

Chapter 7 was all about how Jesus is bigger and better than the Jewish priesthood. For unlike the priests who had to constantly offer sacrifices for their own sins, Jesus was holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. His one perfect sacrifice was good enough for all of us. His priesthood was of a higher order than the Levitical priesthood as the Word of the Oath swore that He would be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (which the Jews knew was the priesthood of the Messiah). In addition, Jesus' priesthood is unchanging; thus, He lives forever to make intercession on our behalf. Nothing compares to greatness and the majesty of His priesthood. In Chapter 8 we are going to compare the old covenant with the new.

### ***Hebrews 8:1-7***

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain." But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted

on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

Again, we continue with the theme of how much bigger and better Jesus is than anything Judaism has to offer. Jesus—our high priest—did His work and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. “Tetelestai” (it is finished); His work is done. He does not have to continually minister sacrifices and offerings as do the Levitical priests. Their work is never done for their system is weak and does not make anyone perfect or acceptable to God; therefore, they have to stand and continually minister sacrifices and offerings, whereas He sits and rests.

And, please, don't over look the fact that He is now seated at the right hand of power of the Majesty in Heaven. And, keep in mind, there is only one of those seats available; He has it and no one else is fit to occupy that seat. I love the Greek word we have translated “Majesty”—“Megalosune.” Our Father is mega-massive and Jesus sits at His right hand above all things and above everyone.

Further, He sits, as a minister, in the true holy place or the true sanctuary built by God and not the copy which is the temple built by man. This totally fascinates me. Men seem to always take things that are temporal (especially religious things) and act as if they are eternal and oh so important. Clearly, the Temple was important only so long as the Spirit of God chose to dwell in it; but other than that it was just a structure made of rock, mortar, wood, metal, and so on.

But Jesus sits in the true tabernacle in heaven which He Himself made. Remember, according to **Hebrews 1:10**, God the Father said to God the Son: “Lord, in the beginning you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are

the work of your hands.” The Spirit reminds us that our high priest actually made the heavens in which He now sits. What has your high priest made? Probably not so much; maybe you should stick with the true high priest.

This is why Christ has been given a ministry that is far superior to that of Judaism. He does not minister on behalf of the old covenant, which as we studied last week was weak and useless; rather, He intercedes (or mediates) for us with the Father based on the covenant of His blood. The old covenant had fault, but the covenant of His blood is faultless and accomplishes everything for which He intended it to accomplish—for it is enacted on better promises.

Let me explain, on the night of His last supper, Jesus passed around a goblet of wine and said that this cup represented the new covenant in His blood which was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (**Matthew 26:28**). This was a reference to the blood that He would soon spill on the cross.

This covenant of His blood was new in that it was being contrasted with the covenant that God gave to His people when they first left Egypt. The old covenant had been set forth in stone and is what we know as the Law. However, what you might not know is that the “new covenant” of His blood was actually enacted on a prior and better promise that the Lord had made to Abraham in **Genesis 22:16-18**, over 430 years before the Law was given to the children of Israel.

Luke writes about this covenant when Zechariah (John the Baptist’s dad and a priest of the Lord) was filled with the Holy Spirit and He prophesied saying:

### *Luke 1:68-75*

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his **holy covenant**, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

This is the promise of the new covenant: that we would be delivered from the hand of Satan and serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before Him all our days. Every bit of this promise was accomplished through the cross of Jesus Christ—it is our new covenant.

The blood of Jesus' sacrifice first cleansed us from all our sin and in so doing He broke the power of sin and death which the devil had over our lives. Second, because Jesus washed us clean with His blood, He was able to impart to every believer a ***new nature*** which, as we know, is holy and righteous (***Ephesians 4:24***) and is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (***Romans 5:5; 8:9***).

Keeping with the metaphor of Judaism, in effect, within each believer is the new "Holy of Holies." In ***Ezekiel 10:18*** we are told that the Holy Spirit departed the temple because of the sin of the nation; however, because of the blood of Jesus' which was sacrificed on the cross, we have been made into the new temple

of the Holy Spirit and He actually takes up permanent residence within us (**1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21**).

This is how this first promise is literally and physically fulfilled in us even though for now we occupy these frail human bodies. And according to **1 Corinthians 3:6** and **Romans 7:6**, we who have received this **new nature** from God are the ones who minister the new covenant not of the letter (or the Law) but of the Spirit.

In addition, Paul tells us in Galatians that even though the Law came after that first promise was made to Abraham, it by no means nullified the first promise, since it had already been ratified by God long before the covenant memorialized by the Law was ever given.

### ***Galatians 3:15-18, 29***

To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise...And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

So to summarize, God first made a promise to Abraham that we would one day defeat Satan and his evil minions and dwell in the presence of God without fear, holy and righteous, during our time on the earth; and this promise was ratified by God. Years after that promise was made, God ushered in the old covenant (specifically to the Israelites); a covenant that was based on the idea that they would make God their God; which is something they failed miserably at doing. Therefore, in fulfillment of the prior promise, Jesus brought forth the second covenant (open to all mankind) which is **far** superior to the first one since it is dependent not upon us to “do it right” but only on the work of Jesus Christ who mediates this better covenant on our behalf.

***Hebrews 8:8-9***

For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

When it says that “for he finds fault with them when he says: Behold...” others translate it: “for He finds fault; with them He says: Behold...” I know this is a matter of punctuation, but I think this later translation is better and consistent with what we read in Chapter 7. In other words, the fault He found is with the weakness and uselessness of the first covenant and not with the people. It was

never the plan that the people could keep that first covenant for the Law was never intended to make anyone perfect; rather, it was given to demonstrate the perfection of God and in so doing convince man 1) that they cannot be like God, 2) that like Abraham all they need is faith, and 3) of their need for a savior.

Now this passage is a quote from ***Jeremiah 31:31-34*** which was written right about the time that the King of Babylon conquered Jerusalem and all of Judea and either killed everyone or took them hostage and transported them to Babylon. It was a moment in time when hope was desperately needed. We will get to the hope of the new covenant, but I want to first take you back to Exodus so you can understand a bit about the old covenant which the Israelites broke.

### ***Exodus 19:1-8***

Exactly two months after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived in the wilderness of Sinai. After breaking camp at Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and set up camp there at the base of Mount Sinai. Then Moses climbed the mountain to appear before God. The Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "Give these instructions to the family of Jacob; announce it to the descendants of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians. You know how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own special treasure from among all the peoples on earth; for all the earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation.'

This is the message you must give to the people of Israel." So Moses returned from the mountain and called together the elders of the people and told them

everything the Lord had commanded him. And all the people responded together, "We will do everything the Lord has commanded." So Moses brought the people's answer back to the Lord.

***Exodus 24:6-8***

Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."

The point is they committed to keep the covenant; they were simply unable; and as we know they always and actively strayed in their hearts. I want to dig a little deeper into this phrase "For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord." This is actually a quote from the Septuagint. As we talked about before, the Septuagint was a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Jesus used and, from time to time, even quoted from the Septuagint; so obviously He thought it accurately captured the Hebrew text.

Similarly, the Holy Spirit believed that in this passage the Septuagint captured what was being communicated even though the original passage in Hebrew says: "Although I was a husband to them" or "although I was their Lord." It seems that the translators of the Septuagint captured the "common" understanding of this passage—it's kind of like explaining to us the meaning of some slang.



In other words, the Israelites did not keep their commitment to the Law which he gave them as their husband, as their Lord; they refused to believe that they could not keep the Law; they never understood their need a Savior; so He would reject all those who try and hold to the Old Covenant and He would give His people a New Covenant based on the promise to Abraham, which had never been retracted; a covenant that would be based on faith.

Now before we get to the description of the new covenant, I want to make a point that this promise to the house of Israel and the house of Judah is not just a promise to the Jews. Without question, it includes the Jews who accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, but according to the New Testament the house of Israel and the house of Judah is a phrase which includes all those who are the sons of God—all those who have the *new nature* and minister this new covenant (**1 Corinthians 3:6** and **Romans 7:6**).

You might want to take careful notes because I am going to explain to you how the New Testament handles this matter. Paul specifically addressed this issue in the letter to the Galatians. The Galatians were Gentile believers living in what we now know as Turkey. They were being told by the Jews that, as Christians, they must be circumcised according to the old covenant in order to be right with God. Paul rejected this claim. He said that the true Israel of God are those who live by the *new creation* according to faith and not by works of the flesh.

### ***Galatians 6:11-16***

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be

circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, **but a new creation**. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, **and upon the Israel of God**.

And in **Romans 9:6**, Paul says the children of promise (not the children of the flesh) are the descendants of Abraham. In **Galatians 3:7** he says that it is the children of faith who are the true sons of Abraham. And then, of course, we have **Galatians 6:16** which says: "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise." The point being that this next part of the passage quoted from **Jeremiah 31** is for all those who place their faith in Jesus Christ—Jews and Gentiles alike.

**Hebrews 8:10-12**

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I

will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

Before we jump into this, let's remember again why the Spirit is writing. These believing Jews were being tempted to return to Judaism in order to escape the persecution they were receiving from the Jews. Throughout this book, the Spirit has been declaring that they would be utter fools to do this for everything about that old system paled in comparison to the reality of their life in Christ—even the method of transmission of the covenant proves this to be true.

The first covenant was carved in stone and spoken to the people through Moses (***Deuteronomy 4:14***). Then Moses chose able men from every tribe and taught them all the statutes and the laws. These leaders in turn taught the same to the people of Israel as they judged the daily affairs of Jewish life (***Exodus 18:17-27***). In addition, Aaron (the first high priest) and his sons were also told to instruct the people about the law (***Leviticus 10:11***) and all Jewish fathers were told to teach the Law to their children (***Deuteronomy 4:10***). So clearly there was the potential for a lot of error.

But the transmission of the new covenant does not come through any intermediaries but directly to us through the Holy Spirit. The new covenant is written directly within our hearts and our minds by the Holy Spirit. The Law expressed God's righteousness with external rites and rituals which everyone had to follow, but the new covenant expresses God's righteousness from within our souls through our bodies for all others to see.

The contrasts are not to be missed. First it says that God will presently and actively put His laws into our minds. This means that we will have continual access to God's wisdom for our life. This stands in stark contrast to having to learn God's ways through fallible people who may or may not remember to teach them to you and who may or may not even understand what they are teaching. We don't have to worry about that; God is always speaking His wisdom into our minds.

The phrase "He will write them on our hearts" is in contrast to the Law which is written in stone. Because it is written in stone, the Law is represented as unbending and exacting; which is why those who follow the Law can only look forward to certain failure, guilt, and judgment. But since we have God's laws written on our hearts, it means that the law of the new covenant has been fused to our souls. This gives us living power which is why our obedience to God comes from within and it is not measured by prescribed external rituals of obedience.

Then He states one of the most powerful promises: I will be their God, and they shall be my people. The phrases, "I will be" and "they shall be" are in the indicative mood (as opposed to the subjunctive mood which would indicate some potential contingency). The indicative mood means that there is no question that He is our God and we are His people. This truth is certain.

This brings me back to the phrase "I will presently and actively put my laws into their minds. You see we belong to God for sure; it's just that He has to continually remind us of this truth. Too many of us have lived not really letting this be our reality. When we blow it, when we sin, when we are totally stupid again and again, we tend to think that we are in big trouble or that we have somehow fallen outside of His loving hands. But that is not the case and never will be the case. We

belong to Him—period! We must not fear and we must not be deceived; He is our God and we are His people and we must let our minds be transformed with this truth so we can live in it every moment of every day of our lives.

We must never forget that we are the ones who were chosen from before the foundations of the earth that we would be holy and blameless before Him. And, in love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. For in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. (*Ephesians 1:4-8*). Yes, we are His people and He is our God; now we must rest in this truth.

Let's think about the statement: "I will be their God." Think about the rooms in the corridors of your soul where you still do not let God be your God—those places deep within your soul where you act as your own counselor, lawgiver, comforter, protector, defender, warrior, provider, redeemer, healer, security, provider of justice, and so on. Have you considered that since we belong to Him these are all roles that belong exclusively to our God?

Besides, we stink at each and every one of them. We need to relinquish our hold on the door knob and release the lock and let Jesus into each and every one of our rooms so He can be (in the very real and practical sense of the word) our God. This is where true faith is birthed.

For example, when we decide that we will not punish people who hurt us and trust that God will provide our justice, we will experience Him as our God. When we seek His wisdom and do nothing until we know how He is leading us, we will

experience Him as our God. When we believe that He cares about the details of our lives and we talk to Him about every aspect of our lives, we will experience Him as our God. When we decide that we will not seek our own sources of comfort in people, places and things and instead trust that the intangible God will be for us a very tangible comforter, we will experience Him as our God. When we let His law of love (His agape love) be the benchmark for our interactions with others and not our own selfishness or some form of legalism that only has the appearance of righteousness, we will experience Him as our God. When we let Him tell us how each and every battle with the enemy and with those who come against us is to be fought instead of taking matters into our own hands, we will experience Him as our God. When we trust that He holds our future in His hands and it is His responsibility—in His timing—to bring to us one whom we will love, and we stop trying to make it happen on our own, we will experience Him as our God.

Do you get it? He is our God and we are His people; therefore, we need to start living as if this is true. This is the kind of faith that will make you mature and well versed in discerning good from evil. This is what it means to grow up and stop acting like a child. This is active belief operating on prepared belief; it's what it means to bet your life on all that is true about God and all that is true about you. This is how we live from our ***new nature*** and let God live in and through our bodies. This is how others will know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God lives.

Besides, what a privilege it is to let God be our God. It is a precious reality that belongs only to believers. We get to know His peace. We get to know His love. We get to know His forgiveness. We get to know His security. We get to know His power and majesty. We get to know and experience it all. We are the privileged

ones. So it is time that we start to live like children of God and stop living as children of this world.

Verses **11-12** are fantastic. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

Regardless of what kind of teaching you have received and the wrong belief you may have swallowed, the Spirit indicates that everyone who has had their sins forgiven knows that they belong to the Lord. Way down deep they know they have been forgiven and released from the sentence of death that was held over their lives. Sometimes we forget this and act as if it is not true because of the pressure and guilt that man and religion has placed upon us; but when we are really quiet and listening to His voice we know the truth.

With the old covenant, the truth had to be passed down from generation to generation, but the new covenant is totally different. The truth is in us and we know the Lord for He lives in us in the person of the Holy Spirit. From the least to the greatest (those who walk in the Spirit through faith and those who are striving in the flesh to be good enough for God) all seem to know that they belong to God and they are proud of that fact.

If a person has truly been born-again, they seem to embrace their identity as a Christian. They may not fully understand their position in Christ or how it all works, they may even be embarrassed at what the "religion of Christianity" has done with it all, but deep down inside they know to whom they belong. John says something very similar in 1 John.

**1 John 2:26-27**

I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray. But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie.

It is imperative that each of you learn how the Holy Spirit personally speaks to you and teaches you. If you have not had an opportunity to listen to the How God Speaks series (or if you have not listened to it in a long time), I strongly encourage you to listen. The Spirit is your guide, He is your instructor, and He provides the wisdom of the Lord for your life. Learn what His voice sounds like and how He speaks to you. **Proverbs 2** explains that if you continually seek the Lord you will hear Him speak; and if you tune your ears to His instruction and concentrate on understanding, He will fill you with His wisdom. How is that for cool?

I also love the fact that Jesus is merciful toward our iniquities and He remembers our sins no more. **Psalms 103:12** says he has thrown our iniquities as far as the East is from the West which is more than awesome, but He also does not deal with us as we deserve. **Psalms 103:10** says: “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” This is fantastic.

Even though we have been used to thinking that with every sin we are going to receive some horrific consequence (because we deserve it), it is simply not the case. He is so merciful to us that He even shelters us and protects us from



ourselves. Many of you know exactly what this passage is talking about. I know you have thought about the horrible things that could have or even should have happened to you as a result of your sin. Yet, in His mercy He sheltered you from those consequences. Praise Jesus.

We think we are always going to be thumped because we have the wrong view of sin. We think that God is shocked and horrified when we do something bad; and “bad” is our measurement of sin. But that is not the truth. We have to remember, that whatever is not of faith is sin; whatever is not of God is evil; so pretty much huge chunks of our life is by definition sinful and evil. So get over it and stop freaking out every time you have messed up. Instead, learn to seek His loving mercy and be thankful that He does not deal with you as you deserve.

Yes, there are times where God has us live the consequences of our sin, but for the most part I think the times that He has protected us from ourselves is more than any of us will ever even be able to calculate. Unlike the Law which is unbending and merciless, He is extremely merciful to us in our circumstances, even though we do not deserve His mercy.

Wow! Do you remember all that the Spirit said about our great salvation? Is it finally starting to sink into your bones? It should. We are privileged beyond our understanding. And finally we come to a really cool prophesy.

***Hebrews 8:13***

In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

The phrase: “he makes this first one obsolete” is in the perfect active indicative. The perfect means that it is obsolete because of a prior action; in other words, it has been negated by the cross. It is active and indicative meaning that God has done it and there is no question or equivocation as to this fact. He has made the old covenant obsolete. And even though the Levitical system would still be practiced for a very short time, within probably 20-30 years it was going to be practically and physically obliterated by the Romans. It was truly ready to vanish away and around 70 AD, in perfect fulfillment of this prophecy, it was obliterated. The Levitical sacrificial system was wiped off the face of the earth. The priests were murdered, the temple was destroyed and dismantled brick by brick, and it has vanished and has not returned. All that remains is the new covenant because it was enacted upon better promises.

You see, God always does what He says. That is why you can trust Him to be your God.

Let's Pray