

TRUTH

“... *Your word is truth*” (John 17:17)

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THE SON OF GOD

The name Jesus was actually quite common in the first century. In fact, we read in the Bible in a couple of different places where the name Jesus is used to tell us about a particular person (Matthew 27:17; Colossians 4:11). However, when we hear the name Jesus, we most often think of just one person. If you heard someone say aloud the name “Jesus,” we commonly think of Jesus of Nazareth, also called Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.

As we examine this title “Son of God.” we must realize that this particular phrase is used in a few different ways in the Scriptures. One example is when Paul says, “*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:26). He is not describing Jesus the Christ, but all people who believe in Christ and are baptized into Him (3:27). We can be called a son of God if we are obedient to God and put on Christ in baptism. However, we are not, and never will be, the one, true Son of God.

As we consider Jesus as the Son of God, let us first, notice that **God declared** Jesus as His Son. Matthew records two different occasions when God declares this to be true. When Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptized, as Jesus came up from the water, “*And suddenly a voice came from heaven saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’*” (Matthew 3:17). Later, Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John on a high mountain. Moses and Elijah appear with Jesus and are talking with Him. Again, God’s voice from heaven comes down saying, “*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear him!*” (Matthew 17:5).

Notice also that while on this earth, **Jesus of Nazareth claimed** to be the Son of God. In John 5:18, the Jews are upset and want to kill Jesus because of His claims that He was the Son of God. They recognize that this claim makes Him equal with God, and no man can claim that. However, we are not talking about just any man.

While on this earth, **Jesus of Nazareth** did not just claim to be the Son of God, but He also **proved** He was the Son of God. He showed this by His power over nature (Mark 4:35-41), sickness (Matthew 8:1-4), and even death (John 11:38-44). He performed these

miracles and signs to show that He was the Son of God. And He also told this plainly to the Jews, “*The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me*” (John 10:25).

While He was on this earth, after interacting with Jesus, **human beings proclaimed** that He was the Son of God. His words and actions were so powerful and true that it caused people who witnessed these things to come to no other explanation. Once, when Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was, Peter stated clearly, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). And even at His death, as many people witnessed the events after His last cry, a centurion and others, “... *feared greatly, saying, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’*” (Matthew 27:54).

Now in heaven, **Jesus is exalted** as the Son of God, sitting at the right hand of God (1 Peter 3:22). Though His enemies here on earth did their best to humiliate and disgrace Him, as Paul declares, “... *God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name*” (Philippians 2:9). He is exalted by the power of His resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:32,33).

This man was not just any son, but truly the Son of God. When we take in these facts from the Scriptures, we simply cannot believe that Jesus was just a good person who did some good works. He was a real person who lived on earth, but He was also the Son of God who bore witness of the Father.

Sometimes a preacher may use the question “What will you do with Jesus?” as a motivating question to encourage the listeners to follow Him and be obedient to His word. John writes that this is the exact reason that he wrote down so much of what Jesus of Nazareth did on this earth. John says he was not able to write down everything, “... *but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name*” (John 20:31). As we stated a moment ago, people in the first century were so moved by His claims, His words, and His actions that they were willing to believe and proclaim that Jesus was the Son of God. Will you?

-- Joel Danley

TAKEAWAYS FROM EXODUS 20

This chapter begins with the words, “*And God spoke all these words, saying: ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage’*” (Exodus 20:1,2). That message was spoken at Mount Sinai (19:1,2), and it was addressed to those whom the Lord had recently delivered from slavery in Egypt — the Israelites.

What follows are: (1) the Ten Commandments (20:3-17), (2) Israel’s response to hearing Jehovah’s voice (20:18-21), and (3) His instructions about an altar on which to make sacrifices to Him (20:22-26).

The Ten Commandments constitute some of the most well-known teachings in the entire Bible. The term “Ten Commandments” is actually used in the Scriptures (Exodus 34:28). They later were *written* down (32:15; 34:28), but initially the Lord *spoke* them to Israel (20:1-17).

According to the Israelites’ own counting, there were more than six hundred different instructions contained in the law of Moses. That means the Ten Commandments, as significant as they were to Israel, comprised only ten out of six hundred plus commands. In reality, they were a small portion of the old law . . . less than two per cent of it.

The Ten Commandments involved instructions about serving the God of heaven and how to treat other humans. The first four of the commands dealt with the Israelites’ responsibilities to God: (1) have no other gods before Him (20:3), (2) do not make carved images/idols (20:4), (3) do not take the Lord’s name in vain (20:7), and (4) remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (20:8-11).

The final six of the Ten Commands involved instructions about how to deal with other people: (5) honor parents (20:12), (6) do not murder (20:13), (7) do not commit adultery (20:14), (8) do not steal (20:15), (9) do not bear false witness (20:16), (10) do not covet what belongs to someone else (20:17).

Out of the Ten Commandments, the same message or a similar principle from nine of them is a part of Jesus’ new covenant teaching. While Jesus’ gospel never directly states that we should not take God’s name in vain, the Master did make it clear that we are to speak with reverence when we address God or talk to others about Him (Matthew 6:9).

The single command of the ten which is neither stated expressly nor implied in the new covenant is the charge to observe the Sabbath by refraining from work on the seventh day/Saturday. The Sabbath law was a sign between the Lord and the nation of Israel (Exodus 31:16,17), and the penalty for an Israelite who labored on the Sabbath was death (35:2). No

aspect of the Sabbath law applies to Christians.

In comparison to the precepts of the Ten Commandments, in some cases the teaching of the new covenant raises the standard/level of the conduct and mentality that God requires. For example, physical adultery was condemned under the old law (Exodus 20:14), as it is under the new one, too (1 Corinthians 6,9,10). Jesus also said that lusting after a woman is adultery in the heart (Matthew 5:27,28).

Murder was condemned under the old law, as it also is under the new (Galatians 5:21). But the new covenant raises the bar, so to speak, stating that one who hates his brother is a murderer (1 John 3:15). So, while the Ten Commandments condemned some outward actions, the teaching of Jesus goes directly to the center of such sinful issues, which is the heart.

Many people living today are convinced that all they need to know and all they need to do to please the Lord is found in the Ten Commandments. They think if they keep the Ten Commandments, they will be saved and go to heaven.

The following observations are not a criticism of the Ten Commandments, but they do remind us of some clear truths. What do the Ten Commandments say about Jesus? Nothing! What do the Ten Commandments say about how to receive the forgiveness of sins? Nothing! What do the Ten Commandments say about how God wants Christians to worship Him? Nothing! If I need to know about Jesus, know about how to be forgiven by God, and how about how to worship Him, but none of these topics (and myriad others) are not addressed in the Ten Commandments, then it is obvious that I am deceiving myself if I think I can focus on only those ten instructions. Remember: Jesus took away and abolished the old law, including the Ten Commandments (Hebrews 10:9; Ephesians 2:14-16).

After the Israelites heard Jehovah speak forth the Ten Commandments and observed “*the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking,*” they were terrified (Exodus 20:18). Their appeal was for any further messages from God to be spoken to them by Moses and not by the Lord Himself (20:19). Moses told them that God’s speaking to Israel was a test for them, He wanted them to fear Him, and wanted such fear to prevent them from sinning (20:20).

The Law of Moses, including the Ten Commands, was given to provide Israel with knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20). The whole law was given to bring/lead the Israelites to the Christ (Galatians 3:23,24).

-- Roger D. Campbell

Overcoming Covetousness

Scripturally speaking, there is nothing wrong with *possessing* money, nothing wrong with working to *make more* money, and nothing wrong with trying to *save* money for the future. Yet, Jesus did warn, “*Take heed and beware of covetousness*” (Luke 12:15).

The Greek word translated as “covetousness” means “greedy desire for more” [Thayer, word no. 4124 via e-Sword]. Some folks are obsessed with making money/accumulating material things. A covetous person is one who is greedy for more, more, more, and never seems to be satisfied with how much he has. Yes, Christians can fall into such a trap.

The Bible says that covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). The Scriptures further affirm that “*the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*” (1 Timothy 6:10). Covetousness is not a matter of *how much* money one longs to have, but rather is the disposition of heart which says, “I just have to have more” in order to be content.

In order to obtain money, some people will lie, betray a friend, prostitute their body, marry someone whom they do not love, commit a crime, or choose work over worship. If you have shown covetous tendencies in the past, do not write yourself off as a hopeless cause. Some members of God’s family in Corinth overcame covetousness and walked with the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). So can you. Perhaps these thoughts can help us deal with covetousness:

Learn to be content (Philippians 4:11). A content person is not covetous; and a covetous person is not content.

Learn and accept the distinction between what we *need* (Philippians 4:19) and what we *want*.

Learn to set your mind/affections on things above instead of earthly things (Colossians 3:2).

Embrace the reality that a person’s character and spiritual standing with God have nothing to do with his financial status (Luke 12:15).

Get feedback from faithful saints about what they see in your life, your attitude, and your choices. Do you come across to others as content, or covetous?

Remember that covetousness has earthly consequences (Matthew 7:16; 1 Corinthians 5:11) and eternal ones, too (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).

Focus on being rich in a spiritual sense. Be “*rich toward God*” (Luke 12:21), “*rich in faith*” (James 2:5), and “*rich in good works*” (1 Timothy 6:18).

Worldly people shrug their shoulders at the idea of being covetous, but God does not. Neither should we.

-- Roger D. Campbell

Are Christians under grace or under law?

Today all people in all places live under the new covenant of Jesus. In the message of this covenant, we read about grace and law. “Grace” means good will, lovingkindness, or favor. “Law” means rule of action.

Some Bible believers are convinced that if we are under grace, then we are not under law; and, if we are under law, then we are not under grace. In their eyes, grace and law are mutually exclusive. That is, you cannot live under both at the same time. Is it true?

Both law and grace were available to humanity in the days of Noah. Noah “*found grace*” in God’s sight, and he obeyed what God commanded him (Genesis 6:8,22). Yes, there was law for Noah to follow.

Under the Law of Moses, Jehovah described Himself as “*merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth*” (Exodus 34:6). God was manifesting His gracious nature (His grace), but the Israelites were also under law (Galatians 3:19,24).

In the same manner, Christians, as we live under the new covenant, are the recipients of both grace and law. We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8). We are justified, that is, made righteous, by grace (Romans 3:24). God’s gospel is a message of grace, and it is called “*the word of His grace*” (Acts 20:32). God’s children come before His throne of grace to receive mercy and “*find grace to help in time of need*” (Hebrews 4:16). There is no denying that we live under the Lord’s grace and are blessed greatly by it.

When it comes to law, the Bible says that “*where there is no law there is no transgression*” (Romans 4:15). If a law does not exist, you and I cannot violate it. According to 1 John 1:8, Christians do commit sin. Sin is described as lawlessness/transgression of God’s law (1 John 3:4). So, when we sin, what are we doing? We are violating something . . . God’s law. If one claims that Christians are not under any law of any type, that means we could never sin. In reality, we do sin (1 John 1:8). Therefore, we are under law.

Are there any Bible statements which directly refer to Christians living under law? God’s Spirit guided Paul to write that members of God’s church are “*under law toward Christ*” (1 Corinthians 9:21). That same apostle was led to tell churches in Galatia, “*Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*” (Galatians 6:2). Read it again: “*the law of Christ.*” Yes, Jesus gives grace, but He also has a law. That law is “*the perfect law of liberty*” (James 1:25).

God’s grace provides law, and His law/instructions to mankind exalt His grace. We do not choose between grace and law: we are under both.

-- Roger D. Campbell

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

Matthew 25 is an entire chapter dealing with the final judgment. In this chapter, Jesus gives two parables: the Parable of the Ten Virgins (1-13) and the Parable of the Talents (14-30); Jesus then gives a depiction of the judgment scene (31-46). Three scenes are portrayed in Matthew 25: (1) the need for preparation, (2) the need for faithful stewardship, and (3) the need for compassion. Our study in this article pertains to the second scene (and second parable) in the chapter: the need for faithful stewardship and responsibility among God's people, as depicted in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30).

To summarize this parable, Jesus describes a man going on a journey who, before leaving, delivered "talents" (or money) to his servants, according to their individual abilities. One servant received five talents, another two, and the third received one talent. When the master returned, he called upon the servants to account for that which was entrusted to them. The servants who had received five talents and two talents had used them in trading and doubled what they originally had been given. The master blessed these two servants and promised to make them "ruler over many things" (Matthew 25:21, 23). The servant who had received one talent, however, had not used his talent; instead, he hid it in the ground. This servant was rebuked sharply for having done nothing with his master's talent, and his master called him "wicked and lazy" (Matthew 25:26), as well as "unprofitable" (Matthew 25:30). This unfaithful servant had his talent taken from him, and it was given to the five-talent servant (who then had ten talents).

To analyze this parable, consider Jesus' statement in Matthew 25:29 – "For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away." In other words, the parable teaches that Jesus' disciples will be judged according to their abilities and opportunities. There is an old—and very true—saying that says, "Ability plus opportunity equals responsibility." Each servant in the parable was entrusted according to his ability. Each servant also had opportunities to use his talent(s) faithfully. Those who did so were commended, while the one who did not was condemned. As the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) depicts the need to be prepared for judgment, the Parable of the Talents teaches us the necessity of working faithfully and being faithful stewards as we await our Master's return.

To sermonize this parable, consider the particulars of the parable and some lessons to be learned. First, note a few particular aspects of the parable:

- The man traveling represents Jesus.
- The servants represent Jesus' disciples.
- The return of the man/lord represents Jesus' second coming.
- The settling of accounts represents the judgment.
- The blessing of the faithful servants represents faithful Christians' reward at the judgment.
- The condemnation of the unfaithful servant represents punishment of unfaithful disciple at the judgment.

While the above list does not include every single particular, it is adequate to see the point Jesus was making. Having seen these particulars, what are some lessons from the Parable of the Talents for us today?

- The Lord has a claim on man's time and labor. All we have is His, and we are merely stewards entrusted with these things for a time.
- Jesus has left His disciples work to do until He comes again. Each Christian's responsibility is to be active in the Lord's kingdom.
- A day of reckoning is coming. Some servants feel no need to work when the Master is away, but the time is coming when an account must be given.
- We all have different abilities. The master gave to each servant "according to his own ability." The two-talent and five-talent servants used what they had. The one-talent servant's wrong was not having only one talent; it was his failure to use it.
- If we use our abilities, they will grow and multiply; if we do not, we will lose them.
- A failure to be active and faithful as the Lord's servant is to render oneself an "unprofitable servant." What did the one-talent man do wrong? Nothing! Rather, it was his failure to be active and faithful with what was entrusted to his care.

The central lesson of the Parable of the Talents is active, faithful stewardship of that with which an individual has been entrusted. "It is required in stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). Whether entrusted with little or much, let us never bury or hide our talents but use them in service to King Jesus. In other words, as the title of the old hymn says, "We'll Work Till Jesus Comes" (Elizabeth Mills, 1836). Those who do so assuredly will one day hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:23).

-- Chad Dollahite

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