



# GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#72)

Good News – Obedience and covenants (1)

## TWO FACTS TO START WITH:

**FACT #1 – God has a right to tell us how to live.**

**FIRST:** He created us for the purpose of reflecting what he is like – his "image" – in the created realm.

So God created humans in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female.

Genesis 1:27 (GW)

**SECOND:** Since he created us, he owns us.

[God speaking:] Everything under heaven belongs to me!

Job 41:11b (GW)

God has a right to demand obedience. (Sin's influence causes people to rebel against this fact.)

**FACT #2 – People who are following Jesus will accept and do what Jesus says.**

**FIRST:** All who belong to Jesus will do this.

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

John 10:27 (NIV)

**SECOND:** Those who don't pay attention to him do not have lives guided by truth. Jesus says:

"I have been born and have come into the world for this reason: to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to me."

John 18:37b (GW)

Those following Jesus will choose obedience; those not following won't. (Church-going fakes tend to rebel against this fact.)

## TODAY'S FOCUS:

**Obedience, covenants, and God's blessing.**

God's purpose has always been to bless the people he created.

**BUT**

To receive those blessings, people must live in a way that enables them to receive the blessings!

**BEFORE SIN ENTERED THE WORLD**, this was not a problem. They joyfully did God's will and benefitted from the blessings associated with obedience.

**WHEN SIN ENTERED THE WORLD**, people created a barrier to that blessing.

**In spite of people's sin...** →

**God offers covenant blessings to people!**

**DOWN THROUGH THE AGES**, God has made repeated offers to bless those who are willing to **turn** from their sin and **follow** God. This **turning** and **following** expresses itself by **trust** and a willingness to **obey** God.

**IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THIS WAY.** Though certain details might change as the covenants changed, the over-all message has always been the same: *It's just like what Paul preached* →

... I preached that they should **repent** and **turn** to God and prove their repentance by their **deeds**.

Acts 26:20b (NIV)

It's not that we earn the blessings... rather, we are removing the barrier, which makes blessings possible. (Though it's not today's focus, God's grace is also at work.)

**BLESSINGS! - - - They're not all the same.**

**DIFFERENT WAYS FOR DIFFERENT COVENANTS.** Some covenants focus on individuals; others on groups (such as nations).

**DIFFERENT TYPES OF BLESSINGS.** Some may be physical; others may be spiritual.

☪ ☪ ☪ ☪

**SOMETIMES A TIME DELAY.** For many possible reasons (depending on the type of blessing).

**SOMETIMES INJUSTICE MAY MAKE THINGS SEEM BACKWARDS.** Living in a sinful world, sometimes the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous suffer. *This is temporary, and will be dealt with at the Day of Justice* (if not sooner).

**BLESSINGS! - - - Or else CURSES?**

God's warnings about curses isn't a "threat," but just a "fact of life," if we reject the obedience that enables blessings.

Blessings are only compatible with a situation in which God's nature and glory are being reflected in people's lives (by their morally pure choices).

Humans were created to reflect God's "image" in the world, and they are blessed when they do what they were created for doing.

When humans choose to reject this privilege, and instead reflect the "image" of evil, their life is incompatible with God's blessings. A rejection of godly living is, by nature, a rejection of the blessings that come with godly living.

**BLESSINGS! - - - Related to OBEDIENCE?**

Unsaved people like the "blessings" part, but they don't like the obedience.


This is one of the reasons the Good News never entices people with blessings – either earthly or heavenly.

This is why many modern-day "good news presentations" are the work of the devil.

**HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO TO HEAVEN! JUST REPEAT THIS PRAYER AFTER ME...**

"You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces."  
Matthew 23:13b (NIV)

"Woe to you... You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are."  
Matthew 23:13, 15 (NIV)



**About the COVENANTS**

**THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COVENANTS** for different purposes. (Not all apply to God-people relationships.) Some are conditional (if people obey, then God will bless); some are unconditional (God simply says he's going to do something).

SOME EXAMPLES THAT SHOW US HOW WE GOT TO OUR PRESENT SITUATION. →

**TWO SIGNIFICANT COVENANTS WE WILL NOT BE FOCUSING ON:**

- Covenant with Noah** – For all people; God's promise that there will be no more global flood judgments. (The next global judgment will be fire.) We should remember this fact every time we see a rainbow.
- Covenant with David** – For David and his offspring; it ultimately applies to Jesus who will rule on David's throne forever.

**At the beginning** **THE FIRST TWO HUMANS**  
(before sin entered the world)

✦ They were **OBEYING**; God was **BLESSING** them. ✦

This blessing included the gift of an entire world filled with good things (Genesis 1:31).

And God blessed them...  
Genesis 1:28a (NASB)

**But God also warned them:**

Curses – horrible consequences – would be the result of disobedience.  
(This happened in chapter 3.)

"But you must never eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because when you eat from it, you will certainly die."  
Genesis 2:17 (GW)

[The word "covenant" is not here; but the instructions have many similarities to a covenant.]

**The significance for us today?**

- We were there, in Adam** (though not as separate individuals). The whole human race was united in our first ancestor – both biologically and spiritually. As a unit, whatever moral choices they made were also our choices.

When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for **everyone sinned**.  
Romans 5:12 (NLT)

- Every time we choose to sin, we're expressing approval of what they did.

"MY NAME IS: [PUT YOUR NAME HERE], AND I APPROVE OF SINNING!"

**About 4000 years ago** **A MAN NAMED ABRAHAM**  
(originally called Abram)

✦ **TRUSTED and OBEYED GOD.** ✦

He considered God to be trustworthy.

The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your land, your relatives, and your father's home. Go to the land that I will show you. So Abram left, as the Lord had told him, ..."  
Genesis 12:1, 4a (GW)

**Even though:**

★ He never saw the fulfillment of the promises God had made to him. ★

**GOD PROMISED ABRAHAM.**

**"I PROMISE YOU..."**

"I will make you a great nation, I will bless you.  
I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.  
I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse.  
Through you every family on earth will be blessed."  
Genesis 12:2-3 (GW)

**ABRAHAM TRUSTED GOD AND OBEYED.**

It was **by faith** that Abraham **obeyed** when God called him to leave home and go to another land that God would give him as his inheritance. He went without knowing where he was going. And even when he reached the land God promised him, he lived there **by faith**—for he was like a foreigner, living in a tent.  
Hebrews 11:8-9a (NLT)

***GOD promised blessings...***

- ✓ **To him (= Abram/Abraham).**  
Like many who have trusted God, he did not see the complete fulfillment of those blessings before he died. (It will happen when Jesus returns – Hebrews 11:13-16!)
- ✓ **To his offspring (= Israel).**  
This is the main focus of the Old Testament. But they kept turning away from God, and forfeiting those blessings.
- ✓ **To the world (= the rest of us).**  
Since Israel (as a nation) rejected Jesus, the New Testament shows the transition from a focus on Israel to a focus on all people.

**SOME OF THE BLESSINGS ARE AVAILABLE ONLY THROUGH JESUS, THE OFFSPRING OF ABRAHAM WHO IS GREATER THAN ABRAHAM!**

**The significance for us today?**

1. **All who trust God (as Abraham did) are considered by God to be Abraham's offspring.** – We do not have to be physical offspring to share in the blessings given to Abraham!\*

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.  
Romans 4:16 (NIV)

2. **Abraham's type of faith results in obedience.**

"... through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."  
Genesis 22:18 (NIV)

\* (In God's sight, a physical Jew without Abraham's faith is not a Jew – Romans 2:28.)

**About 3500 years ago**

**GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL**

✦ **Also called "the Law of Moses."** ✦  
(Today, we can call it "the Old Covenant.")

Because of his promise to Abraham, God blessed Israel in special ways. (It was not because of their own merit.)

It was simply because the Lord loves you, and because **he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors.**  
Deut. 7:8a (NLT)

**IT WAS A "CONDITIONAL" COVENANT.**

Their experience of the blessings would be dependent on their obedience to the covenant.

- ✓ **Through Moses, God gave Israel the Law. This Law contained:**
  - ✦ **Moral regulations** – a reflection of God's holy nature, and applicable to all people in all times.
  - ✦ **Civil regulations** – which showed the people how a righteous government should be run in a sinful world.
  - ✦ **Ceremonial regulations** – related to worship; often intended to symbolize their relationship to God, or to teach (or illustrate) moral principles.
- ✓ **What about non-Jews?**  
The Old Testament mentions non-Jews who were followers of the God of Israel. The moral obligations would apply to them (as they do for all people at all times); but some of the other regulations (especially certain ceremonial ones) did not apply (though some could be voluntarily followed).

- ✓ **Under this covenant, Israel was given many blessings.**  
First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.  
Romans 3:2b (NIV)
- They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's special children. God revealed his glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave his law to them. They have the privilege of worshiping him and receiving his wonderful promises. Their ancestors were great people of God, and Christ himself was a Jew as far as his human nature is concerned.  
Romans 9:4-5a (NLT)
- ✓ **Those blessings would be dependent on their willingness to obey the covenant regulations.**  
Now **if you will obey me** and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the nations of the earth; for all the earth belongs to me.  
Exodus 19:5 (NLT)

- ✓ But there was a problem: The Law was holy, righteous and good... but it could not change people's hearts.

It's purpose was to show us what was right... and it fulfilled its purpose.

So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Romans 7:12 (NIV)

- ✓ The problem was NOT the Law, but the people.

(If people weren't sinners, they would naturally want to obey the law!)

But God found fault with the **people** ...

Hebrews 8:8a (NIV)

"... you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."

Acts 7:53 (NIV)

- ✓ Because of this, God said he would make a new covenant with the people – one that did change the heart.

"The day will come," says the Lord, "when I will make a **new covenant** with the people of Israel and Judah. This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors... They broke that covenant..."

"But this is the **new covenant** I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the Lord. "I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Jeremiah 31:31-33 (NLT)

**This is the NEW COVENANT that Jesus introduced... which we will look at NEXT TIME.**

## The significance for us today?

1. First, when we see the word "Law" in the New Testament, we need to pay attention to context! – For example, it could refer to:

- The entire set of writings that came by way of Moses.
- The ceremonial regulations.
- The moral law (the "Ten Commandments").
- Civil regulations.

2. But remember this: The Law cannot save us! *That wasn't its purpose!*

- False teachers may promote ceremonial rituals as a means for attaining salvation, but our sin nature makes it impossible for us to perfectly obey all the regulations!
- Instead, our only hope is the grace of God... not human merit.

3. There is much we can learn from the law! (Two examples.)

- The moral law shows us how to live. (In addition to the Ten Commandments, there are many examples of how to apply these commands to life.)
- The ceremonial regulations teach us a lot about salvation. They were a pattern that illustrated what Jesus would do – "shadows" of what was real.

... what you eat or drink, ... a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Col. 2:16b-17 (NIV)

★ Like the apostles, we can use the law (and the whole Old Testament) to teach people about God, and about following Jesus! ★

**OUR SALVATION was carefully planned** from before the foundation of the earth. Each of these covenants was one step in the process!

### YOUR MISSION:

**DO NOT PURSUE BLESSINGS!** With this focus, they'll slip right through your fingers; and you'll lose them forever.

**INSTEAD, PURSUE JESUS,** who, through the covenants, brought us salvation, and shows us how to live.

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