

UNDERSTANDING THE “ONE STORY” OF SCRIPTURE

Week 7 – One Way of Salvation!! Then WHY Blessings and Curses?

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Blessings and curses?

How do the Hebrew Scriptures begin?

God’s original purpose is blessing! God created a perfect world. Mankind was blessed to be fruitful and multiply...and to have dominion over the earth on behalf of God. Mankind was to rule over the earth, and nurture, and serve the earth.

Gen. 1:27-28 - *God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’*

Man rebelled against God! Through man sin entered the world.

Because of sin, man forfeited his dominion (John 12:31 – *Satan is the ruler of this world system*).

When man sinned against God, man was ashamed and hid. God pursued man! Is that not a blessing? (Gen. 3:8-9)

Gen. 3:15 – when sin entered the world GOD immediately promised the Seed of the woman. Man brought sin into the world. The solution: man must pay the price to free/to deliver mankind from bondage to sin.

Rom. 5:18-19 – *Therefore, as through one man’s offense (Adam) judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act (Jesus’ death on the cross) the free gift came to all men (offered to all), resulting in justification of life (declared righteous). ¹⁹ For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.*

Humanity had brought the problem into the world and humanity was going to be the solution to the problem. And the Seed of the woman is the solution as the Seed of the woman is 100% man and 100% God – the God/Man, Jesus the Messiah, Emmanuel, God in the flesh.

At the beginning of Scripture, we understand the great need of God’s intervention in our lives – NOT man’s working to get right with God! God’s intervention provides the remedy for sin. God alone...through His grace alone...through faith alone...in the Redeemer alone (the Seed of the woman) was, is, and will be forever THE WAY to God. There is only one way of salvation throughout Scripture: by grace alone through faith alone in God’s revealed message – which always points to the Messiah Jesus alone!

Gen. 3:15 – God is speaking to Satan, *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed (Satan’s followers) and her Seed; He (Jesus) shall bruise your head (mortal wound to Satan at crucifixion [Heb. 2:14 – Jesus destroyed the power of death at the cross; the believer in Jesus does not fear death]), and you (Satan) shall bruise His heel (at the crucifixion).*

Gen. 3:15 has been called “protoevangelium” – first good news/gospel. The earliest announcement of the gospel message in Scripture. In the Hebrew Scriptures, salvation comes through faith in God’s promise which points to the Messiah.

Gen. 15:1 - *After these things (the call of Abram; Abram going into Egypt; Abram going into battle to rescue Lot) the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision saying, Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.’* How did Abram respond? *What will*

you give me seeing I go childless?... God had promised to make of Abram a great nation. Abram and Sarai bore no offspring at this point.

Gen. 15:4-6 - God responded with *'...one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.'* ⁵ *Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'* ⁶ And he/Abram believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. God declared Abram righteous, justified, placed in a right relationship with God because Abram BELIEVED – trusted in God! There is only one way of salvation throughout Scripture: by grace alone through faith alone in God's revealed message which points to Jesus alone!

Gen. 15:7-8 - *Then He said to him, 'I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.'* ⁸ *And he/Abram said, 'Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?'* And God answered clearly...plainly...and POWERFULLY!!

Gen. 15:9-11 - *So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.'* ¹⁰ *Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other;* Contracts were made by the sacrificial cutting of animals, with the split carcasses of the animals lying on either side of a ditch – with their blood running into the ditch. The covenant was cut when parties to the agreement walked through the animal parts together, repeating the terms of the covenant. Firstly, this is a covenant so serious, it is sealed with blood. Secondly, the parties participating knew full well – if they broke their part of the covenant – their end would be the same as the animals!! As evening came, God had not yet appeared to walk through the animal parts with Abram and seal the covenant. Instead, God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Abram.

Gen. 15:13 – *Then He said to Abram, 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.* God specifically told Abram of the slavery and hardship Israel would endure in Egypt (Ex.1:1-14). Though the land was given to Abram and his covenant descendants, there would be a long period of time when they would live outside the land and undergo affliction. And, after four generations the children of Israel would return to Canaan.

Gen. 15:17-20 - *And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land.* God alone passed through the animal parts. God represented Himself by two emblems – a smoking oven and a burning torch:

The smoking oven reminds us of the many times smoke or a cloud represented the presence of God:

- As the pillar of cloud with Israel in the wilderness (Ex.13:21); As the smoke on Mount Sinai (Ex.19:18); As the cloud of God's glory (1 Kings 8:10-12).

The burning torch reminds us of the many times fire represented the presence of God:

- As the pillar of fire with Israel in the wilderness (Ex.13:21); As the burning bush displaying the presence of God before Moses (Ex.3:2); As the fire from heaven that at times consumed sacrifices that pleased God (1 Kings 18:38, 1 Chronicles 21:26, 2 Chronicles 7:1).

God demonstrated that this was a *unilateral* covenant – one sided. God OBLIGATED HIMSELF to deliver on His promises (Heb. 6:13). Therefore, the certainty of the covenant God

made with Abram is based on Who God is, not on who Abram is or what Abram would do. This covenant could not fail, because God cannot fail.

Why then do we read about blessings and curses in the Hebrew Scriptures?

The Abrahamic Covenant is a promise covenant (land, seed/Seed, blessing) – eternal, unilateral, unconditional! God obligates Himself to deliver on these promises to Israel but with a global scope – *in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed* – salvation being offered worldwide.

The Abrahamic Covenant reveals that God justifies, declares righteous the ungodly by trusting His promise of the Messiah (Hebrews 11:13; Hebrews 12:1-2).

The Abrahamic Covenant assures that the restored nation of Israel will never be annihilated (Isa. 66:22; Ezekiel chapters 40-48)!

The Mosaic Covenant which God gave to Moses for the children of Israel at Sinai is structured as a conditional and temporary covenant. God made the Mosaic Covenant with Israel as a people to define their life as a holy nation (Deut. 7:-6-8). Through the Mosaic Covenant we see God's holiness and man's sinfulness!

Why is the Mosaic Covenant structured the way it is?

- To make Israel's life a visible sermon to the nations.

Blessing: The Gentile nations were witnesses to God's faithfulness to His promises to Israel (Josh. 2:8-21; Dan. 4:34-37; Matt. 2:1-12).

Curses: When Israel disobeyed God and God disciplined them, again the nations witnessed God's faithfulness to His word. The nations were witnesses of God's disciplinary judgment of Israel when Israel rebelled against God.

- To make Israel aware of the contrast between the blessings and the curses. Lev. 26 and Deut. 28 lay out the blessings and the curses:
 - The curses overtake the disobedient and declare that Israel cannot secure life and blessing by their own strength. The curses expose the need for faith.
 - The curses prepare the way for a deeper solution than Israel's performance: they need a heart change...the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31; Eze. 36:24-27).

Galatians 3:19-24 (READ) – the law: conditional and temporary:

The law reveals man's utter sinfulness, inability to save himself, and desperate need of a Savior. The law was never intended to be the way of salvation (Rom. 3:20 – *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* Rom. 7:7; Rom. 8:3 and cross reference), Both the promise and the law are from God. God does not work against Himself, therefore, the law and the promise work in harmony. The law reveals man's sinfulness and NEED for salvation freely offered in the promise. Gal. 3:24 – The tutor in the Greek culture was a slave whose duty was to take care of a child until adulthood. Tutors were often strict disciplinarians. Those under their care would long for the day when they would be freed from their tutor. *The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ/the Messiah, that we might be justified by faith.*

The blessings/curses are not a competing way of salvation, but an historical discipline revealing and testing faith.

The New Covenant

- Jer. 31:31-34 - *Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not according to the covenant*

that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.

- Eze. 36:24-27 - For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

- When the New Covenant is fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom, *the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God* (Habakkuk 2:14).

The blessings and curses spelled out in Scripture across Israel's history drove home the deep choice between life with God and life without Him and displayed God's justice and mercy for the purpose of focusing the one story toward the One Who will "bear the curse of the law" so that the "blessing of Abraham" might come to the nations through faith (Gal. 3:13-14).

Rom. 15:9-11 – In the Hebrew Scriptures we read of God calling the Jewish people as witnesses of Who He is...to the Gentiles. 'For this reason I (Paul, the Jewish Apostle to the Gentiles!) will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.' ¹⁰ And again he says: 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!' ¹¹ And again: 'Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!'

Matt. 28:19 – To the Jewish disciples, Jesus, following His resurrection, told them, *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

Rev. 7:1-8 – 144,000 Jewish men (Rev. 14:1-5) will be sealed by God at the outset of the tribulation. Rev. 7:9-17 -**behold**, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

QUESTIONS

Had you known there was only one way of salvation in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament?

Had you known about the blessings and curses in the Hebrew Scriptures?

What have you learned? Has it resulted in magnifying and exalting God?

How would you explain the connection between the blessings/curses and the New Covenant?

What are you taking away from this lesson? WHY?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK

Reread Week 7 along with the Bible references; Journal – based on this lesson.

Share with someone how God is working in your life. Invite someone to the Passover Seder!

Read Week 8 when you receive it.