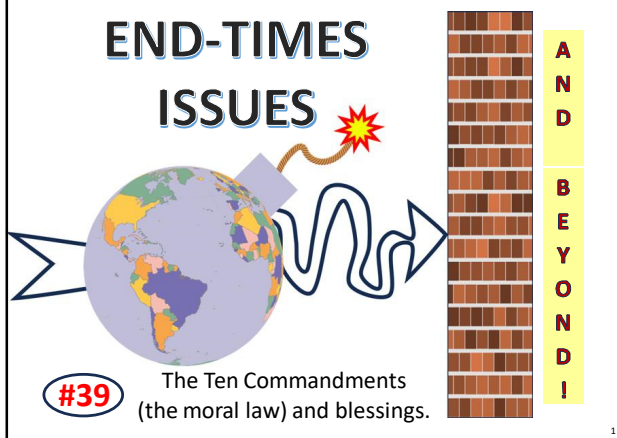


END-TIMES ISSUES



#39 The Ten Commandments (the moral law) and blessings.

1

THE MORAL LAW – DEFINED BY THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

Under the Old Covenant:

- They were written on stone. The people had to choose to obey them.
- This covenant applied to:
 - ✓ Individuals. Some would comply because of obligation to do so (= *external* compulsion). Others would have changed hearts, so the motivation to obey would be *internal*.
 - ✓ Nations. This would include both saved and unsaved individuals; motivations for complying would vary.

Under the New Covenant:

- They are embedded in the heart. These people want to obey them, the decision to do so having *already* been made. (People who *don't* want to obey them have NOT come under this covenant – even if they are religious church-goers.)
 - This covenant applies to:
 - ✓ Individuals who have had this heart change.
- 2

NOTES:

- The rest of Scripture shows us how the Ten Commandments are applied to the various aspects of life.
 - ✓ The rest of the "Law of Moses" (the regulations found in the other "Books of the Law": Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).
 - ✓ The O.T. prophets. ✓ Jesus and the apostles.
 - What makes the blessings possible? There are many types of blessings, and perhaps various degrees of blessing. There will be differences for different situations and different contexts.
 - ✓ Nations: Those that *follow* God will be blessed. This is often "external" compliance to God's Law; it can also be the result of national repentance (i.e., by a significant number of individuals, though others may remain *unrepentant*).
 - ✓ Individuals: The people's "following" may be external (i.e., with unchanged hearts), or internal (changed hearts).
- 3

- Obeying the Ten Commandments cannot cause salvation.

- ✓ External compliance may have value, but only in this present life.
- ✓ An already-saved person will want to obey – out of love (though they also know it's an obligation), and *not* as an attempt to gain God's approval.

- Our focus on *human* responses and activities does not imply a denial of God's role in salvation.

- ✓ They are two different issues that work together.
- ✓ We must choose to make choices. In the end, we give God credit for those choices.

- We are sinners. This means: Nobody deserves to be blessed.

- ✓ Our tendency is to act as though we do deserve to be blessed.
- 4

BLESSINGS FOR OBEYING THE MORAL LAW / TEN COMMANDMENTS.

★ There are BLESSINGS for obedience! ★

- God's people do live by this law (though doing so is an ongoing battle).

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Law of the LORD.

Psalms 119:1 (BSB)

THE CONTEXT: Psalm 119:1-8 tells us: ❶ this as a *fact*, and ❷ it is an expression of the person's heart desires. Yet it also acknowledges: ❸ the individual's imperfections, and ❹ the deep desire that those imperfections would be done-away with.

This struggle is also described in the New Testament: ➡

For in my inner being I **delight in God's law**; but I see another law at work in me, **waging war against the law of my mind** and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

Romans 7:22-23 (NIV); victory is through Jesus Christ, our Lord – vs. 24+.

5

- Those who live by this law have freedom.

But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but **doing it**—they will be **blessed** in what they do.

James 1:25 (NIV)

The Law has become *perfect* when it has changed from "external" (written on stone) to "internal" (written on the heart).

I will walk about in **freedom**, for I have sought out **your precepts**.

Psalms 119:45 (NIV)

★ "Freedom" does not mean "free to sin"! ★

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be **free**. But do **not use your freedom to indulge the flesh**; rather, **serve one another** humbly in love.

Galatians 5:13 (NIV)

6

- **Discipline may be a part of learning (and applying) this law.**

Blessed is the man You **discipline**, O LORD,
and **teach from Your law**, ...

Psalms 94:12 (BSB); see also Hebrews 12:5-

- **In contrast:** Those who lack (or ignore) this moral revelation from God *cease to have restraint*. * They become *slaves* to sin.

When there is no prophetic vision the **people cast off restraint**,
but the one who **keeps the law**, **blessed** is he!

Proverbs 29:18 (NET)

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is **a slave to sin**."

John 8:34 (NIV); see also Romans 6:6, 15-23.

- * { God embeds within people an awareness of the law;
but their tendency is to go *against* it. See Romans 2:14-15. }

7

- **NATIONS can be blessed** (even if some *individuals* aren't).

- ✓ **This applies to Israel.**

If you **pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them**
... [God] will love you and **bless** you ... [Examples of blessings given
here.] You will be **blessed** more than any other people ...

Deuteronomy 7:12a, 14a (NIV)

Blessed is the nation **whose God is the LORD**, ...

Psalms 33:12a (BSB)

- ✓ **This can also apply to other nations.** **EXAMPLE: Nineveh.** After the preaching of Jonah, they repented. And God withdrew his threat to destroy them. (Read the book of Jonah.)
- ✓ **NOTES:** ① This does NOT mean that ALL of the people changed their ways. ② The obedience may be *external* compliance, *without* a permanent change in heart. **EXAMPLE: Nineveh (about 100 years later).** They went back to their former ways... and God destroyed them. (Read the book of Nahum.)

8

- **INDIVIDUALS can be blessed** (whether or not the *nation* is blessed).

- ✓ This applies to *saved* people.

[God] has **blessed** us **in Christ** with every
spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 1:3b (BSB)

For surely You, O LORD, **bless the righteous**;
You surround them with the shield of Your **favor**.

Psalms 5:12 (BSB)

- ✓ The "external" aspect of blessings may even apply to *unsaved* people.
 - This may be due to several factors (= some described later).
 - It will not *save* them at the final judgment.

**GOD BLESSES
EVEN THE
UNSAVED.**

[God] causes His **sun** to rise on the evil and the good,
and sends **rain** on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:45b (BSB)

9

WARNING!!!

GOD IS NOT A "VENDING MACHINE"!

- Blessings are not automatic.
- Nor are they always what we choose.

ALL I NEED IS A FEW MORE
"OBEDIENCE TOKENS" AND
I'LL BE HAVING A
WONDERFUL BLESSED LIFE!!!



10

AN INDIVIDUAL'S BLESSINGS DON'T ALWAYS "WORK" THE WAY THEY SHOULD.

- **SAVED people might be "NOT-blessed," when it seems that they should expect blessing.**
 - ✓ All such situations are *temporary*. Even if they last for a *lifetime*, they will not last *forever*.
- **UNSAVED people may be blessed, when they should expect judgment.**
HOW?
 - ✓ They may be surrounded by other people who are being blessed by God, and the group's blessings may "spill over" onto them.
 - ✓ They may comply with some of the teachings of Scripture (such as in the book of Proverbs). *Even an atheist can do this!*
 - ✓ There may be a variety of other factors – often the same ones that may cause *saved* people to NOT be blessed. (See below.)

11

- ★ **Blessings are NOT always guaranteed in this present life.** ★

- ✓ **"Spiritual" blessings (now and forever)** that belong to those who follow God *cannot* be taken away.
- ✓ **"Physical" blessings in this present life** won't always be there – even for those who follow God.

EXAMPLES: Righteous people NOT receiving promised blessings in *this* life.

THE PATRIARCHS – Abraham (and Sarah)/Isaac/Jacob: They were promised land that they did not receive before they died. But even at death, they still trusted God. Today, they look forward to receiving a heavenly city – the New Jerusalem. (See Hebrews 11:13-16; 12:22.)

MANY FAITHFUL PEOPLE are mentioned in the Old Testament: The book of Hebrews tells us that only *some* experienced blessings in *this present life*. Many of them experienced persecution (and often death), instead a life of blessings. (See Hebrews 11:35b-39. Their blessed future is tied in with ours – v. 40.)

12

Some of the reasons that things might be "backwards."
(*God's people* may suffer; the *wicked* may seem to be blessed.)

- **Random chance** – living in a world that is under the curse of sin.

I have seen something else under the sun:
The race is not to the swift
or the battle to the strong,
nor does food come to the wise
or wealth to the brilliant
or favor to the learned;
but time and chance happen to them all.

Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come:
As fish are caught in a cruel net,
or birds are taken in a snare,
**so people are trapped by evil times
that fall unexpectedly upon them.**

Ecclesiastes 9:11–12 (NIV)

13

- **Exploitation** by the wicked.

They crush your people, Lord;
they oppress your inheritance.

Psalms 94:5 (NIV)

(See also:
James 2:5-7)

"Among my people are the wicked
... they have become rich and powerful
Their **evil deeds** have no limit;
they **do not seek justice**.
They **do not promote the case of the fatherless**;
they **do not defend the just cause** of the poor."

Jeremiah 5:26a, 27b, 28b (NIV)

THE WICKED
MAY EVEN BE
"RELIGIOUS."

"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please
and **exploit all your workers**."

Isaiah 58:3b (NIV)

14

- **Persecution and opposition** by unsaved people.

So do not be surprised, brothers, if **the world hates** you.

1 John 3:13 (BSB)

"In this world **you will have trouble**. But take
heart! I [Jesus] have overcome the world."

John 16:33b (NIV)

(Examples: See Hebrews 11:35b-38.)

- **When a nation is punished**, righteous people may suffer. (The prophet *Jeremiah* is a prime example. Probably any time Israel was punished, at least *some* of the people were still faithful to God.)

**These things show us that, if our focus is on present-life
physical blessings, we have the wrong focus!**

15

On the other hand...

- **God will use these "NOT-blessings" to accomplish good** in our lives.

And we know that **God works all things** together **for the good of those
who love Him**, who are called according to His purpose.

Romans 8:28 (BSB)

- **This may include discipline** – either for training us to be more Christ-like, or to deal with sin in our lives.

Endure suffering as discipline; God is treating you as sons...
No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later
on, however, **it yields a harvest of righteousness and peace**
to those who have been **trained by it**.

Hebrews 12:7a, 11 (BSB)

Those I love, **I rebuke and discipline**. Therefore **be earnest and repent**.

Revelation 3:19 (BSB)

16



WHY IS KNOWING THIS SO IMPORTANT?

Most people who talk about being blessed by God focus
on **physical** blessings, not **spiritual** blessings.

False teachers focus on "getting things" from God, while ignoring what
Scripture says about moral conduct, motives and self-sacrifice.



Other false teachers tell people that the
presence of blessings "proves" you are in
God's will, and if you aren't being blessed,
there is something wrong with you.



**We need to recognize that
the whole issue often boils down to this one question:**

17



WHO SERVES WHO?



Who's job is it to serve?

THE FOCUS OF THE TYPICAL CHURCH-GOER: "BEING SERVED."

"What can I get from God?"
Blessings: Love, Health, Family, Security, Pay my bills, Happiness, Eternal life

THE FOCUS OF THE WORD OF GOD: "SERVING."

**"How can I love the Lord my God with all my
heart/soul/strength/mind, and love my neighbor as myself...
regardless of what I get in return?"**

18

RECEIVING BLESSINGS FROM GOD DOES NOT GUARANTEE THAT A PERSON HAS GOD'S FAVOR.

- You may be under his *wrath* – and that wrath may be *increasing* with each blessing you receive.

- ✓ God's kindness does not mean that you are saved!

... **He is kind** to the ungrateful and wicked.

Luke 6:35b (BSB)

- ✓ God's kindness has a *purpose*. Do you have *contempt* for that purpose? Have you responded appropriately to his kindness?

Or do you show **contempt for the riches of his kindness**, forbearance and patience, not realizing that **God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?**

Romans 2:4 (NIV)

[God] now commands all people everywhere to **repent**.

Acts 17:30b (BSB)

19

SUPPOSE WE DON'T RESPOND TO GOD'S KINDNESS BY REPENTING?

- First, be aware that God's kindness is present in *many* ways – even in the most basic "good things" of life.

(We, as rebels against the King of Kings, don't deserve *even this much*.)

He causes His **sun** to rise on the evil and the good, and sends **rain** on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:45b (BSB)

"Yet He has not left Himself without testimony to His goodness: He gives you **rain** from heaven and **fruitful seasons**, filling your hearts with food and gladness."

Act 14:17 (BSB)

... He Himself gives everyone **life and breath and everything else**.

Acts 17:25b (BSB)

20

- So when we *refuse* to repent, and do good, we *cannot expect* expressions of God's kindness to go on forever. In the end, we will **NOT** be recipients of God's favor!

But because of **your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart**, you are **storing up wrath against yourself** for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.

Romans 2:5 (NIV)

MANY WILL SAY...

BUT LORD, HOW CAN YOU CALL ME "UNSAVED"? YOU CONSTANTLY BLESSED ME!

YOU GAVE ME HEALTH, YOU GAVE ME FAMILY, YOU GAVE ME SECURITY, YOU GAVE ME HAPPINESS, YOU GAVE ME WEALTH...

GOD WILL REPLY...

YOU LIVED FOR YOURSELF. YOU SOAKED-UP MY BLESSINGS LIKE A SPONGE.

YOU NEVER REPENTED OR LIVED FOR ME.

21

REPENTANT PEOPLE WILL PURSUE WHAT GOD CALLS "GOOD."

- They are willing to *prove* their repentance by the things they do.

I [Paul] preached that they should **repent and turn to God** and **demonstrate their repentance by their deeds**.

Acts 26:20b (NIV)

- Therefore, they will reap the *eternal* blessings of doing so.

- ✓ They have the obedience that is the *fruit* of genuine faith.

To those who by **perseverance in doing good** seek glory, honor, and immortality, [God] will give **eternal life**.

Romans 2:7 (BSB)

! This is a good incentive for *growing* in our understanding of God's moral law – the Ten Commandments! !

22

Your Mission:

ARE YOU BEING BLESSED?

- Remember the source of those blessings... and respond appropriately.

ARE YOU DISCOURAGED? Do things seem "backwards"?

- Consider Psalm 73, written by someone else who was discouraged.

- ✓ He saw that the wicked often had *trouble-free lives* – Psalm 73:3b-5, 12.
- ✓ He was discouraged... until he saw their *ultimate fate* – Psalm 73:13-14, 16-17.
- ✓ He rested in his trust in *God, who would make all things right* – Psalm 73:23-28.

23

Credits

SCRIPTURE

- Scriptures marked "NIV" - Scripture quotations taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. (www.biblica.com)
- Scriptures marked "NET" - The Scriptures quoted are from the NET Bible® https://netbible.com copyright ©1996, 2019 used with permission from Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. All rights reserved.
- Scriptures marked "BSB" - Taken from The Holy Bible, Berean Standard Bible, BSB, Public Domain (CC BY NC ND). https://bereanbible.com/

PICTURES (original sources; modifications may have been made)

- Brick wall - GDJ / CC0; via openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/227630/brick-texture
- Globe with lit fuse - GDJ / CC0; via openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/219655/political-map-earth-globe-bomb
- Page divider - Mahua_Sarkar / CC0; via openclipart.org: https://openclipart.org/detail/282450/colourful-divider
- Gumball machine - Nate Enryedi, © used with permission, via Wikimedia Commons; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vendstar3000.JPG

Presentation - Dennis Hinks © 2024.

24