

WHY ME? HELP AND HOPE FOR THE HURTING: FACTOR TWO

We Reap What We Sow – The Consequence/Chapter Five: The Example of Israel

There is no better example of the reap/sow dynamic, in all of the Word of God, than the theocratic nation of Israel. They were God's chosen people, His precious possession, but alongside that privilege came the enormous responsibility of living as a nation in accord with Divine standards. God's dealings with Israel serve as a definitive model of how "reaping what we sow" applies in everyday life. As the promised descendants of Abraham, the twelve sons of Jacob were formed into a nation under God, ratified in a covenant through Moses which would govern their obedience. It was a relatively simple arrangement, revealed in Deuteronomy 28:1-2,15 –

"Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God. . ."

"But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you. . ."

Taking into account these extremes, the choice as to what to do would seem to be a no-brainer. Unfortunately, the sad history of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant was consistently that of disobedience, resulting in punishment. Even when the adverse effect of the reap/sow dynamic was felt, the memory of the lesson learned was incredibly brief. The negative consequences of the people's disobedience rarely produced the desired result of a permanent change for the better in their behavior, as indicated by Asaph in Psalm 78:34-37 –

"When He killed them, then they sought Him, and returned and searched diligently for God; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer. But they deceived Him with their mouth and lied to Him with their tongue. For their heart was not steadfast toward Him, nor were they faithful in His covenant."

On the other hand, the Christian is not functioning under the Old Covenant, but a new and better one, provided through the person and work of Christ (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). The fundamental similarity between the two covenants consists of their comprehensive purpose in "*governing the obedience*" of their respective members. Obedience sowed on the part of the participants in either covenant, reaps a blessing, while disobedience brings chastening. The significant difference involves the contrast between the physical blessings promised under the old, and the spiritual blessings promised under the new (Ephesians 1:3; Romans 14:17). For a detailed look at this contrast, see my study on the relationship between faith and obedience.