

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Deuteronomy: Moses' Great Appeal For Israel To Obey God For Blessing

Part VI: Treaty Blessings And Curses, Deuteronomy 27-28

A. Heeding God's Typologically Predicted Salvation In Jesus Christ

(Deuteronomy 27:1-13)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many critics claim that New Testament Christianity is not connected to the beliefs and the God of the Hebrew Old Testament, that the Christian faith was formed from elements present in the world in the era of the early Church:

(1) Josh McDowell, A Ready Defense, 1990, p. 162 observed: "One major argument against the historicity of the Jesus of the New Testament has been the similarity of mythological elements found in pagan religions during the same time the early Church was active." These mystery religions "flourished in the Hellenistic [Greek] world several centuries before and after the time of Christ," Zon. Pict. Ency. of the Bible, vol. Four, p. 330; brackets ours.

(2) Talk show host Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard, in their recent book, Killing Jesus: A History, claim: "Jesus was executed. But the incredible story behind the lethal struggle between good and evil has not been fully told. Until now. At least, that is the goal of this book," Ibid., p. 4 as cited in Tim Chaffey, AiG-U.S., "Killing Jesus: A History by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard, answersingenesi.org, Nov. 20, 2013. They add: "We do not address Jesus as the Messiah, only as a man who galvanized a remote area of the Roman Empire and made very powerful enemies while preaching a philosophy of peace and love," Ibid., O'Reilly and Dugard, p. 2 as cited in Chaffey, Ibid.

(3) Another charge critics have ardently made is: "The Old Testament allegedly presents only a God of wrath, while the New Testament allegedly depicts only a God of love" (Ibid., p. 407), that the Bible is thus not God inspired!

(4) Then, in striking contrast to Christianity, Judaism, laying claim to the Hebrew Old Testament, has "(n)o concept of substitutionary atonement (as in Christianity in the person of Jesus Christ)," Ibid., McDowell, p. 301. In Judaism, "(a)tonement is accomplished by sacrifices, penitence, good deeds and a little of God's grace" (Ibid.), that salvation in Judaism is mainly by works where salvation in Bible Christianity is by grace through faith alone in Jesus.

Need: So, we ask, "**IS Christianity NOT connected to the faith of the Old Testament so that the Christian faith and its New Testament beliefs are fallible inventions by men living in the early Church era?! HOW do we KNOW?!**"

- I. The Deuteronomy suzerain treaty between God and Israel contains the typical treaty format blessings and curses section in Deuteronomy 27-28 (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 260), but its Hebrew Old Testament Deuteronomy 27:1-13 ritual **REMARKABLY CONTRADICTS** the **THEOLOGY** of **JUDAISM:****
- A. Deuteronomy 27:1-13 directed 6 of Israel's tribes to stand on Mount Gerizim and the other 6 on Mount Ebal with the city of Shechem below, which setting formed "a natural amphitheatre," Guthrie and Motyer, The New Bible Com.: Rev., 1970, p. 224. This was also near the oak of Moreh where God first told Abraham this was the land He was giving him, and Abraham in response had there built his first altar unto the Lord, Ibid., p. 309; Gen. 12:1-3, 4-7. This spot for this ritual "emphasized God's faithfulness to the original Abrahamic promises and hinted that the time for their complete fulfillment might be near if only Israel would obey Him," Ibid.
- B. Of note, that Genesis 12:1-3 Abrahamic Covenant promised Abraham **multiple BLESSINGS** -- God's making of him a great nation, God's blessing him in his life and reputation, God's making him a blessing and blessing those who blessed him and cursing those who cursed him and in him blessing all the families on the earth!
- C. Likewise, in the Deuteronomy 27:1-13 ritual, the tribes that would stand on Mount Gerizim south of Shechem and near the oak of Moreh would repeat the **blessings** Israel would have for **obeying** God, Deut. 27:12.
- D. Yet, **this ritual CONFLICTS** with Judaism's idea that Israel would enjoy God's salvation chiefly by works!
1. The ritual included setting up lime-plastered stones and writing the Law on them on **Mount EBAL** that signified **curses** for **disobeying God**, Deut. 27:1-4, 8, 13; Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Deut. 27:2, 8.
 2. An altar of uncut stones was also to be built on **Mount Ebal**, the mount of **curses**, Deut. 27:5; Jos. 8:30-31.
 3. Offerings were to be made on that altar with Israel **rejoicing** on that **Mount** of **curses**, Deut. 27:6-7!
 4. Remarkably then, though Mount **Ebal**, the mount of **curses**, had the stones written with the Law, the altar, the altar's offerings and rejoicing, Mount Gerizim, the Mount of **blessings**, had **no such items or rejoicing!**
 5. Thus, if this location had been chosen for Israel to **focus** on **heeding God** so He might give her the **blessings** of the **Abrahamic Covenant**, Judaism is at a **loss** to explain **WHY** the **ritual's FOCUS** is on the Mount of **CURSES**, **NOT** on the Mount of **BLESSINGS**, and **WHY** Israel was to **REJOICE** on the **MOUNT** of **CURSES INSTEAD OF** doing so on the **MOUNT** of **BLESSINGS FOR OBEYING GOD!**

- II. However, NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIAN theology *typologically FULLY EXPLAINS* this ritual:**
- A. Just as the large stones with the Law stood on the Mount of *curses*, Galatians 3:19 with Romans 3:23 in the New Testament teach that the Law could only condemn all men as cursed sinners before a righteous God.
 - B. Just as the altar of sacrifice stood on the Mount of *curses*, New Testament Galatians 3:10, 13 and 1 John 2:1-2 in light of Deuteronomy 21:23 teach that Jesus Christ substitutionally became a curse in sinful, condemned mankind's place as He hung on the cross dying for the sins of the whole world!
 - C. Just as the altar of sacrifice on the Mount of *curses* was to be built of stones not cut by human tools and thus human effort lest it pollute them (Deut. 27:5-6 with Ex. 20:25), so salvation in Christ is God's gift by grace through faith apart from sinfully polluting human merit or works as taught in New Testament Ephesians 2:8-9.
 - D. Just as the altar on the Mount of *curses* was to host burnt offerings and peace offerings followed by Israel's rejoicing *there* before the Lord her God, by faith in Christ, the sacrificial Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world via His atonement on the Cross of Calvary, one is saved and has peace with God and rejoices in the salvation and forgiveness through Jesus Christ as taught in New Testament John 1:29 and Romans 5:1-2.
 - E. Just as there were no ritual articles on Mount Gerizim, the Mount of blessings, but all of them were on Mount Ebal, the mount of curses, so New Testament Romans 3:19-20, 23 and John 3:16 claim the Law only convicts all men of sin and that God then graciously reached out to sinful, helplessly lost man where he is to save him.
 - F. Just as Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal also highlight the Abrahamic Covenant, Christ's atonement makes possible the fulfillment of that ancient covenant, that men worldwide through faith in Christ will receive the blessing of Abraham, the Holy Spirit, as is taught in New Testament Galatians 3:13-14 [with Genesis 12:3b].
 - G. Finally, when those who believe in Christ rely on that indwelling Holy Spirit, they can live lives obedient to God in fulfilling the righteous demands of God for a holy life unlike Israel or any sinful man could not do in his own effort as typified in the Deuteronomy 27:1-13 ritual and is taught in New Testament Romans 8:3-4!
- III. The Deuteronomy treaty is in the second millennium B. C. zuzerain treaty format (Ibid., B. K. C., O. T., p. 260), and Israel's Exodus led by Moses occurred in 1446 B. C. according to the Biblical record and archaeological evidences (Ibid., p. 104, citing Bruce K. Waltke, "Palestinian Artifactual Evidence Supporting The Early Date of the Exodus," Bib. Sac., 129. Jan.-Mar., 1972:47), so the Deuteronomy 27:1-13 ritual shows the Christian faith was SET in the mind of the Old Testament God *over a thousand years before any mystery religion of the early Church era could possibly influence Christianity's formation!***

Lesson: (1) *The God of the New Testament is the God of the Hebrew Old Testament, and the whole Bible is God's inspired Word.* (2) *That God of the Bible calls ALL men to HEED the typological instruction of Deuteronomy 27:1-13 and be saved by grace through faith alone in Christ. Then,* (3) *He calls believers to rejoice in their salvation and live righteous lives by relying on the Holy Spirit in application of His ancient Abrahamic Covenant!*

Application: (1) *May we believe the Old and New Testaments are God's inspired Word.* (2) *May we thus believe in Christ to be saved (John 3:16) and thus rejoice in our salvation by grace through faith as we also live righteously by relying on the indwelling Holy Spirit in fulfillment of God's ancient covenant to father Abraham!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

The charge that Christianity was formed from pagan mystery cults has been shown to err: scholars have since indicated "the growth of the church was so explosive that other religions adopted Christian elements in order to attract Christians and to prevent the loss of their adherents to Christianity," Ibid., McDowell, p. 170. McDowell cites now Professor of New Testament Emeritus, Princeton Theological Seminary, Bruce M. Metzger, "Mystery Religions and Early Christianity," Historical and Literary Studies, 1968, p. 11: "In what T. R. Glover aptly called the 'conflict of religions in the Early Roman Empire,' it was to be expected that the hierophants of cults which were beginning to lose devotees to the growing Church should take steps to stem the tide."

(2) Also, the doctrine of salvation by faith alone in the Messiah is taught not only typologically in Old Testament passages like Deuteronomy 27:1-13, but Old Testament Isaiah 53:6, 9-11 openly states it: Isaiah 53:6 claims all have sinned, so God laid man's sin on God's Servant, the Messiah! Isaiah 53:9-11 ESV, NIV predicts Christ would die as a sin offering, be buried and have His days prolonged [in resurrection] and that by the knowledge of him [faith in Him] one would be justified [pronounced righteous] by God. (E. J. Young, Isaiah, 1974, v. III, p. 357)

May we hold to Biblical Christianity as the faith given to man by the God of the Hebrew Old Testament so that the entire Bible is God's inspired Word. Then, may we trust in Christ for salvation and live in praise of God's grace, and also live righteously by the Holy Spirit's power in application of the Abrahamic Covenant!