

# The **Bible** Unpacked

## **Comprehensive Study Series**

A compilation of the Bible's teaching  
for believers established in the faith

paul mallison



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## **Comprehensive Study Series**

A compilation of the Bible's teaching  
for believers established in the faith

## **14. The New Order**

**Composed by Paul Mallison**

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## A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites out of Egypt and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net)

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## Suggestions for Study Groups

### Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

### Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.
- Answers need not be limited to only what is mentioned in the material.
- The group should feel free to diverge from the study if related issues arise.

### General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
  - (a) how you relate to God or to other people; or
  - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?



# I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

(➔ *God's Covenant with Israel and the Law*, in 8. *God's Word: Offerings for Atonement for Sinners*, in 9. *The Problem of Sin*; and *The Role of the Priests*, in 9. *The Problem of Sin*)

The law was given to Israel through Moses – hence the term the “Mosaic Law”. It was what God’s covenant with Israel was based upon. (The contents of this law – including its provisions for dealing with sin – are discussed in the sections cross-referenced above.)

In order to be righteous before God, the Israelites had to continually follow this law, keeping all of its commands – something which they proved incapable of doing. But through Jesus Christ’s life and death, God has provided a new way of righteousness, for all people – leading to salvation. As a result of this, the role of the law has been profoundly changed.

## a) Righteousness Not by Law, but Faith in Jesus Christ

### The Mosaic Law cannot bring perfection . . .

**HEB 7:19A** *The law of Moses could not make anything perfect.* NCV™

### . . . The law only exacerbates the problem of sin

**ROM 7:7–8** [PAUL:] What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”<sup>8</sup> *But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.* ESV

The law actually stimulates sin, arousing sinful passions (cf. v. 5) and all kinds of desires (v. 8). In fact if it were not for the law, sin would be “a dead thing” (v. 8, GNT) – immaterial.

**1COR 15:56** The sting of death is sin, and *the power of sin is the law.*

God’s law gives sin its power. For it is the law that makes sin transgression against God, i.e. violation of standards he has set. As such it gives sin the power to bring about condemnation (of sinners) and so bring death.

### People are not justified by obeying the law – but by faith in Jesus Christ . . .

**GAL 2:15–16** [PAUL, TO PETER AND OTHER JEWS:] We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; <sup>16</sup>*yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.* ESV

God’s new way to being justified – and thus being made righteous before him – is through having faith in Jesus Christ. This primarily involves believing Jesus Christ to be (with what he has accomplished) the means of righteousness – and accordingly trusting in him for one’s own righteousness.

In conjunction with this, faith in Jesus Christ encompasses believing what the Bible says about: who he is; his death and

resurrection; and the outcomes of his mission. Faith or belief in Jesus Christ is discussed in *Belief in Jesus Christ (I): Instructions and Insights*, in 21. *Being Right with God*; and *Belief in Jesus Christ (II): Outcomes*, in 21. *Being Right with God*.

### **. . . Righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ – not by the law**

**ROM 3:21–22A** *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—<sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.* ESV

### **By faith Abraham was declared righteous – and so will all who emulate him**

**ROM 4:19–24** *He [Abraham] did not weaken in faith when he thought about his own body (which was already as good as dead now that he was about a hundred years old) or about Sarah's inability to have children,<sup>20</sup> nor did he doubt God's promise out of a lack of faith. Instead, he became strong in faith and gave glory to God,<sup>21</sup> being absolutely convinced that God would do what he had promised.<sup>22</sup> This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."<sup>23</sup> Now the words "it was credited to him" were written not only for him<sup>24</sup> but also for us. Our faith will be regarded in the same way, if we believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.* ISV

### **So, one's righteous standing is no reason to boast, as it is not due to what one does – but to faith**

**ROM 3:27–28** *Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded! By what principle? Of works? No, but by the principle of faith!<sup>28</sup> For we consider that a person is declared righteous by faith apart from the works of the law.*

Why can't people be justified by obeying the law?

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How does faith in Jesus Christ lead to righteousness?

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What is so significant about Abraham and his faith?

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## b) Salvation by Grace, through Jesus Christ

Note that below (as per the previous section) “works” refers to things one does to attempt to work for or earn righteousness and salvation. This includes good deeds but mainly has in view actions specifically aimed at fulfilling the law’s demands.

### **God chooses people by his grace, through Jesus Christ – not because of works . . .**

**EPH 1:3–6** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup>even as *he chose us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love* <sup>5</sup>*he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,* <sup>6</sup>*to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved [Christ].* ESV

**ROM 11:5–6** So in the same way *at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.* <sup>6</sup>*And if it is by grace, it is no longer by works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace.*

### **. . . and God leads people to respond to him by his grace**

**ACTS 18:27B** On his arrival he [Apollos] greatly helped *those who through grace had believed.* ISV

### **People are justified and made righteous by God’s grace, through Jesus Christ – not by law**

**ROM 3:24** But *they [people] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

**GAL 2:21** [PAUL:] *I do not set aside God’s grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!*

Righteousness comes by God’s grace – by what Jesus Christ’s death accomplished – not through abiding by the law.

**Thus, people are saved by God's grace, through Jesus Christ . . .**

**EPH 2:4–5** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But *God's mercy is so abundant, and his love for us is so great,* <sup>5</sup>*that while we were spiritually dead in our disobedience he brought us to life with Christ. It is by God's grace that you have been saved.* GNT

**. . . So, people are saved by God's grace rather than by works and the law**

**EPH 2:8–9** For *by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God;* <sup>9</sup>*it is not from works, so that no one can boast.*

**ACTS 15:10–11** [PETER, TO THOSE ADVOCATING SUBMISSION TO THE LAW:] So now why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples *a yoke [the law] that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?* <sup>11</sup>*On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they are.*

**Eternal life is in fact a gift from God, through Jesus Christ**

**ROM 6:23** For the payoff of sin is death, but *the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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What is the meaning of “grace” (as used in the sense of “God’s grace”)?

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How are people justified and made righteous by God’s grace?

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If we cannot be saved by anything that we do, is there then nothing we need to do? Explain your answer.

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## c) Release from the Law through Jesus Christ

(⇒ *God's New Covenant*, p. 16)

This section looks at how Jesus Christ has fully realized the key objectives of the Mosaic Law, and how as a result God's people have been released from the law.

The most notable implication of this release is that God's people have been freed from bondage to the law as the means of obtaining righteousness and being made holy. Additionally, other major aspects of the law are no longer applicable to God's people. There is also a change of focus in their lives, with them living their lives primarily by faith and in step with the Holy Spirit (cf. *Living Free of the Law and Sin – by the Spirit*, in 21. *Being Right with God*) – rather than being preoccupied with the requirements of the law.

Note that the law's commands that are applicable to the believer's new spiritual relationship with God or to their relationships with other people, are still very much relevant in that they give guidance in how to please God (cf. *The Relevance of the Law*, in 14. *The New Order*).

### Jesus Christ fully realized what the law had worked towards

**HEB 10:1, 10–14** *For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship. ...* <sup>10</sup>*By his will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* <sup>11</sup>*And every priest stands day after day serving and offering the same sacrifices again and again – sacrifices that can never take away sins.* <sup>12</sup>*But when this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right hand of God,* <sup>13</sup>*where he is now waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.* <sup>14</sup>*For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy.*

The Mosaic Law had primarily worked toward the removal of sin and making God's people holy. But its work really only foreshadowed "the reality" (v. 1) that would be realized through Jesus Christ. For the law's sacrifices for sin were not sufficient to comprehensively deal with sin and make people perfect (vv. 1, 11). But with the sacrifice of himself, Jesus Christ fulfilled what the law

with its sin offerings in effect pointed towards, by consummately removing sins (v. 12) and making God's people holy (vv. 10, 14).

### **Consequently, through Jesus Christ believers have been released from the law**

**ROM 10:4** For *Christ is the end of the law*, with the result that there is righteousness for everyone who believes.

**GAL 3:24–25** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Thus *the law had become our guardian until Christ, so that we could be declared righteous by faith.*<sup>25</sup> *But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.*

The law was only ever to be the authority over God's people until Jesus Christ came, when faith would supersede it as the way for God's people to be righteous.

### **With Jesus Christ's once and for all sacrifice, there is no longer any need to sacrifice for sin**

**HEB 10:12, 17–18** *Christ, however, offered one sacrifice for sins, an offering that is effective for ever, and then he sat down at the right-hand side of God. ...*<sup>17</sup> *And then he [God] says, "I will not remember their sins and evil deeds any longer."*<sup>18</sup> *So when these have been forgiven, an offering to take away sins is no longer needed.* GNT

### **The regulations and rituals of the law are no longer applicable**

**COL 2:16–17** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Therefore *do not let anyone judge you with respect to food or drink, or in the matter of a feast, new moon, or Sabbath days* –<sup>17</sup> *these are only the shadow of the things to come, but the reality is Christ!*

The various aspects of the old covenant mentioned (v. 16) merely foreshadowed what was to come with Christ (v. 17). So there is now no longer any binding requirement to observe such regulations – in accordance with what God has done through Christ (v. 14).

### **Instead of being under the law, believers are under grace**

**ROM 6:14** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For sin will have no mastery over you, because *you are not under law but under grace.*

Believers are not under the law but “under grace”. By grace righteousness and salvation are not only gained, as discussed earlier, but are also maintained. For in his grace God enables believers to live godly lives and continues to provide for forgiveness when they do sin. Accordingly, believers are to rely on God’s grace both in striving to please God and for forgiveness.

In what way/s did Jesus Christ realize or fulfill the law?

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In what sense have God’s people been released from the Old Testament Law?

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Is there anything you do that is a regulation or a ritual, which is not necessary or even unhelpful?

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## d) The Relevance of the Law

The spiritual and moral commands of the law are largely in view this section. These commands are those pertaining to the believer's spiritual relationship with God and their relationships with other people.

### The law is not nullified . . .

**ROM 3:31** *Do we then nullify the law through faith? Absolutely not! Instead we uphold the law.*

In saying that by faith “we uphold the law”, Paul is probably meaning that the way of faith validates the law. As such, Paul is probably speaking of either: faith showing the law to play a key role in God's plan of salvation, such as in regard to awareness of sin; or faith providing the way of fulfilling the law's demands (cf. NCV, NLT) thus showing the law's demands to be legitimate.

### . . . and the law is still good

**1TIM 1:8** *We know that the Law is good, if it is used in the right way.*

CEV

Note that the subsequent verses (vv. 9–11) speak of the law's use for governing and condemning the ungodly. The following subsections speak further of how to use the law properly.

### The primary purpose of the law is to make people aware of sin

**ROM 3:20** *For no one is declared righteous before him by the works of the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.*

**ROM 7:7** [PAUL:] *Shall we say, then, that the Law itself is sinful? Of course not! But it was the Law that made me know what sin is. If the Law had not said, “Do not desire what belongs to someone else,” I would not have known such a desire.* GNT

### The spiritual and moral commands of the law are still to be obeyed

**MATT 5:18–19** [JESUS:] *I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth pass away not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter will pass [away]*

*from the law until everything takes place. <sup>19</sup>So anyone who breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever obeys them and teaches others to do so will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

Most likely Jesus had the moral commands of the law primarily in view, with a number of them being the subject of his subsequent teaching (cf. vv. 21–48).

### **The law’s principles – such as love, justice and mercy – are of central importance, above its rules**

**MATT 22:35–40** And one of them, an expert in religious law, asked him a question to test him: <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” <sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup>The second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ <sup>40</sup>All the law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

**MATT 23:23** [JESUS:] *Woe to you, experts in the law and you Pharisees, hypocrites! You give a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, yet you neglect what is more important in the law – justice, mercy, and faithfulness! You should have done these things without neglecting the others.*

The Pharisees had gone to extreme measures in their tithing, which was one aspect of the law, but had overlooked basic principles of the law.

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How is the Old Testament law relevant to Christians?

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State at least two of the spiritual commands of the law (e.g. laws concerning how we relate to God) that are still to be obeyed.

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What is one relationship in your life where you could better apply one of the key principles of the law mentioned (i.e. love, justice or mercy)? How could you do this?

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## II. Key Elements of the New Order

Through Jesus Christ's mission God enhanced his relationship with his people and the world. Two defining aspects of this new order are God's new covenant with his own people and the kingdom of God.

As well as having instituted these two things in his mission, Jesus Christ continues to play a key role in both of them. Jesus Christ's role as high priest is arguably the central aspect of God's new covenant with his people. Jesus Christ's reign as Lord of all things involves reigning over the kingdom of God. Additionally, his reign extends to reigning over all things that are as yet to be subjugated to God's kingdom, which awaits consummation.

## a) God's New Covenant

(⇒ *God's Covenant with Israel and the Law, in 8. God's Word*)

For a discussion of the term “covenant”, see the introductory comment on *II. Key Old Testament Covenants, in 8. God's Word*. Note that in addition to a number of the following subsections, the superiority of God's new covenant with his people to that of the old covenant (or first covenant) which God made with Israel is further illustrated in the following section – *Jesus Christ as High Priest, p. 20*. It discusses the advantages of Jesus Christ's priesthood of the new covenant over the priesthood of the old covenant.

**The first covenant (with its priesthood and law) was inadequate and superseded by the superior new covenant – through Jesus Christ . . .**

**HEB 8:6–7, 13** *But now Jesus has obtained a superior ministry [to the priests' ministry], since the covenant that he mediates is also better [than the first covenant] and is enacted on better promises. <sup>7</sup>For if that first covenant had been faultless, no one would have looked for a second one. . . . <sup>13</sup>When he [God] speaks of a new covenant, he makes the first obsolete. Now what is growing obsolete and aging is about to disappear.*

The covenant which God made with Israel proved inadequate as Israel could not keep the covenant (by obeying its law) and consequently could not be righteous before God. But God has abolished the old covenant and introduced a superior new covenant – mediated by Jesus Christ in his mission.

**. . . Components of the first covenant were merely a shadow of what was to come in the new covenant**

**HEB 10:1** *For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship.*

## Jesus Christ's blood ratified the new covenant

**LUKE 22:20** And in the same way he [Jesus] took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "*This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.*"

At the "last supper" Jesus used a cup of wine to symbolize his blood that would be shed (cf. Matt 26:28). The shedding of Jesus Christ's blood in his death made it possible for people's sins to be forgiven and so opened the way for the new relationship/covenant between God and his people. As the new covenant is made possible and instituted through Christ's death, the shedding of his blood in effect ratified the new covenant – just as the sprinkling of "the blood of the covenant" by Moses ceremonially confirmed the old covenant (cf. Ex 24:6–8).

## The new covenant is everlasting

**HEB 13:20** Now may the God of peace who by the blood of *the eternal covenant* brought back from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, ...

## The new covenant is spiritual: It is of the Holy Spirit; . . .

**2COR 3:5–6** [PAUL:] Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, <sup>6</sup>who has made us competent to be ministers of *a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit*. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ESV

The "letter" denotes the law. One partakes of the new covenant not through obeying the law but through being transformed by and living by the Holy Spirit.

## . . . and it is internal

**JER 31:33A** "*But I will make a new covenant with the whole nation of Israel after I plant them back in the land,*" says the LORD. "*I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts and minds.*"

Under the new covenant God's laws have become internal principles, not just commands from an external source. Bear in mind that the reference to "Israel" (cf. Heb 8:10 ↓) is applicable to the new people of God, inclusive of Gentiles.

## **Under the new covenant God’s people know him and are forgiven**

**HEB 8:10–12** “For this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and I will inscribe them on their hearts. And I will be their God and they will be my people. <sup>11</sup>And there will be no need at all for each one to teach his countryman or each one to teach his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ since they will all know me, from the least to the greatest. <sup>12</sup>“For I will be merciful toward their evil deeds, and their sins I will remember no longer.”

This is a quotation from Jeremiah 31:31–34 (cf. Jer 31:33a ↑). Verses 11–12 show that under God’s new covenant, all God’s people know him and their sins are truly forgiven. Note that v. 10b speaks of the new covenant also fulfilling a primary aim of the old covenant – “I will be their God and they will be my people” (cf. Jer 24:7).

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What do you like better about the new covenant in comparison to the old one? Why?

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In what sense were components of the first covenant a “shadow” of what was to come in the new covenant?

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How is the new covenant more “spiritual” than the old covenant?

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## b) Jesus Christ as High Priest

(⇒ *Epilogue: God's People Relate to God through Jesus Christ, in 16. The Standing of God's People*)

In the replacement of God's old covenant with Israel by God's new covenant with all who are now his people, the Levitical priesthood of the old covenant has been replaced by Jesus Christ's superior priesthood of the new covenant.

### **Jesus Christ is the high priest of God's people – representing them before God in the superior heavenly sanctuary**

**HEB 8:1B–2** [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *We have such a high priest, one who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup>a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up.*

**HEB 9:24** [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *For the Messiah did not go into a sanctuary made by human hands and just a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in God's presence on our behalf. 15v*

The term “sanctuary” refers to the place of God's presence. This was signified in Israel by the tabernacle and then later the temple, in particular by the Most Holy Place within them. In actuality God of course primarily dwells in heaven, and it is in this sanctuary that Jesus Christ ministers as high priest.

### **Jesus Christ was appointed by God as high priest forever, in the superior priestly order of Melchizedek**

**HEB 7:17** *For here is the testimony about him: “You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.”*

Genesis 14:18–20 tells of Abraham meeting with Melchizedek, who was king of Salem (which would become Jerusalem). It refers to Melchizedek as “priest of God Most High”, indicating he was a priest and worshipper of the LORD. Hebrews 7:1–10 shows Melchizedek's spiritual superiority to both Abraham and the Levitical priesthood of the old covenant that came from Abraham, the priests being Abraham's descendents. One aspect of this is that because no account is given of Melchizedek's ancestry, birth or death, he is understood to have an everlasting priesthood.

**Previous sacrifices offered by priests were ultimately ineffective in dealing with sin, . . .**

**HEB 10:11** *And every priest stands day after day serving and offering the same sacrifices again and again — sacrifices that can never take away sins.*

**. . . but as high priest, Jesus Christ sacrificed for sin once and for all**

**HEB 10:12–14** *But when this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right hand of God,<sup>13</sup> where he is now waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.<sup>14</sup> For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy.*

**As high priest, Jesus Christ continues to intercede for God's people**

**HEB 7:25** *So he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

**1JN 2:1** [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] *I am writing this to you, my children, so that you will not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf—Jesus Christ, the righteous one.*

GNT

In his ongoing priestly ministry for God's people, Jesus Christ continues to intercede before God for them, speaking to God on their behalf.

**Jesus Christ is a high priest who is perfect – but can still identify with his people's humanity**

**HEB 7:26** [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *For it is indeed fitting for us to have such a high priest: holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.*

**HEB 4:15–16** [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin.<sup>16</sup> Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.*

Jesus Christ is a high priest who is himself perfect (cf. Heb 7:26 ↑; 4:15b ↑). As such Jesus Christ was able to offer himself as the perfect sacrifice and is able to remain always in God's presence to represent his people. On the other hand, Jesus Christ is also a high priest who can identify with his people's humanity (cf. 4:15 ↑). As such, being perfect yet empathetic, Jesus Christ is a high priest who will meet his people's needs (cf. 4:16 ↑).

What does Jesus Christ do in his ongoing role as high priest? How is this encouraging for you?

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Why were previous sacrifices offered by priests ultimately ineffective in dealing with sin?

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How should Jesus Christ's role as high priest affect the way we relate to God?

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## c) The Kingdom of God

NT teaching on the kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven) follows on from OT teaching on God's reign or kingship (cf. *God Reigns Supreme*, in 7. *God's Sovereignty*). It indicates that Jesus Christ's coming inaugurated a more far-reaching, spiritual dimension of God's reign. Its domain is in the hearts and minds of those who submit to God. This kingdom of God also has both a present and future dimension – existing now, but only being fully consummated at the end of the age. Then God's authority will be fully imposed in all spheres of existence – once and for all.

### The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ's mission . . .

**MATT 12:28** [JESUS:] *But when I force out demons by the power of God's Spirit, it proves that God's kingdom has already come to you.*

CEV

**MARK 1:14–15** Now after John was imprisoned, Jesus went into Galilee and proclaimed the gospel of God. <sup>15</sup>*He said, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the gospel!"*

With Jesus' mission, the time had come for the kingdom of God to "come near" (NRSV).

### . . . The kingdom of God will come in all its fullness in the future

**LUKE 21:31** [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *So also you, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near.*

The phrase "these things" refers to signs of the end of the age.

### The spiritual nature of the kingdom of God

**LUKE 17:20B–21** [JESUS:] *"The Kingdom of God does not come in such a way as to be seen. <sup>21</sup>No one will say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!'; because the Kingdom of God is within you."* GNT

The final clause of v. 21 probably means that God's kingdom is within the hearts of its people (cf. CEV text note), indicative of its spiritual nature.

## The dynamism and power of the kingdom of God

**MARK 4:26–29** He [Jesus] also said, *“The kingdom of God is like someone who spreads seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup>He goes to sleep and gets up, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup>By itself the soil produces a crop, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. <sup>29</sup>And when the grain is ripe, he sends in the sickle because the harvest has come.”*

The growth of God’s kingdom is not dependent on human effort (v. 28a) and is in fact beyond human comprehension (v. 27b). This illustrates its dynamism and power.

**1COR 4:20** *For the kingdom of God is demonstrated not in idle talk but with power.*

God’s kingdom “consists of and is based on” (AMP) spiritual power – not talk.

## The great cost of participating in the kingdom of God

**MATT 13:44–46** *The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, hidden in a field, that a person found and hid. Then because of joy he went and sold all that he had and bought that field. <sup>45</sup>“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup>When he found a pearl of great value, he went out and sold everything he had and bought it.*

Although some commentators have a somewhat different understanding, both these parables seem to be essentially illustrating the absolute cost of the kingdom of God; one must be prepared to forgo everything for it. Note the joy in doing so that is apparent in v. 44.

## Those who will enter the kingdom of God

**MATT 7:21** [JESUS:] *Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven – only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.*

**MATT 18:1–4** At that time the disciples came to Jesus saying, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” <sup>2</sup>He called a child, had him stand among them, <sup>3</sup>and said, “*I tell you the truth, unless you turn around and become like little children, you will never enter the*

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*kingdom of heaven!* <sup>4</sup>*Whoever then humbles himself like this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

Similarly in Mark 10:15 Jesus says, "...whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." These verses refer to the humility, trust and receptiveness of little children, characteristics which are required to believe Jesus' message and enter God's kingdom.

**Note: The kingdom of God is also the kingdom of Jesus Christ**

**EPH 5:5** For you can be confident of this one thing: that no person who is immoral, impure, or greedy (such a person is an idolater) has any inheritance in *the kingdom of Christ and God*.

As shown in the following section, *Jesus Christ as Lord of All*, God has granted authority over all things to Jesus Christ. This includes authority over his kingdom (cf. Luke 22:29). Thus the kingdom can be referred to as being of God and also as being of Jesus Christ.

Describe the kingdom of God as if you were explaining it to a new believer?

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How is the power of the kingdom of God manifested in and through the lives of its people?

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The kingdom of God is the most common theme in Jesus' teaching. If it is true that it is not so prominent in Christian teaching today, why is this so? Are we to some extent overlooking aspects of it?

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## d) Jesus Christ as Lord of All

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God has made Jesus Christ Lord of all things, to rule over all creation on God's behalf.

The NT speaks of Jesus Christ's lordship as being initiated or affirmed, in him being pronounced Lord of all upon his post-resurrection exaltation to God's right hand. However, note that some verses suggest that in some sense at least he was Lord of all things prior to this, speaking of his prior power or authority over all things.

### **Following his resurrection, God exalted Jesus Christ to his right hand . . .**

**EPH 1:20** This power he exercised in Christ when *he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms ...*

In seating Jesus Christ at his right hand, God exalted Jesus Christ in honor and authority above every other being.

### **. . . and God made Jesus Christ Lord of all**

**ACTS 10:36** You know the message he [God] sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the Good News of peace through *Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.* GNT

**PHIL 2:9–11** As a result [of Jesus being obedient and dying] *God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow – in heaven and on earth and under the earth –<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

Verses 10–11 speak of all people in the future acknowledging Jesus Christ's status, which itself is a current reality.

### **God has given Jesus Christ authority and power over all things . . .**

**MATT 28:18** Then Jesus came up and said to them [his disciples], "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.*

**PHIL 3:20B–21** *Our Lord Jesus Christ* <sup>21</sup>*has power over everything, and he will make these poor bodies of ours like his own glorious body.* CEV

**... God has entrusted everything to Jesus Christ – and made him heir of all things**

**JOHN 3:35** *The Father loves the Son and has put everything in his hands.* ISV

**HEB 1:1–2** [THE WRITER, TO JEWISH BELIEVERS:] Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by *his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things*, through whom also he created the world. ESV

**So, Jesus Christ has power over all other powers**

**COL 2:10** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] And you have been brought to fullness in *him* [Christ], *who is the head of every ruler and authority.* ISV

**Jesus Christ's power extends over death**

**REV 1:18** [JESUS:] I am the One who lives; I was dead, but look, I am alive forever and ever! *And I hold the keys to death and to the place of the dead.* NCV™

As the holder of the keys of death and the place of the dead, Jesus Christ has total authority over their domain – including authority over who goes in and out of them, and when.

**In the end, all Jesus Christ's enemies will be made his footstool – totally conquered**

**HEB 10:12–13** But when this priest [Christ] had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>where *he is now waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.*

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Why do you think that God has given Jesus Christ authority and power over all things?

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How do you think Jesus Christ asserts his sovereign authority today?

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What are some implications of Jesus Christ's lordship for believers?

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## Topics in This Series

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##### **1. God's Being**

- I. Basics
- II. God's Pre-Eminence

##### **2. God's Character**

- I. Holy Characteristics
- II. Loving Characteristics

##### **3. Jesus Christ**

- I. General
- II. Jesus Christ and God

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- I. General
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##### **5. Angels, Satan and Demons**

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## Overview of *The Bible Unpacked*


There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next longest edition. As such they have similar structures. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text along with questions. For more details and free downloads of all the material, go to [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net).

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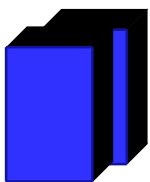
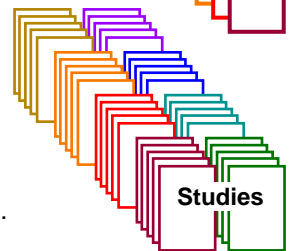
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## An Appeal on Behalf of Persecuted Christians

Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

### **Barnabas Fund** – [www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org)

It provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders.

### **Christian Faith and Freedom** – [www.cffreedom.org](http://www.cffreedom.org)

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

### **Christian Solidarity International** – [www.csi-int.org](http://www.csi-int.org)

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

### **Christian Solidarity Worldwide** – [www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk)

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

### **Compass Direct** – [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org)

This is a Christian news service providing news, reports, interviews and analyses of situations facing persecuted Christians.

### **Open Doors** – [sb.od.org](http://sb.od.org); [www.opendoors.org.au](http://www.opendoors.org.au)

It provides Bibles and other Christian materials, to prepare believers for persecution and equip them to maintain a witness to the Gospel.

### **Religious Liberty Commission** – [www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/); [www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx](http://www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx)

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also [www.idop.org](http://www.idop.org)  
Receive weekly updates by sending a blank email to [join-rlpb@hub.xc.org](mailto:join-rlpb@hub.xc.org).

### **The Bible League** – [www.bibleleague.org/persecuted](http://www.bibleleague.org/persecuted); [www.bibleleague.com](http://www.bibleleague.com)

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

### **Voice of the Martyrs** – [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com); [www.persecution.com.au](http://www.persecution.com.au)

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

*Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.'* Matthew 25:40 NCV



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