

# The Talmid



**Talmid תלמיד** a Hebrew word that means “a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is.”

*Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)*

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STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY  
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



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## DISCIPLESHIP IN AN EVIL DAY (Part 3)

### Making Disciples

**Matthew 4:18-25 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> “Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

<sup>19</sup> And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

<sup>20</sup> Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

<sup>21</sup> Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending

their nets; and He called them.

<sup>22</sup> Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

<sup>24</sup> The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

<sup>25</sup> Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan.”

The ministry of Jesus Christ began with the call of Peter and Andrew, and James and John to be disciples; and it closed with the commission given to those whom He called His disciples “to go into all the world to make disciples of all nations.”

Throughout His ministry Jesus Christ was occupied with making disciples. His ministry was devoted to teaching and training men that these men might be His disciples. From among those who called themselves disciples of the Pharisees and from among others who called themselves disciples of John, and from those who called themselves disciples of Moses, **our Lord called men to be disciples of Jesus Christ.** His

earthly life was invested in these men that they might be His disciples and that they might do the work of a disciple.

Jesus Christ is calling men today to be His disciples. If I asked you if you were a disciple of Jesus Christ, I imagine that almost without exception your answer would be, I am. But before you give an answer I would like you to understand the requirements that Christ lays upon those who would be His disciples. To that end we will devote a number of studies to the subject of the disciples of Jesus Christ, for in the light of New Testament teaching few have any right to claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ; and that profession which we would so glibly make, in light of the demands laid down in the Word of God, would soon prove to be false profession.

There is a vast difference between being saved and being a disciple. Not all men who are saved are disciples although all who are disciples are saved. In discussing the question of discipleship, we are not dealing with a man's salvation. **We are dealing with a man's relationship to Jesus Christ as his Teacher, his Master, and his Lord.** More than 250 references are made to disciples in the gospels. One cannot read through the gospels that record the earthly life of Jesus Christ without recognizing that the relationship which existed between Christ and these men whom He called to be His disciples was a unique and special relationship. It was a personal and intimate relationship — a relationship based on the *knowledge* of the person of Christ, a *love* for the person of Christ, *submission* to the person of Jesus Christ, and *obedience* to the commands of Jesus Christ.

The term *disciple* is used in several different ways. Until we are able to distinguish these, we will not comprehend what is involved in discipleship. **First** of all, the word *disciple* means *a learner, a pupil, a scholar, one who comes to be taught*. The idea of teaching and learning is preeminent in the word *disciple*. In the fourth chapter of the gospel of Matthew as our Lord was walking by the sea, He saw two brothers, Peter and Andrew. They were partners in a fishing business. Later, He saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who were active partners in a lucrative fishing business along with their father. Our Lord summoned these men to

Himself, away from the successful pursuits in which they were engaged. He called them to follow Him. They abandoned their nets, forsook their business, and became close followers of Jesus Christ.

Then in [Matthew 5:1-2](#), we read: **“When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying.”** The relationship between Jesus Christ and those who at this point called themselves His disciples **was the relationship of teacher to pupil**. They were learners. Recognizing themselves to be ignorant and considering Christ the fount of wisdom and knowledge, they turned to Him for instruction. They were what could be called the *curious*. That which characterized them at this point and stage in their development was a curiosity about His words, His doctrine, His teaching. As disciples, pupils who had heard a teacher who differed from any other teacher to whom they had submitted their minds, they were curious about His teaching and about Him as a teacher. **They were willing to be taught.**

We find in the gospels that the ministry of Christ was largely devoted to teaching, and that teaching was given to multitudes who called themselves His disciples. They testified of Him that never had man **“spoken”** as this man **“spoke”**. There were many teachers and rabbis, but this man came with a unique message and a unique method, and they were captivated by His teaching. They were willing to listen to what He had to say. So Christ's ministry was largely a ministry of teaching those who had come to Him as His disciples.

This teaching ministry was undergirded by the ministry of performing miracles. In the **fourth chapter of Matthew's** gospel, after our Lord had called Peter and Andrew, and James and John, and they had left their ship, their nets, and their father, Jesus Christ ([verse 23](#)) **“was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.”**

The miracles that Christ performed in His early ministry were to undergird His teaching. His miracles authenticated His message. He had called these men to be His students, and to prove to them that He had the right to teach, He performed miracles. It was only after He had established His authority by the miracles that He performed, that we read in [Matthew 5:1](#), **“... his disci-**

**ples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them.” The *miracles*, then, *were subservient to the teaching; the works were subservient to the words.***

Great multitudes were willing to attend His teaching; great multitudes were willing to listen to what He taught. Although they were evaluating His words, they made no decision about it. They did not register any acceptance of it; they made no commitment to it; they did not turn from the false teaching of the false teachers in which they had been brought up. But they were willing to continue to listen to Him teach.

**Mark 4:34 (NASB)**

<sup>34</sup> and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

We find in [Mark 4:34](#) a reference to this fact: **“He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.”** *He expounded all things.* The background of this summary statement is found in the **thirteenth chapter of the gospel of Matthew** where our Lord gave eight parables to His disciples. We read in [Matthew 13:2](#) that **“and large crowds gathered to Him.”** Christ taught these multitudes but He taught in the form of parables. **“Then,”** we read in [verse 36](#), **“Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them. ...”** Christ’s exposition of His parables was to those who called themselves His disciples.

We find, again, a reference to this fact in [Mark 9:30–32](#): **“From there they went out and began to go through Galilee, and He did not want anyone to know about it. For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.” But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him.”** We find from this line of truth that there were many whom we would call curious ones who were termed disciples, who recognized something new and fresh and unique in Christ’s teaching, and who were will-

ing to be taught. Their exercise was an intellectual exercise.

They came to be challenged and stimulated intellectually without making any personal commitment to the truth that He was teaching or to the person of the teacher.

We would deduce from a passage such as the **sixth chapter of John’s gospel** where more than 5,000 men, not counting women and children, came together to hear Him teach and to spend all day long sitting at His feet, that the number of the curious who called themselves disciples must have been very large. If Christ could attract a group that numbered more than 5,000, who were willing to spend the entire day to hear Him teach, the multitude of the curious must have been innumerable. That was why the Roman authorities as well as the Jewish authorities were so concerned as to where this movement that Christ was beginning would end; for they could see Christ spreading His doctrine among multitudes that would overthrow the Pharisees and overthrow Rome, and enthrone Jesus Christ. **Multitudes who were only curious were called disciples.**

Giving ear to the teaching of Christ did not make one a true disciple. We read in [John 8:31](#): **“So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine.”** Christ is saying to the curious that simple submission to His voice did not make them disciples— that there must be a reception of the truth, and there must be a response to the truth before they were eligible to be called true disciples.

Today there are multitudes of men who are willing to give their minds to the Word of God to study it as an intellectual pursuit, to listen to what Jesus Christ has to say. And they may even submit themselves to the teaching and preaching of the Scriptures from an evangelical pulpit. **But these people have made no response to that truth or to the person of Jesus Christ.** They would call themselves disciples of Christ, but Christ disowns them. It is possible to approach the Word simply to have one’s intellect stirred, to do what the Athenians did — to listen to some new thing — without any relationship to the truth or without any impact of that truth on one’s life. Such a person may call himself a disciple, **but on the authority of the Word of God, he is not.** He is among the curious who sit to be titillated and tantalized without any response to the truth that is present-

ed. **“If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine.”**

But there is a progression from the **curious** to the **convinced**. These are those who gave themselves perhaps out of curiosity to the Word of God, who had an intellectual curiosity as to what Christ would say and teach, and as they listened to His words and beheld His works, they were convinced of the truth of His word and the truth of His person. They were convinced disciples. I find a reference to this in [John 2](#) at the conclusion of the miracle of the turning of water into wine in Cana of Galilee. [John 2:11](#) records: **“This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him.”** His disciples **believed** on Him. Here were people who had been challenged to follow Him, to listen to Him teach. They had received His teaching; and, when they beheld this miracle, they were convinced of the authority of the person and the truth of His word. John tells us that they believed on Him.

A reference to this is also seen in [Matthew 16:13](#): **“... He was asking His disciples, ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’** What explanations have you heard about My words, about My works, about My person? Some identified Him with John the Baptist, some with Elijah, others with Jeremiah or one of the prophets. In [Matthew 16:15](#) **“He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’”**

The answers being given were answers by the curious. But Christ wanted to see if they had progressed beyond curiosity in their understanding of His person and His words. So He asked them directly, **“But who do you say that I am?”** And in [Matthew 16:16](#) **“Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’** Here is an affirmation of faith in the **person** of Christ. He is the Son of the Living God. It is also an affirmation of faith in the **work** of Christ. He had come to be the Messiah. It was then that Christ pronounced a blessing upon Peter. Why? **Because Peter had passed beyond the curious stage to the convinced stage**, and he gives this great affirmation that brought our Lord’s commendation. **He is now a committed disciple.**

The same truth is emphasized in [John 6:67-69](#).

Multitudes are turning away from Christ because of His inflexible word that men must believe on Him. In [verse 67](#) Jesus said to the twelve, **“You do not want to go away also, do you?”** Simon Peter answered Him, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”** What Peter is affirming in this passage is that, in spite of the defection by the curious, there are those who are convinced. They are called disciples because they are convinced of the truth of His person and His work.

Although we have seen that those who are convinced represent a progression beyond the merely curious, we do not yet have our Lord’s concept of what constitutes a disciple. For in the gospels discipleship is not the result of the satisfaction of curiosity, nor is it even the result of a conviction that Jesus Christ is truth, and His word is true, although those are prerequisites. **One becomes a disciple in the Biblical sense only when one is totally and completely committed to the person of Jesus Christ and His word.** Apart from that commitment to Him and His word, one has no right to call himself a disciple of Jesus Christ.

In [Luke 9:18](#) as Christ was praying, His disciples were with Him. To those who called themselves disciples, our Lord laid down the most rigid requirement ([verse 23-24](#)): **“And He was saying to *them* all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me [that is, if any man will be my true disciple], he must deny himself [say no to himself], and take up his cross daily and follow Me.’ ‘For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.’”**

The key to true discipleship is found in [verse 23](#). Christ said, “If anyone who began as a curious inquirer and consequently called himself a disciple, as a result of exposure to my teaching is convinced that I am the Messiah, the Son of God, and will commit himself totally and completely to Me, that one then becomes My disciple but not until then. If any man will be My disciple, let him say no to himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

See it again in [Luke 14:27](#): **“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”** Our Lord had talked a great deal about the cross which He presently would bear when He went to



Jerusalem. He laid it down as a stringent requirement: if men were not willing to identify themselves with Him in His rejection and in His death, no matter how convinced they might be of His person or His work, apart from that commitment to Him and identification with Him, they could not be His disciples. He had called them disciples before, and now He says they cannot be His disciples — why the change? Before this they were curious, perhaps even convinced, but not committed; and discipleship depended upon that total, complete commitment to Jesus Christ. [Verse 33](#) of the same chapter says: **“So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”**

**Discipleship involves** commitment. It *involves* identification with Christ in His shameful death. Discipleship *involves* renunciation of oneself, it *involves* setting aside one’s own aims, goals, ambitions, desires in life. It *involves* sacrifice for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ. It *involves* setting aside one’s own will and one’s own rights to his life and acknowledging that Jesus Christ has the right to be obeyed, the right to rule. **Our Lord said that if a man is not willing to forsake all that he has, he cannot be His disciple.**

See how this worked out in [John 6](#): Our Lord had concluded His teaching following the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000; He had fed them with bread from heaven, physical bread, and He reminded them that He had come to provide them with spiritual bread from heaven. He told them that He was the bread of life ([verse 48](#)) and that He had come down from heaven to give life ([verse 51](#)). He told them ([verse 53](#)) that, except they eat His flesh and drink His blood, they would have no life in them. Our Lord pressed them for a decision. They who had been curious now have been convinced, and they must come to the place of a committal.

But we read in [verses 60–66](#): **“Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, “This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, “Does this cause you to stumble?” “What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?” “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and**

**are life.” “But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. And He was saying, “For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.”** [Now notice these words] **As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.”**

**Who were these defectors?** Certainly many were from among the curious who came to hear Him teach, who found that what He taught was too costly and they forsook Him. There were also in that number some who, though they had begun as curious, were convinced that Jesus Christ was the Son of God who had come to reveal truth, to redeem and to reign, but, when it came to giving themselves totally and completely to Him, they abandoned Him and walked with Him no more. These, although they were termed disciples, were not disciples in that New Testament sense that our Lord demanded in [Luke 9](#) and [Luke 14](#), that a disciple is one who has a consuming passion for the person of Christ, whose heart is set upon the person of Christ, who has an unshakeable confidence in the word of Christ and is completely committed to Christ in service and obedience. Intellectual assent to His truth, to His doctrine did not make one a full New Testament disciple. Not until one was willing to commit himself, his life, his mind, his heart, his will to that truth and to the person of Jesus Christ could he be called a disciple of Jesus Christ.

In all honesty before God, would we have to confess that we have stopped somewhere short of that which is the New Testament standard? **Discipleship to Jesus Christ means that Jesus Christ has an absolute right to one’s life, to do with it as He sees fit; and, while we have given Him certain rights and allowed Him to control in certain phases, we have retained rights to certain areas ourselves.** We are not disciples. Discipleship means that Jesus Christ possesses every material thing that I have, it is His. It isn’t a question of what I am willing to give to Him; it is a question of what I hold back from Him that is rightfully His; and until I can recognize that everything I have belongs to Jesus Christ, I am not a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has the right to be the one object of my affection; and until Jesus Christ is paramount and preeminent in my affections, I am not a disciple of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has the right to fill my mind with the knowledge and the

truth of Himself, and as long as I let my intellect rule and trust it, I am not a disciple of Jesus Christ.

**As long as Christ can reveal His will to me and I choose to debate and to decide whether or not I will do it, I am not a disciple of Jesus Christ.** I may have passed from the curious to the convinced, but I am not committed to Him. We repeat it again: a true disciple is one who has a love for the person of Christ, confidence in the word of Christ, and is completely committed to Christ in service and obedience. According to [John 9:28](#), the blind man whom Christ had healed was reviled by his fellow Jews. They said, **“You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.”**

Discipleship to Christ is contrasted with discipleship to Moses. How did the nation of Israel become a disciple of Moses? If you think back to the experience of the forefathers in the wilderness, you will recall that God sent Moses to Israel and Moses came with a message from God. Moses authenticated that message by the miracles that substantiated the revelation God had given him. The nation believed Moses because of his word and because of his works. The nation submitted to Moses, and when Moses led them out of Egypt into the wilderness, they followed him. They obeyed Moses. When Moses told them to go, they went; and when Moses told them to stay, they stayed; when Moses told them to give, they gave. Moses was recognized as God’s spokesman. The children of Israel became Moses’ disciples because they heard a word, they believed it, they responded to it, and submitted to the authority of Moses.

How had this blind man become a disciple of Jesus? He heard Christ’s word, and he saw the sign — he experienced in his own body the miracle of healing. Then he came and threw himself at the feet of Jesus in submission and obedience and worship. **He became His disciple by that act of submission.**

We do not become disciples simply by satisfying the intellectual curiosity of the curious. We do not become disciples simply because we are convinced of the truth concerning the person and the work of Jesus Christ. We become disciples when we, convinced by the Word of God, commit ourselves totally and completely to Jesus Christ to become His disciples.

Our desire in these studies of the New Testament teaching on discipleship is to unsettle you who have become so comfortable, to disquiet you who have become so satisfied, in order that we might become a people who because of our love for Jesus Christ and submission to His Word, and commitment to His person, are disciples in truth.

## **CORAM DEO (Before the face of God)**

When we ask God for guidance, the first place we should look for it is in his Word. We should ask, “What does the Bible say about this decision I’m facing?” God will bring to mind Scriptures we’ve read, sermons we’ve heard, or promises we’ve memorized. As we’re faithful to read our Bible daily, we’ll be surprised how often we find it addressing the very issues we’re facing. The psalmist wrote: **“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path”** ([Psalm 119:105](#)). The written Word will be our guide through this dark world.

A Chicago bus driver was making his stops. His bus was filled with passengers—shoppers, people going home from work, teenagers. At the Clark and Webster stop, two men and a woman got on. The seasoned bus driver immediately called out, “Everybody, watch your valuables. Pickpockets on board!” All eyes fixed on the newcomers, as women clutched their purses, and men guarded their wallets. The pickpockets didn’t break stride as they promptly exited through the middle doors. Their plans had been spoiled by the driver’s warning.

The Bible is like that bus driver, given to conduct us safely on our journey through life. When you ask God for guidance, tune your ear first to the warnings and wisdom in His written Word.

That’s one of the basic ways God guides his people .





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## Hebrews 7 – Overview Part 1

What will be studied in these next several chapters is something that is reserved for the mature believer. The background of this epistle involves Jewish readers who had professed belief in Christ and were being tempted to abandon their faith in the Messiah and return to Judaism under the threat of continued persecution that was described in [Hebrews 10:32-36](#).

**<sup>32</sup>But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: <sup>33</sup>partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; <sup>34</sup>for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. <sup>35</sup>Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. <sup>36</sup>For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:**

These Hebrews needed to understand, appreciate,

and embrace the concept of having and maintaining a mindset of spiritual “**endurance**” (Greek word “*hupomeno*”, to stay under). The phrase “**have need of**” is in the present tense which indicates that the believer never outgrows their need of spiritual endurance. The most difficult and the most discouraging trials most often come when a believer is called to obey God’s will when the fulfillment of that will seems so very far away. However, that is exactly why believers need this “**endurance**”. Faithfulness during the time when God’s promises seem unfulfilled is the measure of the believer’s obedience and spiritual maturity. However, what must be clearly understood is that this spiritual endurance is built and developed in the believer’s life through trials (often severe) and the testing of their faith. The Christian life demands “**endurance**” and being able to wait patiently on the outworking of God’s will in the believer’s life.

These are not small truths that are being addressed, and that is probably one of the main reasons why the author gave such a strong warning in [Hebrews 6](#) to those believers who were not going on into maturity. This is a very important point of application. The modern church needs to consider that the “**solid food**” and sound doctrine of Scripture is not revealed by the Holy Spirit to those who are spiritually lazy or apathetic. [Hebrews 7:4](#) is the only command given in this entire chapter and it is that believers might give careful consideration (as contrasted with a superficial reading) to this teaching on Melchizedek. What this lack of imperative tense verbs alerts the reader to is that this section of Scripture is primarily a doctrinal teaching, and it is the doctrinal sections that require the greatest mental effort to understand. The word “**consider**” is the Greek word “*theoreo*” and it is used of someone who looks at something with interest and purpose. It normally indicates the careful observation of the details of what is being looked into. However, the nuance of the meaning is that it also includes partaking of that which is being looked into. I.e., believers are to consider something so that they can experience what has been learned and perceived. I.e., there is something in this particular teaching that the author knows is critical for the reader understanding the next four chapters. Until Christians develop a mindset that is willing to make the effort needed to be good students of Scripture, it is unlikely that any will ever go deeply into the Scriptures themselves or go very deeply in their relationship with Christ. What believers ultimately become as Christians is not something that

just happens without effort. The Christian life is composed of this unique blending of God's divine influence and sovereignty working in the believer, as well as a strong measure of human effort on the believer's part. The benefit of the human element is developed through simple hard work and effort on their part.

Now, it is important at the outset to appreciate that the entire section from [Hebrews 7](#) through [Hebrews 10](#) is theologically demanding and structurally complex, but at the same time it is one of the most biblically rich portions found anywhere in Scripture. The exaltation of Christ found in these chapters has very few places elsewhere in Scripture with which to compare it. To a relatively casual and indifferent Christian, this section of Hebrews will be very hard for them to follow – almost painful at times to try and endure. I say that simply because I do not want anyone to think that the discussion of these chapters will be easy. They will not be easy. At times, this teaching may bore you. It may seem totally irrelevant to where you as the reader are spiritually. However, the truths embedded in these next several chapters of Hebrews is as spiritually profound as can be found anywhere in Scripture. These chapters will unfold truths about Christ and I know that I am not capable of teaching this with the depth and profundity that it rightfully deserves – and especially in an overview process.

In beginning the overview of [Hebrews 7](#), it is important to keep in mind what is the main subject of the next four chapters as well as the predominant theme of the entire letter. The governing theme is the high priestly ministry of Christ and the amazing benefits that are accrued to the believer because of that ministry. The author's underlying theme is that Jesus Christ is the believer's "**great high priest**". Please remember what was mentioned in the last study that the question that we have to find the answer to is simple: if the believer's sins have been eternally forgiven and if the atonement has been fully accepted by God the Father, then why would the believer need a high priest? That is an underlying question that must be answered if we are going to understand this portion of Scripture. One small hint is that a believer's relating to God will ALWAYS be

through their union with Christ. No believer will ever be able to come to God apart from Christ and on their personal merit. It must always be on the merit of Christ and Christ alone. Apart from Christ believers have nothing to offer God whatsoever. One of the primary functions of a high priest was that of being a mediator between God and the people. He not only represented God to the people, but he also represented the people to God. He was a mediator, a go-between, an intermediary. In a very similar way, Christ will eternally be every believer's Great High Priest whose sacrificial life is the eternal mediatorial means by which believers will forever be able to approach God and for that reason Christ will maintain His high priestly ministry on the believer's behalf forever.

Now, what we want to do as we approach the next four chapters is to try and visualize what the author is really trying to do. For me personally, what the author is about to do in these next four chapters is both profound and overpowering. He is moving from the elementary to the advanced. It is like he is going from basic arithmetic to advanced calculus. In Scriptural terms, he is moving from "**milk**" to "**solid food**". [Hebrews 7-10](#) is like taking an advanced course on Christology, but not for the purpose of just conducting some kind of complex and sophisticated teaching. His discussion is still pastoral. He is seeking to renew his congregation's hope and endurance during the colossal trials that many were experiencing. Those people who often seem to have the greatest difficulties in their life are those people who have lost hope and who no longer have either the desire or the will to fight the spiritual battle before them. As mentioned previously, there is only one imperative verb in [Hebrews 7](#). It is the word "**consider**" in v4. In fact, the verb "**consider**" is the only imperative verb for the next four chapters until [Hebrews 10:35](#) when the author encourages these Hebrews to "**not cast away**" their "**confidence, which has great reward**". If I can oversimplify the issue here, it is like this entire section is bookended with "*I want you to think about something so that you will not throw away your spiritual confidence*". No wonder the author begins in [Hebrews 11](#) to talk about what it means to live by faith.

So, [Hebrews 7-10](#) is not the kind of doctrinal teaching for someone who is not very serious about their walk with God. This section of Scripture will be very, very boring to them because it will take some level of cere-



bral effort on everyone's part to understand and appreciate. The depth of these next four chapters is as intriguing as any portion of Scripture that a believer can read. In fact, these truths will not be very stimulating for anyone who is indifferent to the demands that Christianity makes on their life – and there are many demands and they are inescapable for the committed Christian, but they are all based on doctrine. Doctrine is for living. It is the foundation for meaning and purpose in our life. No believer can live a meaningful and purposeful Christian life if they do not have some understanding of doctrine. Doctrine provides the foundational truths on which biblical faith is built.

Now, it is important to understand one of the major thrusts of [Hebrews 7-10](#). It is a deep and profound teaching that is found in these four chapters. This is as doctrinal a passage as can be found anywhere in the New Testament, and it will require a great deal of concentration, deliberation, and personal focus to fully absorb. This is not “milk”. This is “**solid food**” and before even entering this passage, that aspect of what is being studied must be understood. I.e., there has to be an appreciation for what the author is teaching. One of the primary thrusts of these four chapters is to help the reader understand what happened in the throne room of heaven and what is currently happening in the heavenly Holy of Holies. Whatever it was and currently is, the believer can be assured that it is not static or inactive. There is much that is happening right now in heaven and it is all for the believer.

If a believer is ever going to be effective in their Christian life, then they must understand something about the “**Holy Place**” and how to enter into it. It is important that I plant a seed in your mind relative to the “**Holy Place**” and get you to start thinking about it and how it applies to your personal Christian walk. It could be stated this way: If a believer does not know how to enter the “**Holy Place**”, then their life will simply lack the supernatural power and strength that it takes to live out the Christian life in a way that deeply honors the Triune God. God the Father and Christ the Son dwell in the heavenly “**Holy Place**”, in the heavenly “**Holy of Holies**”, and it is in their presence that the believer finds the strength, the courage, the endurance, the will, and the desire to live out their life in honor of God the

Father and Jesus Christ. If a believer bypasses this aspect of their Christian life, their life will be filled with spiritual mediocrity and indifference and for the most part will have no significant impact in the world around them. Each believer must determine and understand what it means to “**draw near to God**” and to partake of Christ's high priestly ministry on their behalf. I am only planting that seed into your heart in this study. The question is whether or not most believers even know that there is a Holy Place into which they are called to enter, and if they do, then do they ever enter into it.

[Hebrews 9:24](#) gives a glimpse of what is actually happening in heaven itself,

**<sup>24</sup>For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;**

Right now at this very moment, Christ is doing something for every believer. It is an incredibly important work that cannot be underestimated, but unfortunately is rarely understood. Christ's ministry for the believer is not something that can be taken lightly. Without this ongoing work of Christ on the believer's behalf, they cannot lead a meaningful and purposeful Christian life. This is one of the reasons why the author mentions in [Hebrews 7:19](#) about what it means to “**draw near to God**”.

**<sup>19</sup>for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.**

In fact, one of the author's final exhortations in this doctrinal section comes in [Hebrews 10:22-25](#) and begins with drawing near to God.

**<sup>22</sup>let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**

No believer can “**draw near to God**” apart from this amazing work that Christ is performing on their behalf. It is spiritually impossible and is spiritual arrogance on our part to think that we can. This work of Christ on the believer’s behalf is taking place in God’s heavenly sanctuary. It is a place that each believer must learn to enter into and to do so on a regular basis and in a meaningful way. Any meaningful work of God in a believer’s life will ALWAYS be because of and through Jesus Christ – ALWAYS. A believer trying to live the Christian life in their own strength and without Christ will only lead to personal frustration and spiritual impotence.

Think of [Hebrews 7-10](#) this way - it is like the author is opening two curtains to look into. One curtain is here on the earth and the other curtain is in heaven. There is something quite supernatural and remarkable beyond what the Hebrews could see on the earth. All they could physically see was the temple, the priests, and the sacrifices that were taking place. However, it must be appreciated that it is what cannot be physically seen that has the greatest meaning and importance for the believer’s life. [Hebrews 11:1](#) expresses it in this way when it declares,

**<sup>1</sup>Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.**

The entire Christian life is built around those things that believer’s cannot physically see. Believers cannot see Christ, they cannot see the Holy Spirit, they cannot see the throne of God as Isaiah did, and they cannot see the supernatural world that exists around them. However, each of these very much exist and are central to the believer’s walk with God. [Hebrews 8:1-2](#) sums it up this way when it says,

**<sup>1</sup>Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, <sup>2</sup>a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.**

This is the main point of everything that the author is talking about. This is what he wants his readers to see and fully grasp. It can be put another way.

Christ is NOT just sitting at the throne in heaven. He is the “**Minister of the sanctuary**”. He is the “**Minister....of the true tabernacle**”. He is performing a high priestly function on every believer’s behalf. He is ministering in the “**Most Holy Place**” in eternity on their behalf. [Hebrews 8:6](#) says that He is mediating a “**better covenant**” for each believer.

So not to appreciate what it is that surely exists, but is not physically visible will be to miss the very thing that the believer needs the most. What will be found in going through [Hebrews 7-10](#) is that the author is always contrasting the earthly with the heavenly. He is always talking about the great work of Christ that took place and is continuing to take place in the heavenly places, in places that are physically unseen, but that must be seen spiritually. Just as an example, [Hebrews 9:6-14](#) displays how the author does this. While reading this, just notice how the author develops the contrast between the earthly and the heavenly. The contrast is the point! The purpose in all of this is to readjust how we think and to readjust how we perceive things. We think earthly, but God wants us to think heavenly. We live for the temporal, but God wants us to live for the eternal. We pursue personal goals, but God wants us to pursue godly goals. We live for the present, but God wants us to live for the future. It is almost as if we can both live and think exactly the opposite of what God desires.

**<sup>6</sup>Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. <sup>7</sup>But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance; <sup>8</sup>the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. <sup>9</sup>It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—<sup>10</sup>concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. <sup>11</sup>But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. <sup>12</sup>Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained**

**eternal redemption.** <sup>13</sup>For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, <sup>14</sup>how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

For the Jews there were their ordinances, their various institutions, their ceremonies, their specific offerings, and all of the types and figures given to them, not to mention the temple and the priesthood. They lived behind the curtain of an earthly temple and an earthly sanctuary, and unfortunately it prevented them from seeing that which was heavenly. Everything just mentioned were pictures and types and foreshadows of that which was “**heavenly**”.

[Hebrews 8:5](#) calls it the “**the copy and shadow of the heavenly things**”. Whether the Jews understood it or not, each one of the various items just mentioned were simply a prefiguring of the “**heavenly**”. [Hebrews 3:1](#) said that they had a “**heavenly calling**”. [Hebrews 6:4](#) said that they had a “**heavenly gift**”. [Hebrews 8:5](#) and [Hebrews 9:23](#) talk about “**heavenly things**”. [Hebrews 11:16](#) speaks of a “**heavenly country**”. [Hebrews 12:22](#) talks of the “**heavenly Jerusalem**”. In fact, [Hebrews 8:1-2](#) sums it all up when it says,

<sup>1</sup>Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, <sup>2</sup>a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

[Hebrews 9:23-24](#) says,

<sup>23</sup>Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens (or the earthly things) should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. <sup>24</sup>For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

I.e., there is something that has taken place and is taking place in heaven right now that is more than remarkable. There is something far superior to what can be seen from an earthly perspective, and to not see that and to not understand that is really one of the greatest tragedies that a believer can experience. So many Christians are totally absorbed in and enamored with that which is earthly. It is almost as if they have never really seen and understood that that which is in heaven is what really gives true meaning and brings lasting fulfillment in their life. They spend their entire life living for that which has no eternal value. Their erroneous perspective is like a giant thief that is constantly robbing them of the treasures of their spiritual inheritance – and they never see it. It is as if the current church age is cursed with a mere outward appearance of godliness that lacks any meaningful substance whatsoever. No matter how much a godly man may preach or teach and no matter how much truth someone may hear, it just seems that the spirit of this age has enthroned itself in people’s hearts and minds and they have become “**dull of hearing**” ([Hebrews 5:11](#)) and unwilling to respond to God’s Word and His Spirit no matter what. They simply cannot see or understand “**heavenly things**”.

Some of what is in [Hebrews 7-10](#) may seem a little foreign and remote simply because most Christians have never been brought up in the things that these chapters discuss – the priesthood, various covenants, sanctuaries, temples, animal sacrifices, vessels of the ministry, high priests, and much more. However, what these chapters deal with are matters that are extremely relevant to the believer’s present understanding of what genuine Christianity really is, what it stands for, and how it is being worked out in their lives. To miss what [Hebrews 7-10](#) says to the believer may be one of the greatest tragedies of the Christian life that a believer can experience. One of the great misfortunes of the Christian church is that many have become so familiar with their religious trappings that they simply take sacred things for granted and ultimately have developed beliefs, practices, and institutions which are founded not on the truth of God’s Word, but on misconceptions of the true nature of the gospel dispensation in which they live. The tendency is to actually embrace the very things that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ were intended to actually supersede. In many parts of the world organized religion is abounding and authentic Christianity is being replaced with something that is both superficial and unbiblical, both in content and practice. Jesus once declared that

when He returned that He wondered if He would even find true faith on the earth. It seems that trying to communicate what real Christianity is and what it demands from those who name the name of Christ is becoming more difficult every day. As the author stated in [Hebrews 5:11](#), people have simply become “**dull of hearing**”, and the concern is that much of what seems to pass as Christianity is not Christianity at all, but simply a cultural illusion and a very artificial replacement for that which is true, authentic Christianity. No matter what kind of opinion that we may have about ourselves and our Christian life, in reality there are very few genuine disciples of Christ who are denying themselves, taking up their cross, and following Christ without reservation – very few. That kind of biblical lifestyle seems far removed from much of what passes as culturally Christian. Organized American Christianity is a very comfortable Christianity that costs people very little and in this author’s opinion has very minimal eternal value, if any at all. It is difficult not to think of Jesus’s words to the church at Laodicea when He rebuked them and said that they were actually “**wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**”.

There are many commentators who believe that [Hebrews 7](#) is the primary focal point of the entire letter because it begins to address the key issue for the Hebrews – the priesthood. The longest doctrinal section of this letter begins with [Hebrews 7](#) and ends at [Hebrews 10:18](#) and it would be difficult to make one chapter any more important than the next. However, the entirety of [Hebrews 7](#) is concerned with explaining the relationship between Christ and Melchizedek. [Hebrews 7](#) is composed of three major sections – v1-10 which deals with Melchizedek, v11-19 (use of “**therefore**”) which deals with the need for having a new priesthood, and v20-28 which deals with the absolute greatness of the new high priest. It appears that the author’s entire purpose in [Hebrews 7](#) is to establish the superior nature of Jesus’ priesthood and to prove biblically and theologically that it is far superior to the Levitical priesthood.

Now, that entire teaching may seem a little foreign and not that important to the average Christian, but it must be kept in mind that everything in the life of

the Hebrews was centered on the priesthood – everything. For them the priesthood was highly exalted and critically important. Their entire religious system revolved around the priesthood, even to the point that they were so obsessed with it that even when they would depart from God they would create false systems of worship that still retained priests. Obviously, fundamental Christianity does not relate well to priests and to all of the paraphernalia associated with them – the robes, the tassels, the strange looking hats, the different looking collars, confession booths, monasteries, and all of the other things that are often associated with them. In some sense, it could be said that priests live in a world of their own. John MacArthur had some very interesting information relative to the priesthood when he stated that,

*The priests really were the ones who connected men with God...and the Latin word for priest is ‘pontifex’. Take it apart, and it means bridge builder. The priest was the one who built the bridge from man to God; and to the Jew, the priesthood was really very, very important. To them, you see, religion was access to God; and since they couldn’t go directly to God, they had to go through a mediator; and the priests were designed to be mediators.*

This could easily be seen in what happened on the Day of Atonement when only the High Priest could go into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat. The High Priest was the “bridge builder”, the mediator that went to God on behalf of the people. [Hebrews 9:7](#) says,

**“But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance;**

[Hebrews 9:22\(b\)](#) simply states that “**without shedding of blood there is no remission** (or forgiveness of sins).” So, for the Jews the issue was really a very simple one – there had to be sacrifices made for sins committed, and the only ones who could make the sacrifices were the priests, and most importantly the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. In the economy of the Old Testament, when an individual repented of their sins they validated the sincerity of their repentance by offering a sacrifice unto the Lord, but the priest was always



the one who had to actually carry out the killing of the animal and the actual offering of the blood. So, the spiritual connection between the individual and God was the priest. He was absolutely critical to the spiritual life of the Hebrew nation. The priest was the “mediator” between man and God. [Hebrews 8:6](#) and [Hebrews 9:15](#) both call Christ the “Mediator”.

**“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.**

**<sup>15</sup>And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.**

Now, obviously we live in the church age and are not required to make the kind of animal sacrifices as the people did in the Old Testament, but we still need a Mediator, or someone who can go to God on our behalf. We have nothing to offer God that can actually merit forgiveness. Forgiveness has always required a blood sacrifice. The Day of Atonement was built around a blood sacrifice being taken into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the mercy seat. In the New Testament, believers still have a Mediator who has gone into the Holy of Holies to offer His own blood. The believer’s personal need for a mediator has not been removed. When a believer actually stands before God, it will NOT be on their own personal merit for they have none. It will always be on the merit of their Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. [Hebrews 9:12](#) says,

**<sup>12</sup>Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.**

[Hebrews 9:24-26](#) speaks in more detail of this event when it says,

**<sup>24</sup>For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; <sup>25</sup>not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters**

**the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—<sup>26</sup>He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.**

Now, one of the things that is very important to understand in all of this is that not only did the high priest have to offer sacrifices for the people, but he also had to make sacrifices for his own sins. Every time that he made a sacrifice for someone else, he would also have to make a sacrifice for himself. The point of all of this in very general terms, and one of the things that the author is obviously doing, is driving home the simple fact that the Levitical priesthood that the Hebrews based their entire life on was tremendously flawed. What the Holy Spirit is saying in these four chapters is that now there is another High Priest and there is now a better covenant. The new High Priest, Jesus Christ, does not have to offer sacrifices daily and He does not have to offer sacrifices for Himself as did the earthly priests. He is the “main point” ([Hebrews 8:1](#)) of everything that the author is trying to communicate. For the Hebrews, they must see that you never go back to the things that are flawed, imperfect, inconsistent, and sinful themselves. The priests, the temple, and even the sacrifices were only types. Unfortunately, what religion has done is to make the types the antitypes.

Now it would be utterly foolish to miss the personal application both as individuals and as a church. The way that the author says this is in [Hebrews 10:15\(a\)](#),

**<sup>15</sup>But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us....**

I.e., the Holy Spirit is saying something very important, and the personal application is found in [Hebrews 10:19-25](#) when it says,

**<sup>19</sup>Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup>by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, <sup>21</sup>and having a High Priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, <sup>25</sup>not forsaking the assembling of ourselves**

**together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.**

Each of these verbs is in the subjunctive mood. Mood represents the way in which something is perceived. It represents the individual's attitude of mind towards something, as well as the manner of affirmation. There are two primary moods – the indicative (actual) mood and the subjunctive (possible) mood. The subjunctive mood is the first step away from that which is actual. I.e., what is possible needs to become active, or in other terms, the believer has to make it actual in their life.

Believers need to “**draw near**” to God and they need to “**hold fast**” to their confession, and they need to constantly be exhorting one another in these various areas of their Christian life. Then in [Hebrews 10:35-36](#) the author closes out with these words of great encouragement when he says,

**<sup>35</sup>Therefore do not cast away your confidence (also in the subjunctive mood), which has great reward. <sup>36</sup>For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:**

The whole point that the author has consistently made throughout all of Hebrews is that Jesus is superior. He has done this since [Hebrews 1](#). He has proclaimed that Jesus is superior to Moses, superior to Joshua, superior to Aaron, superior to the angels, superior to the Old Covenant, and superior to anything and everything in which the Jews placed their confidence. And the same is true for New Testament believers – Christ is superior to anything and everything that we may substitute in His place! How desperately this message is needed today. How desperate the last days church is for the heart of this message – that Jesus is far superior to our creature comforts, our conveniences, our worldly goods, our riches, our superficial and plastic religion, our pursuit of worldly goals, and our living for ourselves rather than for Christ. The application could go on and on and on! Every believer desperately needs to be reoriented and redirected to Christ. The church desperately needs a new and fresh hunger and thirst for the things of God. Believers desperately need to “**draw near**” to God and to “**hold**

**fast**” to a godly confession. Each believer desperately needs to take God at His Word and to become obedient followers of His Word and not just casual listeners of it. In [Hebrews 10:38](#), the message is that God has no pleasure in those who “**draw back**” or “**shrink back**”.

There is a great falling away from the faith today, and it is occurring not in the world, but in the church. For many “professing” Christians, the things that are sacred to God are an inconvenience to them – things like the Word of God and His church, things like a deep seated commitment to Christ, things like prayer and personal Bible study, and things like obedience. Believers have become overtaken with an entertainment mentality in the church. Churches have become like huge retail stores trying to offer men and women every conceivable option possible. Churches are competing for members so that they can continue the explosion of building their religious empires. We are a church age that has become addicted to ourselves rather than to Christ. However, what the author of Hebrews is saying is the very exact opposite – that believers are to be men and women who “**hold fast**” to a biblical faith, to a steadfast commitment to Christ and His Word no matter what the cost may be, and who persevere in that faith until the very salvation of their souls is complete. One of our greatest fears as pastors and teachers is that somehow we fail to communicate these essential truths in a meaningful and compelling way and that our churches just casually drift further and further away from this spiritual holding fast to the things of God, both in our personal lives and in the life of our churches.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Precept, Hebrews 7.

<sup>2</sup>Precept, Hebrews 10.

<sup>3</sup>Precept, Hebrews 7.

<sup>4</sup>Vines, 106.

<sup>5</sup>Long, 80.

<sup>6</sup>Owen, 165.

<sup>7</sup>Gooding, 157.

<sup>8</sup>Gooding, 157-158.

<sup>9</sup>Allen, 407-408.

<sup>10</sup>MacArthur, Melchizedek

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