

Elements Of Judgment (Part Five)

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As we begin this, I am going to summarize the world's misunderstanding and assumptions of the incident that is recorded in Acts 15. Before I do that I want to give a brief explanation of why I occasionally delve into what some might consider to be picky subjects.

To me it is necessary to do so because I fear a serious fault developing in God's people. It is a flaw that the world's Christians have in spades, and it is that they are more focused on getting salvation than being prepared for service in the Kingdom of God.

There is a time for focusing directly on salvation as though that is all that matters. It usually occurs at the beginning of one's calling, but a less intense measure of that desire should always remain. However, focusing on getting ultimately becomes a self-centered carnality and that is not good.

We must grow out of that original intensity, in order that we can give ourselves to God's broader overall purpose of creating us in His image. We have to come to understand that salvation is a broad-based creative process that is in reality preparation for His Kingdom.

Those focusing on the creative process will be saved. God is all about love and giving in order to serve those that He loves. In order to help affect this we must focus on seeking God, therefore coming to know this One with whom we will spend all eternity with.

Coming to know Him, and be like Him, moves one toward this most important focus. Those who have this and are working toward that end, are assured of salvation. In John 17:3 Jesus states that eternal life is to know "the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." The world seeks salvation when they should be seeking after God, that is the being, the person God, and what He is preparing us for.

Satan has cleverly deflected mankind away from God's overall purpose by persuading mankind that the only element that matters is accepting the blood of Jesus Christ for forgiveness. Though that is exceedingly important, the weighty importance of growing in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ is thus effectively shunted aside by declaring to people that much of the Bible, God's Word, is done away, as though it does not matter to the outcome of one's life.

Listen to this reasoning. If what is done away is of no importance to God's purpose of saving people, why did not the sovereign God just eliminate making it available by erasing it from existence so that we would never see it. It may take you a while to think that through.

That is not the way it is done. Instead God is making the whole Bible available to us, even those things that are *supposedly* done away. What use are they? If God left them in the Book they are there for an important reason.

Does not Jesus say in Matthew 4 and Luke 4 that we are to live according to every Word of God, including all of those things that the world says are done away? Why? This is so logical and it is so simple it is almost dumb. Why are they not done away? Because all that they say is done away is part of the mind of God. How can we possibly be in God's image if these things that are already a part of God's mind are not there? The thing is that they are there, and we need the knowledge of those things that are part of the mind of God, and those things are still in the Book.

Without that knowledge we will not be prepared for what He is preparing us for. Why? Because we will not have the background for being in His image. Now we are going through a series of showing many things touching on judging. What we have clearly seen is despite what the world says, God's approach is not a one-size-fits-all message. God very carefully measures each and every aspect of what He is dealing with, that is, His judgment of human beings.

Thus we find that there are some things that are not unto death. It is right in the Book! Also we find that who commits the sin and the circumstance in its commission matters. A high priest and a king, a governor, they were judged much more thoroughly than an ordinary citizen would be.

We find that some commandments are more important than others. Did not Jesus say that there are two commandments on which all the others hang? If they are hanging from those two commandments, those two up there must be of supreme importance, and they are.

God clearly distinguishes between outright murder, and accidental manslaughter, and so forth. So when Jesus came He stated in what is recorded in Luke 12:48, "To whom much is given, from him much will be required." Those who are given less are not required as much. That shows us right off that God does not judge everybody exactly the same. He plants His judgments according to what people have been given.

I am going to quickly review the Acts 15 incident so that we can see within it an overview: that the first century apostles did not look upon what happened in the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant as a vast sweeping away, of what some would call the Old Covenant laws.

Acts 15:1 And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

This is actually stating the central issue of what this dispute was about. A key to understanding this is the way the term circumcision is used. It is used primarily in this chapter as what I call a collective noun, almost as if it was a title. In fact in one sense, the Jews used it as a shorthand title for what they were referring to. That word circumcision covered everything.

So the men directly involved in the issue here that was being argued over understood that the term circumcision included far more than just the initial rite that a male went through when making the Old Covenant. The participants in that discussion were also using the term to represent the entire Old Covenant and now the Old Covenant included far more than merely the act of circumcision. Circumcision was merely the right to become part, or to be under, the Old Covenant legislation.

The converted Jewish men who formerly had been Pharisees, desired for Gentile converts to Christianity to become fully credentialed, and therefore accepted in the fellowship as a Christian, by first becoming an Old Covenant convert. In other words they put this in between the person and their actually becoming a Christian and part of the fellowship.

This is a concept that had continued on for quite a while after Christ went to heaven. It was not merely held only by former Pharisees, what those on that side of the Acts 15 issue argument needed was a believing understanding of much that is contained within what Paul writes in the epistles to the Romans, and most especially in Romans 1-6.

The congregation in Rome apparently contained quite a number of Jews who needed the same correct beliefs as the Pharisees did in Acts 15:1. Before we go any further please understand that nobody, including the Pharisees who were involved in this discussion, this dispute, despised the Old Covenant. Both sides loved the Old Covenant.

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The Pharisees wanted a different way into Christianity, one that was not required by what Jesus had taught. Actually both sides of this dispute had respect for the Old Covenant. The difference was in a detail and that is: how is a person justified? That was the real issue. Was a person justified simply because he got circumcised? Not in the least.

So adjustments needed to be made in understanding what Jesus Christ had revealed in His ministry to the apostles, as well as what He was showing the New Testament church's leadership in practical usage as Gentiles were being converted.

Jesus taught the apostles before He was crucified, then raised, resurrected, and taken off to heaven, and thus began the apostle's use, or participation, in spreading the gospel around that part of the Middle East.

Peter, especially, who was directly taught by Jesus for three and half years (I mention Peter because he is mentioned prominently in Acts 15, as was James)—besides being the first apostle used by God to take the gospel directly to the Gentiles, years before the apostle Paul was called to greatly expand that contact with the Gentiles—was the one who directly refuted the arguments of the Pharisees, and you will see what Peter says in Acts 15:6,7. Peter had direct contact with Gentile converts and so he not only had the experience of drawing from what Jesus taught but also what was being shown to him as he preached to the Gentiles.

Turn to Acts 10. We will see an example of what happened to Peter as he began to take the gospel to the Gentiles, and God was converting these Gentiles.

Acts 10:9-13 The next day, as they [These are emissaries from Cornelius, the Gentile and his family, who are being converted.] went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Rise Peter, kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

There is a difference between common and unclean. Common was a clean piece of meat that had been defiled, usually through contact with dirt, so it was clean but if it had

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been defiled Peter would not eat it because he did not think it was fit to be eaten and he was probably right. The unclean were pieces of meat that was declared by God to be unclean. This was years after Jesus was resurrected, and Peter never ate something that was either common or unclean.

Why do you suppose Peter did not eat those things? First of all Jesus said nothing about those things being suddenly, miraculously, made clean. Peter still understood that the laws regarding clean and unclean and common were still in force and effect, even though the New Covenant was already in progress and being used.

Acts 10:28 Then he said to them, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man [He is in the presence of the Gentiles that God is calling into His church.] to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.”

The vision that he had earlier had nothing to do with cleaning up any flesh food. It had everything to do with things that were let down, illustrated human beings, that the Jews considered—Peter was a Jew—to be common and unclean. We will continue the story in chapter 11. I hope you are getting out of this the understanding where Peter is coming to and from, in Acts 15.

Acts 11:15-18 “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ Therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us [‘them’ are Gentiles, ‘us’ are Jews] when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.”

I went into this for one reason, so that you could see from the standpoint of the apostle. Peter did not look upon Old Covenant regulation laws, declaring things clean and unclean as done away. God put Peter through that experience in order to confirm to Peter's mind that he was justifying the Gentiles in the same way, in the same manner, as he justified those who were Israelitish people. Baptism should not be withheld from them and that circumcision did not have to be gone into in order for them to become credentialed, if I can use that word, in the Christian church.

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Peter was then put through this by God, showing that God was forgiving, he was justifying the new converts, then giving them his Holy Spirit by means of Christ's blood and their faith in it, and thus openly declaring the converts by these examples, to be righteous and acceptable to Him before circumcision could even take place.

Thus Peter and the apostles understood that there is nothing wrong with circumcision, if parents want to circumcise their child that is fine, but it has no spiritual power to impart conversion on anybody and it is unnecessary for them becoming Christians.

God was showing by examples such as this, that the seal of circumcision the Old Covenant required was unnecessary. The far more acceptable rite of baptism symbolizing the death and burial of the old man must be used. None of that signals that Old Testament laws were done away.

Please turn to Acts 15. There is a phrase there in which Peter mentioned, it was a burden we could not bear. That burden that could not be borne was not the laws of God that God gave through Moses, but the hundreds of law the Pharisees *added* to what God gave Moses. The Pharisees added to what God gave to Moses, and the Jews had wrongly raised those added to the same level of what God gave through Moses. Those laws were never part of the Old Covenant. It was a wearying experience for the Jews to try to keep all of those laws.

The book of Acts then proceeds to show a number of examples besides what we saw in chapters 10 and 11, other examples of the apostle using even Old Covenant sacrificial regulations, the observing of the Sabbath. In fact I think Acts 18 shows Paul keeping the Sabbath for eighteen straight months with the people in Corinth. In that year and a half, he could have changed the Sabbath, but he did not. The Sabbath was *not* done away. Observing the Sabbath, teaching the observance of the Sabbath and the actual annual festivals in such a manner that shows that they did not consider those laws done away.

I want to reinforce this to you by making another statement: these things are clearly noted by Protestant scholars, even that the sacrificial laws are not done away, they are merely set aside for a period of time, and late in the book of Ezekiel, if you want to check it out, in Ezekiel 44, it clearly shows the sacrifices were reinstated once again in a millennial setting.

I am going to close off this series by showing one more area where all things are not equal. I am doing this because it impacts on our responsibilities, to this very day, under the New Covenant. This is in regard to holiness.

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I Peter 1:13-16 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

We are commanded to be holy. Now please turn to the book of Hebrews 12 where holiness is again mentioned.

Hebrews 12:12-14 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.

Both of these statements in I Peter and Hebrews, are dogmatic regarding holiness' importance to Christian life. Holiness is presented in both contexts as a quality that *must* be pursued so strongly that Paul warns us to carefully consider lest we fall short of God's grace. There is no doubt that holiness is an important quality regarding a Christian life if we are going to glorify God. However, we face the same difficulties with holiness as with other qualities in that all things termed holy in the Bible are not on the same level, and sometimes this throws people.

In many cases things called holy, especially under the Old Covenant, are not always on the same level as holiness under the New Covenant, even though both words translated holy or holiness, whether in reference to the Old Covenant or the New Covenant, are used in essentially the same way. Being English speakers it is easy to confuse us if we do not get the picture here.

The phrase, “are used in” is important, because neither the Hebrew nor the Greek words translated holy denote a spiritual and moral purity of and by itself.

This is the crux of the issue. *Neither the original words in the Hebrew and the Greek denote a spiritual and moral purity of and by themselves.* Thus, discerning the level of holiness very much depends upon context, and knowledge of the way the word was understood at the time written. In other words we have to read this with an understanding mind, and read very carefully.

Genesis 38:15; 21-22 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot,

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because she had covered her face. . . . Then he asked the men of that place, saying, "Where is the harlot who was openly by the roadside?" And they said, "There was no harlot in this place." And he returned to Judah and said, "I cannot find her. Also, the men of the place said there was no harlot in this place."

This is actually an example that is unusually clear, although it does not look like it now. The same Hebrew word lies under the English word, harlot, in all three verses. It is Strong's #6948, and in Hebrew it is pronounced, kedeshah. It is the feminine of #6945, qadosh, which means a male holy person. Kedeshah is the feminine of qadosh, and thus kedeshah, means a female holy person.

That is the word in all three of these verses. Kedeshah, which is translated harlot, and yet the word directly means, a female holy person, and Judah thought for sure he was looking at a harlot. Why? Because the broader context of this chapter demands it. Judah thought this woman—who turned out to be his daughter-in-law, Tamar, that he had not seen for a number of years—was a harlot because she was disguised by her attire as a temple prostitute, and that is why the King James Version, and the New King James Version, both translated that word in Genesis 38:15; 21-22, as harlot.

By definition of that term, she was considered holy—by the definition of the word, by the appearance, place of her occupation—as a prostitute—and the clothing that she was wearing. We know today if we see a girl going along the streets dressed like a harlot or maybe she is a harlot, we might say. That is kind of the way it was with Tamar. Here she was right outside the Temple and she was dressed like a harlot, and Judah just assumed she was a harlot.

Tamar's disguise was actually part of an elaborate ruse to get Judah's attention so that he would follow through on a promise that he made to her years earlier. This example shows that we must be careful not to assume that the term holy might always indicate something spiritually good, because it does not.

Depending upon context, the term holy, in a different context, means separateness, and besides that it can indicate cleanness, wonderful, exalted, great, unsearchable, incomprehensible, incomparable, majestic, and remoteness. It all depends on the context. It is even used in the Old Testament with fire, holy fire; jealousy, a holy jealousy; a holy fear; or a holy wrath. And in this particular case, the translators of Genesis 38:15 have made it somewhat easier for us by showing the context more clearly.

Both qadosh, and kedeshah, are derived from the same Hebrew word, ko-desh. Ko-desh is the Old Testament term used in the way we are most familiar with. It is the Hebrew synonym of the New Testament Greek word, hagios. Both ko-desh and hagios of and by themselves, without any context, indicate separateness, more than any other usage.

Ko-desh comes from a root indicating to cut, meaning to cut away from something else, to separate one thing from another. It can be used to indicate, as we might say, he singled me out. It was a group of people and one person is singled out. That is what the word ko-desh means. It does not, of and by itself, indicate spiritual purity. It depends upon context.

Those of you who are familiar with western novels and movies, are familiar with cowboys saying they were working cutting cattle. They were not doing that work with a knife, but rather with a lasso and a lariat. They were singling out, separating certain animals from a larger group in a herd, and those cattle were becoming what in the Bible would be called, sanctified, or separated, but there was nothing spiritually claimed or pure involved in that operation.

I am going into this because I want you to see that when you see the word holy, especially in the Old Testament, that you stop and think about it, because you can make a wrong judgment. So whenever ko-desh, and hagios is used in relation to whatever is considered divine, that ko-desh and hagios take on the sense of the English word dedicated, consecrated, or holy.

Remember I told you that the words of and by themselves do not indicate something pure. Of and by themselves they indicate something separate, set apart, so in such a context they carry a much clearer sense of moral and ethical purity though, than qadosh and kedeshah. When hagios is applied to humans in the New Testament, it is either stated or clearly implied as attributable to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If you see that indication in the sentence or paragraph, then you know that this holy is indicating something morally pure, not just separate, but morally pure and separate.

We have to be more careful with ko-desh. In the Old Testament it is very often shown used simply because somebody or something is used in reference to God and thus a building and the articles within the building, or even a Sodomite, or a prostitute, become holy because of the association with a particular building used for worshipping God, or a god.

All the furniture in the Tabernacle or Temple was holy. It was not because they were

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morally pure, it was simply that they were used in relation to God. Therefore they were separate, they were different, from anything else that was outside the building that might have even looked the same. Thus the piece of furniture, set apart thing, has no unique purity of itself, it is separated under God, or a god, but not involved in morally and ethically pure living of and by itself.

The entire nation of Israel had been considered holy merely because they are separated from other nations through a covenant with God. In such cases the moral and ethical purity is implied by God's choice, not the people's righteous choices committed to living a clean life.

An illustration is: Israel was not holy in much the same way as the ground was holy when Moses first met God at the burning bush. The ground was holy because God was standing there but it was not morally pure because it was clean living. The difference is obvious.

I am going into this because there are possibilities of numerous poor judgments made, especially in our understanding, if we are not careful to discern what God means within a given paragraph. Under the New Covenant, holiness has some of the same elements but much more that makes the New Covenant holiness of greater significance as to often render the New Covenant holiness as insignificant. Thus properly understanding much Old Covenant holiness, is important, we have to make a right judgment there.

One of things that this does, this aspect, is that it gives reasons why the Pharisee's judgment of Jesus' teachings were so sternly resisted. His magnifications went right over their heads so that they thought that His teaching was blasphemy rather than righteousness. They mistakenly thought that they were already intrinsically holy. Jesus knew they were not holy, but they thought they were holy.

This next set of verses are key scriptures to understanding why these people judged Jesus in the way they did and the way they judged themselves.

Deuteronomy 29:1-4 These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb. Now Moses called all Israel and said to them; "You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land—the great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs, and those great wonders. Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this very day."

He did not give them the ability to discern true holiness. They thought they were holy merely because of the association they had with God. They did not realize that they were not holy in the same way God wanted them to be holy, and that is because of the result of having the Spirit of God and because they were living lives in obedience to God's commandments.

I wanted to go through this because I want you to see that they were at a very serious disadvantage in their relationship with God. He withheld His Spirit from them that He has willingly given to us, and because they did not have the Spirit of God, they did not get it.

This is why they judged Jesus so righteously. They thought what He was talking about was blasphemy, because they did not have the mind to be able to accept that God has given His Spirit. Thus by giving us His Spirit we have the mind able to discern the difference between what is truly holy and something that is just merely set apart.

Now because we have the Spirit of God, we can literally be holy in the way God wants us to be holy.

Hebrews 3:1-2 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling [Remember we are not in the Old Testament, notice the definition of things here, the Israelite's were never part of that heavenly calling.], consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house.

Hebrews 3:14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

Paul addresses the New Testament Christians as holy brethren. Without looking any further at that point, using the Old Covenant understanding of holiness, we are a little different from those who literally were under the Old Covenant. That is set apart, the way Israel was set apart, but not necessarily holy in conduct as we should be, assuming that we have God's Spirit.

We do have God's Spirit. What does that give us? Because God has given us His Spirit we have gone through the process that we read of there in Acts 10 and 11. It is contained primarily within Romans 1-6. We have been justified by the blood of Jesus

Christ, and because we are justified by His blood, God has then given us His Spirit and we are holy in the truest sense of the word.

We are holy not merely because we are set apart but we are holy because we are partakers of the Holy Spirit, and we are justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. There is one more thing that has to be added and it is right here in this chapter. Verse 2, referring to Jesus Christ and Moses, what is the thing that makes them truly holy in the special way that God intends? They were faithfully keeping the commands of God, they followed through in their life, faithful to Him as Moses was also faithful in all his house.

We are talking about real true New Covenant holiness. We have been justified by the blood of Jesus Christ, we have received the Spirit of God, and we follow through like Moses did, like Jesus did. We obey God, being faithful to His commandments, and what is happening to us? Our character is becoming truly holy in the way the Israelite's never could.

This is why we have to be especially careful in reading in the Old Testament, making sure that the context is showing people whether they are being faithful to God because they have the Spirit of God, or are simply set apart. If they are set apart, they belong to God, but they are not holy as we should be from the inside out.

What Paul has written this for, in Hebrews 3, is that we must follow the example of Jesus Christ, and Moses, and be faithful. The holiness that was imparted to them through the receiving of the Holy Spirit of God, was then faithfully followed through as they pursued holiness just like Hebrews 12 and I Peter 1 says we should.

Christ and Moses' holiness was not merely an assigned holiness by being elect of God which separated them from others, but holiness in the conduct of all their affairs. We are going to carry this forward. Remember what began this section of this sermon was Deuteronomy 29:1-4, in which God makes it very clear that the Israelites had the Spirit of God withheld from them by God.

Ezekiel 36:17, 19, 21-27 "Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. . . . So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. . . . But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went. Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel,

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but the My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the Lord," says the Lord God, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations [God is looking ahead], gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and you will keep My judgment and do them."

This is one of the most fantastic promises in all of the Bible, and it is already been done to those who are making the New Covenant with God. I want you to see how important having God's Spirit is to holy living. "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and you will keep My judgments and do them."

God has already begun this process. He has given us this Spirit that is causing us, it is motivating us, it is moving us, it is energizing us, to be faithful in the way Moses was, to be faithful in the way Jesus Christ was, and to be holy the way they were in which the holiness is a part of our character—it is not just something given because we belong to God.

When I say that we have an advantage over the ancient Israelites, I mean it. We have the opportunity to be truly holy. We have to apply ourselves, but we have been given a gift that for three thousand years God withheld from the Israelites, while millions of them lived and died without ever being holy except in being related to God through the purpose that He was working out. We have the opportunity to not be just part of the purpose, but to become holy in the way that He is holy.

I can add to this. This began as an actual fact, the fulfillment of this began in Acts 2. Remember Jesus prophesied to the apostles, you shall receive power—power to do what? Power to be faithful to God, power to become holy, in actuality. Acts 2:4, 17-18, 32-33, put them all together and you see what Peter preached on the day that God gave His Holy Spirit.

This is basically what we just read there in Ezekiel 36, is that God was beginning to fulfill for His church, so that we can pursue holiness and actually become holy. We will go

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back into the New Testament because this places the responsibility on us.

I John 3:2-3 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him [Jesus was holy and we will be holy], for we shall see Him as He is. [in all of His holiness] And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

We have added to us God's Holy Spirit to enable us to not merely be holy by association with God as a vessel in the Temple, but in actuality as morally pure character displayed in our conduct. What I want us to see is that we become an active part in producing holiness, by purifying ourselves. The power is given, we have to use the tool, and that tool is God's Spirit.

Hebrews 8:7-10, 13 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them [“Them”—he is talking about the New Covenant and a lack in the Old Covenant. The lack was the spiritual power that one needs to be faithful to God. The one that causes us to be motivated to do acts of holiness. Them refers to people, not the covenant, finding fault with them. In Ezekiel 36, what did He find fault with? The people.], He says, “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”. . . . In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

What we have just read here directly connects to Ezekiel 36. I want you to notice this (he is talking about the New Covenant), that God said that His laws, which are truly holy by virtue of their divine Source, are going to be put into our minds and written on our hearts. Rather than do away with the Old Covenant laws He has given us a spirit in which the laws will be written in our hearts and minds. That includes those laws under the Old Covenant as well, that is part of the laws of God.

Nothing even close to what we just read there is ever mentioned in relation to the Old Covenant, and what is being announced here in conjunction with the New Covenant, is a major step toward the establishment of the holiness in each individual making that covenant which makes holiness possible, from the inside out.

So of major importance regarding this great gift is that a major step giving individual guidance for conduct, thus greatly enabling one to live without sin, as God does. Not living a life with the attitudes and motivations as everybody else, as the world uses, and living this way that God wants cannot be done unless God's holy laws are in our minds and hearts, along with the Holy Spirit guiding the way that we live, because what keeps us from being morally and ethically holy is sin.

Notice that the writing in verse 13 is progressive in nature. The first is being made obsolete, it is *becoming* obsolete, it is not just thrown out, it is still in effect, it is just *becoming* obsolete. When God makes a covenant—He began with Adam and Eve, then He had a covenant with Noah, and with Abraham—those things are not done away. Is there a rainbow still in the sky? That covenant is still in effect, and so is the covenant that He made with Adam and Eve. Are people still dying because of sin? Of course they are, yet people are trying to tell us and others that the Old Covenant is done away. No, it is not. That covenant and laws are still there, and those laws under the Old Covenant are to go into our minds as well as the New Covenant's explanation and understanding of them is. All of them are part of a mind of God.

Notice that laws in relation to Hebrews 8 is being used in its broadest sense. He does not say New Covenant laws, just laws. Are there laws all the way from the beginning? Stop and think about it. Do you realize that God has been telling us what to eat ever since Adam and Eve? Do you want all those things just to be done away? That is part of the mind of God. He begins that in Genesis 2. That is part of the covenant that He made with Adam and Eve. I want you to eat this, and she immediately messed the diet up right from the beginning and Adam followed.

The point is this: holiness is far more complex than it may appear in the Old Testament, but when we get to the New Testament we begin to understand that holiness encompasses all that was written in the Old Covenant as well. It remains there for us to learn and understand because every part of us is still part of the mind of God, and it becomes the means by which we judge what is righteous and good, and separate away from it in our minds what is unrighteous and bad and evil.

It is all there for our instruction and we are to use it in our life to become holy as God wants us to be holy. That includes any law that He has made for the blessing, for the

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glorification of God, by our lives.