

RIGHTEOUSNESS VERSUS LAWLESSNESS: -

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NOTE: - All Bible texts are taken from the King James Version; and the compiler has supplied all emphasis throughout this Study Document.

☞ As we examine the New Testament Scriptures, we shall find that the concepts of Righteousness and Lawlessness are **total opposite** and **opposing** concepts. The first one is something Jesus loves; while the second one he hates. The first one is something that we are unable to perform before we experience justification by faith; while after we have been justified by faith, we have been set free from serving the second one, so that we can be servants of righteousness. Let us turn our attention now to examine this important subject as it is found in the Scriptures.

- In our King James Version, in the New Testament Scriptures, one word that is consistently translated as “Iniquity”, has been translated from the Greek word “anomia” – See Strong’s Concordance; Greek, No. 458. This Greek word is defined as “lawlessness”¹. The translation “lawlessness” is a more accurate rendering according to the Greek text, and it also gives us a more meaningful understanding in our minds than the word “iniquity”. This is because the word “lawlessness” is obviously something that is related to the word “LAW”. And in the context of the Scriptures, it must be related to God’s Law.
- The English dictionary has defined “Lawlessness” as follows: -
“1. Without law; ignorant of, or not regulated by law. ... 2. Regardless of, or disobedient to law.”²

Let us now turn our attention to consider what the Scriptures teach concerning this important subject. And as we do so, we shall find that this is a very easy subject to understand, now we know what the word “Lawlessness” means.

- In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, he clearly identified two groups of people who call him “Lord” at the Day of Final Reckoning. Those who will be able to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven will be those who have done the will of their Heavenly Father. While the other group, “the many” who call upon Jesus as “Lord”, and who claim to have performed wonderful miracles and works in the name of Jesus, will **NOT** be able to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. In fact, Jesus states that he has **NEVER** known them – he **NEVER** has recognized them as his followers at any time. And **why** are they denied entry into the Kingdom of Heaven? Because they have been workers of Lawlessness.
Matthew 7:21 - 23: - “Not every one that saith unto me, **Lord, Lord**, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven**. Many will say to me in that day, **Lord, Lord**, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? **And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity** (“lawlessness” - “anomia”).”

¹ A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, by W. Bauer, Translated and revised by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker; pages 71 & 72. From now on, the following initials shall refer to this Lexicon: - “BAGD.”

² The Oxford Universal Dictionary Illustrated, Volume 1, page 1115; 1970 Edition.

Jesus has stated in the book of Revelation that those who do His Father's Commandments will be able to enter into the New Jerusalem through its gates. This obedience to the Father's Commandments must be the doing of the Father's will Jesus referred to in Matthew 7:21.

Revelation 22:12 - 14: - "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward [is] with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. **Blessed [are] they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.**"

NOTE: - A careful reading of this entire passage reveals that there is no change of speaker throughout. Jesus is the One who is speaking to John all the words found within this passage. Therefore, the expression "his commandments" can only be referring to his Father's Commandments; other wise, Jesus would have said "my commandments".

We must remember that Jesus himself when he lived upon earth was obedient to his Father's will, as he himself kept his Father's Commandments.

John 4:34: - "Jesus saith unto them, **My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.**"

John 6:38: - "**For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.**"

John 15:10: - "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; **even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.**"

The difference between these two groups of professed followers of Jesus is found in their attitudes and obedience to the Law of God. While one group is obedient to the Father's Law, the other is Lawless – they are disobedient to the Father's Law, while professing to worship Jesus as "Lord". Of course, Jesus himself taught that all such so-called worship of him is in vain.

Matthew 15:1 - 9: - "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, **Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to [his] father or [his] mother, [It is] a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, [he shall be free]. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. [Ye] hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with [their] lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the commandments of men.**"

Both groups of professed Christians in Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount are calling him "Lord". And yet the majority of those who are doing this will **NOT** be saved. The Scriptures teach that those who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Romans 10:12 & 13: - "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: **for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**"

☞ The solemn truth that we can draw from this passage from Jesus' is the fact that if we call upon Jesus as "Lord", while we are Lawless – disobedient to his Father's Law, our profession of Christ will **NOT** save us!

- In Jesus' parable of the Wheat and the Tares, both types of plants represent those who profess Christ – those who profess to be in Christ's kingdom. The **Tares** are those who commit Lawlessness; they are the children of the Wicked One – the devil. While the **Wheat** are the righteous; they are the children of the Kingdom.

Matthew 13:40 - 43: - "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. **The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity** ("lawlessness" - "anomia"); And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. **Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.** Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Matthew 13:38: - "The field is the world; **the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked [one].**"

We must remember that the apostle John has taught us that the person who commits sin is of the devil, because the devil was the first sinner in the very beginning. This group of people would represent the Tares in Jesus' parable.

1 John 3:8: - "**He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.** For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

This truth is further reinforced by the fact that John has defined "SIN" as being "LAWLESSNESS" a few verses earlier within the same Chapter of this epistle.

1 John 3:4: - "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: **for sin is the transgression of the law** ("lawlessness" – "anomia")."

As Jesus has identified the Wheat as being the Righteous who will enter into the Kingdom of their Heavenly Father, the Scriptures have defined a righteous person as someone who **does** righteousness.

1 John 3:7: - "Little children, let no man deceive you: **he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.**"

And the Psalmist has defined all of God's Commandments as righteousness.

Psalms 119:172: - "My tongue shall speak of thy word: **for all thy commandments [are] righteousness.**"

The Scriptures define a righteous person as some one who has God's Law within their heart.

Psalms 37:30 & 31: - "The mouth of **the righteous** speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. **The law of his God [is] in his heart;** none of his steps shall slide."

Isaiah 51:7: - "Hearken unto me, **ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart [is] my law;** fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings."

In fact, we find in the New Testament that Luke identifies the parents of John the Baptist as being righteous before God. They were both blameless Commandment-keepers.

Luke 1:5 & 6: - "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named **Zacharias**, of the course of Abia: and his wife [was] of the daughters of Aaron, and her name [was] **Elisabeth.** **And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.**"

☞ The solemn truth that we can draw from this parable of Jesus' is the fact that if we profess to be children of the Kingdom of God, while we are Lawless – disobedient to his Father's Law, our profession of Christ will **NOT** save us!

- Jesus pronounced a Woe upon the Scribes and Pharisees, because they outwardly appeared to be righteous unto men, but within their hearts they were full of hypocrisy and Lawlessness.
Matthew 23:27 & 28: - **“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!** for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead [men's] bones, and of all uncleanness. **Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity** (“lawlessness” - “anomia”).”

Let us never forget that Jesus plainly stated in his Sermon on the Mount that unless our righteousness exceeded that of the Scribes and Pharisees, it would be impossible for us to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 5:20: - “For I say unto you, **That except your righteousness shall exceed [the righteousness] of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.**”

☞ An outward profession of righteousness, while at heart we are Lawless, will NOT save us. In fact, what we are consistently finding within this study is that being a worker of Lawlessness no matter what our profession is will **NOT** permit us to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!

- At the end of this world, Lawlessness shall be flourishing, which shall cause many of the professed followers of Christ to grow cold in their love for their Lord.
Matthew 24:12: - **“And because iniquity** (“lawlessness” - “anomia”) **shall abound**, the love of many shall wax cold.”

The prophet Isaiah paints a similar picture of the world just before the Lord intervenes to destroy the wicked inhabitants of this world, and before he desolates the earth. The people of the world have transgressed the Laws of God. In other words they are Lawless.

Isaiah 24:1, 3 & 5: - “Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. ... The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the LORD hath spoken this word. ... **The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.**”

That God's Law of Ten Commandments is the Everlasting Covenant that Isaiah is referring to above is established from the following statements from the Scriptures.

Deuteronomy 4:13: - **“And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, [even] ten commandments;** and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.”

Psalms 111:7 - 9: - “The works of his hands [are] verity and judgment; **all his commandments [are] sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, [and are] done in truth and uprightness.** He sent redemption unto his people: **he hath commanded his covenant for ever:** holy and reverend [is] his name.”

- Before we experienced justification by faith we were the servants of uncleanness, and lawlessness unto lawlessness. At that time we could not do righteousness. But when we were justified, we were set free from

sin, and we became the servants of righteousness unto holiness. This passage shows us that Righteousness and Lawlessness are **complete opposites**.

Romans 6:18 - 20: - **“Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity (“lawlessness” – “anomia”); even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.”**

- Paul has clearly contrasted Righteousness and Lawlessness as being **opposites**.
2 Corinthians 6:14: - **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness (“lawlessness” – “anomia”)? and what communion hath light with darkness?”**
- The Son of God loves Righteousness and hates Lawlessness. Again this informs us that these are two **opposite** concepts.
Hebrews 1:8 & 9: - **“But unto the Son [he saith], Thy throne, O God, [is] for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness [is] the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity (“lawlessness” – “anomia”); therefore God, [even] thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”**
- Jesus gave himself for us to redeem or ransom us from all Lawlessness, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, who are zealous of good works.
Titus 2:13 & 14: - **“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity (“lawlessness” – “anomia”), and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”**

It should come as no surprise then, that the holy angel told Joseph to call Mary’s first-born son “JESUS” because he was to save his people **from** their sins.

Matthew 1:20 & 21: - **“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”**

Christ was sent by his Father **to turn us away** from our iniquities.

Acts 3:25 & 26: - **“Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”**

- Paul refers to the “Man of Sin” as being the “mystery of lawlessness” and “the Lawless One”.
2 Thessalonians 2:3 & 4, & 7 & 8: - **“Let no man deceive you by any means: for [that day shall not come], except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. ... For the mystery of iniquity (“lawlessness” – “anomia”) doth already work: only he who now letteth [will let], until he be taken out of the way. And then**

shall that Wicked (“the Lawless One” –ἀνομος – “anomos”) **be revealed**, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.”

NOTE: - The Greek word that is translated as “Wicked” in the KJV is the word “anomos” – See Strong’s Concordance; Greek, No. 459. It is an adjective and is defined as “Lawless ... the lawless one”³

The prophet Daniel, under the title of “the Little Horn”, also mentions this “Man of Sin” that has arisen within the Christian Church. And he predicted that it would attempt to change “times and laws”. This is a clear reference to an attempt to change the Law of God. Truly this is a Lawless power, which carries out this attack against the Law of God, under a professing Christian guise.

Daniel 7:25: - “And he shall speak [great] words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, **and think to change times and laws:** and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.”

☞ What we have seen throughout the Scriptures that are used within this study, is that our attitude and obedience to the Law of God’s Ten Commandments is vital in determining whom we truly belong to, and where we will spend eternity. Profession of Jesus as “Lord” has **NO** part to play in determining our eternal destiny. It is whether we are righteous before the Lord, walking in obedience to all of God’s Commandments, or whether we are Lawless that decides our eternal destiny. This is exactly what Jesus himself taught.

Matthew 19:16 & 17: - “And, behold, one came and said unto him, **Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? [there is] none good but one, [that is], God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.**”

³ BAGD, page 72.