

END-TIMES ISSUES



#81 Commandment #4 – We need God.

GOD DOESN'T TELL US TO KNOW ALL THE END-TIME DETAILS. HE TELLS US TO BE READY.

A N D B E Y O N D I

1

"WE NEED GOD!"

The intent of the Fourth Commandment:
We must do whatever is necessary to satisfy this need for God.

This includes finding out (and understanding) what God says. *This means we must pay attention to Scripture.*

... so that you might understand that man does not **live** on bread alone, but **on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**

Deuteronomy 8:3b (BSB)

"Understanding" means *more than* a mere awareness of fact statements.
It means accepting those facts and living by them.

People may verbally express these facts; they may claim they are true. But few actually let the facts *change* their values and how they live.

2

Israel's contradiction: "We need God... no we don't!"

- At one moment, they were trusting God, praising God and claiming loyalty to him...

When Israel saw the great power that the LORD had exercised over the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and **believed in Him** and in His servant Moses.

Exodus 14:31 (BSB)

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:

"I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted."

Exodus 15:1 (BSB)

When Moses came and told the people all the words and ordinances of the LORD, they all responded with one voice:

"All the words that the LORD has spoken, we will do."

Exodus 24:3 (BSB)

3

- At the next moment, they were criticizing God, *not* trusting him, and claiming he *hates* them!

You grumbled in your tents and said, "Because **the LORD hates us**, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt ..."

Deuteronomy 1:27 (BSB)

And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people **treat me with contempt? Will they never believe me**, even after all the miraculous signs I have done among them?"

Numbers 14:11 (NLT)

- How serious was this complaining? Serious enough that they *forfeited* the opportunity to enter the land that had been promised to them.

... **not one will ever see the land** that I swore to give their fathers. None of those who have **treated Me with contempt** will see it.

Numbers 14:23 (BSB)

4

- The New Testament describes it in this way:

I want to remind you that the Lord at one time **delivered his people** out of Egypt, but later **destroyed those who did not believe.**

Jude 1:5b (NIV)

For who were the ones who **heard and rebelled**? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt?

And with whom was God angry for forty years? Was it not with those who **sinned**, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would never enter His rest? Was it not to those who **disobeyed**?

So we see that it was **because of their unbelief** that they were **unable to enter.**


Hebrews 3:16-19 (BSB)

- The references to "believing" refer to their unwillingness to trust God.

5


How should we interpret this?

- Were the people following God, or not following him?** Did God redeem them from Egypt (and Egypt's gods), or *not* redeem them?
- Perhaps we could even ask: Were they saved or *not* saved...



Here is the issue:

- There are *different* types of "believing," *different* types of "faith" or "trust." Different types of "following."
- There are *different* types of "hearing" what God says; *different* types of "responding" to what is heard.
- There are *different* types of "being redeemed."
- Consider some of the themes we find in Scripture, which focus on such issues:



6

THE "PARABLE OF THE SOWER" (THE FARMER PLANTING SEEDS) SHOWS US THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF "BELIEVING."

(Found in Matthew 13; Mark 4; Luke 8.)

- The four types of soil represent four basic ways people respond to God's Word. (The "seed" represents God's Word.)
- In each case, the "soil" (= the individual) hears the message. The difference is in their response to it.
- Three of the responses begin with an appearance of being saved: They "believe." The difference is in the end result. In each case, the final response indicates the actual spiritual condition of the person – indicating whether or not they are actually saved.
- Our main focus is on the responses that *begin* with an appearance of being saved. In the end, only *one* of them proves to be saved. We need to understand why.

7

HERE ARE THE FOUR BASIC WAYS PEOPLE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD:

- ⇒ **Response #1 (hard packed soil):** The "seed" never gets into them. They may hear the message of Scripture, but they do not accept it.
- ⇒ **Response #2 (rocky soil):** The "seed" has only a temporary effect. These people believe the message of Scripture... but only for a while. Trials leave them disillusioned, and they abandon what they once believed.
- ⇒ **Response #3 (weedy soil):** The "seed" seems to be accepted, but never accomplishes anything. These people claim to believe the message of Scripture. But its message doesn't have much effect on them – their values and conduct.
- ⇒ **Response #4 (good soil):** The "seed" is accepted, and accomplishes its purpose. These people accept the message of Scripture. They believe it, live by its truth; and it changes them.

8

THE TWO TYPES OF "SURFACE-DEEP BELIEVERS" WERE COMMON IN ISRAEL ... AND ARE COMMON TODAY IN THE CHURCH.

⇒ **Response #2 (rocky soil):** At one point, they may look saved; but then they turn against the message.

- **In Israel:** They tended to act this way on their journey through wilderness.
- **Today:** These are like the church-going fakes who accept the truth for a while, but eventually abandon the truth and leave.

New Testament EXAMPLES:

- **Judas:** For a long time, he seemed to be a faithful follower of Jesus. He was even entrusted with the group's money (John 12:6). But when things didn't go his way, he betrayed Jesus.
- **Simon, the magician:** Scripture says he "believed" (Acts 8:13). But his *heart* was not right in the sight of God (Acts 8:21). He thought that the Holy Spirit was a magical power that could be purchased and used for personal gain.

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⇒ **Response #3 (weedy soil):** They claim to accept the message, but it has no effect on them.

- **In Israel:** They sometimes acted this way, once they were living in the land. (Over the years, they had a variety of responses.)
- **Today:** These are like the church-going fakes who *stay*, but the Word has no effect on them. They never abandon the values of the world.

New Testament EXAMPLES:

- **The religious leaders:** To the people, they looked like followers of God... but they had replaced the words of *God* with the words of *men* (Mark 7:6-7).
- **Ananias and Sapphira:** On the surface, they looked like followers of Jesus; but in their hearts, they were liars, willing to fake their "spirituality," in order to impress people (Acts 5:1-11).

They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.

Titus 1:16a (NIV)

10

What makes the response GENUINE? (Response #4)

The need to HEAR, and the need to RESPOND correctly.

- We need to learn ("hear") what the "manna event" teaches: The need to rely on *everything* that comes from God.

... so that you might understand that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 8:3b (BSB)

(Jesus reaffirms this in Matthew 4:4 and Luke 4:4.)

- What God says (his Word) is to have an impact on our "hearts" – which, in Scripture, includes not just *emotions*, but also *how we think*.

These words I am commanding you today are to be upon your hearts.

Deuteronomy 6:6 (BSB)

11

Under the Old Covenant, the people's hearts needed to change.

- The Old Covenant focused on Israel as a nation, and included both *saved* and *unsaved* individuals. Because of this, people who "believed" often had superficial or "skin-deep" faith.
- This is why they could *praise* God at one moment, and *reject* him at the next moment.
- This is also why Moses frequently told them that they needed a *heart change*. They needed an "Abraham-type faith" – which was symbolized by circumcision. And so, Moses told them:

Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and stiffen your necks no more.

Deuteronomy 10:16 (BSB)

Paul tells us that "outward" circumcision, by itself, has no value. What is necessary is an "inward" circumcision – a change in heart. Otherwise, being a Jew has no long-term value. Romans 2:25-29.

12

The New Covenant includes *only* people with changed hearts.

- For Israel, this means that those who do *not* have this change are no longer considered a part of Israel (under the New Covenant).

A man is not a Jew because he is one outwardly, nor is circumcision only outward and physical.

No, a man is a Jew because he is one **inwardly**, and circumcision is a matter of **the heart**, by the Spirit, not by the written code.

Romans 2:28-29a (BSB)

- Any Jews who are *not* willing to accept *all* that God has said (which now includes the New Testament) have been replaced by Gentiles who *are* willing to do so.

Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the **Gentiles** has come in, ...

"Therefore I want you to know that God's salvation has been sent to the **Gentiles**, and **they will listen!**"

Romans 11:25b; Acts 28:28 (NIV)

13

THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF "HEARING." ONLY ONE LEADS TO SALVATION.

- The "hearing" that leads to salvation results in a **change** in *values* and *conduct*; it's an **understanding** that many people don't have:

"Though seeing, they do not see;
though **hearing**, they **do not hear or understand.**"

Matthew 13:13b (NIV)

HOW DOES THIS WORK?

This **needed** type of change takes *effort* and a willingness to do something that is not natural for sinful humans.

There are *many* ways to "not hear." People ignore what they hear. Or choose to believe something else. Or decide it's not worth the effort to better understand it. They might simply not like the message. In all cases, *it's the same final outcome.*

"They have eyes to see but do not see and **ears to hear** but **do not hear**, for they are a **rebellious people.**"

Ezekiel 12:2b (NIV)

14

OUR OBLIGATION

Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

Mark 4:9 (NIV)

- This **hearing issue** is the **reason** that, even in the New Testament, there are many warnings and admonitions to people who *claim* to be saved – even telling them to *test* their salvation!

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; **test yourselves.**

2 Corinthians 13:5a (BSB)

- This is the reason that we read passages about people *leaving* the faith: They were actually *fakes* - not *genuine*!

They went out from us, but **they did not belong to us**. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But their departure made it clear that **none of them belonged to us**.

1 John 2:19 (BSB)

15

- This is the reason that people can have many "Christian experiences," yet *still* be unsaved – and even "fall away."

It is impossible for those who have once **been enlightened**, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age—and **then have fallen away**—to be restored to repentance, because they themselves are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to open shame.

Hebrews 6:4-6 (BSB)

Note that the above things are *not* described as indicating salvation. Rather, *genuine* salvation is accompanied by *other things*.

Even though we speak like this, beloved, we are convinced of **better things** in your case—**things that accompany salvation.**

Hebrews 6:9 (BSB)

What are these "things"? According to the context, this includes faith, patience, diligence, work, love for other Christians, etc.

16

WHAT IF I'M SAVED,
BUT JUST DON'T
LIVE LIKE IT?

IF THAT REPRESENTS
HOW YOU LIVE,
THAT'S A
CONTRADICTION!

THERE IS NO
SUCH THING!!!

YOU NEED TO START PRAYING
FOR A SPIRIT OF REPENTANCE,
AND FOR A CHANGED WAY OF
THINKING AND LIVING!

- The first step is to get rid of your *pride* and *self-sufficiency*, and to realize your *total dependence* on God. Then *submit* to *Scripture* and let it change the way you think. God can use his Word to *change* you. He offers you the opportunity... are you *willing*?
- Change doesn't always happen immediately; but if you *aren't* willing to do these things, you are *guaranteed* that change *won't* occur!

17

THIS BRINGS US TO THE ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY/RESPONSIBILITY.

WHY DO YOU CLAIM THAT
I CAN'T BE SAVED
WITHOUT LIVING IT?

ARE YOU SAYING THAT
SALVATION IS BASED ON
WORKS, NOT **GRACE**?

ACTUALLY, GOD'S GRACE **GUARANTEES**
IT WILL BE THAT WAY. HIS **SOVEREIGNTY**
IS INVOLVED IN OUR SALVATION.

- The world* teaches us that God's sovereignty and human responsibility *work against* each other. We must *repent* of this attitude, because *Scripture* teaches that the two *always go together, without conflict*.
- We don't need to understand "how" they work together. We just need to repent and accept what Scripture says, be willing to trust God for the power to follow him, and then choose to use that power he has offered us – and humbly acknowledge that the power was not from ourselves.

18

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY *WORK TOGETHER!*

- **HOW do the two interact or function together?** They never oppose each other; they never "intersect" or "collide."
- **Logically**, what God does comes first. But this occurs in the mind of God, not in the realm of creation. (We would never know about it, if God didn't tell us about it.)
- **In terms of time and space**, we make choices, and we are responsible for those choices. We experience no compulsion or forcing by God.
- **EXAMPLE:** It's like a coin. There are two sides, and they always "work" together, never in conflict or opposition to each other.

WHAT IF ONE SIDE OF THE COIN WANTS TO GO A DIFFERENT DIRECTION?

SIDE 1

SIDE 2



IT DOESN'T HAPPEN!!!

19

EXAMPLE: We can compare it to a doorway that has these two inscriptions:

(ON THE OUTSIDE)

"WHOEVER IS WILLING MAY ENTER."

THIS REPRESENTS OUR RESPONSIBILITY

(ON THE INSIDE)

"I HAVE CHOSEN YOU."

THIS REPRESENTS GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

20

- **It's a fact of life:** sovereignty and responsibility *always go together!*

Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never drive away.

John 6:37 (BSB)

Nevertheless, God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord must turn away from iniquity."

2 Timothy 2:19 (BSB)

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

Ge 50:20 (NIV)

The idea that the two conflict with each other was invented by *unsaved* ancient Greek philosophers... not by God!

21

[Jesus] was delivered up by God's set plan and foreknowledge, and you, by the hands of the lawless, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross.

AcTs 2:23 (BSB)

... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who works in you to will and to act on behalf of His good purpose.

Philippians 2:12b-13 (BSB)

A man's heart plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

Proverbs 16:9 (BSB)

In Him we were also **chosen** ... having been **predestined** ... And in Him, having **heard and believed** the word of truth ... you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

Ephesians 1:11a, 13a (BSB)

22

THIS IS WHY GOD CAN GUARANTEE THAT SALVATION WILL RESULT IN A CHANGE IN ONE'S VALUES AND CONDUCT!

- This is the basis for the New Covenant! (Quoted in Hebrews 8-10.)

I will put My law in their minds and inscribe it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they will be My people.

Jeremiah 31:33b (BSB)

The Fourth Commandment: "We must pursue God!"

The New Covenant: "The saved will pursue God!"

We need God and everything God says! The New Covenant embeds within us the *desire* and *willingness* to satisfy these needs... and it gives us the *power* to do so! (Our duty is to repent and trust God, instead of fighting and talking back to him.)

23

THIS IS WHY SCRIPTURE CAN POINT TO HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY AND GUARANTEE THAT OUR CHOICES ARE IMPORTANT.

Beloved, we are now children of God, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. And **everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as Christ is pure.**

1 John 3:2-3 (BSB)

- We aren't *sinlessly perfect*, but sin is not our *pursuit* or our *lifestyle*.

No one who remains in [Christ] keeps on sinning. **No one who continues to sin has seen Him or known Him.**

1 John 3:6 (BSB)

Little children, let no one deceive you: **The one who practices righteousness is righteous**, just as Christ is righteous. **The one who practices sin is of the devil** ...

1 John 3:7-8a (BSB)

24

- **Sovereignty and responsibility working together** is why Jesus could quote an Old Testament prophecy about the New Covenant, and state as a fact that all who are taught by God will come to him.

"It is written in the Prophets: 'And **they will all be taught by God.** **Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to Me ...**'"

John 6:45 (BSB)

- This is why Jesus could **rebuke** those who **refused** to follow him, and **encourage** those who **did** follow him.

"But because you are not My sheep, **you refuse to believe.** My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and **they follow Me.** I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them out of My hand.

My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

John 10:26-30 (BSB)

25

- False teachers may tell you that it's OK to choose a life of sin... and "you'll still be saved." God tells us otherwise.

Anyone born of God **refuses to practice sin**, because God's seed abides in him; he **cannot go on sinning**, because he has been born of God.

1 John 3:9 (BSB)

Being "born of God" is like getting a new set of genetics. We have a **new nature**. And anyone with this new nature **will want to learn to live according to that new nature.**

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creation.** The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!

2 Corinthians 5:17 (BSB)

For we are God's workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works**, which God prepared in advance as our way of life.

Ephesians 2:10 (BSB)

26

- Because our "flesh" has developed habits of sin, following Jesus will take effort (using the power God has given us). There will be struggles... but there will also be victories.
- God will use his Word to lead us in the right direction. This guidance will include warnings *that our choices will lead to either destruction or life.*

A
WARNING
TO ALL

But My righteous one will live by faith; and **if he shrinks back**, I will take no pleasure in him."

THE
RESPONSE
OF THE
SAVED

But **we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed**, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.

Hebrews 10:38-39 (BSB)

Verses like this aren't given to scare a person into thinking they might lose their salvation. Rather, they provide a "decision point" – where a person has to choose how to respond. *And people will respond based on the spiritual condition of their heart.*

27

- Our duty is to focus on *hearing and relying on* everything that God says - just as Moses told the Israelites, when talking about the "manna event." (If we have failed to respond properly, *turn around!*)
- **WHEN should we have this focus? TODAY!** Scripture tells us to not put it off until a later time.

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts ...

Ps 95:7b-8a (BSB)

- Those who *refuse* to pay attention, and to learn from God, are in danger of experiencing what many in Israel experienced:

So I swore on oath in My anger, **"They shall never enter My rest."**

Ps 95:11 (BSB)

We learn in Hebrews 3-4 that this "rest" has an eternal significance. We are in danger of *never in all eternity* being able to experience God's rest – called a "sabbath-rest" in Hebrews 4:9.

28

Our Mission: WE NEED GOD, so pay attention to what God says!

⇒ *This is what the "manna event" taught!*

⇒ *This is the focus of the Fourth Commandment!*

If you are **not** paying attention to what God says:

⚡ Don't blame God!

HE HASN'T CHOSEN TO CHANGE ME!

⚡ Rather, be truthful, and blame yourself!

I HAVE CHOSEN TO NOT CHANGE!

⚡ And take the opportunity **TODAY** to "hear his voice" (Psalm 95:7b). Regardless of your *yesterday's* choice!

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Credits

SCRIPTURE

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