

IX.OBEY THE LORD

77.Obedience to the Lord. Read Lk 11:27-28

Why is the mother of Jesus blessed? Is she blessed or is she to be blessed. Has she received a great blessing or is she deserving of great blessing?

I think the unknown woman is saying "You are a great blessing to your mother!" No doubt Jesus is, particularly when you consider that the most evil people on Earth were the children of their mothers. Those women were not blessed to see how their children turned out.

I am blessed to see how Jesus has turned out. To me, He is the most incredible person there ever was. First, he never did anything wrong. It is impossible for any other man, woman or child alive or dead to never do anything wrong.

Second, He sacrificed Himself to save evil people. Being completely good in His living Jesus must appreciate, ever so much more than we do, how evil we are. Some of us have changed a lot since we began following Jesus. Some of us not so much. All of us should be able to look back on our past actions with shame and disgust. For us those shameful acts seemed like a good idea at the time. For Jesus they have always been disgusting. And yet he died so that people, like you and me, having done these terrible things can be saved from the punishment we deserve.

So Mary was blessed to bear such a good and holy son. But, there was a down side. Where are the grandchildren? Jesus suffered and died somewhere between the ages of 33 and 36. He never married. (Don't make me laugh with any suggestion that the Da Vinci Code has any basis in fact). He never had any children. He prepared Himself for His mission. his mission was to proclaim the kingdom of God and to die that people might enter into it. It was no small thing to accept that your

first and best son would never have a traditional life. It was a great suffering to witness the results of His flogging and His terrible death.

Jesus makes little of whatever blessing Mary received or should receive for bearing and raising Jesus. In His mind it is insignificant compared to the blessings to be received by those who obey God the word of God. Mary the mother of Jesus, if she did not obey God's word, would have found herself in the same hell as the mothers of evil people. And the mother of the most evil person alive, if she obeyed God in all things, would find herself in the Kingdom of God just as much as anyone else. See Mk 3:20-21 &31-35.

God can be our God if we believe in Him but, He only becomes our Lord when we obey Him. The choice before us is this: Obey God in all things or not. God will not hold you responsible for doing any part of His will that He has not revealed. Once it is revealed to us we must do it. If we do all He commands we will not be disqualified from entering into His kingdom. Our obedience does not pay for our reward, and it does not earn it. Our reward was earned by Jesus, given by Him to us when He dies for us on the cross, accepted on our part when we put all our hope for salvation on Him, and retained by us as we strive earnestly and honestly to do the whole will of God.

It does not do to do 90, 95, 98 or 99% of God's will. We must do all of it. If we do 99% of God's will are we not saying, " God and I agree 99% of the time. But, where we don't agree I do it my way!" Really we are following our own will 100% and God's will 0%. For the truth is made bare when we and God do not agree. If we do it God's way, that thing which we think we should, or can, do some other way, then we follow God 100%.

78.Obey Jesus. Keep His Commands. You must. Read Mt 7:21-27, Lk 6:49-49, 9:34-35, Jn 8:30-32 , 14:21, 15:4-17, Mt 17:1-8

Even when I was no believer at all I knew we were supposed to do what God commanded. If there is a God He is the ultimate authority. I didn't go to Sunday school until I was in second grade and then for only a year. But, previous to that I remember watching something on TV one Sunday (probably) morning. I think it was "The Greatest Story Ever Told" maybe not. Our Black and white TV did not get very good reception. It is amazing at what a young age we learned how to adjust the fine tuner. So the picture was basically a silhouette. This added to the effect of misery. Jesus was hanging on the cross. I remember thinking "Jesus is more important than George Washington".

So it boggles the mind when people who claim Jesus as their savior not only don't do what He commanded, but don't want to know what He said. It is as if there are two Christianities in the world. In the first people worship the Father Son and Holy Spirit as they have revealed themselves to be. These Christians want to be people who know God and who do what He says. They want to read about God and what He said.

In the other Christianity people worship a God who they have made up. This God is supposed to (but does not) give them what they need (want really), never asks them to do more than "love thy neighbor", and will carry them off to heaven someday (not soon). This God has not provided a book that describes Him, us, our relationship, or how we are to please Him. Instead He is as we imagine Him to be because we are always right, rational, objective, and good, and the way He is, His character, and values must make sense and seem right to us.

The truth is that mankind in our natural state are at war with God because He calls us to do right but we have turned our backs to Him as we do as we want (mostly), and what we think is right (mostly). God is patient but He will eventually sweep all who are at war with Him into the lake of fire.

He has provided a way for us as individuals to surrender and make peace with Him. The way is this. We must belong to Jesus. Put simply we can belong to Jesus if we love, trust, and obey Him. Because we belong to Him God has given Him all authority over us. Hence the Father said, "This is my Son listen to Him."

If we trust Him and do everything Jesus commands us we will belong to Him and live. But because we can't, we will belong to Him if we trust Him, resolve to do everything He says, do most of what He has said, and repent of everything we did instead of doing what He said and keep trying.

Beyond this Jesus said that if you obey Him you will know the truth. And that the truth will set you free.

If you obey Him you love Him. And the Father and He would love you. And they will show themselves to you.

If you obey Jesus you will remain in His love, you will bear much fruit that will last, you will ask God for things in Jesus name and you will receive them, your joy will be complete, you will be Jesus friend, you will love your brothers in sisters in Jesus.

Why all these good things for those who obey Jesus. How seriously do you take someone who does not take you seriously? Why would we think that Jesus would do awesome things for us while at the same time we ignore what He said? Does it not make more sense that He ignore us if we ignore Him.

I think we expect God to love us and do everything we need (want) while at the same time we can ignore doing what He said. Where does this come from?

I have met the occasional person who was raised to not expect to have to be responsible. They were over indulged as children. They received everything they needed (wanted) but were not expected to actually do anything for anyone else. Rather than expect consequences for their actions they were

raised to think that their family would shield them or negate any of the consequences for their actions. Now they are adults and expect that the rest of the world will be like mom and dad. The world will ask them to do things but they expect that they will never have to do these things. They go to school and wonder why they don't get a passing grade even though they have not studied or done the work. When they borrow money for things and don't make the payments they don't understand why their things get repossessed or their house foreclosed. They get married but don't understand why their spouse leaves them when they continue to live as if they were single. They get a job but don't understand why they got fired for not working or not being responsible. They were raised to fail. Now they are "Christian" and don't understand why their lives are not any better after ignoring what Jesus commanded them to do.

Jesus is like a fireman on the tall ladder lifted up to a high window in a burning building. He is calling to the people in the room to come to Him so He can save them. But to save them they have to come to Him at the window. But the people in the room won't move. They won't come to the window to be saved by them. They won't do what He is telling them to do. They wonder why there is smoke in the room. They wonder why the firemen haven't saved them. They expect to be saved even though they won't do anything to save themselves. This is what many perhaps most people who call themselves Christian are like.

79. Law of Moses See Mt 5:17-20.

Jesus relationship to the law is not simple. The Pharisees gave as the reason why they opposed Jesus the fact that He broke the Law.

First of all, the Law that God gave to Moses is called the Law of Moses, or The Law. It was not the laws of Moses. It was the laws of God. The various laws could be broken down into categories but it is important to note that there are no categories mentioned in the Law. Certain categories of the laws are mentioned in the New Testament. What follows is my way of understanding it. You can come up with your own system.

At the heart of the Law was the moral code. This would be the Ten Commandments and the two greatest commands: Love the Lord and love your neighbor. These speak to the basic ideas of right and wrong. The exception to this might be the Sabbath law.

There were the laws relating to the Sabbath. These would relate to "Remember the seventh day and keep it holy. You shall do no work."

There is the liturgical law. This was the way in which God was to be worshiped. These could be related to "Thou shalt not make any graven image." I would include in these all the commandments regarding the construction of the temple, all the various sacrifices, the offerings, the festivals, the priesthood, tithes, first fruits, vows to the Lord etc. These could be related to "Do not take the Lord's name in vain."

There are the cleanliness laws. These are all about what makes a person unclean and how they get clean again. It also includes what unclean people can not do. These are related to the dietary laws. These are about what you can and can't eat.

There are the family laws. These govern who you can marry, adultery, divorce, slaves, and sexual conduct. These could be related to "Honor your mother and father." and "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

There are the property laws. These cover inheritance, theft, finding lost property, redemptions, forgiveness of debts, etc. These could be related to "Thou shalt not steal."

There are the laws regarding legal cases, judges, witnesses, how to determine guilt. I suppose these could be placed with "Thou shalt not give false testimony."

There are laws regarding the monarchy.

There are laws regarding prophets.

There were laws regarding war.

There are miscellaneous laws dealing with parapets, mildew, clothing, leprosy, etc.

The fact is that Jesus upholds most laws, lays one or two aside, and is silent about many miscellaneous laws. Certainly he sets aside the dietary laws and laws regarding uncleanness. He has no use for the temple tax.

Regarding the Sabbath, it does not seem that He disregarded it so much as He did not agree with the application of it that the scribes and Pharisees upheld. Yet He claimed that He was Lord of the Sabbath, and that the Sabbath was for man's benefit. This last perhaps means that when the Sabbath law works to someone's loss we are not applying it right.

Clearly He upholds "Love the Lord...", "Love your neighbor...", "Have no other Gods...", "Honor your parents...", "Do not kill...steal...commit adultery", "Do not give false testimony", "Do not take the Lord's name in vain".

He says nothing about or "You shall not covet." directly. But if we love the Lord and love our neighbor we will not covet. For to covet is to think "The Lord has not provided enough for me."

The miscellaneous laws and those dealing with prophets and kings receive no comment except that Jesus acknowledges that there are prophets. He refers to Herod Antipas, who was King of Galilee, as "that fox" which would probably be translated with the proper flavor as "that jackal"

Regarding the liturgical law He is silent except when He says "When you are bringing your offering..." But on the other hand He quotes, "I desire mercy not sacrifice" He affirms making the offering for the cleansing of leprosy. He observed the festivals.

So are we to make sacrifices in the temple? There is no longer a temple so how can we?

After Jesus affirms most laws and is silent about so many that really don't come up that much, the fact that he lay aside the cleanness laws is perplexing. He says that it is what we do and say that makes us unclean not what we touch and eat. See Mt 15:1-20

If we look now at the passage in Matthew we see that we should obey and teach the Law on the one hand. But, Jesus fulfills the Law. How does Jesus fulfill the law? And what does that mean?

The Law contained the books we call Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These contain all the commands but also history and God's words on things other than His

commands. Of particular interest now are the promises, blessings and curses of God. These last three work simplistically like this: God promises that if His people do what He commands they will be blessed. If not, they will be cursed. It is in this way that Jesus fulfills the Law.

Jesus was sinless. See Jn 8:46. Therefore He earned the blessings. Jesus was treated shamelessly and crucified, and God abandoned Him on the cross. In this way Jesus took on Himself the curses. The curses in the Law go on for pages. Not all of those curses were laid on Jesus. The examples that come to mind are: Egyptian boils, defeat in battle, having someone carry off His betrothed. The Law does say "Cursed is anyone who is hanged on a tree." So clearly Jesus was cursed. See Romans 8:17, 2 Corinthians 1:5, Philippians 1:29 & 3:10, Colossians 1:24, and 1 Peter 4:3. Just as we share in His blessings we also share in His sufferings. Perhaps in some of us Jesus receives the curse of Egyptian boils etc. so that He may suffer all the curses. About this I am not certain.

If Jesus earned the blessings and received the curses then anyone who belongs to His House can share

in the blessings. Their sins have already been punished through the curses he took. Christianity is all about belonging to Jesus so that all our sins have already been punished in Him and in Him we have earned all the blessings.

Back to our passage, if we can remember what it was. We are to practice and teach the Law of Moses except for the laws of cleanness and the dietary laws.

As one who teaches I need to know from God: should we rest on Saturday not Sunday (it is the seventh day, Sunday is the first)? Shall we tear down walls that have mildew that keeps coming back? Should we not wear clothing woven with two kinds of fiber (a big challenge, or just not linen and wool, an easier challenge)? see Lev 19:19? Should all our flat roofs have a high parapet? Should we not breed mules? Should we not plant a field with two different kinds of seed? Should we not trim our beards, or tattoo ourselves?

This one is fantastic. See Mark 12:19

"...if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother." What if the surviving brother is already married? In this case polygamy is required!

Jesus had the opportunity to set aside this law when the Sadducees spoke of it ,but He did not. So I assume He intends that we practice it. What makes it fantastic is that in Moses' day they practiced polygamy. In Jesus day it was rare due to Hellenistic influences.

If all we had were the words of Jesus then I think the answers to all these is yes. We should obey these commands. But as Christianity spread throughout the Greek and Roman world the question arose," Do gentile Christians need to obey the law of Moses?" The question was resolved using logic and not the words of Jesus. The short answer is no. The Jews could not keep the whole law why ask the gentiles to try and fail.

So Christianity has moved further and further from the Law.

So what shall we do? Most of us are not Jewish but gentile believers. The writings of Paul and the decision of the council at Jerusalem agree that the gentile believers need not practice the law of Moses. If we follow these words are we departing from Jesus commands? Was Jesus talking to us or to just the Jews? I think Jesus assumed His hearers were Jews. He taught the Jews. He traveled about their homeland. When He left Jewish territory it seems that His purpose was to retreat with His disciples for rest and dialogue, except when He crossed Samaria to travel from Galilee to Judea. In fact Jn chapter 4 seems to record the longest conversation Jesus has with a gentile. After Jesus convinces the Samaritan woman that she couldn't trifle with Him. She brings up what was probably the major contention between the Jews and Samaritans, where they were to worship. The law stated that they were to worship at the place God would choose, but that place was not named. Because the worship was to be done at the tabernacle, wherever it was was to be the place. But here was a temple but no tabernacle . The temple succeeded the tabernacle. The ark of the covenant was taken, by David, to Jerusalem where the temple would be built. But the tabernacle itself seems to disappear after the time of Solomon. But before that it stood at Gibeon not in Jerusalem.

I suppose this was Jesus' chance to say, "You must worship in Jerusalem in accordance with the Law of Moses for that is the place the Lord has chosen." But He said," The time is coming when you will worship the Father not in Jerusalem or on this mountain." I'm thinking Jesus did not affirm strict adherence of the Law of Moses to the Samaritans and neither did He to us, the gentile believers.

So I think the last word rests with the council at Jerusalem (see Acts 15). We gentile believers need not follow the entire Law of Moses. At the same time Jesus did affirm certain commands of the Law.

I think that these we are to follow.

Also read Romans 10:4, 13;8 1 Cor 9:20, Galatians 3:19-27, 1 Timothy 1:8-11, and James 2:8-13
80.Flee to the mountains. Read Mt 24:1-44, Mk 13:1-33 and Lk 21:5-36

There is a lot in these lengthy passages. There is direction as to how we should live our lives at all times. We should be ready. By far this is the most useful. But besides this there is information and direction regarding the end times.

We should watch that we are not deceived into thinking that Jesus has come when He has not. We should not be alarmed at wars. We should stand firm with Jesus affirming Him to all people. We should help preach the gospel to all nations. We should pray for our physical well being, that we are delivered. We should recognize that certain heavenly signs will immediately precede Jesus return.

Knowing something about the siege and destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. I have to wonder if Jesus intended His followers to be warned to flee the city and not go back, intending them to survive the war. During the siege the Romans allowed Jews to enter the city unmolested so that they could celebrate the Passover there. Thereafter the Romans did not let them or anyone else out, intending that the visitors should help consume the food and water in the city and starve it into surrender quicker. The Romans surrounded the City with a wall so as to let no one out alive. Apparently tens of thousands attempting to flee were captured and crucified. Eventually the city defenses were overcome by assault. The temple and the city were destroyed by fire and the inhabitants massacred. Had the Christians been in the city they would have perished with the rest.

Now knowing this history read these verses again. Mt 24:1-2, 15-20, 34, Mk 13:1-2, 14-18, 30, Lk 21:5-6, 20-24, 32. In particular look at Lk 21:20-21. I think Jesus was warning his people unequivocally to flee from Jerusalem and not go back. Some historical sources seem to suggest that Christians during the Jewish revolt interpreted the passage that way and left Jerusalem and moved to a Town called Pella across the Jordan River in the province of Perea.

If all this is true then this command had a particular purpose which was fulfilled in 70 A.D. Even so it will serve to remind us that God knows what will happen and His will will be done.