

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



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 7)

The Great Announcement

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

(Continuation from last edition)

Exodus and Conquest *The Gospel and the Kingdom* The Big Map: Exodus and Con- quest

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

In the Meantime Jesus Opens Up
a Crack in History
Pentecost: The Sending of the
Spirit

*The Holy Spirit's Long and
Fruitful Career*

The Spirit at Pentecost

Israel's harvest festival of ingathering
was always directed by the prophets
to the coming day when a remnant from
all nations would worship in Jerusalem.
Just as Pentecost came fifty days after
Passover in the Jewish calendar, the new
Pentecost—the real Pentecost—comes
fifty days after the Passover Lamb's sac-
rifice.

Jesus ordered the disciples to remain
in Jerusalem “for the promise of the
Father”: the baptism with the Holy
Spirit “not many days from
now” ([Acts 1:4-5](#)). About 120 people
were gathered in the upper room, near
the temple, where pilgrims had gathered
for the feast from far-flung regions.

[Acts 2:1-4 \(NASB\)](#)

¹ When the day of Pentecost had
come, they were all together in one
place.

² And suddenly there came from
heaven a noise like a violent rush-

ing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Astonished that uneducated Galileans were proclaiming the gospel in their own languages, the visitors' reactions ranged from **"amazed and perplexed"** to outright incredulity: **"They are filled with new wine"** ([Acts 2:12–13](#)).

Just as the Spirit's presence in Christ's ministry was identified with his proclamation of the gospel ([Isaiah 61:1–2](#); [Luke 4:18–21](#)), the consequence of the Spirit's descent at Pentecost was not unrestrained pandemonium but the public proclamation of the gospel by Peter, with the other apostles standing at his side ([Acts 2:14–36](#)).

The one who had cowardly denied Christ three times was now risking his life for the message that the one who had been crucified only a short distance from where he was speaking had been raised and was at God's right hand. Stringing together a series of citations from the prophets and the Psalms, Peter proclaimed Christ and this remarkable descent of the Spirit as the fulfillment of everything the Scriptures had foretold. **"Cut to the heart,"** three thousand people embraced Peter's message and were baptized ([Acts 2:37–41](#)). Thus began the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Nothing like that had ever happened in Jesus's ministry. In [John 6](#), Jesus drew his largest crowd by feeding the five thousand, but then he drove all but the Twelve away when he preached the difficult doctrines. Jesus had promised his disciples, **"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son"** ([John 14:12–13](#), *emphasis added*).

The Spirit was upon Jesus but did not yet indwell his hearers. Not until Jesus went through his exodus ordeal and his conquest of the heavenly

sanctuary could the Spirit be sent to fill, indwell, and empower the disciples for the conquest on earth. Only the Spirit could unlock human hearts to understand and to receive the gospel.

Jesus Christ is the Word of the Father, but the Spirit makes that Word bear fruit in the hearts of those who are spiritually dead. With the Father, the Spirit gave the Son to sinners in the incarnation (**"conceived by the Holy Spirit"**), and in the upper room discourse ([John 14–16](#)) Jesus promised that when he ascends he will give the Spirit. We are the beneficiaries of this exchange of gifts between the persons of the Trinity.

Because of the Spirit's work, Christ himself is present in his Word, in baptism, and in the Supper, and he is present in the brothers and sisters who enrich us by their fellowship. He is our *prophet* through the lips of ministers, our *priest* through the service of deacons, and our *king* in the discipline of elders. In this way, the church does not replace Jesus, but its ministry is the means of grace through which *he himself* creates, sustains, and expands his body. In this way, the Spirit makes of all Christians in their general office prophets, priests, and kings.

We have seen that God created humankind as an analogy of his own trinitarian life. We were meant to lead creation, with all of its varied parts, in a chorus of praise and thanksgiving. It is human beings, in their rebellion against God, who have **"talked back,"** as it were, instead of answering back in obedient love. Instead of answering God's call with the proper response of a covenant servant—**"Here I am; let it be done unto me according to your word"**—we have built towers of Babel, aspiring toward a homogeneous unity in a Promethean attempt to conquer heaven as well as earth ([Genesis 11](#)).

This parody of God's kingdom swings between individualistic anarchy and totalitarian unity. Although God still preserves and authorizes the secular state, it cannot create peaceful communion, a real fellowship of diversity in unity and unity in diversity. However, the same Spirit who descended on Babel's tower, confusing the languages and scattering the people, descended at Pentecost to form a genuine unity that preserved the rich diversity of language, culture, and custom ([Acts 2:1–13](#)).

The Spirit does not *replace* Jesus; he *gives* us Jesus, uniting a still weak body to its glorified head. The disciples must wait for the Spirit, but when the Spirit comes, they are on the move.

This is why the ascension narrative is followed by the replacement of Judas by Matthias. Why, in the run-up to Pentecost, does the church busy itself with details of church government? It's because the church is not just an invisible movement but a visible institution founded by Christ with the apostles as the foundation. In [Acts 1:2](#) Luke reports that Jesus was **"taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen"** (*emphasis added*).

Not surprisingly, then, the post-Pentecost church gathered regularly for **"the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers"** ([Acts 2:42](#), *emphasis added*). They are *authorized* to pass on what they have been taught by Jesus himself. This is the Great Commission: to go into all the world preaching the gospel, baptizing, and teaching everything Jesus had commanded. And their written testimony forms the canon or constitution that authorizes and defines all subsequent Christian witness, worship, doctrine, and practice. Nothing in Scripture is to be omitted and nothing is to be added. It is Christ's kingdom and he has given us his constitution, which is to endure without amendment until he returns.

We know that Christ's kingdom is at work in this world because sinners are being reconciled to God. From Peter's Pentecost sermon to the end of the book of Acts, the success of the kingdom is identified by the report, **"And the Word of God spread."** From Jerusalem to Rome and beyond, there is already a growing multitude who hear the Word, trust in Christ, are baptized, and begin their pilgrimage together—refreshed along the way by that same Word, fellowship in the Spirit, the Lord's Supper, and the prayers. Baptized into the new creation—that is, Christ—through faith, they form a nucleus of the church that will reach the ends of the earth.

This forgiveness of sins and the raising of those who are spiritually dead is a greater miracle than the raising of Lazarus. It is nothing less than the dawn

of the new creation. In [Ephesians 4](#), Paul highlights the significance of Christ's ascension in terms analogous to the conquest of a general who then distributes the spoils of victory to the soldiers—namely, pastors and teachers whose ministry of Word and sacrament builds up the whole body into its head through the truth.

As the writer to the Hebrews tells us, the powers of the age to come are breaking in on this present age in the power of the Spirit through the Word and sacraments of Christ in his kingdom of grace. The prophets identified the last days with the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh. Because the Spirit has come, we are in **"these last days."** The rest of the book of Acts is the answer to the disciples' question, **"Now are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"** (see [Acts 1:6](#)).

The temple undergoes a makeover. It's no longer a local building but a worldwide house. No longer stationary in Jerusalem, the Spirit is once again on the move, **"in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"** ([Acts 1:8](#)). This is why a central subplot running throughout Acts is Paul's effort to make it from Jerusalem, **"the city of the Great King"** ([Psalm 48:2](#)), to Rome, the city of Gentile power, the real **"court of the Gentiles"**—indeed, **"the uttermost parts of the earth."**

Peter declares,

1 Peter 2:5 (NASB)

⁵ You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NASB)

⁹ But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

¹⁰ for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

As word of this kingdom spreads, the temple grows, expanding, with each living stone reflecting the Light of the World through the indwelling Spirit.

Intermission: "You Are Here"

Now we can locate our place on the map of redemptive history. As I noted at the beginning of this teaching, there are two extremes in contemporary Christian interpretations of the kingdom. One extreme is to say that the kingdom is not present at all, but is an entirely future reality. **“The kingdom, however, will also be a period of failure.”**¹ Thus, even in this future millennial kingdom the purpose is not only to dispense Christ’s gifts, which he has already won by his own trial, but to provide **“the final form of moral testing.”**²

The other extreme is to say that the kingdom is present in its all-encompassing form, transforming the kingdoms of this age into the kingdom of Christ. In this perspective, the main calling of Christians and churches is to redeem the culture and extend Christ’s kingdom over politics, the arts, entertainment, sports, economics, law, and every other aspect of public and private life. We’ve gone from **“soul winning and waiting for the rapture”** to **“kingdom transformation”** in the blink of an eye.

The Great Commission is given to the church for this time between his first and second comings. It is an *intermission* between his **accomplishment of redemption** and his return to **consummate its blessings**. However, this intermission isn’t a time for loitering in the lobby as consumers; it is a time of joyful activity on behalf of our neighbors: loving and serving them through our witness to Christ and also through our daily callings in the world.

This Great Commission is not the **“cultural mandate”**—the original commission to be fruitful and to multiply, ruling creation as God’s viceroys. That is the covenant of creation, in which worship and cultural labors were fused in a vocation whose goal was nothing less than bringing all of creation into the everlasting Sabbath rest. It was this covenant that was renewed as God took Israel to himself as a chosen nation. **“But like Adam they transgressed the covenant”** ([Hosea 6:7](#)). So once again, God cast his people out of his sanctuary, **“east of Eden,”** into captivity, where they languished in hope for the coming Redeemer promised through the prophets even in the people’s dire distress. Nevertheless, God again promised the coming seed who would bring salvation to the ends of the earth. It would be a new covenant, greater than the covenant that Israel swore at Mount Sinai.

The march toward the kingdom continued, even though its typological sign—the land and the temple—lay in ruins. The land of Israel was no longer holy but common. The Spirit had evacuated the temple and Judah joined its northern sister in exile. Yet even in Babylonian captivity, the people received the letter from the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 29:4-9 (NASB)

⁴ **“Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon,**

⁵ **‘Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce.**

⁶ **‘Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease.**

⁷ **‘Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare.’**

⁸ **“For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream.**

⁹ **‘For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them,’ declares the LORD.**

Living like our exiled parents (**Adam and Eve**), **“east of Eden,”** the children of Judah are to participate in the common life of the secular city. They find their welfare in the city’s welfare and are therefore to pray for the commonwealth. Yet they are also to increase the size of the covenant community during this period, and the greatest threat is not persecution by the ungodly but the internal deceptions of unauthorized prophets. (As we will see a little further, this is precisely the situation of the new-covenant church in its exile, and Jeremiah’s exhortations bear striking resemblance to those of the apostles in their letters.)

Although a remnant returns to Jerusalem and seeks to rebuild the walls and rededicate itself to the covenant they made with God at Sinai, they realize that they are still in exile. Ruled by a series of oppressive Gentile regimes, punctuated by false messiahs and attempts to bring in the kingdom by force, the City of Peace is in perpetual turmoil. It is into this scene that John the Baptist steps as the forerunner of the Messiah.

It is this new covenant that forms the basis for the Great Commission: a holy task of bringing the Good News to the world. It is an unshakable kingdom—incapable of being thwarted by our own unfaithfulness—precisely because it is not a kingdom that we are *building* but one that we are *receiving* ([Hebrews 12:28](#)). It is God’s work. Everything that we will be exploring in the rest of this book presupposes the view of the kingdom that is summarized here.

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Ibid.

CORAM DEO (Before the face of God)

Preach the Gospel, Not the Garnish

The common blessings that all humans enjoy, regardless if they’re Christians or not, are often referred to as “**common grace**.” The rain falls on the just and the unjust ([Matthew 5:45](#)). God loves all His creation, as evidenced by His providential care for all of His creation. To think of our specific topic—preaching—one must be careful not to drown one’s hearers in common grace. If our hearers leave our sermons thinking on common grace due to our preaching, we might be drowning their souls in common grace.

Common grace should send humans running to God who provides, but due to our sinful hearts, humans turn God’s common grace to use in our idolatry instead. We need God’s special revelation—the good news of Christ—in order to be saved from God’s wrath, our sinful hearts, the evil one, and this evil world ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)).

Common grace cannot save sinners. Common grace only provides sinners with enough information to condemn them ([Romans 1:18-32](#)). If our

hearers leave our sermons thinking only on the common grace in our message, then they’ve only received enough information to condemn them.

Thus, if our hearers leave our sermons thinking, *What a funny preacher, What a great storyteller, What a gifted speaker*, etc., they’ve retained from our preaching the same grace they could have retained from any unbelieving comedian, storyteller or speaker. They’ve only received enough grace to leave them “**without excuse**” ([Romans 1:20](#)) when they stand before God one day, but not enough to save them. The goal of preaching must be to have our hearers leaving our sermons thinking on special revelation—Scripture.

Now it’s one thing if our hearers ignore the content of our messages and focus on the elements of common grace in our sermons. But it’s another thing altogether if our goal as preachers is to entertain our hearers. It’s one thing to use common grace to magnify special revelation. It’s another thing to drown special revelation in common grace.

As preachers of the Word of God (special revelation), we must not be “**ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’**” ([Romans 1:16-17](#)).

The arts we use in our preaching (homiletics) must serve Scripture instead of hiding it. Special revelation is indeed special. God has spoken, clearly revealing Himself to us through His inerrant word. Through His special revelation, we can know God, His creation, our fall and our redemption that came from the Father through the Son and by the Holy Spirit.

Everything we do, say and display when we preach must serve the purpose of communicating the word of God. The “**specialness**” of the word of God should be evident to our hearers, not just in what we preach, but in how we preach. The main point of our sermons should be the **gospel (special revelation)**, *not* the **garnishes (common grace)**.

Therefore, preachers, let us labor to excellently magnify the inerrant truth of God when we preach. Let us not drown our hearers in common grace like other unbe-

lieving orators. Let us instead use elements of common grace to excellently serve and magnify special revelation. Emphasize the gospel, not the garnishes, for in doing so, God may save the souls of our hearers ([1 Corinthians 15:1-4](#))!

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 9 Overview – Part 1

The Meaning of the Atonement

There are two great parts to the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus Christ has made for each of us. The first was what He accomplished in the Incarnation when He became the God-Man **forever**. The extent of that sacrifice is really beyond our personal comprehension. It is the beginning of the single greatest and unending sacrifice in all of eternity and it took place in heaven before the foundations of the earth were even laid, before anyone or anything had even been created, and then it was manifested on earth. However, as a part of that ultimate and abiding sacrifice, there was also a second part that took place on earth and it is called the “atonement”, and that is the amazing topic of [Hebrews 9](#). If there were only the gospel narratives to help us understand what actually happened at the cross and shortly thereafter, we would never know what it meant. The simplicity of how the gospels speak about this event has no comparison. [Matthew 27:45-53](#) says,

⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

⁴⁷Some of those who stood there, when they heard

that, said, “This Man is calling for Elijah!”

⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled *it* with sour wine and put *it* on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. ⁴⁹The rest said, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him.” ⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, ⁵²and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

[Mark 15:33-38](#) says almost the same exact thing,

³³Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

³⁵Some of those who stood by, when they heard *that*, said, “Look, He is calling for Elijah!” ³⁶Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put *it* on a reed, and offered *it* to Him to drink, saying, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.”

³⁷And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. ³⁸Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

[Luke 23:44-46](#) says even less,

⁴⁴Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. ⁴⁵Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. ⁴⁶And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last.

[John 19:28-30](#) says,

²⁸After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” ²⁹Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hys-

sop, and put it to His mouth. ³⁰So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

So, what is the point? Well, the point is that by just reading the gospel narratives, it is not possible to fully know what the atonement really was. What would be known is that Jesus lived and Jesus died a very cruel death. It would even be known that He was resurrected and ascended back into God’s presence - but what did it all mean? That is the question! Well, that is why there is the remainder of the New Testament. It is to help provide understanding of the eternal significance of those events and to understand some things that are not even mentioned in the narrative itself. We would never diminish the death of Christ in any way. It is as monumental of a biblical event as recorded anywhere in the Scriptures. It far exceeds the creation or the Red Sea or raising Lazarus from the dead. Every one of those simply pale into spiritual insignificance compared to what happened at the cross. However, if we do not understand the significance of that death, then it will never do us any good. One of my greatest fears and concerns for the somewhat superficial cultural Christianity that we live in is that we have maximized the physical event, but we have unfortunately obscured its spiritual significance and meaning for the Christian life. Hopefully that will change as we look at [Hebrews 9](#).

The word “atonement” is not actually used in the New Testament under the NKJV. It is used 86 times in the Old Testament. It is used only once in the KJV in [Romans 5:11](#). However, it is encompassed in a number of other New Testament terms – especially the words “reconciliation” (only used 3 times in the New Testament) or “propitiation” (only used 4 times in the New Testament). In very simple terms, **the atonement is what is known as the death of Christ and it involves the entire saving work affected by God on our behalf when Christ died on the cross and then took His own blood as an offering to the Father.** [Hebrews 9:12](#) states it this way,

¹²**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.**

Please appreciate that what [Hebrews 9:12](#) is saying is that above and beyond Christ physically dying on a

cross that He also literally took **His own blood** into the very presence of God. On what was known as the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament in which the high priest entered into the Holy of Holies, he could not enter without sacrificial blood. [Hebrews 9:7](#) explains it this way,

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

So, what the high priest was doing on that Day of Atonement was simply a picture and a “**copy**” (v23) of what was going to take place after the death of Christ. In the Old Testament sacrifices, which were just a picture of what was to take place in the heavenly temple or sanctuary, it was not just the killing of the sacrificial animal, but also the actual offering of the blood on the altar that completed the sacrifice. On the Day of Atonement that took place each year, the high priest would take the actual blood of the sacrificial animal and then enter into the Holy of Holies in the temple and sprinkle the blood on the articles at the mercy seat. It was just a picture of what was to take place in heaven at a later date when Christ would take His blood into the very presence of God and present it to the Father representing that the perfect sacrifice had been made for the sins of the elect. [Hebrews 9:12](#) states that Christ “**entered the Most Holy Place once for all**”. [Hebrews 9:24](#) further reiterates this when it states,

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

When the high priest took the sacrificial blood into the Holy of Holies, what he was doing was symbolically offering a blood sacrifice for the sins of the people. However, the blood of goats and bulls could never be a sufficient sacrifice to remove sins. It was only symbolic of what was to come when the true High Priest offered His own blood to the Father – and His blood was a sufficient sacrifice that was ac-

ceptable to the Father so that He had a just basis to forgive sin.

Everything that Christians believe is related to the atoning work of Christ in some way. All of the Old Testament sacrifices and rituals are brought to completion in the death and atoning work of Christ. So, in terms of how the word “atonement” will be used in this portion of the study, we want to simply see it as **the entire saving work affected by God when Christ died on the cross and presented His blood to the Father. It is the work that Jesus Christ accomplished in His death and resurrection to satisfy God the Father’s holy and legal demands to secure our salvation.**

Now, in beginning this part of the study, it is important to be perfectly clear on the simple fact that the magnitude of what Jesus Christ has accomplished cannot be appreciated. No one has any idea how good heaven will be or how bad the Lake of Fire will be. We have never been to either place, and we have never met anyone who has. Then to make it worse, we have no real idea as to how sinful we really are. We do not understand the holiness of God. It is just an overused spiritual term for most people. We always see ourselves as being pretty good, better than someone else, and not really that bad at all. We never see ourselves in the proper light, or from the proper perspective. We may say “*Oh yea, we have done some bad things*”, but deep down we still see ourselves as really a pretty good person. Spiritually, all of that is very deadly. We have heard about “**salvation**” so much that it is just “old hat” to us now. So, somehow, in all of this it is important to be very careful, very deliberate, and very purposeful in how we approach a subject with which we are all very familiar. Please appreciate that the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Atonement are two of the three most vital doctrines that can ever be studied. The third would be the sovereignty of God.

Now, it is critical to understand that unless God’s redeeming information has led to a total personal transformation, there has been no genuine salvation. This is the great diabolical illusion of the modern day church – **salvation without transformation**. This could be the most damning truth that has ever been accepted in the church, and especially in the current church age. This is exactly what people want – a salvation that offers them

all of the benefits of heaven without any personal earthly surrender, renunciation, or commitment. That kind of Christianity simply does not exist! There is not one single verse in the New Testament that would foster such a maligning of genuine biblical salvation. There is forgiveness, there is mercy, and there is reconciliation – but it is NEVER without personal transformation. If that were the case, then the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit could be eliminated from the Scriptures and the word “**sanctification**” could be eliminated. [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) says,

¹⁷Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* (italics, added by the translators) a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The second part of that verse is the explanation of the first part of the verse. The truth of God always produces a life transforming effect on the life of a genuine believer. One of the greatest tragedies for so many people is that they have accepted the false notion that people have salvation because they made a “decision” at some point in their life, but in reality they have not truly lived as followers of Christ and presently are not living for Christ. They simply made a decision that produced no real substance in their personal life. Christians do this all of the time for their children. They love them and they want to believe that they are saved because they made that “decision”. Please understand that making a “decision” is not the same as being converted. They are not the same! If someone has truly experienced biblical salvation, then there will be genuine and ongoing biblical fruit to attest to their conversion. This is the great evangelical lie that has been accepted within the Christian church, and the result is that because we love someone and want to believe that they are actually saved when they are not, we have forfeited earnest and heart felt conviction regarding their salvation. Unfortunately, the modern church has adopted the lie that there can be biblical salvation without biblical transformation,, but the eventual result will most likely be eternal separation from the presence of God in a place of eternal torment for many unsuspecting individuals.

So far in this study of Jesus Christ we have looked at His **PERSON** – the fact that He was the Son of God, but became the God-Man forever. We have seen that He is still fully God, but also fully man at the same time. This is His person. However, now we want to begin to look at His specific **WORK**. We can never fully understand His work if we do not understand His person simply because not just anyone could do what He did. So, we have clearly described who He was, who He became, and who He is now. He is the Son of God (and always will be), but He became the God-Man (and always will be – fully God, fully man). At the right hand of the Father right now is the God-Man Christ Jesus, not God the Son as He previously was. So, as we understand who He is, we will be better able to understand the doctrine of His death and the atonement.

The great **central point** of all Biblical revelation is the **person and work of Jesus Christ**. He is the sum total of all that it teaches. So, it needs to be very clear at the outset that we understand why the Son of God actually came to the earth. He did not come here on a vacation, or a sabbatical, or just taking some time off from a busy schedule. He did not think this would just be a nice place to visit. **He came into the world to reconcile men to God**. If He had not come and done what He did, no one could ever be saved. [1 Timothy 2:5-6](#) says,

⁵For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time....

There is only **one Mediator** that can go to God on our behalf – **just one**, and His name is Jesus Christ, the God-Man. No one else can help us. No one else could have taken our place. No one else could have made an acceptable sacrifice in the presence of God. Only Jesus Christ could have done these things. At the beginning of this doctrine it is critical to doctrinally appreciate that **there was no other way for God to save man except by God the Son coming to die in his place**. There was no other way – none, no other means, and no other method that God could have employed to save men. **If Jesus had not died in our place, we could never have been saved**.

At this point, it is important to understand that God was under no obligation whatsoever to save men at all. [2 Peter 2:4](#) is a very interesting verse about the angels that sinned.

⁴For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;

I.e., God chose to simply send these angels into judgment for their sin. That was it. There was no trial, no appeals process, no rethinking what had happened, and no reprieve in any form. They sinned against God and they were immediately judged and cast into Hades waiting to be cast into the final Lake of Fire. In the same way, God was not constrained in any way to save men. He could have chosen with perfect justice to simply leave man in his sin waiting for His judgment. However, God in His great love chose to provide His Son as a sacrifice so that sinners could be saved. The technical New Testament term for what took place is “**propitiation**”, or that the death of Christ fully and completely, and in every way possible “**satisfied**” the judicial demands that God had on the sinner.

Now, Jesus Christ is generally seen as having three basic functions. He is seen as **Prophet, Priest, and King**. Expressed in other terms, Jesus Christ **reveals** God to us, He **reconciles** us to God (settles our account with God), and He will one day **rule** over all of creation. One day every knee is going to bow and every tongue is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. [Philippians 2:9-11](#) says,

⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,
¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹**and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

People cannot escape God’s ultimate existence and presence. No one is exempt from this event. All they can do is ignore it, turn aside from it, disregard

it as unimportant or irrelevant, or just pay no heed to it, **but they cannot escape from it**. This is not a threat, but a reality. The **gospel** applies to us. The **truth** applies to us. The **salvation message** applies to us. We cannot escape the message. A person can ignore it or say they do not believe it, **but they cannot escape it**.

Now, in this portion of the study we are going to look specifically at Jesus Christ’s role as **Priest**. For our study in Hebrews, this is really the aspect of His ministry that we will be focusing in on. He is described in Scripture as the “**Mediator**”– **the One who stands between man and God**. [1 Timothy 2:5](#) says,

⁵For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,

[Hebrews 8:6](#) says,

⁶But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

[Hebrews 9:15](#) says,

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

[Hebrews 12:22-24](#),

²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

The priest is someone who represents **man to God**, whereas the prophet was one who represented **God to man**. The prophet is one who came with a message

from God to man. The priest is one who approaches God on man's behalf. Scripture everywhere teaches that Christ is the believer's High Priest. The priest is essentially a mediator who does two main things. First, he appeases another by making sacrifices. Secondly, he intercedes on behalf of the people. The NT word is "propitiate". [Romans 3:23-25](#) says,

²³**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** ²⁴**being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,** ²⁵**whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness,**

[1 John 2:1-2](#) says,

¹**My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.** ²**And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**

[1 John 4:10](#) says,

¹⁰**In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

So, what does the term "propitiation" actually mean? **It is that which satisfies the demands of God's holiness that men have violated**. Man has violated God's holiness and God's standards of what is right and wrong. Man has crossed over into forbidden territory and willingly chose to do what was wrong when he knew it was wrong, and God, being a holy God, demanded restitution and payment for that sin. However, it was not something that man could pay. He needed someone else to pay the penalty. Being good was not good enough. Going to church was not good enough. Reading the Bible was not good enough. Only someone who was holy could make a holy sacrifice, but it had to be a sacrifice of blood, and specifically a sacrifice of holy blood. The blood of animals would not be sufficient.

The word "propitiation" is only used three times in three verses, and it always refers to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that paid the penalty for our sins. It means that He personally paid the necessary price for both the punishment and the removal of our sins. Christ became our "substitute", and what He did, and this is an important word, He "appeased" the wrath of God once for all. **Man is never said to be able to appease god**. You personally cannot do ONE thing to appease God's wrath for your sin – not one thing. A sinner has nothing, absolutely nothing to offer a holy God. What would we actually offer God? So, in order for God to be able to accept us, it was necessary **for God** and **not man** – to do something to deliver man from his sin. Everything in the atonement – the entire saving work affected by the death of Christ - has come about ONLY as a result of Christ's death on the sinner's behalf. [Romans 5:11](#) says,

¹¹**And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.**

[2 Corinthians 5:18\(a\)](#) says,

¹⁸**Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ....**

The word for "reconcile" is "katallage", and it means to go from a state of enmity and hostility between persons to a state of friendship. Enemies become friends, and that reconciliation, that restoration to God's divine favor, brings about a change in the sinner – a conversion. This is so important to understand. Reconciliation is not just a legal transaction. It is more than being justified. It brings about personal conversions that are known to the sinner and known to their conscience. These effects are the work of the Holy Spirit at an individual's conversion. [Romans 5:5](#) puts it this way,

⁵**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.**

Please appreciate that this reconciliation is something that we can only receive, but it is not something that we

can personally effect. We are the ones being reconciled – reconciled to God. [Romans 5:10](#) says,

¹⁰For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

As you read that verse, please understand that in reconciliation that the sinner did nothing. It was FOR him, but had nothing to do WITH him. I.e., there was nothing that the sinner could do to effect this reconciliation, or the effects of that reconciliation on their life.

When sin was paid for, it was put aside, blotted out, wiped out, done away with forever. That is where we get the word atonement. It literally means “at one”, to be as one. It means that two people who were formerly divided are brought together and made as one. So this entire business of reconciliation is restoring relations between two parties that were formerly separated from each other. It is this great doctrine of the Atonement that describes how God and sinners actually have been brought together by the blood of Jesus Christ and how God and the sinner can now be “at-one”, or as one.

There has to be a satisfactory offering for this “at-one-ment” to take place. Not just any offering will do. It had to be a holy offering of someone who was innocent for the deserved punishment of the one who was guilty. [Hebrews 10:4](#) says,

⁴For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

It is not that it just had to be blood, but it had to be innocent blood, holy blood. They offered blood constantly. [Hebrews 9:13-15](#) sums it up,

¹³For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall

the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
¹⁵And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

[Mark 10:45](#) says,

⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

[1 Peter 3:18](#) says,

¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

In [Romans 8:33-34](#), Paul raises the question as to who might be condemning us or bringing a charge against us.

³³Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Who can bring a charge against us? Surely it cannot be Jesus Christ simply because He is right now at the right hand of the Father interceding for us. The only way we can come to God is through Jesus Christ. [Hebrews 9:24](#) says,

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

Why do you think He is doing that? It is because we will forever need His reconciling work and His intercession. No one can ever stand before God on their own

merit. They have nothing to offer God for salvation or for the continuation of that salvation. There is no sacrifice that anyone can make. There is no gift that anyone can bring. There is no payment that anyone can make. A million years from now we will still be totally dependent on the reconciling and intercessory work of Christ. He will eternally be representing the believer to God the Father. Why? It is because we can never stand before God on our own merit – never, not one single moment. That is why Hebrews declares on four different occasions that Jesus Christ will be our High Priest “**forever**”. There will never be one nano second in eternity where we will not need the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

Continued in next edition...

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