

## ***“New Covenant Blessings”***

### **Fixing Our Eyes on Jesus, Our High Priest**

**Dr. Jeff Stivason**

**Hebrews 8:6-13**

**November 9, 2018**

**Jeff:** I'm ready, and I just want to say thank you for coming back, because I didn't think you would after Sig's talk to you last time. *(Laughter)* But I thank you and I appreciate it. *(Laughter)* It's a wonder they come back. *(Laughter)*

**Participant:** We come back to hear you, Jeff.

**Jeff:** Well, why don't we begin with prayer? And Don, why don't you lead us?  
*(Music)*

Our great and merciful God, we are thankful people. We're thankful because of the Lord Jesus Christ and because of His work on our behalf. We're thankful because You, Father, loved us when we were yet sinners. We're thankful because of Your Holy Spirit who opened our eyes to the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf when we were sinners. And Lord, we come before You now, praising You because of the work You've done and continue to do in our lives.

Father,. As we do, we realize that we come, each one of us, with a different set of concerns. We are all at a different place in our Christian walk. And so we pray that You will meet us where we are. Some of us are melancholic and some of us are manic, and some of us are in between. But all of us are on the path of grace with the hope of redemption. Father, we pray that if there are any who are not on that path, that You will meet them and that You will set them on the narrow path, and that by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, as we go through the book of Hebrews, we pray that our eyes would be opened to the great truths of the priesthood of Christ. We pray that You will help us to understand that we might be helped in our walk. And Father, we pray for people like Bruce who are dear to us, and many here know him better than others. And so we pray, Father, that they would surround him with love and care and blessing. We certainly pray for his wife to be able to minister to him as he grows worse because of the Parkinson's. And Father, we are thankful for the providential way in which You care for us, and the way in which Pete shared how his daughter was able to be in contact with another woman whose daughter had experienced the same issue. It's one of those remarkable providences, and yet it's an ordinary providence because You, Father, are a great God, and You care for Your people. And so we give You thanks for that, and continue to pray for Clara, and pray that You will make this surgery to go well and to be a benefit to her. And we're thankful, Father, for the wisdom of the one surgeon who recognized that a lessened base of approach is best in this case. And Father, we pray for Your hand to be worked out in all of that, as it already is.

Lord, bless us now as we turn to Your word, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Well, I'll tell you what. As I begin, let me just ask for your prayers. I'm in the midst of kind of a busy time. So I have presbytery today, actually. I've got presbytery

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today and tomorrow, and then I have my regular duties on Sunday. But I have an academic conference I have to attend in Denver next week in the middle of the week, and I present a paper there. And so here’s the prayer request: that I would get the paper finished. *(Laughter)* So with that being said, let’s get on to the Bible study. *(Laughter)* I’d like us to turn to Hebrews chapter 8, and let’s read verses 6-13.

**Participant:** Jeff, I’m sorry to interrupt, but—*(Unclear)*

**Transcriber’s Note:** The question had something to do with Jeff’s conference.

**Jeff:** No. In fact, it’s one of those situations where I know that there are a couple thousand guys and gals that usually attend this seminar or this conference. And they usually group you up into four presenters per group, and then, you know, your audience depends on the draw. And I noticed that I’m in with the—I’m a systematic theology guy; that’s my training. So I typically put in a systematic theology topic, and then something else. And they usually accept the systematic topic.

Well in this case, on a whim, I put in a New Testament topic. And they didn’t accept the systematics and they accepted the New Testament. So I’m not a New Testament guy, and I’m put in with people who’ve published on my particular topic. *(Laughter)* It’s really bad! *(Laughter)* It’s bad! Anyway,--

**Participant:** Jeff, you’re learning Philippians 4:13. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

**Jeff:** Well, I’m working on that. *(Laughter)* Don, do you want to read 8:6-13 for us?

**Don:** Sure. I have the New King James today.

**Jeff:** Oh! Somebody else? No; just kidding, Don.

**Don:** If the New King James was good enough for the Apostles, it’s good enough for me. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** I want you to know that the Bishop didn’t raise his head at all for that. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** *“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them 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. None of them shall teach his neighbor, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’*

*“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.”* This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

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**Jeff:** All right. Thank you, Don. We are going to look at three points today. We’re going to look at an introduction. We’re going to go back to ground and we’re going to think about *covenant*. And so Covenant 101 is a new topic that he’s introduced. And then, *the rest of the story*. I realize that’s a somewhat obscure outline. But you’ll get the idea in just a minute. Let’s turn to some introductory matters and think about those.

Recently—well, it’s not been terribly recently, but I sat down with—you know, are you the kind of guy where everything runs together, so that you say “yesterday” and your wife says, “a year ago?” (*Laughter*) That’s the kind of guy I am. Okay. So I sat down with a friend of mine. We went to college together. And he landed a job as a New Testament professor in Scotland, St. Andrews. And we were talking, and I asked him. We had chatted by email and I knew he had gotten a job. Then we got together and I sat down. And I said to him, “Now tell me the details. What’s the story?” And he did. He unfolded all of the providential details and they were just amazing, and it was a very satisfying experience to hear how it worked out for him. Now I want you to imagine something. What do you think would happen if I sat back and looked at him and said to him, “Why in the world did you tell me that? Why did you tell me all the details?”

I’ll tell you what he would have done. He would have looked at me and said, “What medication have you been taking lately?” (*Laughter*) I want you to understand that that is the way in which we need to look at the Jewish Christians who are in this text. It’s as if they had sat down with the Christians. And they not only had their history explained to them, but they had their history explained to them in light of the coming of Jesus Christ who is the rest of the story. And it’s as if they pushed back, or as if they were pushing back from the table and saying, “Why did you tell me that? I don’t want to live in light of Jesus’ coming. It’s easier for me to go back to the types and the shadows of the past, back to the old Judaism from which I came. It’s easier for me to do that than it is for me to stay with you folks in the church. Why did you tell me the rest of the story?” Or you could think about it like this. The Jews wanted to forget the past. But I want you to think about it like this. If you think about it, think about scaffolding on a building. Did you ever go by a building that was in the process of construction, and you knew from looking at the building that it was going to be an absolutely beautiful building? And so you bypassed it again and this time the building was complete. The scaffolding was gone. The building was just absolutely beautiful. And you drove up and you knocked on the door. The pastor answers the door and you say, “Where did the scaffolding go? I want the scaffolding back up. Can we knock a few bricks off?”

You know, that’s the way they were thinking, if you can wrap your mind around those illustrations. They did not want to be told that Jesus had come as the Capstone of their entire history. It was easier for them to walk away.

And so he tells us. He says that the structure is complete. And if you are going to walk away,—you Jews, if you’re going to walk away,—then you’re going to have to walk away from the culmination of your covenants. You’re going to have to walk away from your Messiah. And some of them were struggling with doing that very thing. So that’s really the context that you have to think about as you look at the book of Hebrews.

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But I want us to think now about *covenant* for a minute. I want us to think about covenant. Why? Because *covenant* is really new vocabulary that we find in the book of Hebrews. It's something new that he's introduced. And the question that we have to ask is, what is it? What is covenant?

Well, in one sense it's a very easy thing to describe or to define. I would say that *describe* is probably a better way to put it. A covenant is a relationship in its basic form.

Now once you move out from that, then you get into the nuances and the difficulties. For instance, you have *parody covenants*. And a parody covenant is between two equals. Well, obviously a covenant between God and man is not a relationship between two equals. It's more like what might be described as a suzerain and vassal treaty. A suzerain and vassal treaty covenant.

Now a suzerain was a king. A suzerain is a king and a vassal is a servant. And you have an understanding of a suzerain and vassal treaty covenant right from the Scriptures. It is described for us in Genesis 15. That's where God told Abram to take the animals, to cut them in half and to arrange them so that there is a path that goes down through the middle of the bodies of those animals. And he is to arrange them in such a way so that the blood flows out of the animals and down into the path. And then the vassal or the servant of the king was to hear from the king all that the king had done for him. And then he was to hear what the king expected of him. And then, hearing that, he was to walk down through the middle of those pieces, having the blood come up on his robe. And in doing that he was saying, "If I fail to keep my end of the covenant with you, may I be torn asunder like these animals."

Now the king didn't have to walk through the pieces. He's the king. The interesting thing about this particular covenant in Genesis 15 is that God walks through the halves, or appears in what's called a *theophany*. And it's the theophany or the appearance of an oven, a smoking oven pot. And it passes through the halves on behalf of Abram. And so God is saying to Abram, "I will secure the covenant blessings for you."

Now I want you to think about this. We're actually going to get to the point where we find that Hebrews tells us that God not only secured the blessings for him, but God in the flesh of Jesus Christ was torn asunder like the animals, because He had to undergo the curse of the covenant. In fact, let me just take you there because it will be a few weeks before we get there.

If you go to Hebrews chapter 10, I want you to notice this. It's in verse 19. "*Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Holy Places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, (that is, through His flesh), and since we have a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance.*"

And we often think about the curtain that was torn as the curtain that hangs in the temple, separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. But what the author of Hebrews is telling us is that the rent curtain is the body, the flesh, of Jesus Christ. And therein we see Genesis 15 fulfilled, not only in the securing of the blessings on behalf of God's people through Jesus, but He assumes the curse, the very curse, that God assumed in Genesis 15, saying, "If I don't keep these covenants, may I be torn asunder like these

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animals.” Well he kept them, and He’s the basis for our righteousness. And He underwent the experience of being rent in His body and so experienced the curse on our behalf, which means that we have the forgiveness of sins in Him.

So there are different types of covenants. There’s the parody covenant and then there is the king and vassal covenant. This is a king and vassal covenant, which means that this is a relationship. But if you could use the Children’s Catechism in order to describe or fill out this relationship even more, it would be this. It’s a relationship that God sets up with us and guarantees by His word. And so the covenant is really God’s initiative with us. And He establishes it and brings it to fruition by the very power of His word. And so that’s the kind of covenant that we’re looking at when we think about covenant.

Now we’re going to get into the intricacies a little bit. So let’s just think about this. In the Bible, when we open up the Bible, we find that there are two covenants. Now what are those two covenants? Well, first of all you have the *covenant of works*, and then you have what’s called *the covenant of grace*.

Now if you were going to sort of divide up the Bible and say, “Well, what part is the covenant of works and what part is the covenant of grace?”, here is what you would do. You would take the first three chapters of Genesis and you would say, “This is the covenant of works.” And then you would take from Genesis chapter 3 and you would hold your hand, and you would grab Revelation 22, and that is the covenant of grace. *(Laughter)*

In the covenant of works God appears to Adam. And He says to Adam, “I’m putting you in this garden. I’m giving you a precept to obey. Do not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. There is a blessing if you obey, and that blessing is life. There’s a penalty if you disobey, and that is death.”

In other words, when you think about it, when you think about the covenant of works that God established with Adam, Adam could have worked for his salvation. He could have earned this state of eternal life before God. He could have. And he wasn’t a sinner, so he wasn’t working out of the negative. He was holy and he was good. And he could have obeyed. But he didn’t obey. And so he inherited the penalty.

Now if you ever wonder why it is—and this is just an aside—if you ever wonder why it is that people always want to do this tit for tat kind of thing,—you know, you do something nice for somebody else, you do it out of grace,—and they say, “Now I owe you.” Why do they do that? Why do human beings do that in the main? It’s because we’re children of Adam. We’re still trying to get back to the tree of life through what we do. We believe that in some way, in some shape or form, that we can earn it.

And that was Adam’s problem, because he could have earned it. And once he failed, that has been the lifelong struggle of his progeny ever since. They still believe that they can get back to the tree and back to a relationship with God and back to all that’s good by what they do. And they can’t. It’s amazing!

But they can’t and so God stepped in. He stepped in with Adam and He said, “I’m going to establish another covenant with you. But the covenant that I’m going to establish with you is really a covenant that I’ve established with My Son. And He is going to be a second Adam. He is going to obey in a way that the first Adam did not obey. But He as

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the second Adam is going to have to do something in addition that the first Adam didn't have to do.”

Remember, the first Adam was no sinner. He did not have to overcome a penalty already. But the second Adam will not only have to obey, but He will have to receive the penalty that was meant for the descendants of Adam. So now He's got to offer obedience, and He's got to receive the punishment due to those who are under the covenant of the first Adam in the covenant of works. Does that make sense to you?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Okay, all right. Good deal. I'm so glad to hear that. *(Laughter)* Yes, Don?

**Don:** There are people who—

**Jeff:** I don't want to hear about those people, Don! *(Laughter)*

**Don:** No, but they would say that even the first covenant of works was really a covenant of grace because God didn't have to do what He did.

**Jeff:** Well, Francis Turretin, who is a Protestant scholastic theologian, says that the beneficence of God or the goodness of God, or even the grace of God, is in the establishment of the whole at the very beginning. But within the whole framework of God's goodness He puts a condition upon Adam that he must work in order to earn the life that He promises. So yes, in that sense. However, I would not use the term *grace*, because grace actually means that we are receiving something because of demerit. We're not in a place of neutrality. We're actually in a place of demerit.

**Don:** Right.

**Jeff:** I gotta keep my mouth shut. The more I say the more questions that come, and especially from that guy back there. *(Laughter)* Go ahead. *(Laughter)*

**Participant:** I have a question if you want me to intercede.

**Jeff:** Yeah. Go ahead, Sig. *(Laughter)*

**Sig:** No, I'm serious. When you're talking about this, looking ahead to Jim's seminar tomorrow, it's not like Eden was restored then. Is that accurate?

**Jeff:** Absolutely not. Eden is not restored in Jesus Christ. If that's all that happened in Jesus, now we have to earn it all over again. If we were just brought back to Eden, it becomes ours to earn again.

**Sig:** And we start over under the covenant of works.

**Jeff:** See, this is why—Bill, hold on just a second. I'm just kidding you, and Sig will get to you in about fifteen or twenty minutes. *(Laughter)* Think about this. This is why it's always dangerous to talk about a truncated gospel. When we say, “What did Jesus do?”, and we say, “Well, Jesus died for my sins”, do you know what we're saying? We're saying that he cancelled out my sins, and that takes me back to Eden.

But that's not what Jesus did. That's a truncated view of the gospel. We say, not only did he die for my sins, but I have the imputation of His righteousness as mine.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** And that means that I'm ahead of Adam, because it is as if I obeyed in the Garden, because in Christ I did obey. You see, the full gospel is both the benefit of Christ's active obedience in fulfilling the covenants, in fulfilling obedience to the law.

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And the forgiveness that I have is because He was punished for me on the cross. And so that's the full gospel. Are you going to actually go back and let him talk, or no?

**Sig:** You have a microphone. He has his own. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Oh, okay. All right. Go ahead, Bill.

**Bill:** Okay. You mentioned that Jesus died for the sins of the descendants of Adam.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Bill:** And He also died for Adam's sin so that Adam could look forward to the time of that death for his own salvation, right?

**Jeff:** Well, do you mean that Adam was included in the covenant of grace?

**Bill:** Yes. Well, no. What you're saying is that Jesus died for the sins of Adam's descendants. He also died for Adam's sin, too.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Bill:** Adam could look forward in time to a Savior.

**Jeff:** Yes. If you are saying that original sin was imputed to Christ on the cross in terms of what Adam received, Christ atoned for and all of his posterity, yes.

**Bill:** That's all I'm saying.

**Jeff:** Okay. *(Laughter)* All right. I'm glad we got that cleared up. *(Laughter)* I have no idea in my notes where I am now.

**Participant:** Keep going, keep going. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** It's just going to be a surprise what comes up next. *(Laughter)* Anyway, all right. Oh, there we go.

Now I know what you're going to say to me. You are going to say to me, "What time is it? It's time to go!" *(Laughter)*

**Participant:** No, no!

**Jeff:** You're going to say to me, "Wait a minute! When I open up the Bible, I see more than two covenants. Okay, I grant the covenant of works. I may not say 'covenant of works,' but I see the precept and I see the promise of blessing, and I see the penalty of curse. I see all that and that's a covenantal formula. I'll grant that to you. But I don't see one covenant after that. What I see are five covenants. I see the covenant with Noah. I see the covenant with Abraham. I see the covenant with David. Woops, I forgot Moses! I see the covenant with Christ. I see five covenants. I don't see one."

All right. Here's the way I want you to understand that. I want you to understand that in terms of exfoliations of the one covenant, different dispensations. A dispensation is a time period. I'm not a dispensationalist. It is a dispensation or it is an exfoliation of one covenant.

Another point. Think of a flower. You know, there's a rose, right? I'm sure that all you men in the springtime you're just with your wives standing out in the flower garden, just waiting for the roses to come up. And when they come up,--Gary, I can see that you closed your eyes. Gary, you're thinking of spring, I know. *(Laughter)* So, you know, think about it. When that one flower comes, then its petals unfold and there are more petals than one. It's all one flower.

That's the way with the covenant. Think of the covenantal structure like this. The covenant with Noah is really a reaffirmation of the covenant that God made when he

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established creation. In other words God said to Noah, “I will preserve the stage on which I’m going to carry out the work of redemption.

And then think of Abraham. In Abraham he calls out the first characters of redemption. I’m giving you a way of thinking about it. There were people saved before Abram. But He’s calling out His first characters on the stage of redemption. And then He says, “I’m going to make you and your family a people, and give you a land so you can bless all the world.”

How does He do that? Well, He takes the holy family down into Egypt. And there he creates them a what? A people, a nation in Egypt. And then it’s time for them to leave Egypt, and so the Exodus. And then He puts them into the land that He promised. And now He says, “Now be a blessing.”

Now for the next 480 years they went through a cycle of sin where they just needed a judge to redeem them all the time. But the point is that was God carrying out the first people on the stage of redemption. But think about it. In the Mosaic Covenant God says to the people, “Now I’m giving you a law. And when you go into the land you’ll know how to please Me. And you’re not to be like the other nations. So please Me.” And we’ll talk more about the Mosaic in just a minute.

But then, under the Davidic Covenant, there’s the promise of a king which was promised in the Mosaic Covenant. 2 Samuel chapter 7. Your Son will sit on the throne forever.

And then in the New Covenant what happens? Jesus comes who is the King, who receives more than just the land in the Middle East, but has authority over heaven and earth and says, “Go into My world and make disciples.” In other words, “bring My people into the church.” And so it’s one covenant that progressively looks forward to its culmination in Jesus Christ. And so that would be the exfoliation.

Now the Mosaic Covenant is oftentimes the stinker in all this. It’s the stinker because we talk about the covenant of grace, and yet this is a law covenant. So how do we understand that? Well, that’s exactly what Paul asks. He asks, what is the purpose of the law? In both Romans and Galatians. And what does he say? Why the law?

Well, let me say this to you. The law doesn’t make things better. What does the law do? Well, think about it like this. I’m going to give you a paradigm and I want you to catch the paradigm. You guys are very quick and I know that you’re going to get this. So let me try it. No, I mean I’m slow this morning. I’m just happy you guys are following along with me, that’s all I’ve got to say. (*Laughter*) You’re gracious. So let me try it.

So think about Adam. You have Adam. God creates Adam, creates the garden, places Adam in the garden, gives Adam a precept. “Don’t eat from the tree. If you eat from the tree, you’ll be expelled from the garden.” He eats from the tree. God expels him from the garden. Okay, that’s the paradigm.

Now come over here to the people of Israel. God creates a people outside of the land. He creates them in Egypt. He brings them into the land. And He gives them a precept. He says to them, “Obey the precept and you can stay in the land. If you don’t obey the precepts, you’re going to be driven out of the land.” What does that remind you of? It reminds you of what happened to Adam in the garden.



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Now why did God give them a law that He knew they weren't going to be able to keep? And you know they're not going to be able to keep it. Why? Because He also gives them an entire sacrificial system so that they can look at the substitutionary animal and see ahead to the substitutionary Messiah. So they know by way of the sacrificial system that they can't keep the law.

Now what does the Jew do, asks Paul in Romans? He says that the Jews come to this belief that they can actually keep the law, and so merit a righteous standing before God. I find it ironic that in the Exile God takes the sacrificial system away from them. And even today the sacrificial system is entirely taken away from them, that which would point to Christ. And they are left with the law. And they still think that they are righteous before God by their obedience to that law.

Now Paul says in Romans and in Galatians that the law was given to make sin manifest. In other words, the law was given to them not to make them better, but to make them realize what sinners they are. That's why the law. God was giving them the law and saying, "Look, here's the precept. Obey, stay in the land. I know you're not going to be able to obey, so here's the sacrificial system."

They said, "Well, we can obey. And guess what? The sacrificial system, that's just part of the legal system of obedience before You. So we've got this thing covered. It's all sewn up. We'll obey." And they forgot that the law was not there for their betterment, but it was there to teach them that they are sinners.

All right. Now the striking lesson to this is this. God does this temporally so He can show them eternally that they need grace, that they need Him in order to save them. I mean, think about it. If God actually put them out of the land after their first disobedience, they would never been in the land. That's the whole point.

So what's wrong with this covenantal administration? That's what the question is in our text. What's wrong with the covenantal administration here? And the answer is absolutely nothing. Nothing is wrong with this covenantal administration. What's wrong with this covenantal administration is nothing, because it did what it was meant to do. It was meant to show them their sin, and it adequately did that. The problem was them. They did not understand it as such. And so the problem was with them as sinners. Yes, please?

**Participant:** In this whole context I think it's easy for many of us just to sit there and look backend kind of critically say, "I wouldn't do that."

**Jeff:** Yeah, right.

**Participant:** We don't realize that we have the Holy Spirit and they didn't.

**Jeff:** You know what? That's a great Segway. We're coming to that. We are coming to that very thing. Very good., a great way of anticipating this, really. So what does this text have to do with our text? Look at verse 8. *"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the LORD."*

**Transcriber's Note:** ESV.

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**Jeff:** so now, that basically summarizes what we’ve been saying. What about the rest of the story? Well, there are a couple of preliminary points here that we need to talk about.

The first is this. I think that when he talks about the New Covenant, he’s talking about the church. You need to understand that I believe that when Abraham was given the gospel back in Genesis chapter 12, he was given the gospel. And the reason why I say he was given the gospel is because in Galatians 3 it says that he had the gospel preached to him. And the point is that Abram was supposed to preach that same gospel of the promise of the Messiah to all the nations. And those nations were to be like him. They were to exercise faith in the promise, and so believe and be children of Abraham.

When you get to Paul in Romans chapter 9, he says that the descendants of Abram blew it because they thought they could earn it by their law keeping rather than by faith. And so Paul says, “Guess what? You Gentiles who believe these promises by faith, you’re the Israel of God just like I, a Jew, believe them by faith. We are the Israel of God! And so Jew and Gentile are the Israel of God because we are the children of Abraham who believe the promise given to Abraham by faith.

Now I believe that what we have here is that we have the writer of Hebrews talking to the Israel of God. When he talks about the new covenant that was promised in the old, it was meant for the church. That’s my one assumption.

The second is this. What’s new about the New Covenant? And the question is—and this is your question—what about it? Is the Spirit new?

Now I want you to think about John chapter 3. It’s funny that Jesus has this pneumatological talk, this Spirit-oriented talk, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit discussion with Nicodemus in chapter 3. And then He says this to this teacher of Israel. He says, “Do you not know about the regenerating work of the Spirit? How is it that you’re a teacher of Israel, and you do not know this? How did you graduate seminary without having taken The Doctrine of the Spirit?”

Now I’ll tell you what I think that says to me. That says to me that the Spirit was always in the Old. He had to be in the Old. If there was somebody saved in the Old, they had to be saved because the Holy Spirit saved them.

Now that being said, let me mention this. We believe in a progressive revelation. As I’ve talked to you about a progressive unfolding of the covenants, you know, God didn’t just go, Boom! Here’s Jesus! He said, “Let’s talk about Noah. Now let’s pull out Abram and give some promises to Abram. Let’s now give them a land in which to dwell, and a law so they can see that they’re rebels and need the grace of the promise of Abram. Now let’s talk about a king in David. And let’s bring that King in Jesus Christ.” Progressive unfolding.

Now the Holy Spirit is there in the very beginning bringing life, if there is life. But here is the crucial thing. The Holy Spirit never gives an experience in the Old beyond the revelation that’s given in the Old. In other words, the experience they have in the Old is consistent with the amount of revelation they’re given in the Old.

Now I want to tell you what that does for us. What that does for us is that it says that where their spiritual experience left off in the old is where ours ought to begin. Which is

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why we ought never to look at somebody in the Old Testament and say, “I wish I were like them.”

**Participant:** Amen.

**Jeff:** That’s where we ought to begin, because we live in the fullness of the revelation in which we live. Now the exception to that is the Psalms. Why? Martin Luther said that the Psalms are “*the little Bible*.” Why? Because in the Psalms you have everything. You have the doctrine of sin in Psalm 51. You have the Incarnation in Psalm 40. You have the Resurrection in Psalm 16. You have Christian experience in the Psalms that prophetically actually goes beyond where they were in actuality. And intentionally so, because the Psalter unfolds all of the covenants in all of their fullness in a prophetic manner. Why? Because, as Colossians says, they’re really about Christ and the benefits that are to be had in Christ.

So that being said, I want to talk about three benefits. But I want to pause if you want to revisit this or if anybody else wants to revisit this. Yes, Frank?

**Frank:** What covenant did away with the wrath of God?

**Jeff:** What covenant did away with the wrath of God? The New Covenant did away with the wrath of God for those who are in the New Covenant.

**Frank:** Is that saying that the wrath of God still continues today?

**Jeff:** Yes, the wrath of God continues today among those who are not believers in Christ. So you are either in one of two Adams. Today you are either in, as we all were, Adam the first. And we are all under the curse of the covenant of works. However, some—believers—some, e.g. believers, are under the second Adam, Jesus Christ. And He has merited for us righteousness and, in Himself, has offered us forgiveness of sins because He underwent the punishment due for us. Go ahead. I said it? Okay.

**Participant:** Just in the context of what we’re talking about, again the reminder is sobering. When you look at Israel all those years, they had the commission to preach the gospel to the world.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Participant:** And they failed.

**Jeff:** They kept it to themselves.

**Participant:** They kept it to themselves. But we do have the Holy Spirit indwelling us. From my understanding you’re saying that He was available and came upon them. But did He reside in them? That’s the question. But the fact that we have Him, yet we still fail. It’s easy for us to sit in our holy houses. We got it; we’re in.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Participant:** How is the rest of the world? We need to be reaching out to everybody. That’s our job. 1 Peter says that we “*a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people of God*.”

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Participant:** And so we’ve taken on as a church what Israel should have done. And it’s our job and our mission to make sure that we proclaim that gospel.

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely. A sobering reminder. Okay.

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**Participant:** Just real quickly. Specifically, what was the gospel that they were to preach to the other nations in light of the revelation at that time?

**Jeff:** You can think about this in a couple of different ways, right? The gospel as defined in Galatians 3, look at what it says. I’ll read this and then I’ll say something after it.

Galatians chapter 3. This is verse 7. *“Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall all the nations be blessed.’ Now that’s the Abrahamic promise, right? “So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.”*

So the idea is that you’re to preach this blessing to the nations. What’s the blessing? The blessing is that *“I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”* That’s what he was told in Genesis chapter 15.

And what is that? What does that mean? Well again, the idea of progressive revelation unfolds this idea. But the kernel of it was given back in Genesis 3:15, that the Deliverer would come and He would crush the head of the serpent, but not before the serpent would grasp at His heel. And the idea that a Redeemer would come is clear, because Lamech names Noah Noah, because “maybe this one will be the one who will give us rest from all our labor.” So they are clearly looking for a Redeemer. And so that Redeemer is the One who would come. And that Redeemer was God. I think they understood that. And that’s why God said to Abram, “I’ll be your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” And we find it in Jesus. Our exceedingly great reward is in Jesus Christ who is Immanuel. It’s that idea. The kernel is there; it unfolds throughout. It’s a progressive revelation.

**Participant:** The reason I ask this is because in the New Covenant it’s very specific. I wonder what would have been proclaimed?

**Jeff:** Yes. And clearly we have to take on board the idea that this is a progressive unfolding. Remember, He doesn’t just give them Christ at the very beginning. He gives them a substitutionary atoning Mediator, and then unfolds what that means throughout the rest of their history.

**Participant:** So their faith was based on promises given at that time.

**Jeff:** Yes, that’s right. Go ahead.

**Participant:** When you were mentioning Jesus talking to Nicodemus about the Spirit, I think of Ezekiel 36.

**Jeff:** Yes, right.

**Participant:** Why didn’t Nicodemus understand that that’s what it talks about, the new birth. Ezekiel 36 says, *“I will put My Spirit within them.”*

**Jeff:** Yes. You know, that sounds like a good question for Nicodemus. *(Laughter)* I just want you to know that you men know that I just love to harass Bill. *(Laughter)* Bill’s on my good side. *(Laughter)* I don’t know if I’m on Bill’s good side. Go ahead, Sig.

**Sig:** What would the Jews say in terms of reconciliation with God today? What happens at Yom Kippur when they atone for their sins on their high holy day? They don’t sacrifice animals.

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**Jeff:** Well, remember that they don’t have animals anymore. But they have prayer and they say prayers that substitute for the sacrifice. And it just depends on what form of Judaism you’re in. If you’re in Reformed Judaism it’s a liberal Judaism. If you’re in Hasidic Judaism, it’s a much more conservative Judaism. It’s a modified Judaism, but it’s a Judaism based on obedience nonetheless.

**Sig:** But could it be that even though we know Christ is here and has come, and is risen from the dead and at the right hand of God, God is eternal. And some day they may realize that Jesus is the Christ and the Messiah?

**Jeff:** Well that’s what Hebrews 10 and 11 are all about, right? Paul is saying, “Look. I’m trying to provoke my people to jealousy, that I might save some.”

**Participant:** Romans.

**Jeff:** Sorry. Romans. “I’m trying to provoke them to jealousy through the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, that in seeing the fulfillment of their covenants in the Gentiles they might be jealous and actually see Christ as their Messiah.”

**Participant:** A great turning is coming.

**Jeff:** And John Murray and the Bishop believe that a great turning is coming. I hope so.

**Participant:** It’s part of what we’ll cover tomorrow.

**Jeff:** It will be part of what you cover tomorrow. You know, I have to admit that I have recently changed my view on that. And Palmer Robertson has kind of been instrumental in suggesting that there are no time references in that Hebrews 11 passage to look forward to something, which is why Paul says, “I preach this so that I might save some.” So there are some interesting nuances. John Murray still tugs at my heart with that argument. I’m a man torn. But I think I’m leaning toward O. Palmer Robertson’s position. That’s for another day. Let me just say this.

**Participant:** Are you referring to the end of chapter 11?

**Jeff:** I’m referring to chapter 11 in Romans.

**Participant:** Not Hebrews.

**Jeff:** Not Hebrews.

**Participant:** I think I know what you’re implying. But we need to be reminded that we are grafted in.

**Jeff:** That’s right.

**Participant:** We’re not the true vine. Israel is into a promise.

**Jeff:** Yes. I think, though, that the patriarchs are the root. That’s what he talks about in Romans 11. The root is the patriarchs who were given the promises. And so they are the root. It’s sort of like Peter. “*On this rock I will build My church.*” It’s on the promise that Peter enunciates--“*You are the Son of God*”--and not on Pope Peter. And so it is with Israel. It’s not Israel, but it’s the promises given to the patriarchs that is the root.

Well, let me just give you the three benefits, and then we’ll close. And I would just give them to you. *The law in the heart* is one. I won’t say anything more about that, except to say that the law will be written on the heart in a way that it wasn’t in the Old Testament, but in a way that’s in keeping with the experience of New Covenant Christianity.

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In verse 11 *all will know the Lord*. And Joel 2 is brought into play. Why? Because, if you think back to Amos, the Lord doesn't do anything without first revealing it to His prophet. Now that's not a solid command, because remember, He doesn't reveal to Elisha what He's done to the Shunamite woman. He actually says, "The LORD has kept this from me." But the point is that the people of God in the New Covenant will have an intimacy with God that rivals that of the prophets. That is rich! I love that! That's the idea behind Joel 2, at least in a nutshell.

And then *He'll remember our sins no more*, another rich one. Did God not forgive in the past? Of course He did. But remember, the Day of Atonement was a day to remember your sins year by year. But this is what I was telling you earlier about the Psalms sort of being a book that goes beyond the experience of the Old, because what does Psalm 103 say? Psalm 103 verse 12 says that He'll forgive and forget our iniquities.

**Transcriber's Note:** Psalm 103:12, NKJV.

*"As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us."*

**Jeff:** Well, that wasn't the experience of the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was that you would remember them year by year. So the Psalms actually prophetically forecast a time when God would actually remember our sins no more. And so we see that in the New Covenant. So we have the joy of a full experience. Don, go ahead.

**Don:** The word *all* there, Jeff? What does that mean? *"They shall all know Me?"* Is it talking about rank, status, Jew versus Gentile? What does that mean?

**Jeff:** I think *all* there means all. That was supposed to be a joke. *(Laughter)* Anyway, I think all—

**Participant:** I thought you were right on the money.

**Jeff:** I think *all* means all who are part of the New Covenant, all who are believers in these promises of Abraham that have now come in. That's how I read it. Is that how you read it, Don?

**Don:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Participant:** That's not how I read it.

**Jeff:** All right. On that note, let's pray. *(Laughter)* Oh wait, we've got one more.

**Participant:** In the Psalms, when it says that He'll remember our sins no more,—

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Participant:** Isn't that an act of saying that "I will not remember," not that He actually forgets?

**Jeff:** That's true.

**Participant:** I think that's important, because God is making an active choice of His will not to remember or count our sins against us.

**Jeff:** That's right. He's omniscient.

**Participant:** It's not like "Oh, I forgot."

**Jeff:** So when we think about what this means, we have to take on board a few things. We have to take on board that that's an anthropomorphism. God can't forget because He's omniscient. And you have to take on board that what's striking about Psalm 103 is where

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it's given. It's given in the Old Covenant. And the Old Covenant was a covenant where their sins were remembered year by year. See, you would be actually singing something in the Old Covenant that wasn't actually true in your own experience as of yet, that their sins would be remembered year by year. But there was coming a time when God would not make this the case, that we would all remember our sins, including Him. But you're right. That's a good point to raise. Okay?

All right, let's pray. Father in heaven, we give You thanks again for this day and for the time that You've given us to be together. And Lord, we're thankful for it. We pray that You'll bless our day. We pray that You'll bless our families. We pray, Lord, that You'll bless us and cause us to remember that sobering reminder that it is for us to take the gospel to the nations and even those near to us. So we pray that You will help us to do that, for we ask it in Jesus' name. amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** Great to be with you guys. (*Applause*)