

# The Talmid



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

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

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



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## DISCIPLESHIP IN AN EVIL DAY (Part 9)

### The Great Announcement

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

(Continuation from last edition)

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*The Gospel and the Kingdom*

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tament

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### After Pentecost: The King- dom in Acts and the Epistles

A great deal happens in [Acts 2](#). From  
the throne of the ascended Christ the  
Spirit is sent, creating and indwelling a  
body that will witness of Christ from Je-  
rusalem to the ends of the earth ([vv. 1–  
13](#)).

**Acts 2:1-13 (NASB)**

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

<sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came from  
heaven a noise like a violent rush-  
ing wind, and it filled the whole  
house where they were sitting.

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

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

<sup>5</sup> Now there were Jews living in Je-  
rusalem, devout men from every

nation under heaven.

<sup>6</sup> And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.

<sup>7</sup> They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?"

<sup>8</sup> And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born?

<sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

<sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

<sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.

<sup>12</sup> And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

<sup>13</sup> But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

Its first sign is Peter's sermon proclaiming Christ ([Acts 2:14–36](#)), from which a new covenant community is born. "Peter said to them, Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself" ([Acts 2:38–39](#) (NASB)). We are told that "about three thousand souls" were "cut to the heart" by this message ([vv. 37, 41](#)).

As particular persons, they repented, believed, and were baptized, but they were organized by the Spirit into a new human society. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" ([v. 42](#)). From this shared union with Christ, these pilgrims from faraway regions were so united with each other that the worshiping community itself was a witness to the world. "And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" ([v. 47](#)).

We have seen that the forgiveness of sins and

the new birth are at the heart of Jesus's proclamation of the kingdom. Proclaimed first to the Jews, this gospel will be preached to all nations. This is the fulfillment of the prophetic vision of a remnant from every nation—even those nations that had persecuted Israel—seeking the Lord where he may be found. "In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, "...Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'" ([Zechariah 8:23](#) (NASB)).

The apostles typically interpreted these prophecies as being fulfilled now in Jesus Christ and his gathering of a remnant from Israel and the nations by his Spirit. [Amos 9](#) speaks of the final restoration of Israel in concrete terms. Yet James interprets this prophecy as now being fulfilled in the kingdom of Christ, through the ingathering of a remnant of the Gentiles into the true Israel ([Acts 15:14–18](#)). James's interpretation is typical of the Christ-centered reading of the whole of Scripture that Jesus Christ himself taught his disciples ([Luke 24:25–27, 31–32, 44–49](#)).

Pitting Jesus (and the kingdom motif) against Paul (and the emphasis on personal salvation) used to be a hobby of liberal Protestants. Alfred Loissy, a liberal Roman Catholic writer, once quipped that Jesus announced a kingdom, but instead it was a church that came. So on one side is Jesus, with his invitation to humanity to participate in his kingdom by bringing peace and justice, and on the other side is Paul who spoke instead of the church and personal salvation by belonging to it.

Today, however, this contrast is sometimes heard in evangelical circles. "While some Protestants seem to let Jesus be Savior, but promote Paul to lord and teacher," writes Brian McLaren, "Anabaptists have always interpreted Paul through Jesus, and not the reverse. For them the Sermon on the Mount and the other words of Jesus represent the greatest treasure in the world. Jesus's teachings have been their standard."<sup>1</sup>

In his book, McLaren relates that he used to be a "Romans Christian" who understood the gospel as God's justification of sinners through faith in Christ. "A lunchtime meeting in a Chinese restaurant unconvinced and untaught me. My lunch mate was a well-known Evangelical theologian who quite rudely upset years of theological certainty with one provocative statement:

‘Most Evangelicals haven’t got the foggiest notion of what the gospel really is.’ ”

After McLaren answered by quoting Romans, his friend “followed up with this simple but annoying rhetorical question: ‘You’re quoting Paul. Shouldn’t you let Jesus define the gospel?’ ” And as for Jesus, the friend added, the gospel is “The kingdom of God is at hand.” “*The kingdom of God is at hand*, or, in the words of my friend Rod Washington, *God’s new benevolent society is already among us.*”<sup>2</sup>

However, the “**red letter**” (words of Jesus) method of interpretation assumes a deficient doctrine of Scripture. Jesus’s words, teachings, and actions were remembered, related, and interpreted *by his apostles*. Just as he had promised in the upper room, Jesus sent the Spirit so that they would remember everything that he taught them and would be able to pass that on to others.

If “**all Scripture is God-breathed**” ([2 Timothy 3:16 NIV](#)) and if Paul, having been directly commissioned and taught by the ascended Christ, was an apostle whose writings were recognized as “**Scripture**” ([2 Peter 3:15–16](#)), then to hear Paul is to hear Jesus. “**Whoever receives you receives me,**” Jesus told the Twelve when he sent them out, “**and whoever receives me receives him who sent me**” ([Matthew 10:40](#)). The whole Bible is canon, and Scripture interprets Scripture.

Besides revealing a seriously deficient view of Scripture, this contrast between Jesus and Paul rests on a misunderstanding of our Lord’s teaching concerning the kingdom. Jesus’s proclamation of the kingdom is identical to Paul’s proclamation of the gospel of justification. Contrasting the kingdom with the church is another way of saying that the main point of Jesus’s commission consists in our social action rather than in the public ministry of Word and sacrament. In other words, it’s another way of saying that we are building the kingdom rather than receiving it; that the kingdom of God’s redeeming grace is actually a kingdom of our redeeming works.

Jesus’s message of the kingdom as the forgiveness of sins and the dawning of the new creation

was inseparable from his promise to build his church and to give his apostles the keys of the kingdom through the ministry of preaching, sacrament, and discipline. This motif of the kingdom was hardly lost in the apostolic era. It was this gospel of the kingdom that Peter and the other apostles proclaimed immediately after Jesus’s ascension ([Acts 2:14–36](#); [Acts 3:12–16](#); [Acts 17:2–3](#)). And this is also the heart of Paul’s message ([1 Corinthians 15:3–4](#)).

If the preaching of the gospel, no less than the miracles, is the sign that the kingdom has come, Paul’s message and ministry can only serve as confirmation of the kingdom’s arrival. All of the realities that the gospels announce as evidence of the messianic kingdom—judgment and justification, forgiveness, a new birth, the gift of the Spirit, and the gathering of a people for the end-time feast—are central in Paul’s preaching in Acts and in his letters.

Sometimes it is suggested that Jesus proclaimed a this-worldly reign, while Paul spiritualized this reign as a purely other-worldly reality limited to personal salvation. Whereas Jesus challenged Caesar’s temporal authority, Paul encouraged a passive resignation to secular rulers. However, it was Jesus who famously said, “... **Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s...**” ([Mark 12:17 NASB](#)). Before Pilate, Jesus affirmed that he was a king but said, “...**My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm**” ([John 18:36 NASB](#)). When he comes in glory, his kingdom will be glorious in power and might.

And although Paul called Christians to submit to secular authorities as God’s ministers of temporal justice ([Romans 13](#)), he proclaimed Christ as Lord over all principalities and powers ([Colossians 1:15–17](#)). Although he never invoked his *apostleship* as authority over temporal government, Paul did invoke his Roman *citizenship* by appealing his case to Caesar over the judgment of the Jewish court ([Acts 25:11](#)).

Christ is Lord over both the kingdom of grace and the kingdoms of this age, but in saving grace (through Word and sacrament) and in common grace (through government and culture). The church is neither to rule over secular kingdoms nor to separate from them, but to

live in Babylon in the active expectation of Christ's return.

Paul too teaches that the new creation/kingdom has been inaugurated in Christ's conquest: the righteousness of God has been revealed from heaven ([Romans 1:16–17](#)), including justification of sinners and new birth, the Spirit and his gifts poured out ([Romans 5:5](#)). Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth ([Romans 1:3–4](#); [Ephesians 1:18–22](#); [Philippians 2:9–11](#); [Colossians 1:15–20](#)).

Like Jesus, Paul teaches that the in-breaking of Christ's kingdom creates a new society. Remarkably similar to the Sermon on the Mount, 1 Corinthians extrapolates the implications of Jesus's new-covenant ethic. Neither Jesus nor Paul interprets these commands as the *gospel*, but as the law of God's household. It is a law that can only be obeyed because the new age or new covenant has dawned. With the forgiveness of sins and new birth comes a new fellowship of love in the body of Christ. The gospel breaks down the walls not only between Jew and Gentile but also between rich and poor.

Instead of mirroring their pagan culture, believers are called to settle their disputes between each other in church courts rather than secular ones. They are not to capitulate to a culture of immorality, divorce, socioeconomic and ethnic hierarchies, and the group narcissism that divides Christ's body into competing sects. Rather, united to Christ by his Spirit around the Word and the Lord's Table, Paul tells the Corinthian saints that they are to grow into his body: an embassy of grace in an empire of death.

The tension between the “already” and “not yet” character of the kingdom that we have discovered in Jesus's teaching dominates Paul's horizon as well as that of the other apostles. As the writer to the Hebrews declares, Jesus Christ is already now “**heir of all things**,” even though we don't yet *see* everything in subjection to him ([Hebrews 1:1–4](#)).

Our riches today are the spoils of Christ's triumph that are poured out by his Spirit upon people “**from every tribe and language and people and nation**,” being made into “**a kingdom and priests to our God**” ([Revelation 5:9–10](#)). Since Christ's ascension and the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, we have been living in “**the last days**” ([Acts 2:17](#);

[2 Timothy 3:1](#); [Hebrews 1:2](#); [James 5:3](#); [1 Peter 1:20](#); [2 Peter 3:3](#); [1 John 2:18](#); [Jude 18](#)), before the “**last day**” ([John 6:39–40](#), [44](#), [54](#); [John 11:24](#); [John 12:28](#)). Christ appeared “**at the end of the ages**” ([Hebrews 9:26](#)), yet “**the age to come**” even now is breaking in upon us through preaching and sacrament ([Hebrews 6:5](#)).

Paul says that “**the end of the ages has come**” ([1 Corinthians 10:11](#)), yet “**the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night**” ([1 Thessalonians 5:2](#)). This is precisely how Jesus described his second coming in the Olivet discourse.

And one could hardly find better confirmation of Jesus's promise that “**this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come**” ([Matthew 24:14](#)) than in Paul's mission and message. “**For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death**” ([1 Corinthians 15:25–26](#)).

The presence of the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge of the consummation assures that what he has begun in us he will complete. The Spirit brings the blessings of the age to come into the present, which fills us not only with unspeakable joy but also with unutterable longing for the “**more**” still up ahead ([Romans 8:18–25](#)).

Whatever its wider effects might be, at present the kingdom of Christ itself is not a geopolitical, economic, or cultural force. Just as Jesus said that his kingdom is not of this world, Paul writes, “**For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places**” ([Ephesians 6:12](#)). Our only weapons are the Spirit and the Word of the gospel. Through faith in Christ we have “**the breastplate of righteousness**,” “**the belt of truth**,” “**the shield of faith**,” and “**shoes**” ready to run with “**the gospel of peace**” ([Ephesians 6:14–16](#)).

Jesus's announcement that he has bound the strong man so that the veil of unbelief may be torn from the eyes of Satan's prisoners is elaborated by Paul ([2 Corinthians 4:3](#)). Christ has triumphed over Satan at the cross ([Colossians 2:13–15](#)) and in his resurrection and ascension frees captives ([Ephesians 4:8–10](#)).



The apostles with one voice declare with their Lord that Christ is now reigning ([Acts 2:24–25](#); [Acts 3:20–21](#); [1 Corinthians 15:25](#); [Hebrews 1:3, 8, 13](#); [Hebrews 8:1](#); [Hebrews 10:12–13](#)). For this reason, Jesus can assure his persecuted saints, **“Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades”** ([Revelation 1:17–18](#)).

In this interim period, the kingdom advances alongside the suffering and even martyrdom of its witnesses. Yet Christ **“will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him”** ([Hebrews 9:28](#) (NIV)); see also **“For in just a very little while, ‘He who is coming will come and will not delay’”** ([Hebrews 10:37](#) (NIV))

The regeneration of fallen creation works in concentric circles, beginning with the inner person and then, at the consummation, including the resurrection of the body and the complete renewal of creation. Wherever the New Testament treats the complex of Christ’s return, the resurrection, and the last judgment, no intervening raptures, resurrections, or judgments are mentioned. Only if we are looking for the kingdom in something other than the reconciliation of sinners to God in Christ can we fail to appreciate its miraculous expansion to the ends of the earth.

The **book of Revelation** gives us glimpses of the heavenly worship and the earthly contest as simultaneous events, like watching a split screen on television. Cast out of heaven by the conquering King, Satan **“was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him”** ([Revelation 12:9](#)). Yet we read,

**Revelation 12:10–12 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> **Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night.**

<sup>11</sup> **“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”**

<sup>12</sup> **“For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has *only* a short time.”**

Heaven is conquered, the temple cleansed forever, with the prosecuting attorney disbarred—and yet earth becomes the theater for his futile fury against the church. Especially for our brothers and sisters suffering persecution—and even martyrdom—around the world today, these words are as relevant as when they were first penned.

## *The Gospel Is the Kingdom and the Kingdom Is the Gospel*

The **“gospel of the kingdom”** ([Matthew 24:14](#)) and the **“keys of the kingdom”** ([Matthew 16:19](#)) are really synonymous. They both refer to the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of all things that has begun even now with the in-gathering of outcasts to Zion. Furthermore, both of these phrases are synonymous with the Great Commission.

If John the Baptist could proclaim with seriousness, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”** ([Matthew 3:2](#)), it is all the more urgent that we repent and believe now that the Messiah has come. The foundation of this repentance is the forgiveness of sins, as John Calvin observed:

“From this doctrine, as its source, is drawn the exhortation to repentance. For John does not say, “Repent ye, and in this way the kingdom of heaven will afterwards be at hand;” but first brings forward the grace of God, and then exhorts men to repent. Hence it is evident that the foundation of repentance is the mercy of God, by which he restores the lost....

[Forgiveness is] first in order ... so it must be observed that pardon of sins is bestowed upon us in Christ, not that God may treat them with indulgence, but that he may heal us from our sins.”

<sup>3</sup>

In its present phase, the kingdom is the gospel and the gospel is the kingdom:

“Now the means is His Gospel. Also that is why Jesus Christ spoke so often of the Gospel,

calling it the Kingdom of God. “The Gospel of the Kingdom” can also be translated “the Gospel, which is the Kingdom.” It is not, then, without cause that the Gospel is called “the Kingdom of God.” ... Jesus Christ always has some company wherever the Gospel is preached. For He is not a King without subjects.”<sup>4</sup>

In the West, history is divided into periods: ancient, medieval, modern, and postmodern. Today CNN has its own list of headlines. However, the real turning point in history is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This turning point is not only celebrated but is deepened and widened in its effects every Lord’s Day. Wherever this gospel is taken, a piece of heaven—the age to come—begins even now to dawn in the dusty corners of this passing evil age.

#### **Bibliography:**

<sup>1</sup>Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 206.

<sup>2</sup>McLaren, *A New Kind of Christianity*, 138.

<sup>3</sup>John Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 179.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 201.

## **CORAM DEO**

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

# **Great Preaching Needs Courage ... in the Pulpit AND in the Pews**

**By: Joe McKeever**

Can we talk about courage? This is as rare as plutonium these days, particularly among the very people who should demonstrate it most readily, the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*“The Lord is for me; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”* (**Psalm 118:6**; See also **Hebrews 13:5-6**). I read that scripture—especially the **Hebrews 13:5-6** incarnation—and smile. Asking “What can man do to me?” is kind of like asking for it, isn’t it? Daring them to “bring it on.” The answer,

of course, is that man can do a great deal to you. But the bottom line—and the point of the scripture—is that ultimately, with God being “for me,” it does not matter. Nothing matters so much as our being one with the heavenly Father.

Can we talk about courage? This is as rare as plutonium these days, particularly among the very people who should demonstrate it most readily, the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only two people in the church need courage: the one in the pulpit and the one in the pew.

### **A. The messenger of God in the pulpit needs courage for a thousand reasons. Here are ten:**

**1. To preach the whole counsel of God no matter who may disapprove.** And to sweeten that preaching when his flesh is involved and wants to “lower the boom” on certain people. Graciousness takes courage also.

**2. To withstand the pressures to compromise.** And to compromise when he is feeling headstrong and does not want to budge an inch from his inspired position. Compromising can be courageous.

**3. To oppose ungodly church leaders.** And to support leaders whom he does not necessarily care for or with whom he differs on some matters but who are right on this issue. Recognizing wisdom and standing with it may take great courage.

**4. To hold the line on biblical doctrines.** And to ease up on emphasizing doctrines that are of lesser importance and on which good people differ. Kindness when you are tempted to be judgmental takes courage.

**5. To combat his own fears.** And to give in to legitimate red flags his spirit raises. Withdrawing flawed plans can take great courage.

**6. To stand up to his own spouse (sometimes) whose fears have taken over and whose faith is wavering.** And to hear from his spouse when she is resisting something he really wants to do and he realizes she has a point. Yielding often takes great courage.

**7. To believe the Word against many voices to the contrary.** And when his voice is one against the many,

to consider that he might be mistaken and seek out more information. Listening to the counsel of others can be courageous.

**8. To speak truth to power.** And to control his tongue when the “power” is simply doing something the preacher does not like but where nothing important is at stake. Silence can also be courageous.

**9. To humble himself to wash the feet of the lowliest.** And to keep on washing them when his advisors imply that he is tarnishing his image. Ignoring bad advice from people we trust takes great courage.

**10. To humble himself at the feet of Jesus every day of his life.** And to keep on doing it, day after day, year after year. Few things require more courage than “**entering into our closet,**” as Jesus said ([Matthew 6:6](#)) and placing yourself on His altar time and again. When you pray for your ministers and missionaries, pray the Lord to grant them great courage to do the right things, no matter what forces are pressuring them to ease up, back down or go away.

## **B. The Lord’s people—the men and women in the pews—need courage also if they are to do the work God has for them:**

**1. To put the Lord before all other considerations, to “seek first His kingdom.”** And to remember the Lord’s work is not all inside the church building walls but also in the office, factory, school-room, and especially in the home. Courage is delighted to speak up for the right.

**2. To trust the Lord to meet his needs when giving to the Lord’s work because he has so many other things he could be doing with this money.** And to recognize that financial stewardship also means exercising restraint in buying unneeded items or spending frivolously. Courage drives past the places of great temptation without slowing down.

**3. To stand up and speak out when a pastor is preaching untruth or trying to lead the church into error.** And to support the pastor when the truth he preaches is unpopular and people are resisting

him. Courage stands up and speaks out when to do otherwise would be safer but cowardly.

**4. To speak up when fellow members are doing damage to the Lord’s church.** And to defend the lonely voice of a righteous soul trying to get the church back on track. Courage does not look to see who is standing with it.

**5. To say no to a boss asking him to lie or steal or misrepresent or exaggerate.** And to be willing to pay the consequence for this, even to the point of losing his job or receiving a demotion. Courage can be costly; not everyone is willing to pay the price.

**6. To say no to anyone pressuring him to compromise.** And to suffer the ostracism which may result from refusing to go along. Courage can be lonely; only the strong can be courageous.

**7. To compromise on inconsequential things when nothing is at stake and the welfare of the team is at risk.** And to encourage others who, for the sake of “what I believe,” would sacrifice the entire ministry of the church. Courage does not sacrifice itself for foolishness but for God’s truth.

When you pray for brothers and sisters in Christ, pray the Lord will give them courage to live for Him each day and not just Sundays, the courage to take unpopular stands for right and not just when it’s safe to do so, and the courage to seek out the most vulnerable and defenseless and be their voice. The Christian life is not for sissies, as they say. That is, not for the cowardly. Anyone doubting that may wish to turn to [Revelation 21:8](#) and see who is leading that tragic parade into hell-fire. “Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the living of these days. Amen.”





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## Hebrews 9 – Overview

### Part 3

This portion of the overview of [Hebrews 9](#) will concentrate primarily on the key ideas of [Hebrews 9](#). Other key ideas will be presented in the upcoming Talmid articles.

#### Key Idea 1:

**Everything taking place in the earthly sanctuary was a picture and a type of that which was taking place in the heavenly sanctuary.** The important element that the writer is trying to convey to his readers is that everything that God had done through the Levitical priesthood, the sacrifices, the Day of Atonement, the feast days, the temple, the tabernacle, etc. was simply a model, a representation, a copy, a pattern, a template, and a simulation of something much greater. The type that was being modeled on the earth was simply demonstrating and displaying the greater reality that was going to happen in heaven itself. If you will notice how [Hebrews 9](#) is actually constructed, it is immediately evident that [Hebrews 9:1-10](#) is about the “earthly sanctuary” and [Hebrews 9:11ff](#) is about the heavenly sanctuary. [Hebrews 9:1-5](#) speaks specifically of the “earthly sanctuary” (v1) and what was transpiring there. Then in [Hebrews 9:6-10](#), the author speaks of the

limitations of the services that were being performed in the “earthly sanctuary” and states in [Hebrews 9:9](#) that they were simply “**symbolic for the present time**”. In fact, the actual word for “symbolic” is the Greek word for a parable (*parabole*). Much of the predominant teaching of Christ was done through parables and their symbolic content carried with it a simple, but profound spiritual application. So, what was taking place in the “earthly sanctuary” had profound spiritual implications. It seems that if the reader does not appreciate the significance between the “earthly sanctuary” and what [Hebrews 9:11](#) calls “**the greater and more perfect tabernacle**”, then the major emphasis of the book of Hebrews will be completely lost.

So, what is the significance of these verses and the “symbolic” picture they provide? Well, the first element that should be apparent is that salvation is something that is primarily taking place in heaven. The work of salvation is something that God has done. Salvation has never been dependent on the sinner – never. The real work of salvation is a “God-work” - something that was initiated and fully completed by the Triune God on our behalf. It was God the Father whose justice had to be satisfied, and God the Son was the only being in eternity that could provide an acceptable sacrifice to the Father. At the earthly level, the sacrificial blood of the animals had to ultimately be presented in the Holy of Holies of the temple by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. Then, in like manner, the far greater blood of Christ as our great High Priest had to be presented to the Father in the what [Hebrews 9:12](#) refers to as “**the Most Holy Place**” in heaven. [Hebrews 9:12](#) says that Christ “**entered**” and that He “**obtained**”. [Hebrews 9:14](#) says that He “**offered**”. [Hebrews 9:24 and 26](#) says that He “**appeared**”. [Hebrews 9:28](#) says that He came “**to bear**”. These are all action verbs and are at the very heart of Hebrews because they are the words that tell us what Christ accomplished for us. He “**entered**”, He “**obtained**”, He “**offered**”, He “**appeared**” on our behalf, and He was the One that bore our sins. This part of salvation is so rarely seen or even understood and appreciated, and yet it is this amazing and intimate conclusion to the sacrificial work of Christ that fully exalts what He has done. However, what needs to be gleaned from this in very simple terms is that salvation is something that God has accomplished for us. At a personal level, I am humbled that I have absolutely nothing to offer to the work of salvation. I have nothing to offer to God for the forgiveness



of sins. There is no personal sacrifice that I can make and no personal work that I can accomplish to merit even one small ounce of my salvation. I cannot be good enough, I cannot make enough sacrifices, I cannot work hard enough, I cannot pray enough, and I cannot give enough to merit anything salvific. I have nothing to offer whatsoever – zero, and that should produce nothing but humility in me as a Christian. This doctrinal perspective is such an insult to the lost person. It is a monumental insult to the religious individual and to the moralist. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Sanhedrin just hated Christ. They hated that He opposed and insulted all of their superficial religious efforts and trappings. They hated that He exposed their moral hypocrisy, double-standards, and religious pretensions - and nothing has changed. Men still despise all of the above because they want to think that salvation is something that they can merit. When we see Christ taking His blood into the holy places “**not made with hands**” and appearing in the presence of God with His sacrificial blood that He shed for us, it should be one of the greatest catalysts possible to produce in each of us a humble contrition before God Almighty that we are nothing and that He is everything. One of the most monumental truths that has humbled my life, that has chastened my life, and that at times has shamed my life is that I have nothing to offer to God. However, at the same time, it is that one overwhelming truth that has exalted Christ to me personally as much as any other truth in Scripture – that the work of Christ is totally sufficient for every salvific need that I have. In meditating on and working through these divine truths, it is an evident conclusion that the worst thing that could ever happen to someone is for them to think that salvation somehow depended on them and what they could do and offer to God. Every believer should be grateful that their salvation does not depend on them. Every believer has failed miserably in every conceivable way, and if it were not for Christ, no one would have any hope whatsoever.

#### Key Idea 2:

**Hebrews 9** is the pinnacle revelation on the high priestly ministry of Christ. From a doctrinal perspective, it seems that the final and concluding statement regarding the high priestly ministry of Christ comes in **Hebrews 10:11-14** which says,

**<sup>11</sup>And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.<sup>12</sup>But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,<sup>13</sup>from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.<sup>14</sup>For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.**

To make it even better, notice **Hebrews 10:18**, probably one of the greatest summary statements and reminders ever written. It says,

**<sup>18</sup>Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.**

The verse states “**remission of these**”. What are the “**these**”? It is from v17 – the “**these**” are “**sins and lawless deeds**”. In reality, that is all anyone had to offer God as men and women who were desperately and eternally lost – just “**sins and lawless deeds**”. Not much of an offering at all. That is exactly why we need a High Priest, or someone who could go to God on our behalf. It has been repeatedly stated throughout this overview study that we will all forever need the high priestly ministry of Christ. There will never be a time in eternity when our need for Christ does not exist. That is why the author has repeatedly stated that Christ is a “**priest forever**”. **Hebrews 7:24** says that Christ “**continues forever**” because He has “**an unchangeable priesthood**”. There will never be a time when we do not have a need for Christ and for his high priestly intercession on our behalf. That is one of the heresies of Mormon doctrine. They believe that they become little gods and inherit some planet of the universe where they go and establish their own little world and kingdom with them as the initial progenitor of the race. It is as if when they enter heaven that their need for Christ no longer exists. From a theological perspective, that is blatant heresy and a denial of the high priestly work of Christ on our behalf. Based on their doctrine we can just go and delete **Revelation 21 and 22**. If no one is going to be there, then why even talk about “**a new heaven and a new earth**” or “**the holy city**” and the “**new Jerusalem**” in **Revelation 21:1-2**? Why talk about “**the river of water of life...proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb**” in **Revelation 22:1**? Why even talk about it if no one is going to be there? For some reason they have not done a good exegesis of **Revelation 22:18-19** which is very clear,

<sup>18</sup>For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; <sup>19</sup>and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

It would be a good idea to just leave those verses alone!

[Hebrews 9](#) is the crowning pinnacle of the redemptive work of Christ on the believer's behalf as our Substitute, our Saviour, and our forever High Priest. The picture of what happened in the throne room of God after Christ's death is as intimate a picture of the obedience and sacrifice of Christ as can be found anywhere in Scripture. [Hebrews 9:24](#) states what happens when it says that Christ has entered "**into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.**" He was there as our High Priest taking His blood into the very presence of God as the one and only eternally sufficient and redeeming sacrifice for our salvation. Christ is a great, great High Priest, and He demonstrates that greatness in this heavenly scene described in [Hebrews 9](#).

### [Key Idea 3:](#)

**The reader must understand the connection between the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary in order to understand the actual atonement.** Since we have already addressed much of this in "Key Idea 1", suffice it to say that what [Hebrews 9](#) does is provide a picture of the final aspect of the atoning work of Christ – and it does so by contrasting the work that took place in the Old Testament temple, or earthly sanctuary, with the work that took place in the heavenly sanctuary which has always existed. The Old Testament temple is a picture of the heavenly temple, and even though our understanding of the heavenly sanctuary can never be fully understood just by looking at the earthly temple, it still provides a picture of one particular aspect of the "**heavenly sanctuary**" – the "**throne of God**". It is interesting that the actual term "**throne of God**" is only mentioned six times in the entire Bible, and all of those occur in the New Testament. Obviously, there are places in the Old

Testament which do speak directly of this particular "place" such as [Isaiah 6:1](#) which says,

<sup>1</sup>In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Here in v1 it is called a "**temple**" that had a "**throne**". In v4 it speaks of "**the posts of the door**" and "**the house**" being shaken. In v6, it is said to have contained an "**altar**". It is a specific place that had specific attributes and specific items throughout. What they were exactly and how it actually looked, no one knows – nor is it necessary to know for that matter. Of the six times that the term is used in the New Testament, four of those occur in Revelation. One occurs in [Hebrews 12:2](#) which says,

<sup>2</sup>looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

If we take a short look beginning in [Hebrews 9:11ff](#), we learn that this "**heavenly sanctuary**" is a "**perfect tabernacle**" (v11), "**not made with hands**" (v11), and "**not of this creation**" (v11). It has a place to "**enter**" (v12) and it has the "**Most Holy Place**" (v12), and in that place the blood of Christ was taken "**once**". We learn in v23 that the things in the earthly tabernacle are just a copy of "**the things in the heavens**". V24 says that God is there. So, we can readily see that there simply is not much detail given relative to what the actual throne of God is like. What is seen in these verses, however, is that the one recorded significant event that took place in the heavenly sanctuary was that of Christ offering His blood to the Father. The altar was there in [Isaiah 6](#) and it had a fire that was burning. So, it appears that the altar in the heavenly sanctuary has always been there, and that would correspond with the statement in [Revelation 13:8](#) which says,

<sup>8</sup>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.

The monumental saving work of Christ was fully completed in the mind of the Triune God before time even began, before the foundation of the world was even laid.

There is no time reference for us that we can relate to as to when this actually occurred in eternity past, but what is clear is that what had to be done for the work of salvation was fully known in the mind of the Triune God. Now, just imagine for a moment what the throne of God must have been like prior to the creation. There at the throne of God was an altar, and we can just imagine that it was something that was fully seen by God the Son and fully understood as to what it actually meant for Him personally. It represented a place where blood had to be shed. In fact, [Hebrews 9:22](#) states that “**without shedding of blood there is no remission**”. God the Son knew this. It was something that never escaped His attention. There was the altar, and He knew full well that it was there as a place where blood was to be offered to the Father, and He knew that it could only be His blood. This is an amazing picture. This is a picture of an amazing love – a staggering love from a Holy God for those who did not yet even exist. It was all there in the most intimate of detail. There were no sacrificial animals in heaven. There was no high priest or Levitical priesthood to make an offering. There was only an altar, and it was there for the sole purpose of one day receiving the sacrificial blood that was to be presented on it for the forgiveness of our sins. The work of salvation was the primary picture at the throne of God.

Just imagine for a moment if for some reason God had supernaturally brought you into His heavenly sanctuary before the world had ever existed and before time had even begun, and there you were with the Triune God. Please remember that prior to creation there were no angels, just the Triune God. Every angel, every cherubim, every seraphim is a created creature and they did not even exist until [Genesis 1](#) and the creation. So there you are in God’s sanctuary and there before you is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. What kind of things were in that place is not fully known, but what is known is that there was an “**altar**”. Just imagine for a moment what it would have been like to have been there and to look around and see all of the beauty and glory of that place, but suddenly you see a place of sacrifice for the shedding of blood. There in the very midst of the heavenly throne was an altar! This is before time even existed. What would you have thought? What would you have wondered as you looked around and saw an altar, what would have

gone through your mind? Why an altar, why a place to sacrifice blood, and why something like this at the throne of God? It was there because God has always loved us with an everlasting love. It was there as a constant reminder of the task ahead, of the work that had to be completed, and of how that work was to take place. The sacrificial work of Christ was unavoidable, inescapable, and inevitable. There was no compulsion here, no forcing of an issue. This was the mandate of God’s immeasurable love. The picture here is beyond words and beyond what our feeble minds can imagine – but it is true. How to fully understand all of this is not an easy task. How to place all of this into a practical perspective for our lives is not something that can just happen on our part. It is something that requires a level of meditation and concentration to simply appreciate this most amazing picture of love that the Triune God had for us before the world ever came into existence. God knew that we would fail, and do so miserably. God knew that sin would enter quickly into man’s existence. God the Father fully knew that only God the Son could make the perfect acceptable sacrifice, and in that knowledge they went ahead and prepared an altar for the one and only blood sacrifice that would ever be made in that “**Most Holy Place**”.

What a most remarkable picture! If you have never realized how much our incredible God loves and cares for you, then you are missing the most wonderful truth that exists in the universe. There is no truth that can have as much impact in a person’s life than knowing that God’s salvation for their life is no accident and that the full payment and eternal satisfaction for their sins has been completely paid. So much for those who deserve so little – amazing, amazing love!

*Continued in next edition...*

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