

Last week we saw how Solomon dedicated the temple to the Lord and the promise from the Lord known as the dual sanctions: 'if you obey and follow Me I will bless you, if you forsake Me I will turn from you.'

2 Chronicles 7:17-22 ¹⁷ "As for you, if you walk before Me as your father David walked, even to do according to all that I have commanded you, and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, ¹⁸ then I will establish your royal throne as I covenanted with your father David, saying, 'You shall not lack a man *to be* ruler in Israel.' ¹⁹ "But if you turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, ²⁰ then I will uproot you from My land which I have given you, and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight and I will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. ²¹ "As for this house, which was exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' ²² "And they will say, 'Because they forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers who brought them from the land of Egypt, and they adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them; therefore He has brought all this adversity on them.'"

From this point Solomon begins to stretch out Israel's influence by building cities, particularly storage cities, with the intent of being able to supply his army with these fortified cities that would be self sustaining. From a strategic and tactical perspective this would cut down on long supply lines from Jerusalem in the event the military had to start a campaign far from home.

This is wise on Solomon's part and it's how we do war today when possible.

But you'll remember that the Lord had initially told Joshua that when he entered the land part of his responsibility was to destroy the Canaanites who lived in the land. But as we've seen throughout the time in which Israel has been living in the land the Canaanites have not been fully destroyed.

So, what does Solomon do with this people who are enemies of Israel? He uses them to further his plan.

2 Chronicles 8:7-9 ⁷ "All of the people who were left of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites,

who were not of Israel, ⁸ *namely*, from their descendants who were left after them in the land whom the sons of Israel had not destroyed, them Solomon raised as forced laborers to this day. ⁹ But Solomon did not make slaves for his work from the sons of Israel; they were men of war, his chief captains and commanders of his chariots and his horsemen.

Now the question always comes up why would God order the Israelites to destroy the people of Canaan when they apparently were only minding their own business when Joshua entered the land?

Keep in mind, what is the theme of the entire word of God?

God redeeming a people for Himself.

Well, if God is redeeming a people for Himself from what are they redeemed?

Sin, and judgment leading to death.

So, does anyone deserve to be redeemed by God?

And why not?

Because we are all sinners.

What is the wage of sin?

Death and God's wrath.

Ephesians 2:1-3 ^{NAU} And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Do then the Canaanites deserve God's wrath?

Does God have the prerogative to enact His wrath sooner than later; that is, can He enact His wrath on sinful people before they live their lives out on this planet?

So, is God unjust to destroy the Canaanites?

But then the question must be raised are the Israelites any less sinful than the Canaanites?

Why then does God work with the Israelites in a way that seeks to prosper them instead of destroying them?

Because He has chosen them and has not chosen the Canaanites.

So, is there something special in the Israelites that God saw in them so as to choose them?

So, why did He choose them?

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 ⁷ "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

God made a covenant choice to set His special love upon the Israelites and not upon the Canaanites or any other group. But He did not do so based upon anything that was inherently lovely about the Israelites.

So, again, why did God choose Israel and by implication, their forefathers, in particular Abraham?

This is where God's mercy and grace come into play. Mercy and grace cannot be earned or deserved. Therefore, anything that God does in the way of grace is an act of God that is benevolent and has nothing to do with man's goodness.

In fact, if man could earn or work toward gaining God's grace it would cease to be grace and would then become a wage, something that you worked for and deserved in exchange for your work.

Romans 4:4-6 ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:

So, if all men are by nature children of wrath deserving God's judgment then how many people should expect God's grace?

Does this mean that God does not impart grace upon sinful human beings who are lost and love their sin more than God?

Matthew 5:44-45 ⁴⁴ "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

Because all men are sinners and all men deserve God's judgment, is God obligated to provide for the needs of any man while on the earth?

And yet, we see that He does.

Now, this brings us back to the question about the Canaanites. Had God shown mercy and grace to the Canaanites in any form?

Yes, by meeting their needs and in many cases their wants and desires in the same way He did for the Israelites.

And so, there is a sense in which God blesses the world by meeting the needs of people in the world who deserve wrath instead of blessing.

But then we need to ask, does God have different types of blessings for mankind?

Again, keep in mind that you and I have been made in the image of God.

As human beings, do we possess and share different types of love among other human beings?

Yes. We are commanded by God to love our wives or husbands in an entirely different way than we love other spouses of other people.

How do we know this?

Because God's word is clear on this issue. But we are still to love others.

1 John 3:14 ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.

What does it mean to love the brethren?

To have a special affection toward them with the intent of blessing them and encouraging them toward Christ.

So, is our love toward the brethren different from the love we have toward other's outside of the faith?

Galatians 6:10 ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and *especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*

So, if our love toward the brethren is special is it a different love we have toward our enemies?

Luke 6:27-28 ²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

How can we love our enemy?

Is demonstrating love toward our enemy make him or her any less an enemy?

And getting back to our spouses, is our love for them different from the love we have toward the rest of the world?

Ephesians 5:25-27 ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

So, my question again, does God have the ability to bless any part of His creation in different ways?

You'll also notice in Ephesians 5 that the love we have for our spouses is the kind of love that God has for whom in particular?

The church, His bride.

And so, is it unjust for God to bless one person differently than He blesses another?

No. He is the Potter and we are the clay, and all of those whom He creates He blesses, but He may bless differently. Some He blesses by providing for their needs in this world and allows them to live out their lives by not bringing judgment upon them as they deserve.

But keep in mind that if God chooses to bless His enemies, are they any less an enemy deserving nothing less than His wrath?

Others He blesses with a redemptive love as He has chosen them before the foundations of the world unto glory to be with Him forever.

Do those people deserve that kind of love from God?

No. And that's why that kind of grace from God is amazing because all of us deserve God's wrath.

And so, was it unjust for God to finally judge the Canaanites through the hands of His chosen people Israel?

Romans 9:15-23 ¹⁵ For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." ¹⁶ So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. ¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." ¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. ¹⁹ You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" ²⁰ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? ²¹ Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use? ²² What if God, although willing to

demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory,

Solomon understood this and he too was amazed that God was gracious to him and allowed him to further the kingdom of Israel in the way that He did. In fact, the exploits of Solomon were so amazing throughout all the land that many leaders took notice, not the least of whom was one queen who ruled the land of Sheba.

And what is interesting about this woman is how she arrived at the conclusion that it was the true God and Creator who was fully responsible for Solomon's success.

2 Chronicles 9:1-8 ^{NAU} Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test Solomon with difficult questions. She had a very large retinue, with camels carrying spices and a large amount of gold and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was on her heart. ² Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from Solomon which he did not explain to her. ³ When the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, the house which he had built, ⁴ the food at his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his ministers and their attire, his cupbearers and their attire, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, she was breathless. ⁵ Then she said to the king, "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. ⁶ "Nevertheless I did not believe their reports until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half of the greatness of your wisdom was not told me. You surpass the report that I heard. ⁷ "How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom. ⁸ ***"Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you, setting you on His throne as king for the LORD your God; because your God loved Israel establishing them forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness."***

This is how our lives should be seen by people, so that in the final analysis God gets the glory for the way in which He works in our lives, even though we don't deserve it. So, you and I cannot take credit for our salvation, you and I cannot take the final credit for our sanctification, and we can never take credit for the glory that has been promised to us.

Just as the kingdom of Israel, at the hands of Solomon, was to declare to the world that God has shown His mercy and grace to a particular people, we too should give glory to God in our lives as His particular people, (all of the elect both Jew and Gentile), await the kingdom of God that He has shed abroad in our hearts and the promise of that kingdom to come in the new heavens and new earth.

Hebrews 13:20-21 ²⁰ Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* Jesus our Lord, ²¹ equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.