

8. Learning What Advantages the Jews Have

In our last topic, we saw that in the time of the New Testament, many of the Jews thought they were right with God because they taught the law of God to others even though they did not obey it themselves. Some people today do the same thing. They think that they are right with God because they teach the Word of God to others even though they have never repented of their sin of unbelief and placed their faith in the fact that Christ died for their sin and the Father showed that He was satisfied with the payment that Christ made by raising Christ from the dead. Today, we are going to see that God has blessed the Jews with many blessings because He originally gave them the Word of God.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the advantages that God gave to the Jews by giving them the Word of God. Romans 3:1-2 says, “What advantage then has the Jew, or what *is* the profit of circumcision? Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.” We see that God gave Abraham the sign of circumcision in Genesis 17. In Genesis 17:10, God said, ““This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised...” Then, in Genesis 17:14, God said, ““And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”” Circumcision was and is a sign to all Jews that God would keep the covenant that He made with Abraham.

The most important blessing that the Jews received was the fact that God committed to them the oracles of God. The word that is translated “oracles” means *a divine utterance from God*. The word is used four times in the New Testament and each time it speaks of the Word of God that was given in the Old Testament. In Acts 7:38, it refers to the law that was given to Moses at Mount Sinai. That verse says, ““This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and *with* our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us...”” The writer of the book of Hebrews said in Hebrews 5:12, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” The Jewish Christians had grown up with the Old Testament but they had not grown to spiritual maturity and needed someone to explain the first principles of the Word of God.

Finally, Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:10-11, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Here, we see that if God has given us a speaking gift, we are to speak the Word of God. If God has given us a serving gift, we are to serve in the strength or ability that God supplies.

The fourth use of the word “oracles” is here in Romans 3:2. In this verse, we see that God gave the Jews the Old Testament. This gave them a great advantage over every other nation on the

earth. As a result of having the Old Testament, they knew exactly what God said is right and exactly what God said is sin. As a result, they had the will of God explained clearly to them. They could see that they were to come to God by faith. They could understand that God said that they could show their faith by offering sacrifices as a covering for sin until Christ came to take away sin by His death and resurrection.

Even though some of the Jews did not believe, they at least knew what was right and what was wrong. Romans 3:3-4 says, “For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: ‘That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged.’” Some of the Jews did not believe what God said in the Old Testament. Their unbelief did not make the faithfulness of God useless. Instead, the Old Testament showed the faithfulness of God. The Word of God showed that God always spoke the truth.

At the same time, the Old Testament showed that every person was a liar. Psalm 51:4 says, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in Your sight--That You may be found just when You speak, *and* blameless when You judge.” David realized that his sin with Bathsheba was really sin against God. The Word of God showed that God is just. The Word of God showed that God is blameless when He judges. Since the Jews had the Old Testament to help them know what was right and wrong, none of them could say they did not know what God said about sin. Instead, they could know that they were condemned by the Word of God because they knew what was right and what was wrong.

Romans 3:5-6 says, “But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is* God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?” The fact that every one of the Jews had broken the commandments in the Old Testament showed that they were not right with God. The fact that the law showed that every Jew had broken the commandments of God also showed that God was righteous when He brought judgment on sin. Once a person knows what is right and what is wrong and the consequences of those choices, no one can say that God is unjust when He brings those consequences.

This is illustrated with the very first sin in the Bible. Genesis 2:16-17 says, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Adam was told that the only sin that he could commit was to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He was also told the consequence of that sin would be that he would die the very day he ate that fruit. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul and the spirit. Spiritual death is the separation of man from God.

Genesis 3:7-8 makes it clear that Adam and Eve immediately experienced spiritual death or separation from God the very day that they sinned even though Adam did not experience physical death until 930 years later. Those verses say, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the

day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” First, Adam and Eve tried to cover their shame before God. When that did not work, they tried to hide from God. This provided clear evidence that they experienced immediate spiritual death as soon as they sinned. God was certainly not unjust to bring the judgment that He promised.

Here, we see Paul answered the charge that he knew some people would try to make. Romans 3:7-8 says, “For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? And *why* not say, ‘Let us do evil that good may come’?--as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.” Paul said that some would say that the truth of God would be clearly revealed if Paul told a lie. It is true that his lie would certainly have shown that God told the truth.

However, Paul went on to point out that God would certainly be righteous to judge him as a sinner and condemn him for his lie. His lie would make him guilty before God and it would be right for God to judge him. Paul had to say this because of the false charges that were being made against him by some of the false teachers. Romans 5:20-6:2 says, “Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” Paul made it very clear that Christians should not continue in sin because of the grace of God. Instead, as Christians, we are to realize that we are dead to the power of sin over our lives.

Paul said that the false teachers who were changing the statements of Paul to provide an excuse for their own sins were facing a just judgment. The Old Testament made it clear that Jewish teachers that taught such teachings were guilty before God. They had no excuse for their sin because the law said in Exodus 20:16, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” Moses had reminded all of the people of that law when he reviewed the law forty years later. Deuteronomy 5:20 says, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” No Jew could say he did not know the law.

We want to help our children understand why God said that the Jews had a great advantage over the Gentiles during the time of the Old Testament. They had the written law of God so that they knew exactly what was right and what was wrong. They also knew the consequences for breaking the law. However, they chose to break the law in spite of that knowledge. As a result, we want to show our children how to explain that every person is guilty before God even if they had the written law of God.