

## **The Doctrine Of Israel (Part Fifteen):The Israel Of God**

**A Matter of Response**  
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I have a story for you to start my sermon.

A rich man bought a beautiful new car. It was sleek and fast and powerful, with the latest and greatest technology. Its leather interior and all its appointments inside were perfect. It was very comfortable car. The paint job was immaculate. The rich man loved to drive it around town to show it off, because was it not the most stunning car in town? The rich man adored his hot rod.

But before the year was out the engine smoked and coughed and died, and stranded him out in the middle of the desert. Of course, he had to have it towed back to the dealer to have it repaired. The engine's ruined, the mechanic told him. It needs a new one. So the rich man, having very deep pockets, ordered a new engine installed. He felt back on top of the world when he drove it home from the dealership after the repairs were done. He thought, as he tooled down the highway, it must have come with a flawed engine from the manufacturer. And for many months the car ran beautifully.

But after a time, once again the engine conked out just as he was crossing some railroad tracks and he had to hotfoot it to push it quickly out of the way before a train smashed it to pieces. You will need another engine, his mechanic said, giving his diagnosis. The engine blew up again. It is ruined. Sighing, the rich man ponied up for yet another engine. He really loved that car.

Getting it back after the repair was like having a new car again. He cruised the avenues to show his pleasure with his new car, show it off a little bit. Then, just as happened before, the hot rod's engine blew again, but this time on a fast moving, crowded freeway. The

car veered toward the center guardrail, smashed the left side up, and flipped, barrel rolling down the road. Many other cars were caught in it, wrecked. People were hurt and traffic was snarled for miles. The rich man came through the ordeal without a scratch.

And the first place he headed in his rental car was the dealership. "All three engines you put in my car blew up!" he shouted at the manager and the mechanic. "You must have done something wrong or the engines were flawed." The mechanic shook his head. He said, "I'm sorry, sir, but the engines were fine and I installed them according to the manufacturer's specs. I'm afraid your blown engines were the result of poor maintenance." "What!" shouted the rich man. "I gave it the most tender loving care an owner could give. I washed and polished it myself. I kept the tires at the recommended pressures. I filled the washer fluid regularly. I filled it only with premium gasoline. And you say it was a maintenance issue?" "But sir," said the mechanic, "Did you ever change the oil?"

Now, this story is a very poor attempt at a parable. It breaks down quite quickly, but it illustrates a major flaw in the relationship between God and Israel. The people of Israel never received an oil change, if you will, and they kept blowing up as a result of their overheated engines, their human nature. God, in this story, as the rich man, could maintain them only so much due to His purpose. So the blowups came frequently and became so destructive that the car—Israel—ultimately had to be junked. And what happens when you junk a car? Well, of course, you have to get a new car and that is exactly what God did.

Do not get me wrong (by the way, this is my specific purpose statement), Israel, physical Israel, is an important cog in God's purpose, but we, especially, should be careful not to make too much of it, not to make too much of physical Israel. For now, God has moved on to greater and more spiritual parts of His plan. His focus now, as High Priest and Head of the church, is on spiritual Israel, which Paul, in Galatians 6:16 calls the Israel of God.

We are going to conclude this series, "The Doctrine of Israel" on this point, that is, the Israel of God and its responsibilities right now.

If you will, please turn to Genesis 19. We are going to start there and we are going to take a little bit of a side track here, so that I can give you, I guess it is a minor rant on my part. It is something that has bothered me for a while about some of the thinking in the church and I want to show you a few biblical principles in this sideline that were going on here to show you that the principle warns us against doing what many of us have done, and thus get fixated on something from the past.

**Genesis 19:15-17** When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, "Arise, take your wife, and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city. [So now we know what is happening here. It is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.] And while he [Lot] lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hands, and the hands of the two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."

**Genesis 19:23-26** The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. [We skipped the part where he said, "Could not I go to Zoar? It is such a little city." And the Angel said, okay, go, get out of here.] Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. So he overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

This story here, at the end, contains a biblical principle in Lot's wife looking back. It is a warning against longing for the good old days of our former life, disdaining God's deliverance and His present and future plans for us to bless us. That is what she did. She walked out, but she looked back at the destruction of clearly a city she loved to live in and disobeyed God in doing it. This also mildly cautions against fixating on the past, living in the past, and thus ignoring the present and the future. So it contains a good lesson: that God wants us thinking about what we are doing now and what He is

planning for us in the future. And His job is to urge us to seek those things that He has before us and to change so that that we will be worthy of them.

Now, this principle is found in other places. Let us go to Hebrews 11. He had just gone through Abraham and Sarah having already talked about Abel, Enoch, and Noah, and so he has a little bit of an insert here.

**Hebrews 11:13-16** These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Like I said, this is a similar principle put in New Testament terms as we saw in Genesis 19. And it is specifically in the phrase there at the end of verse 15, they would have had opportunity to return.

Let me back up a little bit. If you read this carefully, you will see that this little insert, this paragraph here between talking about Abraham and Sarah and then going back to Abraham again, it has forward movement. He is talking about the heroes of faith looking forward and moving forward, seeking what is ahead, seeking what God has promised them. And he said, had they not had this mindset, they would have had opportunity to go back. It would have opened up opportunity for them to desire what they had left behind.

And so he is warning, "If you want to be a hero of faith, if you want to be faithful towards God, you have to have this mindset, this is insight from God about what made these men and women of faith successful in their work for God." They moved forward according to His will. They were in lockstep with Him and His plan. God is always trying to move *toward* the Kingdom of God that He wants to set up and turn all these things around and He is preparing a people for it. He does not want us looking back at what failed us and what we failed at in our lives before. He wants us moving forward.

So we could say that too much looking back, too much going back, is counterproductive to living in the present for the future God has in store for us. He is a forward-looking God with all kinds of plans for the future, all kinds of blessings He wants to give. And He has called people out of this world to be forward-looking with Him, but of course, very much engaged with what is going on in the present.

Now, one of the themes of Ecclesiastes is this very piece of wisdom. I will just give you the citations here: in chapter 2, verse 24; chapter 3, verse 12; chapter 5, verse 18; chapter 8, verse 15; and chapter 9, verses 7 through 10. Several times Solomon tells the readers of his book that there is nothing better than to enjoy eating, drinking, working, doing good in God's sight, enjoying His blessings that He gives. Because living abundantly with God as our center is the most important thing.

He brings it down to a level that we are all familiar with and it is very common: eat, drink, work, and do good. Those are things we do in the present in order to please God. We do those things because God has provided us the blessings that we can do them. In parallel with this, Solomon tells us that the past can indeed teach us lessons and it is good for that. It is good knowledge to be able to see what people in the past did and to understand that events tend to repeat themselves. But on the other hand, history is not circular. History is from the past through the present into the future, and we are living in the present and we need to live in the present.

We should not be living in the past. Living mired in the past is one of those things he calls vanity. It is futile. It does not produce anything good for the future. So he says, Engage with what God has provided and what God has promised. Fear God and keep His commandments. And in that way we will fulfill our responsibilities before Him.

Now, that was my paraphrase of Ecclesiastes 12:13. What he concludes the whole book with. What is the whole duty of man? What are we supposed to be doing? Fear God and keep His commandments because that is the whole duty of man, he says. That is how he concludes the book. That is our responsibility now as God's people. Now, my point is this: physical Israel is a matter of history, for now. They will come into play again a bit later.

We can learn a great deal from the Israelites failings because they are many, multitudinous failings. They rarely got anything right and we can look forward to their restoration and the future work that God will do through them. But that indeed is future. We have more pressing matters right now. Today, in "River City," it is time for us to get to work. Concentrating on physical Israel or historical Israel too much will, over time, take us off track because,

1) God is not working with them now, His eyes are not there. His eyes are elsewhere and our eyes should be where His eyes are, and 2) it will distract us from pursuing God's promises to us.

Now, I see this a great deal in the Messianic churches. They are so busy trying to imitate the Jews in their failed traditional practices that they miss a great deal of what Christ has changed under the New Covenant. They are fixated on the practices of the Old Covenant and fail to see the glory of the New. They are living back then, if you will, and not seeing what Christ has presented us under the New Covenant. They seem not to have noticed what Jesus told the Jews in Matthew 21:43, that the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

They had their chance, they failed. So, as part of the plan, God knew they would fail from the very beginning because they were not given access to the Holy Spirit. But as part of the plan, part of the way God is working out things toward His Kingdom, is that He switched His focus from the physical Israel that He had called through Abraham, and He instituted a new and living way to have a relationship with God. As I said, in Hebrews 10:20 He opened up the veil so that we could have a relationship with God personally, not under the terms of the Old Covenant, but under the terms of a New Covenant.

That makes things so much better: better promises, better rewards, better access, a better High Priest. A far better High Priest than Aaron who made gods for the people of Israel. And so many other things that are superior to what was in the Old Covenant, what was given to Israel.

This thing that I am talking about, what I am doing this minor rant on, is similar to spending too much time focusing on prophecy. It is just the other way around, focusing too much on the future. Knowing the prophecies is good, it is great. God put them here in the Book for our learning. But concentrating on endless speculation and conspiracy theories about how they are going to be fulfilled is a vain, futile pursuit.

We are given many assurances that we will not know how they are all going to come out. And certainly we do not know the chronology and the timing of them. And I have to say that in some people I have known, this deep dive into prophecy has been a way to avoid God's other instruction and so they do not have to work on themselves. Oh, but they know every which way that something may come out, but they still are stuck on the very rudiments of Christianity.

Now we can boil this all down to a simple word: priorities. That is what I am talking about, what we place first in importance. While God loves physical Israel for the sake of the patriarchs, Paul says this very plainly in Romans 11: 28, His priorities have changed. They have changed from physical Israel to spiritual Israel—the church of God, His elect. He has put them aside for now; she will have her time in the future.

But right now you could say, Israel is nothing more than a distraction to us. They have been set in abeyance, if you will, for a future work of God and they will play a major role at the end of this age, and certainly in the upcoming Millennium, they will play a major role in that government and all the goings on then. But as it says in Hosea 2:23, right now they are presently "not My people." It is very clear and Paul echoes this in his Romans 9 through 11 section on Israel and as His called children, we must understand that they are not our people either.

That may be stunning to hear. We may have descended from them, but they are not our people. If we are going to have the mind of Christ, we have to consider them in the same way Jesus Christ does—they are not My people. Who are our people? Our brethren! Do we not call them that? All those others who have been called in this age, those are our people because those are God's people.

So we have to get our priorities straight. We have to understand where God has us focused in this time.

What we have gone through in these 14 sermons I have given on the doctrine of Israel is great knowledge to have, but I felt that when I turned to this final sermon, I had to make a correction, if you will, and tell us what our actual priorities are. It is not on physical Israel, it is on spiritual Israel. It is on what God is doing for and with us right now and that spiritual Israel is where He is focused right now. Because He has got a job to do and time is running short, and we have to understand the urgency that He has in preparing us for His Kingdom. And we have to be willing to go where He goes. As Charles [Whitaker] said many years ago, when He zigs, we zig. When He zags, we zag. We have to be in lockstep with Him.

We, as His people now, bear heavy responsibilities due to our calling in this age, at this time. We have a lot to live up to. We have a lot to live down, if you will, because we came out of this physical Israel that has failed. But we certainly have a lot to live up to: the very righteousness of our Savior. That is the goal.

So we must focus not on the historical significance or the symbols or whatever of the past, nor about what may happen in the future according to the Bible. Even though there are aspects of those things that are important, we have to focus on pursuing holy righteous character and that is putting on the New Man in preparation for our glorification at the first resurrection and our positions in God's Kingdom thereafter. That is what we have got to be focused on as the Israel of God.

And speaking of that, please turn with me in your Bibles to Galatians 6:16. I want to review this. I mentioned it in Part Six of this series and spent a few minutes there, but I would like to do so again because this sermon is about the Israel of God and this is a great place to start. Paul says very simply,

**Galatians 6:16** As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.



Now, as I mentioned in Part Six, commentators cover in the pages of the commentaries several arguments about who Paul is talking about here. But when it all comes down to it, they tend to conclude that the Israel of God identifies what he says in the verse, "those who walk according to this rule." That that phrase, the Israel of God, is like an appositive to those who walk according to this rule. He is repeating himself in a different way so we understand what he is talking about.

So the Israel of God are those who live a certain way—walk, live—and it is according to this rule. Now Paul refers then to only one group of people by using this phrase, the Israel of God—those who truly follow Christ's rule.

What it means there are those who follow His standards, those who follow His commandments, those who live placing complete trust in Him. As a matter of fact, that is what he had basically concluded with in the paragraph before. Those people, those who follow this rule, are the true Israel. They are like Jacob, prevailers with God. So we can conclude, then, that the Israel of God are the elect who make up God's true church, His saints, because they are the only ones that actually follow His rules. They are the ones that have placed themselves under His rule, in other words, and live according to His instruction.

So we are talking, obviously, about the elect, the church. Upon them Paul prays for peace and mercy. "Peace and mercy be upon them," he says. And spiritual peace comes as a result of divine mercy. He is talking about a process here that has put them in this position.

So let us go to Romans 5 where Paul explains it in a slightly different way, but gives the same understanding at the other end. We will read the first five verses. This is basically the keynote paragraph here for the rest of my sermon. In verse 1 he is making a concluding statement about what he had said in chapter 4 about Abraham's faith being accounted by God as righteousness. So he was saved by grace through faith.

**Romans 5:1-5** Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and

rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

Paul puts the elements that we saw introduced in Galatians 6:16 together in a slightly different way. He is, in this case here in Romans 5, trying to explain the proper response of the Israel of God to God. Once you have been baptized, once you have been justified by faith, what is the response?

Now God's grace, which he mentions here, and justification by faith are how we received divine mercy. Right? God gave us grace and we were justified by our faith in Jesus Christ and all that was given to us by God's mercy. And because we have been justified, because we have been given God's mercy, because our sins have been forgiven, and we come before Him under the blood of Jesus Christ, well, that results in peace, peace with God and reconciliation. So now we can have a relationship with Him. So mercy was given by God—divine mercy—and the result of that was peace.

We can now fellowship with God on a one-to-one basis through our Savior Jesus Christ, the Mediator. And so there is peace there. It is like we have all come around a fellowship table and we can therefore talk, we can eat together, we can make plans together. We can do whatever friends do. So this is the starting point of what has been done for us. We are brought to a place of peace, peace with our High Priest priest, peace with God, and They are at peace with us. So in this condition of peace, we can then do things. We can, as I said, make plans, etcetera. We can speak without rancor, what have you.

What happens then? What happens after that? If you have an evangelical Protestant, that is the end, there is no real reason to do anything else. Right? That is their doctrine of eternal security. It cannot be taken away from you. You have been given grace by faith and so you do not have to do anything. Christ has done it all for us. That is as far as they have gone. And it has really amazed me that they cannot see in Romans and Galatians and Ephesians and various other places where they pull some of their proof text, that Paul, or whoever the author is, goes on to tell them, "Okay, now that

you've done this, it's time to do this." I mean Ephesians 2:8-10 is a classic example. "Yay, we've been saved by grace through faith." And they do not notice that two verses later, it talks about God having prepared works for us to do.

It is mind boggling that they cannot see it. It is that close. And the same happens here in chapter 5 of Romans. It does not stop with just mercy and peace here. In Romans 5, the apostle follows up his praise of God's mercy and the resulting peace with the realization that God putting us in this new category as His people will expose us to tribulation, trials, tests, hard times, difficulties, which will teach us perseverance, which will build our character as we obey God, and produce in us a hope in God that will not let us down.

He is telling us here in chapter 5 that once we have peace with God, there is plenty more that we could do because just by being in that position we are bound to face a lot of problems, and those problems are going to have to be overcome; but they lead to good things. Perseverance is a good thing! Does Jesus not say those who endure to the end will be saved? If you want to be saved, learn perseverance. Learn to endure your trials. And of course, in going through those trials and making right decisions—and occasionally making wrong decisions and having to go through them again!—we grow in character because we are obeying God and learning the right steps to take.

And those things get ingrained in us in the way we think and the way we act. And then of course, because we see God's intervention, and we see that steady help that we get from Him, we have hope. And a hope that we know that God will not let us down. He was always there! And we know, then, that we can have that same hope all the way through to our glorification.

Paul is putting in a nutshell, if you will, the whole life of a Christian in these first five verses. And I have not even gotten to the biggest point, which is that God has poured His love out in our hearts through His Holy Spirit, and that is what allows us to do all these things. So we have, then, the love of God coursing through us and it needs to come out. And how does it come out but with love toward God and love toward neighbor. Is that not the Christian life, what we are striving for, what we have to be doing during this time between our calling and our glorification?

What this tells me is that the calling we have been given as members of the Israel of God has strings attached, strings that evangelical Protestantism will not even acknowledge. Because we have to live, once we are called, according to the terms of the New Covenant. They think, and I do not know how they do this, but they think it is all by grace! And I can see how they might think that, just in an overall term, because God of course makes it all happen. He makes it all possible through His Spirit.

But they do not see what we have agreed to do as signers of the New Covenant, as a party of the New Covenant. Sure, what God does and what God promises is 99% of what is going to make it work. But there is still, whatever the amount is, our part to play in it—and it is crucial. It is a crucial part because if we do not do our part, we break the covenant and we end up where physical Israel was in the Old Covenant. Judged!

We do not want God's judgment to come down on us like that. His wrath because we have failed to keep the covenant. He is going to do everything He can to make sure that we make it, that we do keep the covenant, because He is faithful, and hopefully we will be faithful too and follow His lead. But there is that chance that, as the writer of Hebrews puts it, that if we have tasted all of those good things that He has provided and we do not respond to it or we reject it outright, there is only one end for a person like that—and that is the Lake of Fire. Because God does not compromise with His covenants. Mr. Armstrong used to say God does not compromise one wit with His law. Same thing.

God is a God of justice as well as mercy and He gives us plenty of chances. He errs on the side of mercy. But like with Israel, the time comes when He has to give justice. So there are strings attached. Yes, it is a very great honor that we have been called at this time and we can rejoice in God's choice of us and in His grace. But it, like I said, requires a response, a response that physical Israel failed to give, and that is why they ended up where they were. If we respond properly, however, with trust, faith in God, and obedience, keeping His Word, keeping His commandments, doing His instructions, it kicks off a process which we call sanctification that seeks to purify and complete, or mature, the spiritual Israelite into the image of Christ.

Justification without sanctification goes nowhere. But justification *with* sanctification leads to glory. God's generous supply of His Spirit in us, if we use it properly, will accomplish this goal and all it takes is a little bit of cooperation. That is what Paul is saying in Philippians 2:12-13. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling and God will work with you and in you to make it happen.

Now this is the great difference between the physical Israelite and the spiritual Israelite. Physical Israel has demonstrated a consistent lack of cooperation with God. In fact, it descended to the level of outright enmity for God. An enmity that refuses to change. They are just like every other human in this world. They have done nothing really to separate themselves from the Gentiles, and in terms of their response to God, they have it as a thin veneer that there are Christian people. But when push comes to shove, they are just like the rest of humanity.

Spiritual Israel, though, walks according to Christ's rule. They trust Him, they submit to Him, and they live by His instructions so that they learn them, learn them until they are in the bone, as it were. Learn them until they are written on their hearts and in their minds as the New Covenant tells us that that is God's purpose.

Let us go to Colossians 3. I am sure glad I found this book in the Bible. I was very much ignorant of its contents for a long time, thinking that it was just a carbon copy of Ephesians, but I found a lot here in Colossians over the past few years that has really made my understanding a lot deeper. I really love this third chapter, especially.

**Colossians 3:1-11** If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you also once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Now, this is again, a very similar passage to Romans 5:1-5, except Paul puts it in different language, which is great for us because we learn a little bit more. Instead of starting with the idea of divine mercy producing peace, he starts with baptism, that we were raised, we were resurrected from our old life after dying to our sins in the waters of baptism. So that is where he starts. It is the same place, he just puts it in some different language. He is assuming all of those other theological matters that were in Romans 5. So he just starts with the fact that, okay, once you were baptized, and then he goes on. Since you have been baptized.

The paragraph then, verses 1 through 11, answers the unspoken question: What should a Christian do to please God once he or she is baptized, once he or she has accepted the New Covenant, once he or she has died to the old sins and has been raised to a new life? That is what Paul is trying to answer here. It is very simple.

His initial reply starts where it needs to start and that is in our minds. His initial reply concerns the direction of our focus and our mindset. If you get these right, you made a good foundation for the rest of your Christian life. So he says, "set your mind on things above and seek those things which are above." If that becomes our mindset, that we are always looking toward Christ and that we are always seeking the things that He wants us to seek, then wow! We are going to grow. But it starts between our ears; that we have to have this determination to focus our minds and our life's activities on the things which are above and the things that it can only be given from God.

So if you get that right, I am not saying you are set, but things will be a whole lot easier because your focus and direction is on the right thing. God,

the leadership of Jesus Christ, the future that They have planned for us, the steps we need to take in order to get there.

Now, we can say, just very simply, that we must adjust our priorities Godward. I do not know if that sticks in your head or will, but that is the first step we need to take. We need to wake up every morning thinking this. We live to God. So every day we have to think and adjust our minds, our priorities Godward. If we make this major adjustment, making Christ our life, we are bound, Paul says in verse 4, to appear with Him in glory when He returns. That is a pretty strong statement! "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

If we set our mind on things which are above and we seek those things which are above. That is pretty good. A pretty wonderful promise to have in the back pocket. Physical Israel never did this. Their concerns were always earthly, material, and selfish. Ecclesiastes is great for this where he shows the difference between "over the sun" and "under the sun." He is pointing us to have a life that is directed over the sun, out into the heavens where God is, and not to live merely as most people do, under the sun.

Let us go on in this paragraph here. Next, with this mind in us, concentrating on heavenly things, concentrating on the things of Christ, and having the mind of Christ, we might say, we must begin paring away what does not reflect the perfection of Jesus Christ. That is when he says "put to death your members which are on the earth." So get rid of whatever is in you that is under the sun, using the language of Solomon, what is of the earth, what is earthly, sensual, devilish, as James put it.

He concentrates here in this first verse on sexual matters and on covetousness and on idolatry. So he hits four of the commandments right there: 7, 10, and 1 and 2, which are both about idolatry. He says, work on those things; and I can imagine that the Colossians, being a Gentile church, had those problems. They had a problem with sexual sins, which seems like were very rampant over the Greek world. And hey, they are pretty rampant over our world too.

Then, of course, covetousness. Who doesn't? I mean, who does not covet what their neighbor has and want more and want to be this and that and

willing to do whatever to get there. And of course the same applies to idolatry. Who does not have idolatries that they need to get rid of? Whether it is, you know, some material things or the self or what have you, a foreign God. So he tells them there, "Okay, this is what you have to work on. Once you've got your mind set on the things that are above and you're seeking those things that are above, let's start getting rid of these other things that are on the earth so that we can better reflect what is above in our own lives and our own character."

He then goes on in verses 8 and 9 hitting the sixth commandment pretty heavily, and the ninth commandment as well. That is in verse 9, "Do not lie to one another." So he hits murder and wrath and all those things a lot in verse 8 and then he goes to the ninth commandment in verse 9. So in just a few verses, just about four verses, he hit six of the Ten Commandments: 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, and 10.

It is very clear what Paul is telling us here. That after baptism, a Christian is to work on repenting of indwelling sin and obeying God's commandments. He says it in such language, but that is what it comes down to. Get your mind straight. And once you get your mind straight, start working on overcoming sin and keeping those commandments.

He pictures this in terms of changing clothing, which is a consistent biblical symbol of a person's moral state, of a state of righteousness. We are to take off our dirty, sinful ways, the old man, those things that we did before our calling, and put on the new man, which Paul identifies *unmistakably* here with the image of our Creator, Jesus Christ, whom he says is everything to us. So our Christian life is basically to swap out what is not good with what is good. Very simple. You get baptized and immediately you have your whole life mapped out for you in a very general way, which is to get rid of sin, overcome that, and start putting on the right things.

We will not go into verses 12 through 17, but Paul talks in that paragraph of what the new man looks like, what the character of the new man is. That is how it is headed in my Bible here, the New King James. But like I said, we will not go into that.



To use a different metaphor we are to be busy with the theme of the Feast of Unleavened Bread for the rest of our lives. We are to abstain from corruption and get rid of it, and ingest and assimilate righteousness. So we stop eating leavening. We start eating unleavened bread. Very simple. Even we can understand it.

It is this way, Paul says, this very simple way—chucking out the bad, putting on the good—that we become sanctified, that we become holy. Not just by imputation. That is there from the beginning. Christ's holiness and righteousness is imputed to us because of who He is and because He has accepted us and we have accepted Him. But this process—the new man process—gives us holiness and righteousness by experience, growth, and bearing fruit.

So it is not just a legal matter in which we are told, Hey, you are now righteous and holy because Jesus Christ has died for you and His blood covers you. That is legal. At that point, we have not done anything. God has simply given that to us by His grace because of what Christ did. We did not have a thing to do with making that happen other than saying, I accept Him as my personal Savior and I have done this little bit in repenting of my sins.

But now, at this point, God says, Okay, you have this imputed righteousness, but I want you to make it real in you. And so He puts us through the sanctification process so that that righteousness becomes more and more and more and more a part of what we are intrinsically, what we are inside, what our actual character is, and this is to be taken all the way up to the very image of the Son of God. Huge, huge goal—and a possible goal in this life. And God says He will make up the difference, which is a wonderful thing because we all fall very short.

But if we take this mind and use it, then our eventual end, if you will, is glorification and an eternity with our Savior and His Father. That is something to cheer about, to rejoice in, and to work on. As bad as that term is to a lot of Christians out there, it is a good term to us because that means that we are following God's program of sanctification. And if we follow

God's program of sanctification, it ends up with all the blessings of God and all the promises of God fulfilled. Your choice. And the choice is very narrow because this is the only way it happens.

**Hebrews 2:9** But we see Jesus [He is the center here, He is our focus, remember], who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

That is His completed work. He came to do it. He did it. It is done. It is finished. And so we can move on from that stage of the plan.

**Hebrews 2:10** [he explains something here] For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory. [That is the 'we' from verse 9, we are the many sons that He is bringing to glory], to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

So the author here peels back the curtain a bit so we can see into God's mind about how He understood the sanctification, the perfection, the completion, the maturation of the Son of God could be accomplished. And so whenever this decision was made eons ago, He and the Son decided that the only way to bring Him, the Son, to glory as well as all the other sons and daughters to glory, was to begin with the Son and make Him perfect through sufferings, with the implication being, then, all the other sons would also be brought to glory by the same process—through sufferings.

**Hebrews 2:11** For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one [they are all united, they are all on the same plan], for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Why would He be ashamed to call them brethren at all? Well, He would be ashamed to call them brethren if they tried to be His brothers any other way. Because there is only one way. And because those who are being brought to glory are doing it the right way, He is not ashamed to call them brethren. The way that was founded at the very beginning for producing sons of God. And it started with the very Son of God. The Father said,

"Son, this is the way it's going to be. Sorry, but you're going to have to go through a lot of suffering. There is going to be a lot of trials and tests, You're going to have to come through them all with flying colors, no mistakes, no sins. You've got to do it this way because in going through this as a human being, this will produce and finish Your character to where it will be perfect. It will be what is necessary, what is needed to be a Son of God. You'll have all the experience you need, You'll be able to do Your job, and you know what? Once you do this, You'll be the perfect example for everyone else who follows in Your footsteps of how this is done and they will be able to read the gospels and say, This is how Jesus did it. They'll be able to read the letters of Paul and say, This is how it works theologically, these are the practical things you can do, and they will come through the same process. And guess what? Like You, they will sit on Your throne and be kings and priests forever."

That is the way it works. There is only one way. It worked beautifully, Their plan. He was perfected and matured and completed through sufferings, it says here. Tribulations, trials, and tests! And so as a tried and true method in bringing about His glorification, They make us do the same thing. If it produced the First of the firstfruits, it will work just as well for the rest of the firstfruits.

What is more, he writes further down in verses 16 and 18, that Christ, because He went through it, will be there to help us, the seed of Abraham, the children of the promise, as he says in Romans 9:7-8. He will be helping the spiritual true Israel of God all along the way. We just have to get aligned with the program and move forward.

Let us conclude in Isaiah 8. This may be a strange place to conclude. Just a little background, God made Isaiah name his sons a certain thing. He gave them the names that they should be called because He used them for signs to Israel at the time. This is where this particular chapter starts. You will see that in a minute. But I came here for a purpose, because this particular passage which Jesus alludes to to the Jews in Matthew 21:44, and the author of Hebrews quotes in Hebrews 2:13, is about the pivot that God made from physical Israel to spiritual Israel in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

**Isaiah 8:11-18** For the Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me [he really emphasized it] that I should not walk in the way of this people [he is talking about Israel], saying: "Do not say 'A conspiracy,' concerning all that these people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats nor be troubled. The Lord of hosts, Him you shall hallow [you shall sanctify]; let Him be your fear, let Him be your dread. He will be as a sanctuary [a place to run to, a holy place], but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken [and that is exactly what happened with Israel and Judah]." Bind up the testimony, seal the law among My disciples [those who follow Him]. And I will wait on the Lord, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him. Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given me! [This is the part that was quoted in Hebrews 2:13, which the 'I' is applied to Jesus Christ and the children is the Israel of God, His brethren.] We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion.

Like I said, this prophecy foretells of God's pivot from physical Israel to spiritual Israel in the ministry and the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ. This paragraph contains our marching orders. Did you catch them? Do not follow Israel's example, is the first thing He says. But fear God, revere Him, live in Him as a sanctuary. And those who do, who follow these instructions, Christ's testimony, and His law, will be bound up and sealed, and they will have the greatest hope of all: to become the glorified children of the living God.