

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 NEEDED NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



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DISCIPLESHIP IN AN EVIL DAY (Part 6)

The Great Announcement

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

Exodus and Conquest

The Gospel and the Kingdom

The Big Map: Exodus and Conquest

**Exodus and Conquest in the Old
Testament**

**Exodus and Conquest in the
New Testament**

The Kingdom (Conquest) They Were Expecting The Kingdom (Conquest) That Came

So now Jesus stands before the apostles and, right at the commencement of the conquest, leaves! In [Acts 1](#), Luke reminds the recipient of his report, Theophilus, that his Gospel narrated “**all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God**” ([vv. 1–3](#)).

Jesus was raised “**after his suffering**.” There is no exodus without the Passover. The original event was the trial by which the Spirit of God passed over the houses in Egypt whose doors were sprinkled with blood and brought death to the rest of Egypt’s households. The old-covenant Passover was the annual participation of Israelites in that event of judgment and deliverance. Especially poignant is [Isaiah 53](#), prophesying the advent of the Suffering Servant who will bear “**the sin of many**,” will “**make many to be accounted righteous**,” and “**makes intercession for the transgressors**” ([vv. 11–12](#)).

Instituting the Supper on the eve of his crucifixion, with the ambient noise of bleating Passover sheep, Jesus said,

“This is my body, broken for you; my blood of the new covenant, shed for many for a remission of sins” (see [Matthew 26:26–28](#)). This last will and testament was put into effect at the cross ([Hebrews 9:15–22](#)). While the sacrifices of the old covenant covered over sins until the day of final redemption, Jesus Christ offered himself, once and for all. **“Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised *eternal inheritance*,”** not just the inheritance of the land of Israel, which was only a type ([Hebrews 9:15](#), emphasis added). Our High Priest entered not the earthly replica but the heavenly sanctuary itself, with his own blood, **“now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf”** ([Hebrews 9:24](#)).

Even after his exodus through the waters of death, Jesus led his disciples through a new wilderness in forty days of preparation prior to his ascension. There were ten appearances of Jesus Christ after his resurrection, including his appearance to five hundred people in Galilee ([1 Corinthians 15:6](#)). Now there is an intense period of instructing the disciples **“and speaking about the kingdom of God”** ([Acts 1:3](#)). It was like a Berlitz seminary education in just over a month.

Joshua and Jesus are really the same name in Hebrew (*Yeshua*, meaning **“God saves”**). And now, just as the first *Yeshua* led the Israelites into Canaan at the end of forty years, the second *Yeshua* ends his forty days by entering into the heavenly Canaan by conquest.

I mentioned above the significance of the theme of “eating and drinking with God” in the Old Testament. This “eating and drinking” formula is not merely a sign of fellowship but a covenant-making meal. Adam and Eve ate without God, as they chose the fruit he had forbidden, and the lush Garden became a wasteland. Moses, Aaron, and the elders “ate and drank with God” at the top of Mount Sinai. The theme continues with the vision of eating and drinking with God in the land of Canaan.

However, Jesus brought the new wine of God’s kingdom. The mourning ministry of John the Baptist is overcome by the merry ministry of Jesus. In fact, disciples of John asked why Jesus’s disciples do not

fast, even though they and the Pharisees do. **“Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?”** Jesus answers. **“The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast”** ([Matthew 9:15](#)).

During these forty days between the resurrection and ascension, meals—eating and drinking in the presence of God—are central. In [Acts 1:4–5](#) Luke reports, **“And while staying [or *eating*] with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, ‘you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’”**

In [Luke 24:36–43](#), the eating and drinking is especially stressed, first, as an occasion for Jesus to prove that he is not a ghost. “Does a ghost eat and drink? Does a ghost have flesh and bones as you see that I have?” Peter reports later in Acts that Jesus appeared **“not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, *that is*, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead”** ([Acts 10:41](#)). But this eating and drinking is also emphasized as a new-covenant meal through which Christ assures his disciples of their forgiveness of sins. The words and actions of Jesus in these postresurrection meals follow the formula that Jesus used in the upper room when he instituted the Holy Supper.

Table fellowship is a central motif for the joy of the kingdom (international banquet), and it is rightly included as a central part of new-covenant worship (**“the breaking of bread”** in [Acts 2:42](#)). Just as the two disciples whom the resurrected Jesus meets on the Emmaus road in [Luke 24](#) hear him *expound himself from all the Scriptures* and then recognize him in *the breaking of the bread*, so too in the upper room again we see Jesus’s ministry of the Word and the Supper as the double assurance of—and sharing in—his victory. Paul would tell the Corinthians that the cup of blessing and the bread that is broken are a **“participation in”** the body and blood of Christ ([1 Corinthians 10:16](#)). In a covenantal context, the meal ratifies the treaty toward all who embrace its promise. So even in the ambiance of a feast, we are still in the world of foreign diplomacy: the covenantal environment of a peace treaty.

Luke continues his postresurrection narrative by re-

porting that Jesus “**ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem**” but to wait for the promised Spirit ([Acts 1:4](#)). Joshua had been told by God to give instructions to each of the twelve tribes before entering Canaan in conquest, and Jesus gives instructions to his twelve apostles (minus Judas, of course). They too are to wait for heavenly empowerment to take possession, this time of the whole earth, not by sword but by the word of their testimony to Jesus Christ. Now it is not only Jerusalem and Judea but “the ends of the earth” that are the field of conquest.

But first they must learn. Apostles (ambassadors) are *sent*; they do not send themselves. Before they go, they need to be prepared by Jesus’s instruction and the Spirit’s empowerment. While John the Baptist spoke of the Messiah as the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit *and with fire*, Jesus assures his disciples that they will be baptized with the former rather than the latter. The Spirit will descend in blessing upon those whom Jesus has clothed with his own righteousness. *Then* he will return at the end of the age to judge the world.

In the upper room ([John 14–15](#)), Jesus had already prepared the disciples for his departure and the arrival of the Spirit. “**It is better that I go,**” Jesus said. “**When I go to the Father, I will send you the Holy Spirit**” (see [John 14:16, 26, 28](#); [John 15:26](#)).

What could be better than Jesus’s continued ministry among them? How could there be a new conquest without Joshua leading the troops? Jesus had already answered this in his upper room discourse ([John 14–16](#)). He would ascend to the Father, and he and the Father would send the Spirit on his mission of earthly conquest. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “another *parakletos*” (attorney), who would bring inward conviction of sin and faith in the gospel while Jesus himself interceded in the heavenly courtroom. The same Spirit who clothed the Servant in our flesh and then clothed him with heavenly power for his earthly ministry will “**clothe**” the disciples. At the conclusion of his Gospel, Luke reports Jesus’s words, “**I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high**” ([Luke 24:49](#)).

Imagine what would have happened if the one

event of final judgment and salvation had occurred in Jesus’s first advent. There would have been no break in the clouds of judgment, with a space opened up for repentance and faith in Christ. The gospel would not have been preached to Israel and the nations, with now two millennia of a Spirit-led ingathering of the harvest. Then and there, the world would have been confirmed in everlasting guilt and judgment, with no hope of forgiveness and entrance into the new creation.

Yet the last question that the disciples ask Jesus before his ascension is, “**Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**” ([Acts 1:6](#)). It’s a great question. No doubt it was even provoked by Jesus’s emphases in his forty days of instruction, “**speaking about the kingdom of God**” ([Acts 1:3](#)). It reminds us what the story is all about, its central plot that unfolds from the promise to Abraham all the way to the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting. It is not about merely “going to heaven when you die.” It is not just an individualistic thing. It’s a lot larger than that. It’s about a cosmic, sweeping, historical re-creation.

Of course, a lot had already happened to turn the disciples’ expectations on their head. Christ inaugurates his kingdom by dying on a Roman cross, becoming a curse for us. He is raised, but why aren’t the *rest* of the dead raised? Why are we still living in exile, with the Romans occupying the holy land? All of these questions percolate and are expressed in this single query.

Jesus answered the disciples’ last question of his earthly ministry: “**It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth**” ([Acts 1:7–8](#)).

This indicates the form that his kingdom-conquest takes in this present age. Like the Great Commission, it centers on the Spirit-empowered witness to Christ, taking the gospel to the world. Only in Jesus Christ, the true Temple, can the dividing wall that separates the court of the Jews from the court of the Gentiles—and both from the Holy of Holies—be broken down.

Only in Christ can the borders of Israel be expanded to encompass the whole earth. He is the seed of Abraham and Sarah in whom all the nations of the earth are

blessed. His kingdom is not a revival of the old-covenant theocracy that *Israel* swore at Mount Sinai but the realization of the Abrahamic covenant that *God* swore and to which the Sinai covenant pointed. Having fulfilled its role, the old covenant is now “obsolete” ([Hebrews 8:13](#)). The kingdom has no borders. It is no longer a geopolitical entity but a global embassy of grace. The Father sends the Son, the Father and Son send the Spirit, and the Triune God sends the disciples out on this mission of salvation. “As you sent me into the world,” Jesus prays to the Father, “so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth” ([John 17:18–19](#)).

The nature of this new-covenant conquest is clear. The disciples must wait in Jerusalem until the Spirit comes to make them *witnesses* to Christ. He doesn’t dismiss their question. Rather, he answers by saying, “The Holy Spirit will come in power and make you my witnesses to the world.” It may not be the answer they were expecting, but it is indeed an answer—the answer that continues to propel the kingdom vision of Christ’s disciples.

“And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight” ([Acts 1:9](#)). The ascension is not just something that the disciples experience subjectively or interpreted in their hearts. It is an event that they witness together “as they were looking on.” The cloud in which Jesus is wrapped is nothing less than the Glory-Cloud: the Spirit who had hovered over the waters in creation, who led Israel through the Red Sea and wilderness, who filled the temple and then evacuated it when Israel violated the covenant. And the same Spirit of Glory who envelops Christ will be sent to envelop his co-heirs at Pentecost.

The resurrection is the watershed in history, with the dominion of sin and death falling into oblivion, losing its grip on its terrified subjects, and righteousness and life coming to reign. The descent of the Spirit is the event that renders all subsequent time “these last days.” The clock is running down on this present evil age. The first fruits of the harvest, Jesus Christ, has been raised, entering the everlasting Sabbath rest in conquest. The war in heaven is over, though insurgent battles must still be waged on earth. The lame were excluded from the temple

courts as a sign of corruption, but already in [Acts 3](#) a lame man is healed within the temple courts ([Acts 3:1–4:31](#)). It’s already happening—“on earth, as it is in heaven.”

Jesus is really gone now: “a cloud took him out of their sight” ([Acts 1:9](#)). He is truly absent from us now in the flesh. In church history there have been various attempts to downplay this fact of Jesus’s bodily departure until his return at the end of the age. The two Gentile misunderstandings of the kingdom I mentioned above are at play here.

Defaulting to our Greek philosophical heritage, we can speak as if Jesus is still present with us spiritually on earth, the way that a deceased loved one is “still with us” as we gather together at Thanksgiving. We can do something like this by saying that since Jesus is omnipresent in his divinity, it does not matter that he is bodily absent. Perhaps even the church takes his place as the visible embodiment of its ascended Lord. It’s easy, then, to see the *church* as the replacement for Jesus in the flesh. The glorified Son may reign in heaven, but the church (or perhaps an earthly head) reigns as his vicar (meaning substitute) on earth. It has even been argued recently that Christ’s second coming is fulfilled in the world-transforming activity of those who continue his redeeming and reconciling work. Jesus simply vanishes and “returns” as the community of his followers.

However, neither then nor apparently afterward did the disciples look for, much less find, any adequate substitute for Jesus and his return in the flesh. Jesus was raised bodily and he ascended bodily. He is indeed forming a covenantal body for himself in this age, by his Spirit, but his natural body is now glorified at the Father’s right hand. He does not walk with us and talk with us in a garden, as he did with his disciples, but he is exactly where we need him most. In our human flesh, glorified in immortality, our living head guarantees our own resurrection, interceding and reigning.

This point is emphasized by the two angels who appear—perhaps the same ones who appeared to the women at the tomb in [Luke 24](#). In that earlier scene, the women go to the tomb with the customary burial spices, and Jesus’s body is gone. “While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to

them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen’” ([Luke 24:4–6](#)).

Now, at the ascension, the two angels said, **“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven”** ([Acts 1:11](#)). He has been **“taken up from you”** bodily, and he will return in exactly the same flesh. They are not to pitch tents at the ascension site and build a shrine, reminiscing about the good old days when Jesus was among them. There is no time for that—the plot is still unfolding. Rather, they are to go to the upper room—Christ’s earthly embassy—and await the Spirit’s empowerment for their mission. The story is not allowed to come to a halt at the ascension; it has only begun.

Luke reported the same event in the closing verses of his Gospel: **“Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they ... returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God”** ([Luke 24:50–53](#)). They would eventually be cast out of the temple and the synagogue, just as Jesus told them in his Olivet discourse, along with the prophecy that the temple itself would soon be destroyed. It was completely leveled under the emperor Titus in AD 70. Yet the true sanctuary—Christ with his people—would continue to be erected **“without hands,”** by the Spirit.

Arraigned before the Jewish council ([Acts 7](#)), Stephen recalled Israel’s history, with Christ as its fulfillment, including the prophecy of the end-time temple not **“made by hands”** ([v. 48](#)). And he beheld **“the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God”** ([v. 56](#)). Participating in Stephen’s execution that day was Saul, who would be converted (and renamed Paul) through a similar vision as Stephen’s ([vv. 54–60](#)).

In [Acts 2:42](#) we read that the believers gathered daily and were devoted **“to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”** In this assembly, Jesus would be in

their midst. Though he would not descend bodily until his return, Jesus pledges his uninterrupted presence by his Word and Spirit. For now, he makes himself the meal; when he returns bodily, he will eat and drink with us at the everlasting feast.

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

Seeking a Deeper Devotion

Psalm 119:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments.

Scripture defines unbelievers as totally godless. Paul tells the Romans that they have no fear of God, are hostile to Him, are unwilling to submit to His law, and are unable to please Him. This is just as true of the morally upright unbeliever as it is of the most corrupt profligate. The former worships a god of his own mind, not the God of the Bible. When confronted with the claims of the Sovereign God of the universe, he often reacts with greater hostility than an unbeliever living in open sin.

At the time of our salvation, God through His Holy Spirit deals with this godless spirit within us. He gives us a new heart and moves us to obey Him, He gives us a singleness of heart and inspires us to fear Him, and He pours out His love into our hearts so that we begin to comprehend His love for us. All of this is bound up in the blessings of the new birth, so we may safely say that all Christians possess, at least in embryonic form, a basic devotion to God. It is impossible to be a Christian and not have it. The work of the Holy Spirit at regeneration assures this. God has given us everything we need for life and godliness.

But though all of us as Christians possess a basic Godcenteredness as an integral part of our spiritual lives, we must grow in this devotion to God. We are to train ourselves to be godly; we are to make every effort to add godliness to our faith. To grow in godliness is to grow both in our devotion to God and in our likeness to His character.

To grow in our devotion to God is to grow in each

of the following three areas; the fear of God, the love of God, and the desire for God.. And as the triangle is equal on all three sides, so we should seek to grow equally in all of these areas; otherwise our devotion becomes unbalanced.

To seek to grow in the fear of God, for example, without also growing in our comprehension of His love can cause us to begin to view God as far-off and austere. Or to seek to grow in our awareness of the love of God without also growing in our reverence and awe of Him can cause us to view God as a permissive and indulgent heavenly Father who does not deal with our sin. This latter unbalanced view is prevalent in our society today. That is why many Christians are calling for a renewed emphasis on the biblical teaching of the fear of God.

A crucial characteristic of our growth in godly devotion, then, must be a balanced approach to all three of the essential elements of devotion: fear, love, and desire. Another crucial characteristic must be a *vital dependence upon the Holy Spirit* to bring about this growth. The principle of Christian ministry that Paul states in [1 Corinthians 3:7](#), “**neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow,**” is just as true as a principle of growth in godliness. We must plant and water through whatever means of grace God has given us, but only God can make godly devotion increase within our hearts.

Continued in next edition...



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Hebrews 8 – Overview – Part 2

We want to continue to look at this idea of “covenants” and what they meant in the Old and New Testaments, and ultimately what they should mean to committed believers in the church age. It does not appear that in today’s cultural setting that the church really sees much practical value in “covenants”. Covenants are not talked about very often. In essence a covenant is something that should bind people together, but from a practical perspective in today’s culture things like covenants, oaths, and treaties do not carry that much value. For instance, men and women break their marriage covenants all the time. It has become epidemic in our culture. Nations consistently break treaties with each other. Elected officials receive bribes and make laws that are self-serving. Men takes oaths before God on a Bible in a court of law, then proceed to tell lies to cover up their crimes. So, before even approaching this subject, it is critical to appreciate that the value of certain elements or attributes may change with time.

An example of how values change over time is America. When America was formed, it was formed on the idea of personal freedom and liberties and an environment that allowed someone to work hard and succeed without the interference of the government on their lives. The idea was so strong that people left behind everything they had and came to America for a fresh,

new start with their lives. They left their heritage, their families, their homes, and their possessions to follow an idea and to follow a certain set of values. Today, however, people immigrate into America, but not from the same perspective. They come for prosperity or education, but not for the values upon which the country was founded. In fact, many immigrants actually despise America's values and want to impose their values on the culture. In a similar way, the same is true for the church. It has certain non-negotiable values that are critical to its very life, and if people come into a local church that do not share those same values, then they will begin to advance their values on that church. So, if a church lacks discernment in this area and allows other values to be integrated into its spiritual life, then the result will simply be a long-term weakening of our biblical value system. When people are allowed to assimilate into local churches, they need to share the same values such as commitment, service, prayer, evangelism, study, morality, marriage, and many more. If they assimilate and become members without sharing the same value system, then they will devalue the churches impact and influence. When churches undiscerningly allow non-believers or uncommitted believers to become members of their fellowship, invariably it will only hurt the sheep.

The root of the Hebrew word for “**covenant**” most likely meant “to bind”. So, a covenant is that which binds two parties together. There have to be values that bind believers together in a local assembly. A church is like a family in that if we do not have the same values within our family such as commitment to the things of God and a high value for the truth, then it only causes tension and harms the family. It is important to recognize the vast differences of understanding and appreciation that existed in the Old and New Testaments regarding “**covenants**” versus how people understand “**covenants**” today. In the biblical context, a covenant was seen as being immutable and unchanging. Obviously, just as today, individuals might forfeit their rights under a covenant by their deliberate rebellion against God or the other party involved.

What is at stake in the basic understanding of covenants is not so much a theological issue, but rather a personal issue. It is the personal issue of whether or not believers are truly going to take God at His

Word. As believers, do we really believe that God will keep His promises to us, or have those promises actually just become nice words that have no practical value in our lives whatsoever. We could put it like this: God calls on believers to trust Him so completely that they are not afraid to put themselves in situations where they will be in trouble if God does not come through. A statement like that is something that will quickly take a believer out of their personal comfort zone. In surveying the landscape of Scripture and history, the men and women who have made the greatest spiritual impact were those people who did just that – place themselves in situations where the effectiveness of everything they were doing depended entirely on God's supernatural power. Noah or Abraham would be obvious examples that come to mind. That is what is at stake – do we really believe God or not and if we say that we do, how much of what we confess is being practically worked out in our lives. We live in a church age that is more than satisfied with spiritual mediocrity and indifference. We seem to value our creature comforts and personal conveniences much more than things like sacrifice and commitment. This is where all of this will ultimately lead us, and the way that the author accomplishes this is by going straight from [Hebrews 10](#) into [Hebrews 11](#), or one of the greatest chapters in all of Scripture on what it really means to have faith in God and to actually believe that God's promises and His Word are true, immutable, and fully trustworthy.

It is interesting to note that in our Bibles that the terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament” are used. However, the word for “Testament” is actually the word “covenant”. The word “testament” comes from the Latin translation of the Bible, but in reality it was the actual Hebrew word or Greek word for “covenant” that was used. So, the Bible could be thought of as the “Old Covenant” and the “New Covenant” and be absolute correct in that terminology. The reason to mention this is simply because the author's audience had a certain perspective on covenants that was a little different than Christians do today. Their entire spiritual life revolved around the covenants – Adamic (Edenic) covenant, Noahic covenant, Abrahamic covenant, Davidic covenant, etc., and now, in the New Testament, Jesus introduces a “**new covenant**”. He did not say that He was giving them a “new idea” or a “new concept” or a “new principle” for them to live by. Rather, He said that He was giving them a new and different covenant that would establish the way that God related to men and the way

that men would relate to God. It was a covenant in which God would provide for regeneration or the new birth, for the full forgiveness of sins, for an intimate knowledge of God, and for assurance that once the person was saved that God's part of the covenant could never be broken.

In most covenants there were several significant elements that existed. The first was a statement of the covenant itself that outlined the actual terms of the covenant. Secondly, there was an oath by each party that they would observe the terms of the covenant. A covenant has no value if the parties are not willing to adhere to the terms. Marriage vows, for instance, mean nothing if both parties are not willing to really take their vows seriously and be fully committed to those vows. For instance, [Genesis 26:31](#) says,

³¹Then they arose early in the morning and swore an oath with one another; and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

However, in the time of the Old Testament and the New Testament, it was understood that when someone made an oath that God was witnessing the oath. [Genesis 31:50](#) speaks of this idea of God being the witness of the oath,

⁵⁰If you afflict my daughters, or if you take other wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us - see, God is witness between you and me!"

Thirdly, there was a curse that was invoked by each one upon himself if he broke the covenant that he had made. In many cases the curse was not actually stated, but it was inferred simply by the fact that it was an oath. [Deuteronomy 27:15-26](#) gives an idea of the "curse" involved for breaking God's covenant. This was a very serious issue with ramifications that are not always actually quantified in the Scriptures.

¹⁴And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel:
¹⁵Cursed is the one who makes a carved or molded image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.' "And all the people shall

answer and say, 'Amen!' ¹⁶**Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' ¹⁷**Cursed is the one who moves his neighbor's landmark.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' ¹⁸**Cursed is the one who makes the blind to wander off the road.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' ¹⁹**Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' ²⁰**Cursed is the one who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's bed.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' ²¹**Cursed is the one who lies with any kind of animal.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' ²²**Cursed is the one who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' ²³**Cursed is the one who lies with his mother-in-law.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' ²⁴**Cursed is the one who attacks his neighbor secretly.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' ²⁵**Cursed is the one who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!' ²⁶**Cursed is the one who does not confirm all the words of this law.'** "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'"

It should be obvious that before entering into the covenant that the people fully understood (v14) that there were serious consequences for violating God's covenant. Once again, those consequences are not specifically quantified, but they are present and were to be understood as existent and operative. One of the major issues in the American church culture is that people do not really take God's Word seriously. It seems to have no meaningful impact on how many professing believers actually live. Any God-honoring local church does not need to be so naïve and undiscerning that they think that the church age in which they live is really doing that well. We live in a very weak, compromising, and "lukewarm" church age. Obviously, there are some very good churches and some very committed Christians throughout the church, but in many cases that is not actually the norm.

The word "cursed" is used 58 times in the Old Testament and 5 times in the New Testament. For instance, [Matthew 25:41](#) speaks of the "cursed" that are spoken of at the end of the Tribulation and says,

⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels....

Obviously, that is the ultimate and final “**curse**” – being eternally separated from God in “**everlasting fire**”. It appears to be quite important that in the Old Testament that when God cursed someone or something that they never recovered. For instance, in [Genesis 3:17](#), He cursed the actual ground. In [Genesis 4:11](#), He cursed Cain for killing his brother. Unfortunately, we have embraced the idea of “cheap grace” and “easy believism”, both of which are very unbiblical. God is not here just to accommodate unbiblical whims about Him and the Christian life, but rather He challenges believers to a life of faith, trust, and full commitment to Him.

Then fourthly, the covenant was normally ratified in a formal way by some kind of solemn act. In some cases they would sprinkle their blood on each other or eat a sacrificial meal of some kind. It was mentioned in a previous study about the cutting of the animals in half and then “the walk of death” through them. In the New Testament, believers periodically outwardly ratify their acceptance of the terms of God’s covenant with them first through baptism and then they periodically confirm their continued participation in God’s salvific covenant by taking the Lord’s Supper. These are sacred issues and believers must maintain an incredibly high reverence for them. However, a believer’s commitment to these sacred elements must be based on a very deep and personal commitment to Christ and to the Word of God, or in essence they have no meaningful value whatsoever and become practically worthless as an outward symbol of someone’s faith in Christ.

Most biblical scholars believe that the early New Testament believers took the Lord’s Supper much more often than Christians do today. One of the reasons for that was simply the fact that they placed a very high value on a covenant. In the Old Testament there is a story in [Joshua 9](#) where the Gibeonites who were under a ban by God to be destroyed, purposely deceived Joshua into making a covenant to live in peace and protect them. However, even after finding out that he had been deceived by the Gibeonites, Joshua would not go back on his word

and honored the covenant that he had made with them. Even though he had been lied to and purposely deceived, yet he would not break his word.

In [Malachi 2:13-15](#), God speaks about the covenant of marriage and how a man treats His wife. Malachi is a book in which God speaks proportionately more than in any other book of the Bible. Of the 55 verses, God is directly speaking in 50 verses. Malachi is a book where God speaks among other things about infidelity, divorce, marrying unbelievers, hypocrisy, and meaningless worship. It was a time in which the words of God had no meaningful impact on the people. They heard them, but they meant nothing to them.

¹³And this is the second thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. ¹⁴ Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

Since the very beginning of creation, how God has related to man has always been through various covenants. Those covenants carried with them two specific attributes – promises and requirements. Biblical covenants are built on what God promises that He will do and what He will perform on behalf of those to whom He is making the covenant. So, what is obviously important is the character of the one making the promise. A promise, a vow, or an oath is no better than the person actually making the promise. Keeping promises is always a matter of character – always. A person is no better than their word. If they make a promise, but are not willing to keep that promise, then it calls into question their character and the sincerity and intentions of their heart. So, one of the attributes of biblical covenants is that they ALWAYS reveal the character and integrity of God in being a promise keeper and not a covenant breaker. The only ones who ever broke the covenants were the ones to whom God made the covenants. God’s continuous undertakings in regards to the covenants were absolutely sure of fulfillment, no matter

whether man was faithful or not. In fact, almost the entire history of Israel and Judah as the people of God in the Old Testament is the story of just that – the faithfulness of God and the unfaithfulness of the nation, or God’s people.

Now, the important element to understand regarding covenants is that they were what established the relationship between God and man. Furthermore, it needs to be appreciated that men never had any input into the covenants. God was the One who established how the covenant relationship was going to be carried out. The parameters of the relationship were “divinely imposed”. I.e., man had no input into the terms of the covenant. The only element that man could contribute was in the area of accepting and obeying the requirements of the covenant or rejecting the terms and conditions of the covenant. That is one of the reasons why the New Testament writers did not use the ordinary word for contracts or agreements. That word made both parties equal – which is certainly not the case with a biblical covenant between God and man. The New Testament word that is used is the Greek word “*diatheke*” and what it emphasized was that the provisions of the covenant were being dictated by only one person. It would be similar to a will in which the person making out the will is the one establishing the provisions of the will. A biblical covenant made by God was also unchangeable. It was fixed and could not be altered in any way. Obviously, all of the covenants could be replaced or superseded by a higher covenant if God so chose, but while the covenant was in effect, none of the stipulations could be altered in any way. Once God made a promise to His people, or anyone for that matter, nothing could change that promise. In today’s vernacular, it was a “done deal”.

Now, it is important to understand what was actually at the heart of the covenants, or what God was actually saying through a covenant. A godly covenant was always related to the relationship that God wanted to establish with His people. [Hebrews 8:7-12](#) gives what that relationship was to be. This is a quote from [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#),

⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a

second. ⁸Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—⁹not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. ¹⁰For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

¹¹None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹²For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

V10 is what God desires. He desires to be our God and for us to be His people. That is the heart of what all of the covenants are designed to do – to bring believers into a meaningful and purposeful relationship with the living God. In this promise, God the Father unreservedly gives Himself to all those who are His, and in a reciprocal way they are to give themselves to Him to identify that they belong to Him.

So, it is very important that God be found trustworthy and faithful in His side of the covenant – and I must add that He very much has been. There has not been one time in all of history where God has not been faithful in any of the covenants – not one single time. Now, without making the obvious application, it should be more than evident that God’s faithfulness to fulfill every single promise that He has ever made should do something both to and within the believer. The entire Christian life is built around the faithfulness of a holy God. If God were only faithful to His promises fifty percent of the time, no one would attend a church, no one would read the Bible, and no one would even pray to someone who they knew to be unfaithful. The church exists today, not because believers are faithful, but because God is faithful. One of the obvious benefits of this “**new covenant**” is that it not only provides complete forgiveness, but it also provides believers with an eternal safekeeping – what the Scriptures call “**eternal life**”.

Just to reiterate what [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) says, there are eight other places in the Old Testament where the same statement is made and one other time in the New Testament. For instance, [Jeremiah 24:4-7](#) says,

⁴Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵“Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive from Judah, whom I have sent out of this place for *their own* good, into the land of the Chaldeans. ⁶For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land; I will build them and not pull *them* down, and I will plant them and not pluck *them* up. ⁷Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I *am* the LORD; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.

[Jeremiah 32:37-41](#) says,

³⁷Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. ³⁸They shall be My people, and I will be their God; ³⁹then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. ⁴⁰And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me. ⁴¹Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will assuredly plant them in this land, with all My heart and with all My soul.’

[Ezekiel 11:16-21](#) says,

¹⁶Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Although I have cast them far off among the Gentiles, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet I shall be a little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.’” ¹⁷Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been

scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’”

¹⁸And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. ¹⁹Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God. ²¹But *as for those* whose hearts follow the desire for their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their deeds on their own heads,” says the Lord GOD.

[Ezekiel 37:27](#) says the same thing and is quoted again in [2 Corinthians 6:16](#). The idea of our being the people of God and God the Father being our God is at the very heart of what God desires.

Now, it is really very important to appreciate that all meaningful relationships must have parameters, limitations, restrictions, guidelines, and boundaries. Someone cannot have a purely open ended relationship with someone else where nothing is out of bounds for the relationship. In a marriage, for instance, one of the partners cannot have absolute and total freedom to do whatever they may want to do. Marriage is a partnership and continuing restraints are just a normal part of a healthy marriage. All relationships, whether in marriage, at work, at school, as a citizen, as a Christian, or wherever, have boundaries that must be maintained for the relationship to be productive and continue. Without meaningful restrictions and boundaries, no relationship could survive. I know a couple that was divorced a number of years ago because the wife enjoyed looking at pornography on the internet, and she told her husband that it did not matter what he thought about it because she was still going to watch it. Her desire for personal freedom destroyed the marriage. That kind of perspective and involvement on her part was a gross and hideous violation of the marriage vows that they both had made to each other. Just think if you owned a business and had employees who worked for you. It would be utterly ludicrous for one of the employees to think that they could just come to work and leave work whenever they wanted. Every relationship has limitations and boundaries, and it is those boundaries that ultimately give meaning and purpose to the relationship.

So, in the covenants, what God does is establish the limitations and boundaries of His relationship to us and our relationship to Him, and we do not have any input as to what those boundaries and limitations are. The only response that we have is to accept them or to reject them. If we accept them, then our only response should be one of obedience to them. Now, immediately someone is going to complain that they want to have input into the relationship. They would cry out, *“How can you have a meaningful relationship with someone with whom you have no input as to what the relationship is to be like?”* However, having a relationship with an omnipotent, sovereign, and holy God who loves with a perfect and everlasting love is not the same as having a relationship with another person who is limited in their understanding. It is not as if the Creator God needs to make some adjustments and relational modifications so that believers can live a meaningful life – not at all. He is the One who created us, who made us, and who knows us better than we know ourselves. In my utter depravity, any limitations and restrictions that I would impose on the relationship would ultimately be harmful. Every believer must come to that place where they recognize the absolute majesty and holiness of the Creator God of the universe who has willingly called on God the Son to make the ultimate sacrifice so that they can have a meaningful and everlasting relationship with Him.

It is critical to understanding the great biblical truths found in [Hebrews 7-10](#) that believers not lose sight of their overall purpose. These chapters are trying to convince believers of one primary truth found in [Hebrews 8:1-2](#) which is that they have a great High Priest.

¹Now 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, ²a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

[Hebrews 10:32-34](#) speaks of the fact that these Hebrew believers were experiencing incredible trials. They were being tested at every level, their personal faith was constantly being challenged, and their lives were constantly being threatened. Obviously, the author of Hebrews did not want them to “cast

away” their confidence, and so part of the goal of what he is writing is found in [Hebrews 10:36](#) when he says,

³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

It is apparent from the context of [Hebrews 10](#) that some of the believers were being challenged in their faith to such a degree that they were considering forsaking the very thing that they needed the most. The word “**endurance**” is “*hupomone*” and means to patiently and continually endure. It is a word that calls on the believer to exercise a high level of commitment to the things of God, even when adversity and trials make it difficult. Please do not lose sight of the fact that the only way that this “**endurance**” can be developed is in actually going through the trials. There are no spiritual shortcuts here – none at all. This doctrinal position certainly does not fit into the “easy-believism” mentality, into the “health and wealth” mentality, or into the “name it and claim it” mentality that is so prevalent in Christianity today. In my opinion, each of those represent that which is not Christian at all, and are certainly a far cry from that which the author of Hebrews is addressing.

Unfortunately many segments of Christianity have become addicted to a subtle, yet prevailing form “easy Christianity”. It clings to the “Staples” mentality that there is an “Easy Button” that they can push in prayer and “poof” – all of their problems just disappear. What a disastrous spiritual place to be led to. It is almost as if the church at large believes that to be the reason that God saved them in the first place – to make life easy and comfortable and without conflict. No wonder the last days church is so weak. That is why the preacher who speaks of sacrifice and commitment quickly loses his audience.

Just think of something like church membership and how casually some take their commitment to the local church. In trying to give definition to what it means to be a committed follower of Christ, true followers of Christ are individuals who are not church avoiders, not just church attenders, not church hoppers, and not church shoppers. A lot of research has been done to establish the impact of what is known as the “emergent church” in America, and what has been uncovered is that their seemingly phenomenal growth has not occurred because of conversions, but rather have come

primarily from church transfers. Many of the large emergent churches are simply stealing sheep from other churches. They advertise on billboards that they have what other churches do not have. From where in the world did that kind of spiritual mentality come – churches competing for members? Do we know why churches compete for members? Most often it is because of money needed to support all of their large building programs that are deemed essential for a proper church environment. You will NOT find that in the New Testament! They represent themselves as being informal, as having this wonderful praise band, and the pastor is a really “cool” guy. What a spiritual tragedy – offering everything but the true gospel which calls on all men to repent and fully commit their lives to Jesus Christ.

For many, choosing a church has become similar to going to the mall. They are going to a church for all of the various options that it may offer to their family and whether or not it can meet their personal “felt needs”. They are not interested in going to a church that calls on them to live out their Christianity, but rather they want to go to one that allows them to feel comfortable and satisfied with a mediocre, lethargic commitment to Christ that has no measureable accountability associated with it other than signing a financial pledge for giving. If personal accountability and commitment to Christ is pressed on these individuals, they see it as an infringement on their personal privacy and individual rights. What they fail to realize is that the church is called a “**body**” and “**members of one another**”, and what one member does affects every other member. The New Testament does not allow believers to live in a kind of personal spiritual isolation that allows them to live anyway they choose and believe whatever they want. Personal freedom is one thing, but within the framework of the New Testament church, the issue is not one of doing whatever one may please, but rather doing what pleases Christ. [Ephesians 4:25](#) probably puts it into perspective best when it says,

²⁵Therefore, putting away lying, “**Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,**” for we are **members of one another.**

[Ephesians 4:13](#) speaks of coming “**to the unity of the faith**”.

Of the 114 uses of the Greek word “*ekklesia*” for “**church**” in the New Testament, 90 of them refer specifically to the gathering of believers in a specific place for a specific purpose. By its very nature, the local church is a place of a deep and abiding commitment to Christ that should constantly be on display and should constantly be holding its members in accountability for how they live. Anything less is not Scriptural and ultimately is non-glorifying to Christ. No genuine believer in any local assembly has the right to be unaccountable to the body of Christ. Commitment to Christ cannot be seen as just some kind of personal issue between the believer and Christ - never. The New Testament does not allow that perspective, and yet it is the prevailing view in the church today and has incredibly debilitating consequences within a local assembly when allowed to persist.

In [Hebrews 8:1-2](#) Jesus Christ is not just “**seated**” in the heavenly sanctuary, but He is a “**Minister**” within that “**sanctuary**”. The NIV states that He is one “**who serves in the sanctuary**”. Young’s Literal Translation (YLT) says “**of the holy places a servant**”. The word translated “**Minister**” is referring to the one who actually does the ministering. I.e., Christ has an active ministry that He is performing on behalf of the “**We**” (v1) which are believers. There is nothing passive about what is taking place in the heavenly sanctuary. It still remains a very deep and continuing work of salvation on the believer’s behalf. [Hebrews 8:6](#) says that Christ is mediating a “**better covenant**”, and it is a work that will never cease. It is an on-going and eternal work of Christ on the believer’s behalf. This is a monumental work that is not generally understood or even accepted by many Christians. They see their salvation as finished – which it is. However, they also see the work of Christ as finished at the cross –which it was not, and that is what is so staggering. What was completed at the cross was the “**propitiation**”, or the sacrifice needed to satisfy the Father’s holy demands for salvation. The work necessary for redemption to take place was fully satisfied in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – and the Father fully accepted the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf. The death of Christ was to satisfy the holy demands of the Father. It was the eternal payment for sin and it was the only acceptable payment that could be made.

However, after that sacrificial work at the cross was completed to purchase salvation, then came the continu-

ing need for the high priestly ministry and intercession of Christ for the believer. If that were not the case, then there would be no need to even mention this monumental work of Christ in [Hebrews 7-10](#). There would be no need for the author of Hebrews to even write about it with such depth if there was no need. **It must be understood that the believer can never stand in the presence of God on their own merit – not even in the eternal state.** No believer has any merit apart from Christ. If for some reason someone believes that they have personal virtues that deserve God's meritorious acceptance of them, what would they be? Would it be their personal faith in Christ? Would it be some personal goodness in them now that they are saved? Would it be their faithfulness? I doubt it. Personal faith and even the desire to repent are a gift from God ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)), and apart from the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit, no believer would even be able to live out the Christian life. Eternity will not diminish the work of Christ, rather it will actually magnify it because it will forever be an ongoing mediatorial and intercessory work.

The only way that the believer can come into the presence of God is through the continuing intermediary work of Christ. He is called the "**Mediator**". He never gets to retire or take a day off. He never relinquishes His work of being a "**Mediator**" or of being an "**Intercessor**" for the believer. His sacrifice will continue into and throughout eternity, and He is the only One in heaven who is impacted by our continuing need. He is the only One who will be "working" and the only One who will be making a sacrifice. What He is personally sacrificing so that believers can eternally live is of such a magnitude that it almost defies explanation. We think in terms of hours, days, months, and years. However, in this high priestly work of Christ there is no timeframe. It is an eternal work.

After Adam sinned, what God had to do was to establish a means, a channel, an instrument, and a way by which sinful men could be saved and come into fellowship with a holy God. One of the most damning false doctrines that has saturated the church for centuries is the doctrine of works, or that man is able in and of his own means to merit God's favor. Nothing, absolutely nothing could be further from the truth. Embedded within any doctrinal study rel-

ative to sin is the doctrine of total depravity. By nature and prior to salvation, we could have called ourselves "sin-aholics". I.e., there was no thought, no word, no act, and no area of human life that in some way was not affected by sin. The worst part about all of this is that men and women who are unregenerate are unable to do anything about their spiritual condition. Without God's divine intervention in their life, they will die in their sins and enter into eternal judgment. The Christian life is not looking for reformation, but for transformation – and that requires regeneration, or the new birth. The lost man is spiritually and morally impotent and incapable of changing his nature. He does not appreciate what the Bible declares about his spiritual condition, and he is powerless to work towards his own conversion. It could be stated in the simple terms that before salvation "we could do nothing but sin". Every facet of the lost man's life falls under the domain and dominion of sin. There is no part of his life that is NOT affected by sin. It is not that sin is just there or that the potential for sin is present. It is not that at all. It is that sin is active, total depravity is constantly working, prevailing, and controlling the natural man – and he does not even recognize it and is not capable of recognizing it. The doctrine of total depravity, or total inability, states that the sinner is in a state of spiritual death that renders it impossible for him to respond to the gospel without God's intervening help.

The natural posture of the unregenerate man is that of a fugitive – someone who is always trying to avoid God and avoid His Word. The natural inclination of the lost man is to flee from God, not come to Him. The first thing that Adam did when he sinned was to flee from God's presence and to hide himself from God's scrutiny. We often hear people talking about their friends who are "seeking God", or "searching for God". However, Scripture clearly teaches that no unregenerate person seeks after God ([Romans 3:11](#)) on their own. What people are seeking is not God, but happiness, relief from the guilt sin has produced, personal peace, personal fulfillment, and other such benefits. The difference is that in his fallen condition, the lost man is looking for the benefits and advantages that only God can truly give, but in reality they do not want God – just His benefits. They want the gifts, but not the Giver. The lost man does not find God as a result of his search for God, but because **God** regenerates Him. The search for God does not end at conversion, rather it begins at conversion. It is the converted person, and them only, who

sincerely and genuinely seeks after God. Jonathan Edwards remarked that *“seeking after God is the main business of the Christian life.”*

If you were to ask an unbeliever if they hated God, most of them would categorically deny it. Love for God, however, is not something that is natural or desirable to the unbeliever. Even in a redeemed state, believer’s souls often grow cold and they experience feelings of indifference toward God. When they pray, their minds wander. Even in worship services, many people are really bored and always looking at their watches to see how much longer they may have until they can leave. Because of the Fall, man is simply unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. By Scripture’s own definition, man is spiritually dead, spiritually blind, and spiritually deaf to the things of God without God’s divine intervention. The heart of the lost man is deceitful and desperately wicked. Please appreciate that the Bible does not describe the lost man’s condition as a disability, but as death – and specifically, a spiritual death.

So, God’s intervening work on behalf of man is theologically called the “covenant of grace”. It is called that simply because it is based entirely on God’s grace. However, the covenant of grace itself is based on what is theologically called the “covenant of redemption”. What makes the covenant of redemption unique is that it is **not** a covenant between God and man, but rather a covenant between the members of the Trinity. In this Trinitarian covenant, God the Son agreed to become the God-Man, be our representative, obey the demands of the covenant, and then pay the actual penalty for the sin that had been committed against a holy God. These were decisions made in eternity past before time even began – what the Scriptures call **“before the foundation of the world”**. For instance, [1 Peter 1:20](#) declares,

²⁰**He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you....**

[Revelation 13:8](#) declares,

⁸**All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the**

Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

This was the eternal plan of God before Adam ever sinned. The omniscient God knew full well what would take place and in eternity past before time began, the Triune God made a covenant with one another that they would do what was needed to be done to provide salvation for sinful men – AND THEY DID! There were multiple parts of this covenant for each of the members of the Trinity for which they would be responsible. Each had a function and each would be responsible to do what they had agreed to do – and they did.

Now, someone is certainly going to ask *“Well, how does all of this relate to Hebrews 8”*, and the answer is that it has everything to do with [Hebrews 8](#). It is imperative to appreciate the cost that the **“new covenant”** of the New Testament had within the Godhead itself. Until the actual cost is understood and appreciated, then the impact will be minimal on the individual. If someone made a monumental sacrifice to save your life that they knew beforehand would cost them their arms and legs, then every time that you saw them or thought about them, your heart and mind would race to that sacrifice and it would be their sacrifice that actually determined the depth of your love and appreciation for them. It is the same with Christ. Believers simply do not understand or appreciate the magnitude of the eternal sacrifice that Jesus Christ made in order that they might be saved, and until they gain that fundamental appreciation for what their personal salvation cost Him, their Christian life will remain static, indifferent, and lethargic at best! If we ever want our Christian life to become what God wants it to become, then we must come to a place of deep understanding about the person and work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. Unfortunately, the average Christian is smugly secure in what they believe is their understanding of that sacrifice. They just see Christ dying on a cross and ascending back into heaven where all returns back to normal. That is the great evangelical tragedy and spiritual misconception within the modern church – a fundamental lack of knowledge and appreciation for the amazing sacrifice of Jesus Christ on their part.

Very often it appears that the average believer simply does not have a deep appreciation for what this redemptive plan actually cost those within the Trinity. The prevailing perspective is that because the members of the

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Trinity are God that ultimately there was no “real” cost to the sacrifices that were made. However, nothing could be any further from the truth – nothing. Jesus Christ made the most significant sacrifice in all of time and eternity when God the Son became the God-Man forever. Nothing even compares to what He personally sacrificed so that we could have eternal life, and it is that fundamental lack of appreciation for His sacrifice that so characterizes the church age in which we live. The critical issue as it relates to the idea of “**covenants**” in Hebrews is that until believers appreciate the cost involved in the God-head making the covenant and the sacrifices that would provide their salvation, they will never deeply appreciate their salvation and therefore never be truly willing to commit their lives to becoming a fully devoted disciple of Jesus Christ. Until we personally see and understand the actual cost, salvation will simply remain an idea without a life-transforming effect.

ENDNOTES

¹Brown, 355.

²Brown, 358.

³Orr, 727.

⁴Brown, 355.

⁵Grudem, 515.

⁶Elwell, 300.

⁷Grudem, 515.

⁸Elwell, 300.

⁹Grudem, 518.

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