

Lesson 159 - Obedience defined in the Old Testament

After establishing that obedience is a New Testament doctrine, we will investigate Old Testament references to complete the entire instruction from God on the subject.

1. What shall be built if we obey the voice of the Lord? **Zechariah 6:15**

EGW: The Lord gave Paul the wisdom of a skillful architect, that he might lay the foundation of the church of Christ. This figure of the erection of a temple is frequently repeated in the Scriptures, as forcibly illustrating the building up of the true Christian church. Zechariah refers to Christ as the Branch that should build the temple of the Lord. He also refers to the Gentiles as helping in this work: "And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord." {LP 154.1}

2. What type of material will be used to build this structure? **1 Peter 2:5**

EGW: "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." Mark the figure presented in verse five: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Then these lively stones are exerting a tangible, practical influence in the Lord's spiritual house. They are a holy priesthood, performing pure, sacred service. They offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God. {FE 461.2}

The Lord will not accept a heartless service, a round of ceremonies that are really Christless. His children must be lively stones in God's building. If all would give themselves unreservedly to God, if they would cease to study and plan for their amusement, for excursions, and pleasure-loving associations, and would study the words, "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," they would never hunger or thirst for excitement or change. If it is for our true interest to be spiritual and if the salvation of our people depends on our being riveted on the Eternal Rock, would we not better be engaged in seeking for that which will hold the whole building to the chief corner stone, that we may not be confused and confounded in our faith. {FE 461.3}

3. What is the foundation made from? **Ephesians 2:20**

EGW: In the quarry of the Jewish and the Gentile world the apostles labored, bringing out stones to lay upon the foundation. In his letter to the believers at Ephesus, Paul said, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2:19-22. {AA 596.1}

4. What is the chief cornerstone? **Ephesians 2:20**

EGW: Bear in mind, the time will never come when the hellish shadow of Satan will not be cast athwart our pathway to obstruct our faith and eclipse the light emanating from the presence of Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness. Our faith must not stagger, but cleave through that shadow. We have an experience that is not to be buried in the darkness of doubt. Our faith is not in feeling, but in truth. The inspired apostle speaks of our being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone. The church of Christ is represented as being built for "an habitation of God through the Spirit." If we are "rooted and grounded in love," we shall "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Oh, precious possibilities and encouragement! In the human heart cleansed from all moral impurity dwells the precious Saviour, ennobling, sanctifying the whole nature, and making the man a temple for the Holy Spirit. {TM 387.2}

5. What two things ought we to obey? **Daniel 9:10**

EGW: To many of the afflicted ones who received healing, Christ said, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." John 5:14. Thus He taught that disease is the result of violating God's laws, both natural and spiritual. The great misery in the world would not exist did men but live in harmony with the Creator's plan. {DA 824.2}

Christ had been the guide and teacher of ancient Israel, and He taught them that health is the reward of obedience to the laws of God. The Great Physician who healed the sick in Palestine had spoken to His people from the pillar of cloud, telling them what they must do, and what God would do for them. "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God," He said, "and wilt do

that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." Exodus 15:26. Christ gave to Israel definite instruction in regard to their habits of life, and He assured them, "The Lord will take away from thee all sickness." Deuteronomy 7:15. When they fulfilled the conditions, the promise was verified to them. "There was not one feeble person among their tribes." Psalm 105:37. {DA 824.3}

6. What will God allow to come upon His people to encourage obedience? **Daniel 9:14**

EGW: (no comment)

7. When we amend our ways and turn to obedience, what will God do with the action that He was going to permit? **Jeremiah 26:13** [hint: the word does not mean the same when describing people who are in their sins and feel sorry but simply meaning that God has changed the correction.]

EGW: (no comment)

8. What shall be given unto the saints who obey God? **Daniel 7:27**

EGW: The announcement which had been made by the disciples in the name of the Lord was in every particular correct, and the events to which it pointed were even then taking place. "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand," had been their message. At the expiration of "the time"—the sixty-nine weeks of Daniel 9, which were to extend to the Messiah, "the Anointed One"—Christ had received the anointing of the Spirit, after his baptism by John in Jordan. And the "kingdom of God" which they had declared to be at hand, was established by the death of Christ. This kingdom was not, as they had been taught to believe, an earthly empire. Nor was it that future, immortal kingdom which shall be set up when "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;" that everlasting kingdom, in which "all dominions shall serve and obey him." [Daniel 7:27.] As used in the Bible, the expression "kingdom of God" is employed to designate both the kingdom of grace and the kingdom of glory. The kingdom of grace is brought to view by Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews. After pointing to Christ, the compassionate intercessor who is "touched with the feeling of our

infirmities," the apostle says, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace." [Hebrews 4:16.] The throne of grace represents the kingdom of grace; for the existence of a throne implies the existence of a kingdom. In many of his parables, Christ uses the expression, "the kingdom of Heaven," to designate the work of divine grace upon the hearts of men. {GC88 346.4}

9. What is it called when we do not obey God? **Jeremiah 44:23**

EGW: (no comment)

10. What two things will happen to nations that refuse to obey God? **Jeremiah 12:17**

EGW: (no comment)

11. What do many people choose to follow instead of obeying God? **Jeremiah 11:8**

EGW: "I earnestly protested unto your fathers in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey My voice. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart" (Jeremiah 11:3-8). {1MR 107.1}

The people did not fulfill their promise, and they therefore did not receive the blessings God wished to bestow on them. By following their own impulses, they pursued a course that disqualified them for being recognized as God's peculiar treasure. {1MR 107.2}

12. What will such people that follow that item receive? **Jeremiah 9:13-15 [two answers]**

EGW: (no comment)

13. What relationship do obedient people have with God? **Jeremiah 11:4 [provide both acknowledgments]**

EGW: (no comment)

14. What perishes when the law of God is ignored, abrogated, changed, etc.? **Jeremiah 7:28**

EGW: Satan is watching for an opportunity whereby he may take control of him whom God has blessed with great light. If he can work upon the soul in such a way as to transform the character of those who have been greatly enlightened of heaven, so that he may cause them to work his works, he will triumph. We are a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men. He who makes up his mind that he will follow his own natural, unsanctified inclination, is not placing himself where he is likely to be inclined to become religious. The unsanctified heart will never incline itself to God. Joshua said to Israel: "Now therefore put away . . . the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel." "But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. . . . But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth." "But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear; but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction." {YI, December 7, 1893 par. 1}

15. If we are willing and obedient, what shall we be able to do, referring to Heaven by implication? **Isaiah 1:19, Job 36:11**

EGW: With ruthless hands many have sought to remove the landmarks, to tear down God's great moral standard, and to erect one of their own. In claiming holiness they measure themselves by their own standard. They do not test their actions and character by the law of God. It was by his own standard that Satan measured his actions, he represented himself before men as an angel of light; but his pretension does not make him such, by any means. There is a class of persons who are not following the example of Christ in keeping God's law, yet they claim to be holy. They are ready to

appropriate the promises of God without fulfilling the conditions upon which they are given. But their faith has no foundation; it is like sliding sand. There is another class who see the claims of the law of God, and, although it involves a cross, they choose the path of obedience, coming out and separating themselves from the world. They do not consult convenience, nor shrink from accepting the truth for fear of reproach. They step out from the path of transgression, and place their feet in the way of God's commandments. The promises of God, which are given on condition of obedience, are for those who walk in the light of his holy word. Those who do his will may claim all the benefits the Lord has promised. The obedient do not simply cry, "Believe, all you have to do is believe in Christ;" but their faith is like Noah's and Abraham's, which led them to keep the commandments. They follow the example of Christ, they listen and wait to catch every word of direction from the Captain of their salvation. They respond to the voice that says, "This is the way, to walk ye in it." Every step that Noah and Abraham took in obedience to God's word was a step of victory. A "Thus saith the Lord" fortified Noah in doing his work of warning the world. The testimony in regard to Noah is, "And Noah did according to all that the Lord commanded him." The path of obedience is the path in which our safety lies; for it is the willing and obedient that shall eat the good of the land. If we keep the commandments of God, we may claim his recorded promises in all their fullness. Many feel so unworthy that like the poor publican they dare not lift up so much as their eyes to heaven. They should encourage faith. We may have an intelligent faith; we may not only say we believe, but we may in meekness and confidence be able to define what we believe, and why we believe as we do. We should exercise living faith, not a blind credulity. All heaven is at the command of those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus. {ST, March 31, 1890 par. 6}

16. But if people will not be obedient, what shall they be devoured with? **Isaiah 1:20; Revelation 19:15, 21**

EGW: The evils are to be cut away from the life. Sins are to be repented of. Though they are as scarlet, they may be made as white as snow. Just as great a transformation as possible is to take place in the character. But if, after test and trial, after being brought into connection with those who work faithfully in their behalf, men and women do not give evidence that they have been purified from wrong habits and practises, they show that they do not appreciate the pearl of great price. If they are dishonest in any transaction, temporal or spiritual, if they are not straightforward, they show that they regard the rich mercies of God as a common thing. They can not see the value of the pearl of great price. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land," God declares; "but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. How is the faithful city become an harlot." How have those who have had every opportunity to know the truth become defiled with the corruptions of the ungodly. "It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver has become dross, thy wine

mixed with water." {RH, August 1, 1899 par. 6}

17. What is obedience better than? **1 Samuel 15:22**

EGW: But the gospel of good news was not to be interpreted as allowing men to live in continued rebellion against God by transgressing his just and holy law. Why cannot those who claim to understand the Scriptures, see that God's requirement under grace is just the same he made in Eden,--perfect obedience to his law. In the Judgment, God will ask those who profess to be Christians, Why did you claim to believe in my Son, and continue to transgress my law? Who required this at your hands--to trample upon my rules of righteousness? "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The gospel of the New Testament is not the Old Testament standard lowered to meet the sinner and save him in his sins. God requires of all his subjects obedience, entire obedience to all his commandments. He demands now as ever perfect righteousness as the only title to heaven. Christ is our hope and our refuge. His righteousness only is imputed to the obedient. Let us accept it through faith, that the Father shall find in us no sin. But those who have trampled on the holy law will have no right to claim that righteousness. Oh that we might view the immensity of the plan of salvation as obedient children to all God's requirements, believing that we have peace with God through Jesus Christ, our atoning sacrifice! {RH, September 21, 1886 par. 16}

18. What goes along with obeying God? **Joshua 24:24**

EGW: Joshua endeavored to lead his hearers to weigh well their words, and refrain from vows which they would be unprepared to fulfill. With deep earnestness they repeated the declaration: "Nay; but we will serve the Lord." Solemnly consenting to the witness against themselves that they had chosen Jehovah, they once more reiterated their pledge of loyalty: "The Lord our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey. {PP 524.2}

"So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem." Having written an account of this solemn transaction, he placed it, with the book of the law, in the side of the ark. And he set up a pillar as a memorial, saying, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which He spake unto us; it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God. So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance." {PP 524.3}

19. What two things will people do if they obey God? **Deuteronomy 27:10**

EGW: But genuine faith will be manifest in obedience. Said Christ to the unbelieving Jews, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." John 8:39. And concerning the father of the faithful the Lord declares, "Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." Genesis 26:5. Says the apostle James, "Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." James 2:17. And John, who dwells so fully upon love, tells us, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." 1 John 5:3. {PP 153.4}

20. What two descriptive words are connected with disobedience towards God? **Deuteronomy 21:20**

EGW: Men do not understand what they are doing, when they permit themselves even for a moment, to doubt the wisdom and benevolence of God,--to regard as a species of cruelty the judgments visited upon the stubborn and rebellious. Few realize the malignity of sin. It is a deadly leprosy, contaminating all who are brought in contact with it. If men persist in showing contempt for divine authority, God, who created them, and whose property they are, has a perfect right to take from them the blessings which they have abused. God's name and authority as ruler in the universe must be maintained. When idolatry is rearing its proud head, when blasphemy and rebellion are strengthening, then God reproofs the sins of the nations, and the manifestations of divine anger which they had provoked come upon the transgressors of his law. The Most High delivers his word of doom, and chooses the instruments to perform his will. These messengers of God are required to faithfully perform the work appointed them, however repugnant it may be to their natural feelings. Sacred history records no instance in which these men were reproofed for too great thoroughness and severity; but God has many times reproofed his servants for lack of faithfulness in executing his judgments. In all this, God would teach us the lesson that in the future Judgment retribution will surely be visited upon "every soul of man that doeth evil," "according to the deeds done in the body." {ST, January 6, 1881 par. 6}

21. For those who obey God and serve Him, what type of relationship will they have with God implying that indifference is not an option? **Deuteronomy 13:4**

EGW: The instruction of Christ from the pillar of cloud to the children of Israel, defines the duty of

parents, and is not indefinite or hard to be understood. This instruction is for our admonition and benefit. "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes." In every work of their hands, they were to remember the commandment of the Lord. It was to be bound upon their hands, not literally, but to exert an influence over every transaction of their lives. It was to be as frontlets between their eyes. Their minds were to dwell upon the truth of God's commandments, and they were to be governed by their principles. "And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shall write them upon the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates; that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth. For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours; from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. There shall no man be able to stand before you; for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you. Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, . . . and a curse, if ye will not obey." {SSW, April 1, 1889 par. 4}

22. What do we receive if we obey God's commandments? **Deuteronomy 11:27**

EGW: More than fourteen centuries before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the children of Israel gathered in the fair vale of Shechem, and from the mountains on either side the voices of the priests were heard proclaiming the blessings and the curses--"a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God: . . . and a curse, if ye will not obey." Deuteronomy 11:27, 28. And thus the mountain from which the words of benediction were spoken came to be known as the mount of blessing. But it was not upon Gerizim that the words were spoken which have come as a benediction to a sinning and sorrowing world. Israel fell short of the high ideal which had been set before her. Another than Joshua must guide His people to the true rest of faith. No longer is Gerizim known as the mount of the Beatitudes, but that unnamed mountain beside the Lake of Gennesaret, where Jesus spoke the words of blessing to His disciples and the multitude. {MB 1.1}

23. What shall we receive if we disobey God's commandments? **Deuteronomy 11:28**

EGW: (no comment)

24. What are we if we keep God's covenant (the commandments) and obey God's voice? **Exodus 19:5, 1 Peter 2:9**

EGW: The Lord made a special covenant with ancient Israel: "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." He addresses His commandment-keeping people in these last days: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." {2T 450.2}

Not all who profess to keep the commandments of God possess their bodies in sanctification and honor. The most solemn message ever committed to mortals has been entrusted to this people, and they can have a powerful influence if they will be sanctified by it. They profess to be standing upon the elevated platform of eternal truth, keeping all of God's commandments; therefore, if they indulge in sin, if they commit fornication and adultery, their crime is of tenfold greater magnitude than is that of the classes I have named, who do not acknowledge the law of God as binding upon them. In a peculiar sense do those who profess to keep God's law dishonor Him and reproach the truth by transgressing its precepts. {2T 450.3}

25. Who is well known to obeying God's voice, charge, commandments, statutes, and laws despite not being perfect at it but learning to be perfect? **Genesis 26:5**

EGW: Adam taught his descendants the law of God, and it was handed down from father to son through successive generations. But notwithstanding the gracious provision for man's redemption, there were few who accepted it and rendered obedience. By transgression the world became so vile that it was necessary to cleanse it by the Flood from its corruption. The law was preserved by Noah and his family, and Noah taught his descendants the Ten Commandments. As men again departed from God, the Lord chose Abraham, of whom He declared, "Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." Genesis 26:5. To him was given the rite of circumcision, which was a sign that those who received it were devoted to the service of God--a pledge that they would remain separate from idolatry, and would obey the law of God. The failure of

Abraham's descendants to keep this pledge, as shown in their disposition to form alliances with the heathen and adopt their practices, was the cause of their sojourn and bondage in Egypt. But in their intercourse with idolaters, and their forced submission to the Egyptians, the divine precepts became still further corrupted with the vile and cruel teachings of heathenism. Therefore when the Lord brought them forth from Egypt, He came down upon Sinai, enshrouded in glory and surrounded by His angels, and in awful majesty spoke His law in the hearing of all the people. {PP 363.2}