaving loopholes for breaking them. Swearing 'by the Temple' could be dismissed as non-binding, but 'by the gold of the Temple' (perhaps referring to vessels or treasury) was considered binding—a distinction that served greed, not truth.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

## Study Questions

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1. How does prioritizing material offerings over devotion to God still occur in Christian practice?
2. What modern religious casuistry creates loopholes to avoid straightforward obedience?
3. Why does Jesus call this reasoning 'foolish' and 'blind' rather than merely mistaken?

## Interlinear Text

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μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοί, τίς γὰρ μείζων ἐστίν, ὁ  
Ye fools and blind whether for greater is G3588  
G3474 G2532 G5185 G5101 G1063 G3187 G2076

χρυσόν; ἢ ὁ ναὸς ὁ ἀγιάζων τὸν χρυσόν;  
the gold or the temple that sanctifieth G3588 G37 G3588 G5557  
G5557 G2228 G3485

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 23:19** (Parallel theme): Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?

**Psalms 94:8** (Parallel theme): Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise?