

Keys to Prophecy



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#10 - Back to the Future

Turn to Revelation 12 (1182) - We have already studied the first part of this chapter
From there we took a side trip into exploring the problem of evil - and God's plan of salvation
Now we are ready to study the rest of this chapter

First let's recap vs. 1-9 - which we covered several sessions back

Revelation 12:1-6 - We saw the Woman - Dragon - and Child

The Woman - God's people before the Cross - Israel - Who is very pregnant - about to give birth
She is confronted by...

The Dragon with 10 horns - Satan working through the power of Pagan Rome, who wants to destroy...

The Child - as soon as he is born

This child is to "rule all nations with a rod of iron" - A clear Old Testament reference to the Messiah

The Dragon fails to destroy the Messiah - And the child is caught up to God and to His throne

This is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ - When Jesus was born in Bethlehem...

Herod - the Roman appointed King of Judea - tries to kill Jesus as a baby

Satan harasses Jesus all through his life - Trying to take Him out

Under Pilate - The Roman governor of Judea - Jesus is crucified - and buried

But Jesus rose in victory over sin, Satan and death - And ascended to heaven - to the right hand of God

Having failed to destroy Jesus - Satan now goes after God's faithful people after the cross - The Church
Persecuted by Rome - and then by the Little Horn (the church corrupted in the middle ages)

The woman has to flee into the wilderness - To the unpopulated areas of earth - Mountains and deserts
Where God ensures her survival during the 1260 days/years

Next - In Revelation 12:7-9 - We have a flash back - Explaining who the Dragon is - and where He came from

War in heaven - Michael and His angels vs. the Dragon and his angels - The forces of good vs. evil

The Dragon is clearly identified as Satan - The serpent of old (a reference to the Garden of Eden)

Satan loses the war - He is not executed - He is exiled - To this earth

There - The story in Genesis tells us...

He persuaded Adam and Eve to invite him here to try out his ideas

This world is where Satan is revealing what things would be like if He were running the universe

Now - Continuing in our study of Revelation 12

☐ Revelation 12:10-12 (1182) - Just after the view of Satan causing war in heaven and being cast out...
We have a major announcement

Revelation 12:10-12 ¹⁰ *Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.*
¹¹ *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*
¹² *Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."*

- This is a major announcement - Satan is defeated - That is GOOD NEWS
But it is mixed news - He is defeated - but not destroyed - Yet

v.10 Salvation is certain because Satan has been defeated - Cast down - That is GOOD NEWS
He accused God - and God's people - Day and night - He never lets up
But he has been overcome
This is something right now we have to take by faith - Because it sure doesn't look defeated
How is it that a beaten foe can still be causing so much trouble in my neighborhood?

How has Satan been overcome?

- v.11 - *They overcame him...*
- By the blood of the Lamb* - Jesus conquered Satan at the cross - And saved the human race from death
Jesus is THE overcomer - And in Jesus we are all overcomers of Satan by Jesus' blood
- 1 John 4:4 (1170) *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

Our personal salvation is secure in Jesus - We have been rescued from Satan's grasp
Satan may be able to harass and cause us pain and suffering in this present evil world
But on an eternal level - He has lost control of everyone who puts their faith in Jesus
- By the word of their testimony* - We conquer Satan by telling others about Jesus - spreading salvation's story
Diminishing his kingdom one person at a time
Every time we tell someone of the Gospel - and they accept Jesus - Satan loses more territory
- Did not love their lives to the death* - This is a life and death struggle - This is WAR
We may die in battle - But Jesus is the resurrection and the life

Let's not pass by this too quickly -

How far must be we willing to go in standing for Jesus? - All the way to death!

We tend to cave in on things so trivial compared to death

We are afraid to stand up for Jesus - lest someone might ridicule us - or think we are weird

We cave in over fear of losing money - a job - a friend - status - things

Jesus said - We must LOVE Him more than anything else - more than anyone else

God calls us to follow Him to the point of death - To be ready to lay down our lives for Him

The old saying is still true -

If you don't have something worth dying for - you don't have anything worth living for

v.12 - There is rejoicing in heaven - Satan is cast down - He is beaten - He was mortally wounded at the cross
BUT -Woe to the earth - He is angry and cornered - Defeated but not yet destroyed - And still doing damage
A wounded and cornered animal - Exceedingly dangerous - Even if mortally wounded
Like Hitler - After Normandy - He was beaten - Germany could not win the war
Several of his generals tried to tell him so - And he had them shot
Though he could not win - He was cornered - He fought on - Millions more died before he did

Satan is beaten - But he is evil - He wants to do as much damage as possible before he dies of his wound

The mortal wound Jesus inflicted upon him at the cross

Great tribulation is still ahead for earth - for God's people - But only for a "short" (limited) time

But the final outcome is absolutely secure - God has won - God will win - Eternal life is sure

- Revelation 12:13-17 (1182) - The passage returns to the historical progression left off in v.6
¹³Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. ¹⁴But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.
¹⁵So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. ¹⁶But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

Notice how vs.13-14 parallel v.6

<input type="checkbox"/> v.6 -	<input type="checkbox"/> Woman fled (from Dragon)	<input type="checkbox"/> v.13 -	<input type="checkbox"/> Dragon persecuted woman
	<input type="checkbox"/> Fled into wilderness	<input type="checkbox"/> v.14 -	<input type="checkbox"/> Flies into wilderness
	<input type="checkbox"/> Place prepared to feed her		<input type="checkbox"/> Place where she is nourished
	<input type="checkbox"/> 1260 days		<input type="checkbox"/> Time, times and half a time

So vs.7-12 are an interlude about the Dragon's origin and ultimate demise

And v.6 and v.14 - We see the clear parallel between the time prophecies of 1260 days and the 3½ times
 That these two time prophecies refer to the same time and events
 This time the woman is in the wilderness is the same time as the Little Horn of Daniel 7
 As we saw in an earlier study - This prophecy appears seven times in Daniel and Revelation
 As 3 ½ times - 1260 days - and 42 months - See Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Revelation 11:2,3; 12:6,14; 13:5

Don't miss the allusion to Elijah - Do you remember that story
 Ahab - was a wicked king of Israel - Who led his people into idolatry - Abandoning the God of heaven
 Elijah comes along - Tells Ahab - "There will be no rain - until you rethink your policies and repent"
 God sends Elijah to wait out the drought by the Brook Cherith - He flies in food via ravens
 When the brook dries up - God sends Elijah to Zarepath - where a widow cares for him
 Out of a bin of flour that never goes empty - And a jar of oil that never runs dry
 How long does that drought last - 3 ½ years - Luke 4:25 (995); James 5:17-18 (1161)
 That's 42 months - or 1260 days! - Another verification that we are right on track

Do you see how God pulls various metaphors from Scripture together when he weaves his prophetic tapestry?
 As God fed Elijah in the wilderness for 3 ½ years - So God will feed his faithful people for the 3 ½ times

So we are looking at God's faithful people during the middle ages - 538-1798 (See the prior study on Daniel 7)
 Chased around by the Dragon - Who we see is now the same as the Little Horn of Daniel 7-8

v.15 - Serpent = Dragon - spewed water = people - to sweep the woman away
 Parallels the persecuting and making war on the saints by the Little Horn - in Daniel 7-8
 Under the direction of the apostate medieval church
 Armies of people were sent out to destroy those who dissented against apostate Christianity
 People who chose to follow the Bible truths instead of the false dictates of the church
 History bears this out clearly - 100 million plus died at the hands of medieval Christianity

v.16 - The earth helped the woman - True Christ-followers hid in the mountains - Crossed the oceans
 The lesser populated, more rugged places of the earth gave them sanctuary from the Dragon

No matter how hard the forces of evil have tried -
 They could not stamp out either the Bible or people who insist on living by the Bible
 Either by political power - or rationalistic philosophy
 Christ followers just won't go away! - They loved not their lives to the death

Satan did all he could to sweep the true Christ followers away during the medieval Christian apostasy
 But he failed to wipe out all who insisted on purely following Christ - and rejecting the Church's distortions

Now - Get the picture
 The dragon took a swing at the Child - Jesus - He missed - Strike one
 The dragon took another swing at the woman - The true Christ-followers since the cross - Strike two
 The dragon has one more strike left - before he is OUT - And the pitch is on its way to the plate

Revelation 12:17 (1182) *And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

- The Dragon was enraged - The Dragon-Serpent-Satan - is really angry - He knows his time is running out
He is angry at the Woman - God's faithful people - And he hates to lose
He couldn't kill her premier Offspring - Jesus Christ
He tried to destroy her during the middle ages - The 1260 days - 3 ½ times - 538 to 1798
The time prophecy is clearly stated twice - v.6 and v.14
But she keeps slipping away - He can't catch and destroy her
So now he sets out to wage all-out war against "the rest of her offspring"
- The REST of her offspring - The remaining ones - Remaining after WHAT?
After the 1260 years - 3 ½ times - After 1798
So NOW - in the END TIME - Satan is really cranky - He knows it is the End Time - He is about finished
And he is out to do as much damage as he can to God's true people in the last days - Our day!

This is about US - Our time - Those of us who insist on sticking with Jesus now - no matter what
Satan is not going to leave us alone - He is out to destroy
But do we have anything to fear? - NO - Maybe a little discomfort - But nothing lasting
Our salvation is sure in Jesus - Satan might even kill us - But that is only temporary
Jesus is the resurrection and the life

What is Satan going to do to try to destroy us in these last days? - That is the story of Revelation 13
Which we will cover in detail in a future topic

But be clear on this - Satan is going to pull out all the stops
Satan will pull together the best of everything he used in the past against God's people
And compress it all into his final super-weapon - And throw it at us with all the force he has
This includes the scenario of the Mark of the Beast - And we will get to that - But first...

How are these end-time Christ followers identified - By TWO things

- They "keep the commandments of God"
- They "have the testimony of Jesus Christ"
- Let's take a closer look at these TWO identifiers of God's end-time people - Starting with the 2nd identifier...
What is meant by the "TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST"? - What is it?

- Revelation 1:1-2 (1174) *¹ The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, ²who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.*

The message God gave to John - From Jesus through the angel - is called the "testimony of Jesus"
The whole book of Revelation - is the "testimony of Jesus"

- Revelation 1:9 (1174) *I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

John was exiled to the island prison of Patmos because of the "testimony of Jesus"
So it must be more than just the book of Revelation - which John wrote while on Patmos
John loved Jesus - Talked about Jesus - Taught about Jesus - Would not shut up about Jesus
Wherever John went - He taught about Jesus from the Word of God - And that got him into trouble
The Romans tried to kill him by deep frying him in boiling oil - God protected him
John "loved not his life to the death" - He continued to bear witness to Jesus
The "testimony of Jesus" is simply the Gospel - Proclaimed by the lives and words of Christ followers

- Revelation 20:4 (1188) *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

Here the word “testimony” has been translated “witness”

(We will study this passage in detail in one of the last topics of our seminar)

Many of God’s faithful people have been martyred for their “testimony of Jesus” down through the ages

So the testimony of Jesus is simply the Gospel message of Jesus Christ - our Messiah and Savior

Which Jesus’ faithful followers proclaim boldly to the world - at the peril of their lives

And that reminds us of...

- ☐ Revelation 12:11 (1182) *And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

This phrase also appears in...

- ☐ Revelation 19:9-10 (1187) *Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”¹⁰ And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”*

Nearing the end of the great vision - John falls at the feet of the angel who brought him the message

The angel spoken of in Revelation 1:2

The angel rebukes John - God alone is worthy of worship -

The angel is only a “messenger” - and in that way just like John and his fellow disciples

And like earthly messengers - Heavenly angels also bear the “testimony of Jesus”

And that Gospel proclamation is identified with the “spirit of prophecy” - What does that mean?

Paul tells us that the best spiritual gift is prophecy - 1 Corinthians 14:1-5 (1108)

Because it edifies - exhorts - and comforts

Prophecy in the New Testament is not primarily fore-telling - or predicting

But forth-telling - Or proclaiming - By the power of the Holy Spirit

Speaking boldly and accurately for Jesus Christ - Bearing witness no matter what - With Divine power

But that Holy Spirit driven gift of proclamation does not make us eligible to be worshiped

We are just “fellow servants” - Brethren - bearing the same testimony to Jesus Christ

The word “testimony” - is the Greek “marturia” from which we get the English word “martyr”

It simply means to be a witness in court - To tell what you have personally seen and experienced

For many Christians - The word came to identify one who died for Jesus

One who is boldly tells about Jesus - Remains true to Jesus - even if it costs them their life

And that is what happened to most of the prophets - They were killed in order to silence them

That is what happened to all the apostles - except John - They had to kill them to shut them up

And God’s end-time people will take the same stand -

v.12 - They did “not love their lives to the death

But even that level of devotion does not deserve worship - as saints or something

Only God is worthy of our worship - of our total life devotion - and our testimony

One thing this makes clear - The gift of prophecy will be with us right up to the end of time

We need that clear word - Like a light in the dark

God’s people will keep on proclaiming the gospel with bold, prophetic, Holy Spirit power

In spite of Satan’s ferocious attacks

And the ultimate end-time manifestation of the gift of prophecy will not be predicting the future

But clearly and fearlessly proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world

So those who bear the testimony of Jesus are those who believe the Bible and preach the Gospel with power

Witnessing - even to the point of death - that Jesus is God, reconciling the world to himself

Speaking forth - fearlessly - to anyone and everyone - Calling them to turn to Jesus and live

Joining Jesus on his rescue mission to snatch people out of the death grip of Satan

To diminish Satan’s kingdom by bringing people into the Kingdom of God

And all that through the Grace of Jesus Christ - Salvation by faith alone

The Testimony of Jesus - is really the opposite of the great words of the Little Horn
 And bearing that testimony is the essence of the end-time restoration predicted in Daniel 8
 While the Little Horn is defaming Jesus name - obscuring the Gospel with error and deceit
 The true followers of Jesus are proclaiming the true Gospel of Grace through Faith -
 Which is - The Testimony of Jesus

So this last day people - Attacked by the dragon in all his fury - Will be stuck like glue to the Gospel
 Nothing will budge them away from the message of Grace - Proclaimed with prophetic, Holy Spirit power
 Neither threat of death - nor false doctrines - They hold to the truth of the Grace of Jesus Christ

- What about that other identifier? - "They keep the commandments of God"
 What does this mean? - It shows up in one other place in Revelation...

After warning about the Mark of the Beast - God says

- Revelation 14:12 (1184) *Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

Those who stand against Satan's final attack - The beast and his mark - With death penalty attached
 Are identified the same way as the last-day remnant in Revelation 12:17
 They keep God's commandments
 They keep the faith of Jesus

What does "keep" mean? - To hold onto - cling to - stick with - abide by - follow closely - obey

So God's end-time remnant - last day true followers - are clearly identified as keeping God's commandments
 They are obedient to all God's laws and directions -
 They trust God completely - and therefore they carefully obey whatever God says in His Word
 They follow God wherever He leads them - Faithfully

So - What will be the attitude of God's end-time people toward's God's commandments - His law?
 What should be our attitude toward's God's law? - Towards obedience to God's commands?
 What will be our rules of engagement - as we engage the enemy in the final struggle
 We will keep God's commandments faithfully - And the bear boldly our testimony of trust in Jesus

How will we keep our balance against Satan's end-time onslaught - His all out furious attack?
 Here we have the formula - Balancing God's law with the Gospel - Keeping both in proper relationship
 How do these fit together - And how do they fit into the prophetic picture?

One thing has bothered me a lot - as I have listened to many Gospel preachers
 There seems to be a wide-spread negative attitude towards God's Law or laws - in th Old Testament
 at least from the so-called "New Testament" perspective

I've heard statements like - *I'm sure glad we live now under grace, and not under the old law*
 As if living under God's laws was a negative experience - something to be avoided
 As if God gave a less enjoyable way of life to an earlier generation - Which was burdensome and hard
 But - Thank God - He set us free and has given us an easier, better way now - under GRACE

Now - I admit that I am glad I do not have to kill an animal in worship to God
 I am glad I live AFTER the cross fulfilled all those symbols
 When we can view all the demonstration of sin and its results by looking back to Calvary

I have also heard it said that the Law is the old way to salvation - The Old Testament way
 While GRACE is a whole new way in the New Testament - And that the two are incompatible

It sounds to me in Revelation like there is no angst in God's people between the Law and the Gospel
 They are held like two hands on one body - Like brothers - Like two sides of a coin - Like chips and salsa
 Two balancing aspects of the end-time Christian message and experience
 The same people are described as keeping God's commandments AND as trusting in Jesus

In Revelation's last-day Christ-followers - I believe there is no room for negativity towards the Law
 And no incompatibility between the Law and Grace
 In fact - I believe this balancing of Law and Grace forms the template by which we can tell...
 who God's true end-time people are

I know that Paul has said some rather difficult things about the Law - Especially in Galatians
 Paul said some hard things that people misunderstood in his own day
 Look at what Peter had to say about some of the things Paul wrote

- ☐ 2 Peter 3:14-16 (1167) *¹⁴Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; ¹⁵and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*

I believe that due to misunderstandings about the Law - some monstrous things have been said about God

- ☐ I believe that Scripture presents ONE GOSPEL for all people FOR ALL TIME
 Only one way of salvation - And that is by Grace through Faith in the Messiah - Jesus Christ
 I have tried to show you that the entire Old Testament religious system is about GRACE through FAITH
 God using symbols and events of sacrifice and sanctuary to teach people the Gospel before the cross
 The "Old Covenant" which looks forward by FAITH to the Messiah to come
 And the New Testament simply teaches that same Gospel of Grace through Faith looking BACK to the cross
 The "New Covenant" which looks back by FAITH to the Messiah Jesus who came - lived - died - rose

It is always the same Gospel - The same covenant - Just viewed from two different perspectives
 Before the cross - It was by faith in a promise
 Since the cross - It is by faith in a finished reality
 The "New Covenant" is better than the "Old" simply because it is no longer a hoped-for promise
 It is now "in the bank"
 Jesus has come, lived, died and risen - Salvation is now a FACT - Not just a promise
 Nothing in heaven or earth can undo what Jesus has accomplished - It is DONE!

Look at these strong words from the Apostle Paul in Galatians 1.

- ☐ Galatians 1:6-8 (1120) *⁶I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*
- ☐ Paul makes it clear that there is ONLY ONE GOSPEL - THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST -
 The so-called "New Testament" Gospel - that HE was preaching to both Jews and Gentiles
 And that Gospel is... - The Good News that Jesus of Nazareth is our Messiah and Savior

Now look again at a verse we looked at a few nights ago...

- ☐ Hebrews 4:2 (1150) *For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*

This is referring to the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai - as they traveled through the desert from Egypt to Canaan

- ☐ The SAME GOSPEL was preached to "them" - TO ISRAEL in the wilderness - As to us - TO THE CHURCH
 And the same response was called for - Faith
 Israel's system of salvation was evidently no different than ours
 And their problem of unbelief was really no different than ours

Now look at...

- ☐ Revelation 14:6 (1183) *⁶Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—*

- ❑ This angel has the EVERLASTING GOSPEL - to preach TO ALL NATIONS - Every person on earth
If this Gospel is everlasting - Then there is no room for any other Gospel at any other time in history
If this Gospel is for every people and language - Then it is for Jew and Gentile alike - To the end of time
So there is only one Gospel - Preached in Old and New Testaments - To every nation and language on earth

So if the same Gospel was preached to and through Israel in the Old Testament as to us in the New Testament

- ❑ Look at how that colors the way we look at GOD'S INTENTIONS FOR ISRAEL
- ❑ Genesis 12:1-3 (10) ¹Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you.
²I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.
³I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God's intention was that Abraham's descendants would BLESS THE WHOLE WORLD

Passing on the blessings God had given them - to everyone - Every nation, tribe and people

And what was the ultimate blessing Israel would bring to the whole world?

The Messiah - Jesus - The Savior of the whole world

Shortly after the deliverance from Egypt - Just before giving the 10 Commandments - God said...

- ❑ Exodus 19:4-6 (70) ⁴'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. ⁶And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

A priest - is someone who connects people to God - and God to people

Everyone in Israel was to be a "priest" - connecting the God of salvation to the lost people in the world

God intended Israel to be a whole nation of missionaries

- ❑ Deuteronomy 4:5-8 (169) ⁵Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. ⁶Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'
- ❑ ⁷For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? ⁸And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

Here we have a picture of people beating a path to Israel's door - Because of the Law of their God

Doing life God's way would make Israel ATTRACTIVE TO ALL NATIONS - To the world

Not the world sighing a big sigh of relief that they are not burdened by that awful law

- ❑ Deuteronomy 26:18,19 (191) ¹⁸Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that you should keep all His commandments, ¹⁹and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken."

Keeping God's law was to be an attraction - PRAISED AND HONORED BY ALL NATIONS

A notoriously good thing - Exalting, not weighing down

Certainly God did not foresee a time when people would say - Wow, am I ever glad I didn't have to endure that Law

God foresaw a magnet for all peoples - A positive life style that was attractive to everyone

Of course - When Israel strayed into idolatry - They kind of blew their mission

And later - after the captivity in Babylon - when they strayed into legalism - They just hit the other ditch

I believe that the Old Covenant can simply be stated - Jesus is coming
 Looking forward by faith through God-given symbols
 And the New Covenant is simply - Jesus came - Looking back by faith to the cross event
 Messiah is coming - Messiah came - Looking forward by faith - or backward by faith

So many difficult and detailed theologies have been formulated about the covenants - Yet it is really so simple
 It is always grace - always faith - always GOOD NEWS - Old or New - Promise or Reality

- Paul says a couple of rather fascinating things about the Law - his attitude and relationship to it - as a Christ follower
- Romans 3:31 (1087) *Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.*

FAITH ESTABLISHES THE LAW -

Here we see Paul reflecting a supportive compatibility between faith in Jesus and God's law
 Not a destructive incompatibility - Or even a latent antagonism

- Acts 24:14 (1079) *But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.*

Paul here says his Christian faith and practice includes **belief in ALL that is written in the Law and Prophets**
 And in that belief Paul worships God
 That includes the whole Old Testament
 And remember - In Paul's time there was no New Testament
 The Bible of the early church - for the first 200 or more years - was simply the Old Testament

Paul is clear that we cannot be saved by keeping the Law
 But he is also clear that the saved will be keeping all of God's law

I believe that Paul's problem with the law was not the true Old Testament understanding
 But the distorted, legalistic view he had been raised with as a Jewish son of a Pharisee
 Where Grace had been completely morphed into a system of behavior and merit
 With a whole additional layer of man-made laws added on to God's commandments
 Which truly were a burden - and were impossible to keep
 When God's law is turned into a system of behavior and merit - it becomes a "yoke of bondage"
 Whether by the Jews in Jesus' time - By the medieval Little Horn's apostate Christianity
 Or any modern religious incarnation in our world today
 When religious leaders make God's law the means of salvation - It becomes a "yoke of bondage"
 When religion adds man-made laws on to God's law - it becomes even more of a "yoke of bondage"
 But the laws God has given to mankind have never been a "yoke of bondage" - They are a "law of liberty"

- Look at the POSITIVE ATTITUDE TO GOD'S LAW revealed in these verses
- Romans 7:12 (1090) - *"The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good."*
- Romans 7:14 (1090) - *"The law is spiritual..."*
- Romans 7:16 (1090) - *"I agree with the law that it is good."*
- Romans 7:22 (1090) - *"I delight in the law of God according to the inward man."*
- Romans 7:25 (1090) - *"With my mind I myself serve the law of God."*
- James 1:25 (1159) - *"The perfect law of liberty"*
- James 2:8 (1159) - *"The royal law"*
- James 2:12 (1159) - *"The law of liberty"*

Look at how Jesus put it...

The Jews had so distorted the true message of the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus said to them

- Matthew 23:15 (959) *"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves."*

TWICE THE SON OF HELL - Those are strong words -
 And reveal just how fatally the Old Testament truth had been distorted in Jesus' day

So when Paul argues against coming back under the “yoke of bondage” in Galatians 5:1...

- Galatians 5:1 (1123) *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with A YOKE OF BONDAGE.*

I believe he is standing AGAINST the belief that keeping the law merits salvation - earns it
 And that simply trusting Jesus is not enough - That salvation was not complete in what Jesus did for us
 Paul is speaking AGAINST the distorted view of the Pharisees in that era - which was held to be truth
 The Pharisees were saying monstrous things about God - Things being repeated by Jewish Christians
 And Paul wanted to free people from THAT “yoke of bondage”
 Truly following God and His laws has never been bondage - and never will be

Remember God’s rule of engagement? - God is LOVE -

- 1 John 4:7-9 (1170) *⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

Everything God does is from LOVE - Flowing from His perfect knowledge and perspective
 God never has given an inferior plan of salvation to one people - and a superior one to another
 Everything from that first promise of a Savior in Eden - Down to the present
 has been God trying to unfold His character to us - And draw us back into relationship with Him

So how does God’s law fit into “God is LOVE”? - Look at this...

- Romans 13:8-10 (1095) *⁸Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

- Notice - Obedience is not the fulfilling of the law - LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW
 So if you obey God’s law in every detail - but don’t have LOVE - you have not really obeyed

- If the whole Bible could be boiled down into ONE Word - what would that word be? - LOVE

But we look at that word and say - just what does it mean? There are so many ideas about love in our society
 Friendship love - Erotic love - Love of a pet - or food - or a garden - or...
 So maybe we need a little more instruction about Love - if we are to really know how to LOVE

One day Jesus was asked a question - by one of those legalistic Jewish pharisees

- Matthew 22:36-40 (958) *³⁶“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”*

Notice - He asked for THE great commandment - He was looking for just ONE
 But Jesus gave him not ONE - but TWO - at no extra charge

³⁷Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

The Great commandment is to LOVE God - Jesus is quoting the Old Testament - Deuteronomy 6:5 (1173)
 But it as if Jesus said - I really can’t give you just one - That would be incomplete - Not a balanced truth
 So let me add the second one - Also from the Old Testament - Leviticus 19:18 (112)

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”

Being in right relationship with God will always result in right relationships with each other

- So we have gone from ONE to TWO - Real love has two key dimensions - Vertical and Horizontal
 The ONE = LOVE
 The TWO = Love God - Love others

OK - That is helpful - we at least know that love relationships go in two specific directions
But how do I love God? - And how do I love other people?

Love involves not just treating someone nice - But actually finding out how they would like to be treated
Couples who are trying to love each other - often run into difficulties - because...

They don't know each other's love language

Different people perceive being loved through different means - Different love languages include...

Words of affirmation - Quality time - Receiving gifts - Acts of service - Physical touch

See: The Five Love Languages, by Gary Chapman - fivelovelanguages.com

So if we truly want to LOVE God - Why not ask him how He would like to be loved
And how He would like us to love His people

- Exodus 20 (71) God has told us specifically how to love Him - and others - In Exodus 20 - The 10 commandments
- The first four - have to do with how to love God with all your heart, soul and mind
And though there are only four - They contain by far the majority of words in the big 10
- The last six - show us the core principles of loving one another

And who wrote down those 10 commandments? - God did it Himself - with His own finger - In stone

Exodus 31:18 (83) *And when He (God) had made an end of speaking with him (Moses) on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.*

What would that tell us? - What does it mean when something is "set in stone"?

While in most of the rest of the Bible God was content to speak through the minds of people

Letting them write those thoughts down using their own words

For these 10 commandments - God wrote the very words himself - God's exact words

And he wrote them in stone - Permanence - Notice Jesus own words...

- Luke 16:17 (1030) *And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.*

And God had Moses put the stone tablets into the Ark of the Covenant - What would that signify?

That the 10 commandments are the foundation of God's government - The basis of judgment

Atonement was made in front of the Ark

Oh - And if you are thinking - "That's simple - All I have to do in obey ten rules - No problem"

Well - Let's go through them quickly

1. Make God your only God
2. Don't make or bow down to idols
3. Don't use God's name frivolously
4. Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy

Now what is the focus of these first four? - God telling us how to love Him - Vertical

5. Honor your parents
6. Do not murder
7. Do not commit adultery
8. Do not steal
9. Do not lie to hurt another person
10. Do not covet

The focus of these last six - God is telling us how to love others - Horizontal

So - How are you doing? - Not too bad?

Look again at #10 - What does it mean to covet? -

DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT! - Don't even let the desire enter your mind!

Whoops! - Now we are all in trouble

Paul even admits that he thought he was a pretty good law-keeper until he saw #10

And that one just killed him - Romans 7:7-9 (1090)

Like Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount - in Matthew 5 (938)
 If you hate in your mind - you have murdered in God's eyes
 If you lust in your heart - you have committed adultery in God's eyes
 And he ends up taking this to a ridiculous extreme - LOVE your enemies
 Don't just NOT hate them! - Don't just ignore them
 LOVE them - Because - only LOVE is the true fulfilling of the Law

Do you get the picture that God's Law is not something that can be kept with external behavior
 No - It requires God to do an internal transformation - To live it out inside you - To write it in your heart

And remember Jesus words in...

□ Matthew 22:40 (959) ⁴⁰*On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

All other Law in the Bible - And all the writings of the prophets - hang on these two principles
 So the rest of Scripture is simply an expansion of these same principles
 What it means to LOVE - To love God - and to love others

This is the ONE - the TWO - and the TEN

1. Love
 2. Love God - and - Love each other
 10. The ten commandments - #1-4 teach us how to love God - #5-10 teach us how to love each other
- All The rest of Scripture - is just a further expansion on God - His love for us - And our love for each other

Revelation 12:17 - Identifies God's end-time faithful people as those who...
 "keep the commandments of God AND have the testimony of Jesus Christ

In our next session we are going to look more closely at...
 How keeping God's commandments fits into Revelation's end-time people
 How should we look BACK on God's commandments as we look to the FUTURE as God's End-time people?
 How do God's commandments apply to our PRESENT time - as gospel centered Christ-followers?

We live in a world where so many people have rejected the whole idea of TRUTH
 And where breaking God's commandments is simply seen as an alternative life-style option
 Where anyone who calls something sin - will more than likely be accused of discrimination
 So tomorrow night is a vital piece in the puzzle as we move forward in our study of the book of Revelation
 Because God's end-time people will be a commandment keeping people

What is your relationship tonight to God's commandments?
 If God is truly LOVE - Then would He not only and always give us commands that are for our good?
 Would a God of love ever lay on any of His children an onerous "yoke of bondage"?
 I believe we can trust that whatever God asks us to do
 If we could see from His perspective - We would choose to do the exact same things

...I love God because he first loved me. I will obey God because I love God. But if I cannot accept God's love, I cannot love Him in return, and I cannot obey Him. Self-discipline will never make us feel righteous or clean; accepting God's love will. The ability to accept God's unconditional grace and ferocious love is all the fuel we need to obey Him in return. Accepting God's kindness and free love is something the devil does not want us to do. If we hear, in our inner ear, a voice saying we are failures, we are losers, we will never amount to anything, this is the voice of Satan trying to convince the bride that the groom does not love her. This is not the voice of God. God woos us with kindness, He changes our character with the passion of His love.

Our "behavior" will not be changed long with self-discipline, but fall in love and a human will accomplish what he never thought possible. The laziest of men will swim the English channel to win his woman. ...by accepting God's love for us, we fall in love with Him, and only then do we have the fuel we need to obey.

Blue Like Jazz, by Donald Miller - p.86