

# 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



**Dr. Eddie Ildefonso**

*West Los Angeles Living Word Christian Center  
Los Angeles, California*

*Professor, Covington Theological Seminary  
Honduras, Pakistan, Zimbabwe Extensions  
International Dean, Covington Theological  
Seminary*

## DISCIPLESHIP IN AN EVIL DAY (Part 4)

### The Great Announcement

“All authority in heaven and on earth has  
been given to me.” [Matthew 28:18](#)

### In Heaven and on Earth

The titles “**Lord**” and “**Savior of the world**” are familiar in our Christian vocabulary. Apart from the unfolding drama of redemption, they are mere slogans. In fact, these phrases have taken on a less radical meaning in our ordinary usage today. We often speak of “**making Jesus our personal Lord and Savior**,” but this obscures two

important points.

**First, we do not *make* Jesus anything**, especially Lord and Savior. It is because he already is Lord and Savior that we are freed from the fear of death and hell. **All authority** belongs to him already.

**Second, the gospel announces Jesus Christ not only as your personal Lord and Savior or mine, but as *the* Lord and Savior of the world.** All authority ***in heaven and on earth*** belongs to him. As the risen Lord, he is given by the Father the power to judge and to justify. Salvation is not just “**fire insurance**” or “**sin management**.” The gospel promises far more than going to heaven when you die. It is an all-encompassing pledge from God for the total renewal of creation. It involves the resurrection of our bodies and the liberation of the whole creation from its bondage to sin and death. What insurance plan, global market, or government agency can claim this kind of authority over life and death? When he returns, Jesus will judge every person and nation and consummate his kingdom in everlasting righteousness and peace. We cannot limit salvation to our private world of the soul; the whole cosmos was created by the Father, in the Son, through the Spirit, and it is upheld and finally redeemed in the same way.

The privatized view of Jesus merely as “**personal Lord and Savior**” does not really provoke controversy today. After all, our non-Christian neighbors shrug, “**Whatever works for you!**”

However, these ascriptions of praise to Jesus Christ were subversive on the lips of early Christians in the Roman Empire. After all, they were titles that Caesar had ascribed to himself. People could believe whatever they wanted to in private. Whatever they found morally useful, therapeutically valuable, or spiritually and intellectually enlightening was fine. In fact, when it came to gods, the more the merrier!

The Roman Empire was a melting pot of cultures and religions. However, whatever varied religions and spiritualities it tolerated, Rome insisted that they contribute to the civil religion that included the cult of the emperor. God could have his heaven, or the inner soul, but Caesar was “**lord of the earth.**”

The early Christians were not fed to wild beasts or dipped in wax and set ablaze as lamps in Nero’s garden because they thought Jesus was a helpful life coach or role model but because they witnessed to him as the only Lord and Savior of the world. Jesus Christ doesn’t just live in the private hearts of individuals as the source of an inner peace. He is the **Creator, Ruler, Redeemer, and Judge of all the earth.** And now he commands everyone everywhere to repent. All idols are shams. All power and authority not only in heaven but on earth is Christ’s. He has cast Satan out of the heavenly sanctuary, where he prosecuted the saints day and night ([Revelation 12](#)). And now, having bound the strong man, he is looting his house on earth, taking back what rightfully belongs to him ([Matthew 12:29](#)).

[Matthew 12:29 \(NASB\)](#)

**29 “Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.”**

We can only imagine the offense that such testimony as the following might have aroused in Caesar or his emissaries:

[Colossians 1:16-20 \(NASB\)](#)

**16 “For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.**

**17 He is before all things, and in Him all**

**things hold together.**

**18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.**

**19 For it was the *Father’s* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,**

**20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.”**

Later in Colossians Paul writes,

[Colossians 2:13-15 \(NASB\)](#)

**13 “When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,**

**14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.**

**15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”**

The “**rulers and authorities**”—whether sin, death, and Satan themselves or their earthly lackeys who spread destruction to the ends of the earth—are already divested of their ultimate power. Like the deceiver himself, they fall over themselves in a stupor of pride, oppression, and persecution of the church, but they will all be brought down; their time is short ([Revelation 18](#)). Even in his “**weakness**,” God has made a mockery of the powerful of this age ([1 Corinthians 1:25–29](#)).

[1 Corinthians 1:25-29 \(NASB\)](#)

**25 “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

**26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;**

**27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,**

**28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,**

<sup>29</sup> **so that no man may boast before God.”**

Caesars may still rule and demand the proper temporal allegiance of their subjects ([Romans 13:1–7](#)), but they rule at the pleasure of the Sovereign of the universe. Disease may stalk and death may claim our bodies, but it no longer has the last word: **“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”** ([1 Corinthians 15:55](#)). Our fate does not lie in the impersonal forces of nature. We are not at the mercy of insurance companies and health care providers. Not the invisible hand of the market but Jesus Christ is Lord of all powers and principalities.

Of course, devout Jews agreed that there was only one universal sovereign, **Yahweh**, and stoutly refused any collusion with Gentile idolatry. However, they just as sharply rejected the apostles’ transfer of the name of **Yahweh** in the prophets ([Joel 2:32](#)) to Jesus ([Acts 2:21](#); [Romans 10:13](#)).

[Joel 2:32 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>32</sup> **“And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls.”**

[Acts 2:21 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>21</sup> **“AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”**

[Romans 10:13 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> **“For “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”**

They regarded as blasphemy such statements as we find in [Acts 4:12](#): **“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”**

The boundaries of Israel are now redrawn around Jesus Christ. There is a new kingdom, from heaven, spreading its dominion in this world. It is not a kingdom of power and glory, with an earthly capital. It is a kingdom of grace and forgiveness, overcoming the death and condemnation under which the world lies helpless.

Are you rattled by the magnitude of opposition to the gospel, increasingly even in the nations once nominally committed to a vaguely Christian culture? Does the Great Commission seem threatened by the gathering forces of secularism, militant Islam, consumerism, violence, and moral relativism? These are among the **“principalities and powers”** that Christ has vanquished objectively, although their effects have not yet been finally and forever eliminated.

New Testament scholar **Oscar Cullmann** compared Christ’s resurrection and return in glory to **“D-day”** and **“V-day”** during World War II. The landing assault broke the back of the Nazi forces, but insurgent battles raged until victory in Europe was fully realized. Even now, Christ has crushed the head of the serpent and is setting prisoners free. All authority in heaven and on earth is given to him. Are you distressed by your lack of understanding, zeal, or faithfulness in your own discipleship, much less in your appreciation for the Great Commission? Christ is Lord! He has forgiven you all of your sins and has given you a new heart. In spite of every setback, you are assured that your Shepherd-King has already won the war!

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

As Christ’s embassy of grace, the church is commissioned with the most important vocation in the cosmos right now: the forgiveness and renewal of sinners. The church’s ministry—preaching the gospel, baptizing, communing, and caring for the growing flock—is already determined by its ascended King. To say that this is the most important work to be done in the world right now is not to say that it is the only important work to be done. The church cannot say or do everything that needs to be said and done by Christians working alongside non-Christians in society.

What about Jesus’s miraculous signs? Aren’t they indicative of the all-encompassing renewal of creation? Jesus not only forgives and renews but heals and raises the dead. Yes, all of this is true. The kingdom is just this all-encompassing, but not everyone was healed. Not only were the resurrections few in number, but the beneficiary ended up dying again on another day. They were not raised in glory, as Jesus was and we will be one day.

What we have in these miraculous signs is a testimony to Christ and his kingdom's inauguration, not a pattern for our work of consummating it. The age to come is breaking in on this present evil age, but it's still this present evil age. Jesus healed the paralytic and said, **"Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven,"** provoking charges of blasphemy from the religious leaders ([Matthew 9:2](#)). Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, **"Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?'"** But *that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*—he then said to the paralytic—**"Rise, pick up your bed and go home"** ([Matthew 9:4–6](#), emphasis added). Jesus's works were signs that all authority was given to him to judge and to forgive, not object lessons for our fulfillment of the Great Commission.

The central mandate of the Great Commission—to proclaim the gospel to everyone in the world—used to be taken for granted by Christians, especially by evangelicals. Convinced that salvation comes through hearing and believing the gospel, generations of ordinary Christians left the comfort of kith (acquaintances) and kin (kinsfolk) to hazard unfamiliar and often unwelcoming engagement with those who had not yet heard the Good News.

*Continued in next edition...*



**Pastor Gary C. Fleetwood**  
Chime Bell Baptist Church  
Windsor, South Carolina

*Professor, Covington Theological Seminary  
Aiken, South Carolina Extension  
Dean, Covington Theological Seminary  
Country of Romania*

## Hebrews 7 – Overview Part 3

When looking at [Hebrews 7:11-28](#), it is broken down into basically two parts – v11-19 and v20-28. The first section deals with the insufficiency and imperfection of the Levitical priesthood system in contrast with the superiority of the new priestly system that is **"according to the order of Melchizedek"** (v17). In essence what the writer is saying is that the priestly order of Melchizedek replaces the priestly order of Aaron. Now, whether that means much to us can be debated, but it meant everything to the Hebrew. Their entire belief system was based on the Levitical priesthood, but if it was a deficient and ineffective means of actually obtaining eternal forgiveness of sins, then how important was it for the author to make this argument. He has to convince the Hebrews how utterly worthless it would be for them to go back into something that has absolutely no life transforming power and no saving value whatsoever.

The second section deals with the absolute greatness of the new High Priest that is of **"the order of Melchizedek"**. In v22, He has become **"a surety of a better covenant"**. I.e., He is the guarantee of the new covenant that God has made. It is not simply that He gives a guarantee, but rather that He is the guarantee. In v24, He is a priest that **"continues forever"**. In v25, He is



“able to save to the uttermost”, or completely and forever. The Amplified Bible says “**completely, perfectly, finally, and for all time and eternity**”. V25 says that He “**always lives to make intercession**” for those whom He saves. In v26, He is said to be “**holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners**”, and “**higher than the heavens**”. In v27, He “**offered up Himself**”. And in v28, He has been “**perfected forever**”. Now, each of those descriptions of Christ as the new High Priest is there to expose the utter insufficiency and imperfection of the Levitical priesthood. The priests could not guarantee anything. Their ministry never continued, but was only temporary and then someone else would have to take their place. They could save no one. Their intercession was limited. They were unholy, not innocent, and they were defiled. That is why they had to make a sacrifice for themselves before they could ever make a sacrifice for someone else.

Obviously it is difficult for modern 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians to relate to these kinds of issues, but this particular argument and approach must be made in order to help convince the doubting Hebrew believers of the utter superiority, supremacy, and preeminence of Jesus Christ. Just think for a moment of how this may apply to us today in the church. Just think of the multitudes of professing Christians who do not really have any meaningful regard for Christ. You may ask the question, “*How can you know that? How can you know that someone takes very little interest in Christ? Isn’t that more of a personal issue?*” Well, not really, not really at all. This is a God thing, a God issue, a God priority. The average professing Christian in our religious culture generally just gives a token response to the things of God. The vast majority have no meaningful or even regular time with God. Just think about that for a moment – never spending any personal time in the Word of God. I wonder what God thinks about that? Many people lead very busy lives and on some days time is a very precious commodity, but is that a legitimate excuse for ignoring the most important means that God has given to believers for having fellowship with Him? What about words like “**seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness**” in [Matthew 6:33](#)? What does that really mean for a Christian? [Colossians 3:1-2](#) says,

**<sup>1</sup>If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is,**

**sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**

What is Paul trying to say in those verses? [Hebrews 11:6](#) declares that “**God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him**”.

In eternity when a believer stands before God and gives an account of their life, it is doubtful that any of someone’s excuses for not seeking His kingdom first will have much weight or significance. In the final analysis, it will simply be a matter of having misplaced and misaligned priorities. It would be good for every God-honoring believer to evaluate if the time that they allot to God’s Word is really sufficient enough to have a meaningful impact on their lives or not. In the same way that countless Christians seem to have time for many things other than God’s Word or any life transforming fellowship with Him, many professing Christians seem to treat the church with a measure of indifference. They have taken something that God has declared sacred and made it what [Hebrews 10:29](#) declares to be a “**common thing**”. If we were really honest about the spiritual condition of many professing believers’ commitment and faithfulness to just the simple things of God, the obvious conclusion would have to be one of spiritual indifference, disinterest, and apathy towards Christ and His church. The most frightening thing about all of this is how easily people seem to become spiritually numb to the only thing that really matters – a heartfelt commitment to Jesus Christ. Obedience has become optional. Faithfulness to the things of God has become non-compelling in light of personal preferences and objectives. So, even though this section of Hebrews may at first seem somewhat difficult to grasp and relate to, in the overall landscape of the modern day church, this thrust of the author to convince believers of the incredible preeminence of Jesus Christ seems to be much more relevant than maybe is gleaned at first glance.

Now, so far it has been seen that the primary thrust of [Hebrews 7-10](#) is all about the high priestly ministry and work of Christ. Nothing can be more important to the Christian life than understanding the depth and profundity of the work of Christ on the believer’s behalf. However, in reality this amazing work of Christ has been the ultimate focus of the writer since the opening chapter and specifically since [Hebrews 2:17](#) which says,

**<sup>17</sup>Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**

This verse is the first place in the New Testament that Christ is actually called a “**High Priest**”. One of the things that may not be apparent is that the description of this particular work of Christ is solely unique to the book of Hebrews in the New Testament. In fact, this particular ministry of Christ is not mentioned anywhere else in the entire Bible. Paul never once calls Christ a priest or a high priest, and Peter who is the one who calls believers a “**royal priesthood**” never mentions that Christ is a high priest. Even if we look at the final picture of the heavenly kingdom that is provided in Revelation, it never refers to Christ as a high priest. Hebrews is the only book in the entire Bible that mentions this unique aspect of Christ’s ministry for believers. For the Hebrews, the concept of having “**another**” high priest in [Hebrews 7:11](#) was not one that they would readily accept. The actual word for “**another**” is the Greek word “*heteros*” which means another of a different kind. The word “*allos*”, which means another of the same kind, would have been used if it was just another high priest from the same Levitical system. Obviously, that was not the case at all.

For the Hebrews their entire religious life revolved around the Levitical priesthood – everything. So, this idea of having a different kind of high priest was a very radical departure from what they had always known. Today it would be similar to someone coming along and saying that the Catholic church would no longer be governed by a pope or that churches would no longer have pastors. You can imagine how difficult that would be for people to just accept. However, in essence that is exactly the kind of radical paradigm shift that the author is addressing. To make it even worse, what he is saying is that the entire Levitical system that all of their religious life was based on was no longer of any value to them. Just imagine someone coming along today and declaring that the New Testament church as we know it was no longer a valid spiritual entity. In fact, that is exactly the scenario that will happen at the rapture of the church. The church will be re-

moved and will no longer be that channel of redemption that it has been for nearly the last 2000 years. However, a very powerful and false church will still exist and will still offer people a very false salvation.

It is still important to appreciate and understand that the entire Levitical system – the priesthood, the temple, and all of the sacrifices – were merely types, and temporary at best. At a very foundational level, they were never able in and of themselves to save anyone. They were never saving in their function, but were only there in a symbolic way to symbolize that which was to come. In fact, in [Hebrews 8: 5](#) the writer actually identifies all of the Levitical trappings as just “**the copy and shadow of the heavenly things**”. [Hebrews 9:9-10](#) reiterates the same thing when it declares,

**<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.**

[Hebrews 10:8-9](#) says,

**<sup>8</sup>Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them” (which are offered according to the law),<sup>9</sup>then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second.**

Just think of the absolute shock that this would make on a committed Hebrew. It would be similar to someone telling you that all of the time and toil that you have put into your church has had absolutely no temporal or eternal value whatsoever. For me personally, I would find that most difficult to even consider. My entire Christian life has been deeply rooted in the confines of the local church and its work in the world. I cannot imagine even listening to someone who tried to diminish the value of the church. However, that is exactly what is happening here to the Jews. Everything that they placed value in was being done away with, replaced, and annulled. In the Jews mind, they simply did not understand what the author meant when he said that God took no “**pleasure**” in the sacrifices, or that “**He takes away the first...**”? To the Hebrews, these are some of the most radical statements that anyone could ever make to them. They

believed that they were the only ones who actually were saved and that they were the only people on the face of the planet that had a legitimate religious system – and now someone is telling them that it was all spiritually worthless. Just think for a moment of all of the people that are involved in the cultic Jehovah Witnesses or the Mormon church. They think that they are the only ones saved, and in reality they are the ones that are not saved. Everything that they do from week to week and year to year is spiritually worthless. It has absolutely no eternal value whatsoever, and in the end will leave them utterly destitute and without Christ. Have you ever tried to witness to a Jehovah's Witness or a Mormon? It almost seems impossible to reach them. They are so enamored in their false doctrines concerning Christ that they have completely missed Him.

So what is being said here is exactly the same kind of thing. The Jews deeply believed that they were the only **"people of God"** because they had been given these various ordinances and now the writer is saying that all of that has changed and that what the Levitical system did for them was not something that could actually save them. This is absolutely more than they can conceive. For many of these Hebrews who are actually considering going back into Judaism, maybe the most significant statement that the author makes is in [Hebrews 10:4](#) when he says,

**<sup>4</sup>For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.**

*"What? What are you talking about?"* They thought that that was exactly what all of the sacrifices were doing – they were dealing with their sins, taking their sins away, removing their sins. Then, to actually make it even worse, [Hebrews 7:18](#) says,

**<sup>18</sup>For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness,**

The impact that the words **"annulling"** and **"unprofitableness"** and **"weakness"** had on the Jewish mindset would be almost impossible to fully explain. The word **"annulling"** simply meant that the **"former commandment"** that produced the Levitical priesthood system was being completely set

aside. Now just imagine that for a moment. This is amazing – the entire Jewish system of worship had become completely negated. All of the paraphernalia of the sacrificial system, the whole ceremonial system – all of it was canceled, annulled, and done away with entirely. God assured its end just a few years later in 70AD when He allowed the Temple to be destroyed and all of the sacrifices stopped. If there was no more temple and no more sacrifices, then there was no more need for any priests. That was all they did – minister in the temple. Just imagine one day waking up to the news that the United States government, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights had been completely annulled and done away with? Just think of how you would feel when you heard that. You would be mad, outraged, confused, and probably militant in your reaction and disapproval. Well, that is how many of these Hebrews would have felt. Even though they had come to Christ and were convinced of His salvation, they still had trouble letting go of their heritage and their religious roots.

In the Greek language, the word **"annulling"** is a word that has an incredibly strong meaning. It means to declare something invalid, to not recognize it any longer, to make it ineffective, inoperative, and nonexistent. It is a word that describes the doing away of something that has been established and was used of annulling a treaty, a promise, a law, or a regulation. It was a word used for removing a man's name from a document. The only other place that this particular word is used in the New Testament is in [Hebrews 9:26](#) which speaking of Christ says,

**<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.**

In this verse, the words **"put away"** are the same Greek word for **"annulling"**, and it means that at the cross that the guilt and power of sin were entirely canceled. Now, I find that to be really good news!

In the Greek Interlinear Bible the word **"unprofitableness"** is actually translated as **"uselessness"**. The law was useless in the sense that it could not save or bring about inward changes in a person. An outward code and a system of rules may actually point someone in the right direction (and the moral law of God certainly does that), but innate to any set of rules is the simple fact that in and of themselves they

have no power to change the heart. Then to make the description of what had taken place even more vivid to the Hebrews, the writer reinforces his defense by using the word “**weakness**”. It is a word that describes the utter powerlessness of the Law to produce righteousness and a life pleasing to God.

All of the elements of the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial ceremonies were types pointing to the ultimate antitype which was Christ. A type never has any saving value – never. So, with that in mind, one of the things that the author is consistently doing throughout the entire letter to the Hebrews is trying to convince these believers that they cannot make the type to be the antitype. He simply does not want them to trust in something that has no saving value. He does not want them to replace that which is real and powerful for their lives with something that is not. Unfortunately, this replacing one religious thing for another happens all of the time. As an example, there are many instances where say, church membership or baptism, has become a false substitute for genuine salvation. People have been convinced that if they are a member of a church, or maybe that they have “made a decision” and have been baptized that that is what saves them. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth. The substitutes, even though each is important and meaningful after salvation, do not possess any kind of saving value whatsoever prior to salvation. In fact, they may become the very hindrance and obstacle that actually prevents someone from being saved. Unfortunately, that is probably the case in more instances than not. People and denominations have made the substitute to be the real thing – which it is not. Just think of all of the people, for instance, that may have listened to someone like Robert Schuler and his Crystal Cathedral gospel and he convinced them that they had salvation. Think of someone like Joel Osteen who offers his meaningless gospel to people, writes his worthless books, and somehow convinces people that they are actually saved. Men like this have successfully replaced the real means of salvation with a false means of salvation and unfortunately people have fully embraced it. I cannot think of anything worse than having to stand before God and answer for these kinds of incredible spiritual atrocities being pawned off on the church where you have removed the real means of salvation and

replaced it with a false gospel that is absolutely worthless and damning.

Now, a key element that [Hebrews 7](#) introduces is the word “**covenant**”. Covenants do not have the same importance to us today that they had to the Jewish nation. To them, their covenants were critical. The word “**covenant**” is used 28 times in the New Testament, and 16 of those are in Hebrews, and 14 of that 16 are in [Hebrews 7-10](#). So, one-half of the number of times that the word is used in the New Testament is in [Hebrews 7-10](#). It has to be one of the most important terms in this section to understand. The first mention of the term “covenant” is [Hebrews 7:22](#) which says,

**<sup>22</sup>by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.**

In the Scriptures, a “**covenant**” was the vehicle that established the terms for a relationship. It would be similar to the covenants that a couple makes at a wedding ceremony. The vows and promises that they make to each other are what establish how their marriage should be viewed and lived out between them. When someone goes into one of the armed services, they take an oath, and that oath is what establishes how they are to view what it is that they are doing. It is to govern their behavior. So, when God made various covenants, He did so in order to establish how His relationship to His people should be lived out – both from their side and His side. The covenants established how God would relate to men and how men should relate to God. So, when Jesus Christ came, what He did was to establish a new and “**better covenant**”, or a new way in which believers would relate to God. Jesus had declared this to His disciples when they were taking the Passover meal. In [Matthew 26:29](#) He declared,

**<sup>28</sup>For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins**

So for the Jew, the establishment of this new covenant mentioned here in [Hebrews 7](#) clearly meant that the old covenant that they operated in had been superseded and done away with, and as a part of that old covenant was the priesthood of Aaron and the tribe of Levi. If the priesthood of Aaron had been done away with, then the law or covenant that established it also had to be done away with. What is being discussed here was so radical to the Jews that it almost defies explanation – doing



away with the sacrifices, doing away with the priesthood, doing away with every ritual, and doing away with every feast day. Everything that made them Jewish is being done away with? How can that be? It would be like taking away everything that makes us Americans – apple pie, hamburgers, baseball, football, freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Now, as New Testament believers, all of this should really be fairly easy to see and understand. We understand that the Law of God, both moral and ceremonial, cannot save and never could. It was never given as a means of salvation. [Hebrews 7:11 and 18-19](#) reiterate this simple truth.

**<sup>11</sup>Therefore, if (implies that it was not) perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?**

**<sup>18</sup>For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, <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.***

Now, it is important to take a look at this last phrase of [Hebrews 7:19](#) – “**through which we draw near to God**”. It seems as if this idea of drawing near to God is really at the very heart of what the author is trying to do in Hebrews – to help believers “**draw near to God**” during some very difficult times in their life. The phrase “**draw near to God**” is not a very used phrase in the New Testament. There are only four uses in the New Testament and one of those is negative and occurs in [Matthew 15:8](#) and is a quote from [Isaiah 29:13](#) speaking about how insincerely people, and specifically the leaders, actually drew near to God.

**<sup>8</sup>“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. <sup>9</sup>And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”**

In [Matthew 15:3](#) Jesus set the stage for what he was going to say,

**<sup>3</sup>He answered and said to them, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?”**

I.e., their tradition was actually causing them to violate the very Word of God. They had elevated their tradition and teaching above what the Word of God declared. This is really a very strong rebuke. Outwardly the Israelites drew near to God verbally and they said all of the right and honorable things about God, but the problem was that in reality their heart was very far from Him. Isaiah actually says that their worship was vanity, and one of the evidences of that vanity was that the doctrines that men taught had become more important to them than the commandments of God.

This same scenario is so shockingly prevalent today that it almost needs no explanation. Churches of all denominations have developed many cultural and traditional ideas about God that are far removed from Scripture. Church traditions actually invalidate the Word of God in many cases. For instance, in many denominations they practice what is known as “baptismal regeneration”. This is a complete travesty of the doctrine of salvation, regeneration, and justification. Young babies are sprinkled and considered at that point to be a part of the kingdom of God. That doctrine of man has completely invalidated the Word of God in those churches, men fully ascribe to it, and the consequences lead to eternal damnation. In essence, many people are attending churches, giving financially to that church, singing songs, reading Scripture, and honoring God with their lips, but in reality they are not even saved. Just think of how deadly the “easy believism” gospel has become. Entire church movements are founded on a false premise. Many segments of the church have made the gospel non-demanding.

The point in all of this is simple – it is not enough to just “**draw near to God**” with our mouth and our religious activities and by participating in some kind of spiritual formality. Salvation is not a mere theoretical religious exercise. To the contrary, salvation is a very real work of God in a person’s life and it has very real results in their life. Salvation is something that actually changes a person, something that actually transforms their life. The changes really happen, and if they do not

happen then in essence salvation has never really occurred. The new believer is given the indwelling Holy Spirit and a new heart and those two things have an immediate impact on the new believer's life. This idea of just being a member of a church or having said a prayer at some time in your past, but without any significant long-term evidence of real salvation having occurred, has no eternal value whatsoever. In just the next several verses after this, Jesus offers a very stinging rebuke and says in [Matthew 15:14](#),

**<sup>14</sup>Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."**

"**Let them alone!**" Wow! How spiritually dangerous is that?

Now, the positive idea of drawing near to God is only used in three (3) other places in the New Testament – [Hebrews 7:19](#), [Hebrews 10:22](#), and [James 4:8](#).

**<sup>7:19</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.**

**<sup>10:22</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>4:8</sup>Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.**

Before going any further, the obvious question must be asked. What benefit, what profit, or what value is there for Christians if in reality they may choose not to "**draw near to God**" in their life? What if believers become so enamored with their lifestyle, their possessions, their creature comforts, and all of their extra-curricular activities that they subtly displace true worship and honor of Christ with a mere Christian façade? What if in reality all that believers do is simply go through the motions of Christianity, but never really draw near to God. What if in reality we never saw ourselves this way and were

just simply perpetuating another meaningless religion that made people comfortable.

Personally, I believe that within the American Christian culture that this is the norm and not the exception and easily describes the vast landscape of cultural Christianity today – a people who only draw near to God with their lips and traditions, but not with their heart. It describes a people who go through all of the motions and rituals of Christianity and who are simply satisfied with a Sunday religion, but never really "**draw near to God**" in the true sense of the meaning. Spiritually this is deadly! One of the points that has been previously made is that one of the ultimate goals of this entire letter is to try and help these Hebrews know what it means to enter into the most Holy Place, and then to encourage them to do that very thing. This is the place of rest and a spiritual refuge. This is that place where believers are given strength, courage, and faith to become what God wants them to be. [Hebrews 10:19-20](#) alludes to this 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,**

The "entering" is the issue, and it is the believer's right and privilege to actually enter into the true Holy of Holies and into the very presence of God that Christ has secured and consecrated for them. The Greek word for "enter" is "*eisodos*" and literally means "a way in".

Now, what does it actually mean to "**draw near to God**"? The words "**draw near**" are the Greek word "*engizo*" and it simply means to approach or to come near to something. In [Hebrews 10:22](#), the author really gives the heart of "how" someone draws near to God when he says "**let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith**". The word "true" is "*alethinos*" which means true in the sense of that which is genuine and authentic. It refers to that which measures up to or consists of all that makes someone the person that they would be expected to be. I am an architect and just by the nature of that profession, I have to measure up to a certain standard before I can be licensed and function as an architect. You would not want to have heart surgery by a doctor who was academically last in his class and whose last ten patients had died during surgery. There has to be some way to

measure the reality and substance of what someone says that they actually are.

When reading [Hebrews 10:19](#), what it is saying is that believers have the privilege of entering into “**the Holiest by the blood of Jesus**”. They have the privilege of entering into the very presence of God. The mercy seat was located in the Holy of Holies. It was the place where the Atonement was both made and accepted when Jesus took His precious blood into the Holy Place. Please remember that everything that took place in the earthly temple was simply a “picture” and a “snapshot” of what actual in heaven. [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.**

Even today as Christians and as God’s children, entering into the presence of God is not something that is automatic. There has to be sincerity, genuineness, honesty, and earnestness that is real. A “**true heart**” is what God requires if a believer is to have any level of meaningful fellowship with Him. This is not God requiring some kind of unobtainable perfection on their part, but just a genuineness of heart, a true heart, and a sincere heart. If a believer wants to truly “**draw near to God**”, then that is what is required, and it will take some level of introspection and evaluation on their part to ensure that that is how they approach God. Many times all many believers give God are the leftovers, the crumbs of their day, and they fail to enter into His presence with the kind of sincerity and honesty that He actually requires, and for the most part their fellowship with Him at an intimate level is almost negligible. Are they forgiven? Yes. Are they His children? Yes. The issue, however, is not one of forgiveness or being a part of God’s family. The issue is one of sincerity and genuineness – and that is what is often lacking.

The author also says in [Hebrews 10:22](#) that believers are to draw near in a “**full assurance of faith**”. It appears from all that the author has previously talked about that these Hebrews did not have a “**full assurance of faith**”. To the contrary, they were wavering and drifting and thinking about going back

into something that had no meaningful value for their life whatsoever. The very thing that they lacked was faith, and the simple fact that they lacked faith meant that they could not have any assurance. If Christians do not really believe God, how in the world can they ever think that they could have assurance of their salvation? Paul addressed this in [Romans 5:1-2](#) when he said,

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

The believer’s “**access**” to God is twofold. First, it is always “**through**” Christ. Whenever a believer comes to God, it is always through the person and work of Christ. No one has access to God apart from Christ. In fact, that is the primary reason why Hebrews states on five different occasions that Jesus Christ will be our High Priest “**forever**”. It is because apart from Christ we have no access to God. Our access is **through** Jesus Christ. Even though we would like to think we do, we have **NO** merit of our own relative to access to God – no merit whatsoever. All of our righteousness is of no spiritual value relative to our access to God. Even at our very, very best, we still have deep rooted sin within us. So, believers must come to God through the person and work of Jesus Christ. The word in [Romans 5:2](#) for “**access**” is “*prosagoge*”. The word is made up of “*ago*” which means to bring, and “*pros*” which means facing. However, what does not come out in just reading the text is that the Greek word actually refers to someone who brings or escorts another person into the presence of a third party. The French have a word that they use called “*entrée*”, and it is the word that they use when someone is clothed and prepared properly to come into the presence of a king or dignitary. Now, that is exactly what Jesus Christ does for the believer. He clothes them with His righteousness, cleanses them with His own precious blood, and then brings them into the full favor of God the Father. He provides their access to God. The NIV and the Amplified Bible use the word “**introduction**”, or that Jesus provides our introduction to God. To make it even better, the verb “**have**” (“**have access**”) is in the perfect indicative tense which means that believers have a permanent access. The perfect indicative tense says that something happened in the past, but still has an ongoing reference to the present. It is the tense that stresses that what happened in the past has

an important relationship to the present. So, the believer's "access" is because of something that happened in the past, or the work of Christ on the cross, and it is a permanent access. In fact, the word "stand" is also in the perfect indicative tense speaking of the permanence of the believer's salvation.

Secondly, however, what Paul says in [Romans 5:2](#) is that the "access" itself also occurs on the believer's side through "faith". At some point in their life, every believer simply has to believe God. They have to believe His Word. They have to come to a personal conviction that what God says is true and that their entire life can be entrusted to Him. If that never truly happens in a believer's life, then they will find themselves like these Hebrews and wavering every time something difficult and unpleasant happens. In fact, just to reinforce that this is the thrust of what the writer is saying, in [Romans 5:3-5](#) he writes these words about "tribulations" (trials, sufferings, troubles).

**<sup>3</sup>And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; <sup>4</sup>and perseverance, character; and character, hope. <sup>5</sup>Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

So, the one single thought that we want to leave [Hebrews 7](#) with is that we have a great High Priest, one who is able to save us to the uttermost, or completely. He is "higher than the heavens" and has "offered up Himself" on our behalf. This is exactly what the author will conclude in [Hebrews 8:1](#) when he 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.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Culver, 629.

<sup>2</sup>Precept, Commentary.

<sup>3</sup>Precept, Greek.

<sup>4</sup>Phillips, 237.

<sup>5</sup>Culver, 630.

<sup>6</sup>Phillips, 231-232.

<sup>7</sup>Wuest Hebrews, 180.

<sup>8</sup>Wuest Hebrews, 180.

<sup>9</sup>Wuest Romans, 77.

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