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# THE GRACE OF GOD VS. THE LAW

Part One

*of Experiencing God's Grace*

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## ***Introduction***

Is the New Covenant an extension of the Old or did it entirely replace it? Is the moral law of God and its righteous requirements still in effect in the New Covenant? Did Jesus entirely fulfill the Old Covenant? Did the grace of God replace the law of Moses? Does the New Covenant consist of the grace of God plus the Ten Commandments? Are we required to keep the Old Covenant feasts today? What are the benefits and advantages of being under the grace of God as opposed to the law of Moses?

There is an invasion of false teachings and books emphasizing that certain parts of the Old Covenant are still in force. Assuredly, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Paul was obviously referring to the Old Testament here because the New Testament "canon" was not yet established. That would not happen until many years later. However, there is a major difference between teaching doctrine, reproving, correcting, and instructing people from the Old *Testament* and being under the Old *Covenant*. Clear distinctions must be made between what is characteristic of living under the Old Covenant (law of Moses) as opposed to the new one.

Time would not allow us to fully convey the excellence and magnificence of God's wisdom and ways revealed in both testaments. The Apostle Paul's words would be appropriate:

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! (34) For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? (35) Or who has first given to Him and it shall

be repaid to him? (36) For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Ro. 11:33-36).

The wise student of God’s word will know what is applicable from the Old Testament to New Covenant living. There are too many who do not make clear distinctions. For instance, it is not appropriate or beneficial for us to agree with *Job* about any tribulation or calamity that we may experience: “The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:21; KJV). Job was probably a contemporary of Abraham. What he experienced proved the need for covenant. There is no evidence that God had made a covenant with him. In fact, his complaint that there was no one to intercede or go between him and God would prove the point (Job 9:32-33). So, Job’s godliness could most likely be part of Noah’s legacy. Probably, in the wisdom of God, the record of Job’s experience was given as a backdrop to set the stage for His covenant with Abraham. Through this covenant, protection was promised to Abraham and later to the children of Israel from the very things Job experienced. In this, we clearly see the importance of covenant and our need to understand and appropriate the benefits thereof.

*Everything of the Old Testament must be filtered through the realities of Christ’s redemptive suffering, His resurrection, His ascension, and our having been seated in the heavenly places with Him (Eph.2:1-10). The New Covenant experience is a significant upgrade to the Old.*

One verse of Scripture sums up what all the Old Covenant foreshadowed: “...And you are complete in Him [Christ], who is the head of all principality and power (Col. 2:10). The whole purpose of the New Covenant is to secure our completeness in Christ. Every warning, promise, and provision was perfectly designed to this end. God sent Jesus as the sum total of all that we need. The Old Covenant law and prophets could not provide that but was set in place to prepare mankind for the Anointed One who was to come.

The wisdom and ways that God has used to fulfill His redemptive purposes for mankind can be separated into two distinct categories. [Covenant has always been used to provide the framework through which His purposes are fulfilled.]

- † The first involves the preparation for the solution to sin. In order for mankind to be redeemed and no longer subject to legal accusation as was Job, we had to understand the depths of our moral depravity. We had to be convinced of our dire need for God’s solution.
- † The second involves the unveiling of the solution for which the first has prepared us. Upon our embracing the solution, the method, means, and ways used for our preparation are no longer needed.

One example of this on a smaller scale is seen in the preparation process that the patriarch Jacob had to experience to receive the full blessing of covenant (Gen. 32:24-30). He had to be delivered from everything within him that would attempt to control, manipulate, lie, and deceive in order to obtain those things God was freely willing to give. All of these hindrances are the offspring of unbelief and independence from God. God cannot fully bless those who operate independent of Him—those whose actions mock His free gift of grace.

Jacob's deliverance happened after wrestling with a "man" (most likely an angel) one night until dawn. Jacob had determined that he would not give up until God blessed him. His determination caused his name to be changed from Jacob (supplanter; one who exalts himself by unseating another) to Israel (prince with God). He prevailed with God and man. After this experience, he never needed to repeat it. Although the way Jacob originally obtained the covenant blessing was deceitful, God still honored him above Esau who despised it. Jacob eventually received the full blessing on God's terms (Gen. 25).

So, accordingly and on a personal level, we are either in preparation or are experiencing what we have been prepared for. This fundamental truth is interwoven throughout Scripture. There is much more that can be written about this subject but it will not be necessary here. What is necessary is our understanding how this applies to the law of Moses and the grace of the Lord Jesus.

### **The Old and the New Distinguished**

The title of this article is not implying that the grace of God is opposed to the law or vice versa as in good vs. evil. If you owned an older car and a new one, there would be a choice as to which one you would drive on any particular day. However, if the old car is inoperable and/or unfixable, you would have to drive the new car no matter how much you like the old one. Besides, the new car happens to be the same make but is a considerable improvement of the old one. Whatever sentiments we have for the old will fade away because of the glory of the new. The total experience of the new by far supersedes that of the old car.

Hebrews 8:13 states this: "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

When something is obsolete it means it is "no longer in use." The Greek word translated "obsolete" literally means "to decay or become old or worn out because of use." Seven different translations of this verse communicate the same idea. The last statement in the verse also verifies that this is what was being communicated by the Holy Spirit. God, Himself, has declared that the Old Covenant (not the Old Testament word of God) is no

longer in use because it has grown old and decayed like rotten lumber. It has vanished from the scene.

We must stop right here and pay special attention to what is being said. Notice that *I* did not conclude that the Old Covenant is obsolete but *God* has declared it so. Too often, students of God's word approach it in an attempt to make it fit into their preconceived beliefs and ideologies. "God didn't really mean that the Old Covenant is entirely obsolete" would be a typical response in such cases. Would you prefer that the literal meaning of the Greek word be used? If so, that would mean that the Old Covenant has grown old and decayed and is no longer usable.

We cannot approach Biblical interpretation with a biased mindset. I did not make the above conclusion about the Old Covenant. The conclusion about the dissolution of the Old Covenant is clearly stated in Scripture and sets a precedent to which the Bible student must strictly adhere. We must first always agree with and let Scripture make its own conclusions. This one truth establishes the framework in our thinking that allows for clear understanding in what the rest of Scripture states concerning this subject. This approach will insure that we teach sound Biblical doctrine that glorifies Jesus although it may betray all human loyalties and sentiments.

There was a controversy in the early Church over whether or not the Gentile Church should be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. Certain believing Pharisees were saying they needed to do just that (Acts 15:5). Among other things, Peter responded with: "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they" (vs. 10-11). The Apostle James brought resolution to the whole matter: "I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

How shocking! The Apostle Peter referred to the law of Moses as a heavy and burdensome yoke that the Jews could not even bare. Why would they want to place that undesirable yoke on them and get themselves in trouble with God by testing Him? James then, after referring to the law of Moses as a source of "troubling" to the Gentiles, warns them about four things to stay away from. He stated that the law of Moses had been taught in the synagogues throughout many generations, thus fulfilling its purpose. The purpose then for Jesus' proclamation in Matthew 11:28-30 becomes very clear:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden [because of the Old Covenant], and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

*The transition from the Old to the New Covenant is clearly portrayed in Scripture as the exchange of one very undesirable “yoke” for the abundant, life-giving “yoke” of Christ. The New Covenant is not an extension of the Old but entirely replaced it as portrayed in the idea of swapping a troubling and unbearable yoke for a light and easy one.*

Shall we embrace the authority of Scripture in this matter or the words of those false teachers today who would bring us under unbearable yokes of bondage?

### **Is any Aspect of the Old Covenant Still Operational or Binding?**

Because God is unchanging, His righteous standard never changes. God did *not* lower the standard of morality in the New Covenant. Neither did He change His way of doing things. God always does things in phases or seasons. The Old Covenant feasts reveal God’s timetable for the unfolding of His redemptive plan for Israel and the rest of the world. In the Old Covenant, they foreshadowed the substance of the Christ to come and today serve as timetables for the unveiling of God’s blessings and judgments through Christ.

Even so, Scripture portrays the Old Covenant as a minister of death—as code (letter) that is engraved in stone or written with ink. The righteous (moral) requirements of the law (Old Covenant teachings) are now written in our hearts, fulfilled in us who are led by the Spirit (Ro. 2:27; 2 Cor. 3; Ro. 8:1-3; Heb. 8). God’s moral law and its righteous requirements have nothing to do with the keeping of days, months, seasons, feasts, or years because it is now fulfilled by loving God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves (or as Jesus loves us; Jn. 13:34 & 15:12). “Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law” (Ro. 13:8-10). The fruit of the Spirit meet all the righteous requirements of the law. That list in Galatians 5 does not include the observance of the previously mentioned things. If we walk in the Spirit, we are not under the Old Covenant (written code of) law and will not carry out the lawless deeds of the flesh (Gal. 5). We bear fruit for Christ when we allow the Holy Spirit to minister His love through us. On that hangs all the Old Covenant law and prophets. That love has already been poured out in our hearts (Ro. 5:5). We just need to believe it and walk in it.

This indicates that God’s righteous standard and requirements have not changed or been done away with in the New Covenant. They are still binding and must, therefore, be fulfilled. The Old Covenant revealed God’s righteous requirements and also showed us that we could not live up to it. Christ took upon Himself the full responsibility to fulfill those

requirements. When we consistently place our faith in our co-death with Him, sin is condemned in our sinful flesh, and the righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled in us as we yield to the work of His Holy Spirit in us (Ro. 6; Ro. 8:1-3). Now the fruit (works) of love produced by the Holy Spirit in us entirely fulfill what is required. The love required by God is what makes a man moral and good in His sight.

The written *moral* law of God (defining how we are to treat our fellowman and God) is still the ultimate authority on sin and righteousness. The Apostle Paul expressed outrage that a man was having sexual relations with his father's wife (stepmother) without regard as to whether the father was still living. From where did he get the notion that it was wrong? The Holy Spirit? Most likely, but the Spirit and the (written) word of God agree. Anyone can say they are speaking by the Spirit of God, thus making them a self-proclaimed authority on such matters. What is the final or ultimate authority on such things? *It is written*: "The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them" (Lev. 20:11).

The Apostle James cites the written moral law as the ultimate authority for defining and convicting even God's people of sin (James 2:8-12). He also encourages us to conduct ourselves as those who are under the higher "law of liberty" (the fathering and life-giving grace of God). The early apostles obviously still held the written moral law of God as the ultimate authority on what is right and wrong in God's eyes. However, the corporal punishment prescribed therein was not carried over into the New Covenant. As Jesus declared, "I did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Lk. 9:56; adapted). There are many other proofs in Scripture but I do not see it necessary to labor the matter any further. The Holy Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, are the final authority concerning the definitions of good and evil.

### **Two Aspects to the Idea of Fulfillment**

In light of this, we must understand that the Old Covenant has *not* been destroyed but fulfilled. As Jesus declared in Mt. 5:17-18:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled."

Jesus' reference to "the law and the prophets" defines the two things that make up the Old Covenant. In other words, "the law and the prophets" refers to the entirety of the Old Covenant. What God said, did, commanded, and promised in the Old Testament came through the law and the prophets. In verse 18, He only refers to the "law." In either case, you can substitute those words with "the Old Covenant" and the same original meaning is

upheld and conveyed. This would apply in many other instances within Scripture where those words are used.

John 1:17 reveals: "The law came through Moses but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

In the New Covenant, two things fully represent its purpose and provision. They are the grace and truth that comes through our wonderful Lord Jesus. The law that came through Moses ministers death but the grace and truth that comes through Christ is our only source of life (2 Cor. 3:5-9).

There are two aspects to what is meant by the "fulfillment" of the Old Covenant law and prophets. The first involves a bringing to an end of something that is no longer needed. One example is when Jesus became our Passover (or Lamb; 1 Cor. 5:7). Animal sacrifice has been abolished (Heb. 9). Another example is the displacement of the Levitical priesthood by Christ as the Great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:11-28).

The second aspect to the idea of "fulfillment" is the initiation of the Divine purposes that reference or foreshadow the New Covenant. The fulfillment of prophecy can also release God's purposes in the earth. One example of this is referenced in Matthew 8:16-17: "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.'" His doing this was the beginning of the prophecy but not the end. Jesus also fulfilled prophecy by forgiving sin during His earthly ministry. Does this mean He no longer forgives sin? No, healing and forgiveness were actually released abundantly in the earth according to New Covenant design. Where sin abounded, God's grace abounded much more (Ro. 5:20).

Another example is what occurred on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Peter stated that what the Prophet Joel prophesied was fulfilled as the beginning and not the end of it. The fulfillment of these prophesies, among many others, initiated very important things that are now *common to* the New Covenant experience.

New Covenant experience was foreshadowed in the Old, but Old Covenant experience is no longer needed in the New. Jesus has been made for us everything we need: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30-31). The Old Covenant law and prophets prepared us for Him in whom all fullness dwells. Now that Christ is in us and we are in Him, nothing more is needed. He fills up everything we need of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

*Anything declared by the Old Covenant prophets that were not fulfilled by Christ's first coming will be fulfilled because of and after the second coming.*

Luke 16:16 declares: "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the Kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it."

While Jesus earthly ministry was carried out under the Old Covenant, it introduced Israel to the realities of the New. The preaching of the Kingdom of God and how to enter it is only typical of the New Covenant. Christ's death and resurrection ended or made obsolete the Old Covenant by fulfilling it and simultaneously initiated the New (see Heb. 9).

Now let's dig into Scripture and find out what it says about the purpose for the Old Covenant (law).

### **The Purpose for the Law**

Galatians 3:19 shows us its purpose: "What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator."

The law was given because of transgression but it could not redeem people from it or give life. Life can only come through Christ. According to Galatians 3:21-29, it "tutored" people in preparation for Christ. When faith in Christ has come, it is no longer needed. This is what the law of Moses accomplished:

- † Proved the guilt of the whole world; that all people deserve the wrath [determined punishment] of God (Ro. 3:19; 4:15).
- † Provided us with the knowledge of sin (Ro. 3:20 & 7:7)
- † Strengthened and increased sin through the knowledge of it because of our sinful flesh or rebellious and lawless nature (Ro. 5:20, 7:5, & 8:3; 1 Cor. 15:56).

After these things have been accomplished, true faith in Christ can then arise within the hearts of those who hear the Gospel of the Kingdom. The "tutor's" job is over.

### **The Serpent Under the Prayer Shawl**

Someone I know had a vision in which they saw a serpent crawling out from under a prayer shawl. What does this mean?

Some of you reading this need to "fire the tutor." You owe nothing to the Old Covenant (not referring to the *Old Testament*) and the only thing you owe to the nation of Israel is the love



of Christ. There are those who seek your allegiance and loyalty to the Jewish culture as if embracing it gives you an advantage over others before God. They boast in being Jewish but not before God. I will say to you what Paul told the Church in Galatia (5:2-6): "...If you become circumcised [or embrace "Jewishness"], Christ will profit you nothing. (3) And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. (4) You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (5) For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. (6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."

Circumcision was the mark of "Jewishness" in that day. In fact, Scripture often refers to them as "the Circumcision." Today, some think that if we place a prayer shawl over our head, blow a shofar while standing under a chuppah, and recite prayers in Hebrew that it gives us a "special" anointing and makes us more appealing to God. While there is nothing wrong with using these things when directed by the Spirit of God, they do not add to us anything just because they are associated with the nation of Israel. They will profit us absolutely nothing. Remember the things that the early apostles exhorted the Gentile Church to do. They were not required to embrace anything Jewish or any ritualistic observance common to the Old Covenant. The Lord gave us two things to observe in the New Covenant: water baptism and the Lord's Supper (Mt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:20-34). These serve as physical objects or points of contact by which our faith is able to link what we see (or physically touch and experience) with the unseen Kingdom realities defined in covenant promises.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Being a Jew or Greek, slave or free person, and male or female gives us no advantage before God. Christ is not partial to any. Let Him who boasts, boast in the Lord and let all praise be to the glory of His grace (1 Cor. 1:31; Eph. 1:3-6). The only thing that Jesus is partial to is faith that works by love.

The serpent lurks behind anything that seeks to undermine our faith in Christ's finished work. We are complete in Him. The New Covenant does not consist of Jesus plus something else. We must, at all cost, keep Him in our hearts and value the costly fellowship we have with Him because of His shed blood.

So, what advantage does emphasizing and getting to know the "Jewish" Jesus over the Jesus that the Apostles preached. You mean there is a difference? Yes, Jesus was born a Jew, but He is no more a Jew now than I will be an American after the resurrection from the dead. My citizenship is in Heaven with Christ. He is now the glorified King of kings. He is Lord of all cultures and nations and is partial to none. Both Jew and Gentile believers now form

one new man in Christ (Eph. 2:11-22). That does not mean that the Gentile believers are absorbed into Jewish culture or are to embrace it in any way. Neither does it indicate that Jews lose those traits that mark them as such. That Scripture passage contains no such implication. In fact, it states that the [Old Covenant] law of commandments contained in ordinances [teachings] have been abolished in order to create one new man. Those Old Covenant things were the source of the enmity existing between the two.

Someone will respond with: "You are anti-Semitic!"

If, while being "pro" the Jesus that the early apostles preached, I *appear* to be anti-Semitic, then you indeed are anti-Christ because you have embraced a different Jesus and Gospel. Your calling me anti-Semitic would only prove that you have indeed exalted the Jewish culture and the Old Covenant to the same level as Jesus and the New Covenant.

"Jewishness" gives no one any advantage over another before God no more than being free does over a slave or being male does over a female. We cannot come before God boasting about ourselves or our ethnic, gender, and social status. Faith in Christ excludes all boasting in the flesh on any occasion and for any reason (Ro. 3:27).

"For there is *no distinction* between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him" (Ro. 10:12). This indicates that God sees no distinction between the Jew and the Gentile. He is not partial.

*Those ordinances given to Israel under the Old Covenant were shadows of the Heavenly things and foreshadowed Christ and His coming Kingdom. They were not Jewish as if they originated from or were common to their culture. They originated from Heaven.*

Thank God for the things in Jewish culture that reflect God's heavenly design. We must recognize this and give honor to whom honor is due. We must do this realizing they came *through Israel from God*. For instance, Jesus said: "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn 14:2-3). This design that originated with God is reflected in old Jewish culture in the betrothal and marriage process. A Jewish man, after betrothing himself to a virgin, will tell her something similar to what Jesus stated above. *Yes, we can learn from such things as long as we remember that such things existed in God before creation.*

Emphasizing the "Jewish" Jesus can be a sneaky way of exalting "Jewishness" to the same level of Jesus or as being as important as faith in Him. This is not true in every case in

which the “Jewish Jesus” is emphasized. This is where the serpent does his stealthy work because he knows that:

*Anything we exalt to the level of Christ or of faith in Him takes the place of Him.*

This will, as the result, estrange us from Christ and cause us to fall from grace as Paul warned the Church in Galatia (5:1-4). The devil knows that to embrace and practice anything under the Old Covenant brings us under the entire law and, therefore, under its condemnation (Gal. 5:3). We then forfeit faith in Christ as our sure means of righteousness and embrace a self-righteousness that comes through the self-willed observance of the law. God has already made it clear that no one can be made righteous before Him in that way (Ro. 3-4).

*If we approach God with our works, our wages will be considered by God to be a payment toward a sin debt that we can never pay (Ro. 4:4). Those who approach God with faith in the Christ who paid their sin debt will receive the reward of the righteous—eternal life.*

### **The Jewish Roots Movement**

There are teachings and books existing today which emphasize that the western Church needs to get back to its Jewish roots and that the next great move of God will entail this happening. Well, I have already traced our Jewish roots all the way back to their origin and this is what I found:

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn. 1:1-2, 14).

There are false teachers today who will attempt to make you feel excluded, short-changed, or left out even as the serpent beguiled Eve (Gal. 4:17; 2 Cor. 11:1-4). They would have you be as they are as if being Jewish, or embracing certain knowledge, or observing certain things of the Old Covenant makes you a better Christian. They are liars and deserve condemnation for preaching another Jesus. Let them be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9).

“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. (9) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; (10) and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:8-10).

If you embrace their teachings, you will surely be cheated out of your Kingdom inheritance.

*YOU must be entirely convinced by New Testament Scripture that Jesus has already made you complete or you will be deceived in these last days! You only owe Him your loyalty—the One who died for you.*

This is what the authority of Scripture says about Old Covenant observances and the law. Paul stated, in Galatians 4:9-21, that the keeping of days, months, seasons, and years is going back under the Old Covenant law. He defines such things as weak and beggarly elements. They are indeed just that compared to the One who is full of grace and truth.

*Yes, we can and should learn about God's ways, His Kingdom, and His wisdom from the Old Testament and even from Jewish culture but none of us are required to become as the Jews.*

Even as He who builds the house is greater than the house, so is Jesus and the New Covenant better than all that came through Moses (Heb. 3: 1-6). The New Testament Scriptures, although based on the Old, fulfill, supersede, and have greater authority than it.

So, should anyone stand condemned as being anti-Semitic because they take Jesus' and the early apostles' words over all that is written in the Old Covenant or above the modern exaggerated role that Jewish heritage and the law of Moses should have in the Church?

God will save the nation of Israel as clearly revealed in Romans 11:26-27. Our attitude toward them should be the same as Paul's: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (Ro. 10:1). "Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers" (Ro. 11:28). God used their disobedience as an opportunity to show mercy to all nations but they will be brought back into salvation. Through the mercy He has shown to all nations, the nation of Israel will again receive mercy (Ro. 11:29-32).

Whether you are Jew or Gentile, the only hope you have is in the mercy of God. God has shown mercy to the Gentile nations because of the nation of Israel's disobedience. He will show mercy to Israel again because of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

What advantage does being a Jew have over being a Gentile? Originally, it was an advantage much in every way. To them were first given the oracles (direct declarations) of God (Ro. 3:1-2). Through them, came our Lord, the rod out of the stem of Jesse, who will sit as the promised heir on the throne of David and rule all nations with a rod of iron. He became the Lion of the tribe of Judah to secure God's redemptive purposes for *all* people, tongues, tribes, and nations. Ancestry is used by God to fulfill His purposes and can never be used as an occasion by anyone to boast before the Lord as if it entitles someone to the blessings of God. We should only boast in His great mercy and wisdom that has provided grace to all of creation through it. Both Jesus and John the Baptist called those Jews who

put their faith in their Abrahamic lineage the offspring of vipers. Ignoring these types of warnings has dire consequences as they did with Israel.

The time will come when God's beloved nation of Israel will be grafted back into Christ their vine so that the "one new man" will be complete. Their re-acceptance by God, as they embrace Jesus their Messiah, will finish the end of this age.

The conclusion of this can be summed up in an observation made by daughter, Grace, after reading the first two parts of this series: In the Old Covenant, the people were separated (made pure, holy) by what they did. In the New Covenant, we are separated unto God by observing Christ.

Now, we are ready to search out *The Wonders of God's Grace* (Part 2).

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