

# *I Will Build My Church*

## The Purpose and Characteristics of Christ's Church

### 12 The Power and Splendor of the Church Assembled- Part 1

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April 19, 2020

#### **Hebrews 10:19-25**

**19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,**

**20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh,**

**21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God,**

**22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**

**23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;**

**24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,**

**25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.**

To the Glory of God

Just about a year and half before the Roman army, led by Titus Vespasian, rose down "from the north" into 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine on his way to Jerusalem to destroy the Temple in 70AD- an unknown man was "carried along" by God the Holy Spirit to pen down an amazing Book that we now call, the "**Epistle to the Hebrews**".

Most Bible scholars date this Book to be around 68AD because it is obvious, from what he wrote, that one earth-shaking event had already taken place while another was soon to come.

The Spirit of Life from God had entered back into the lifeless Body of Jesus of Nazareth (three days after He had died by Crucifixion) and He rose from the dead and had appeared to over 500 witnesses during a forty-day time frame. (**1Corinthians 15:3-6**). During that time- Jesus appeared and

disappeared many times. And through what Dr. Luke called, “**many convincing proofs**” (**The Acts 1:3**), the Lord spent time with the Apostles to prepare them to establish the Church and Christianity on the earth. And at the conclusion of that forty-day time frame- Jesus bodily ascended into Heaven in broad daylight and in full view of many people. (**The Acts 1:9**)

That single Event- the physical Resurrection of Jesus from the dead- literally changed the course of history. There is simply no way to *overstate* the magnitude of importance that the Resurrection had on the ancient world. And that Importance is still transforming hundreds of millions of lives to this very day.

Now as you read this Epistle- you see the struggle that the writer had with his first Century Jewish audience. There were several Teachings, that were deeply imbedded in the Jews; and which they held on with great zeal; and which they considered to be sacred- and yet they were completely false. So, the writer of **Hebrews** spends 13 Chapters exposing and denouncing those false and heretical Teachings.

But, like with all things truly Christian, it isn't enough to simply NOT believe wrongly. It isn't enough to reject ideas and concepts and doctrines (and even people) that are wrong. Salvation is NOT brought about by the things we DON'T believe in; or the sins we DON'T commit; or the acts we DON'T engage in. No, genuine believers must also embrace and love and believe and teach what is true. And the Resurrection is true. And so, as this Pastor/Teacher (whoever he might have been) writes that while the Resurrection has already occurred- it is true and must be embraced (and taught and defended) by all who will be saved. (**Romans 10:9**)

But as you read through **Hebrews**- it is also clear that *another* earthshaking Event- that will also change everything- has not yet happened as the writer pens down these inspired Words. The Temple in Jerusalem is yet standing when this Epistle was written. And because that is true- there were several aspects of the normal daily life of genuinely saved Jews that was still going on. Among them were:

- Animal sacrifices were still being offered- even among Jews who had embraced Jesus as the Messiah
- Pilgrimages to Jerusalem were still going on
- All the Jewish feasts and ceremonies were still in effect
- The dietary aspects of the Law were still being followed
- The Doctrine of Angels and their Ministry to believers had become

almost completely pagan

- Moses was revered and almost worshipped
- Jews were terribly confused about the distinction between the Old and New Covenants

... and it is into all this confusion that this Epistle was written. The first several Chapters of **Hebrews** deals with the “Superiority” of Jesus. And it is there that we find that Jesus is superior to Angels; to Joshua; and to Moses.

And then as the Chapters unfold- we see that **Hebrews** teaches that the New Covenant is an *infinitely* superior Covenant; based upon *infinitely* superior Promises; instituted by an *infinitely* superior High Priest; Who offered an *infinitely* superior Sacrifice. And then, with the beginning verses of Chapter 6- this writer tells his first Century Jewish audience to utterly *abandon* the Old Covenant and come over to the superiority of the New.

Now what is interesting, is that it becomes clear that the Book of Hebrews has three different audiences:

- Saved Jews, who genuinely believed in Jesus
- Unserved Jews, who were intellectually curious about Jesus
- Unserved Jews, who were completely indifferent toward Jesus

... and the writer jumps back and forth between these three groups.

So, some parts of **Hebrews** is written to those Jews, who were genuinely saved- but who were confused about what to do with the Old Covenant. Other parts were written to Jews, who had become fascinated with Jesus and the prospects that He just might be the long- awaited Messiah- but were, as yet, still lost. And finally, there was another group of Jews, who were physically in the small little Church in what is today- modern Turkey- but who were totally uninterested in anything having to do with this Man, named Jesus.

But by the time we get to Chapter 10, the writer has already laid out that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament Prophecies and, just as the Old Covenant had foretold- the New Covenant was the *final, full, and completed* Revelation of God to Man. And so, Chapter 10 is written *exclusively* to the first group- the Jews, who had abandoned the Signs, and Symbols, and Shadows of the First Covenant and who had embraced Jesus as being God Almighty in human flesh and the Savior and Master.

So, at the beginning of Chapter 10- the writer puts the finishing touches on his Argument that the Old Covenant has been completely abrogated and supplanted by the invincibility of the New Covenant and he complements his discussion by saying this in **Hebrews 10:11- 17**:

**Every [Old Testament Levitical] priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He [Jesus], having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us [in the Old Testament Scriptures]; for after saying,**

**"THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:  
I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART,  
AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,"**

He [God the Holy Spirit] then says,

**"AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS  
I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."**

Now the writer of **Hebrews** quotes from David's Prophecy in **Psalms 110:1** five different times in this Epistle. And each time- he makes the point that David was talking about Jesus. But when he uses this Prophecy here in Chapter 10- he is re-iterating the main theme of this entire Epistle that he began in Chapter 1, when he wrote:

#### **Hebrews 1:1-4**

**God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.**

Now, like all English translations- the NASB ran into what I call, a "Translation Difficulty" here- because the writer was clearly quoting from David's Prophecy in **Psalm 110:1**- here in verse 3, and so the phrase, "**sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high**" should have been put in all capital letters as they did for the other times the writer quoted from that OT Passage.

But the way to connect this Passage in Chapter 1 with the Passage in Chapter 10 is like this:

**"He . . . being the very Radiance of God's Glory . . . sat down at the Right Hand of Majesty on High"**

**"He . . . being the exact representation of God's Nature . . . sat down at the Right Hand of Majesty on High."**

**"He . . . upholding all things by the Word of His Power . . . sat down at the right hand of Majesty on High."**

**"He . . . having made purification of sins (all by Himself) sat down at the right hand of Majesty on High."**

So, what the writer wants us to see in Chapter 1 is what makes it "fitting"; or "proper"; or "correct" for Jesus (as God the Son) to "sit down" at the Right Hand of God's Majesty- *without that being blasphemy*. So, he mentions four things:

- **Jesus alone** is the very Radiance (the epitome) of God's Glory- so He sat down at God's Right Hand
- **Jesus alone** is the exact Representation of God's Nature- so He sat down at God's Right Hand
- **Jesus alone** upholds all things by the Word of His Divine Power- so He sat down at God's Right Hand
- **Jesus alone** made purification of Sins- so He sat down at God's Right Hand.

... and this is almost identical to what he wrote here in Chapter 10:

**but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.**

Now we know that God the Father is Spirit and doesn't have a body. So, God doesn't have a "Right Side" for anybody to sit down on. So, the term, "Right Hand" signifies Power and Strength- NOT a literal physical location with God. So, the idea of Jesus "sitting down" at the "Right Hand" of God- is signifying at least three things:

- The full Deity of Jesus Christ
- The Work of Redemption was finished
- Jesus is powerful and strong enough to subjugate all of God's enemies

No priest; angel; cherubim; seraphim; nor any other heavenly creature would be able to "sit down" at God's Right Hand. Only God can sit "by"; "near"; or "with" God. But now look again at the other Old Testament phrase that the writer quotes:

**... waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET**

This tells us that Jesus is not resting in Heaven. So, Jesus is NOT sitting at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High because He is tired. No, Jesus is very busy. He never sleeps and He never slumbers. Jesus is actively engaged in making sure that every aspect of the Father's Will- is *perfectly* accomplished in the earth. And what is Jesus busy doing? Well, to understand this better- it might be helpful to know that Jesus was ready to come back the day He left. We must try to comprehend that the Bible teaches that Jesus is RULING and He is REIGNING- *right now*- BEFORE He comes back to this earth! How is He ruling and reigning? In three ways:

- By **waiting** until all of God's enemies become a footstool (**Hebrews 10:13**)
- By **interceding** for His saints (**Romans 8:34**)
- By **preparing** a place for us (**John 14:2&3**)

... and by His waiting; and by His intercession and by His preparation- He is

*assuring* that His Church will be and will remain, One; Holy; Catholic; and Apostolic till the moment He bursts through the sky and returns to the earth and presents the Church to Himself- as the crowning Achievement of all that He is; and all that He has done!

So, the writer of **Hebrews** tells us that Jesus is ruling and reigning and that He will continue to do that- until something marvelous happens:

### **... UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET**

Now in the ancient world- the concept of an enemy ruler bowing down at the conqueror's feet- was a sign of complete subjugation. So, for example, when Rome conquered the various tribes in what is now Germany- it was required that the king or leader of each tribe- would come and bow down at the feet of the Roman general, who had vanquished him in combat. And all the various vassals and princes and underlings of that tribe would understand that since the king had bowed- they could not rebel against their new master.

So, when God the Holy Spirit "carried along" David to write down **Psalms 110:1**- David probably did not fully understand what he was writing. And for almost 1,000 years- Jewish rabbis and theologians and scholars didn't have a clue what **Psalms 110:1** meant. But when the writer of **Hebrews** infallibly linked the fulfillment of **Psalms 110:1** to Jesus- that became the one and only correct interpretation of that Old Testament Passage.

So, Jesus, as God the Son; sitting across from God the Father (Right Hand)- radiating back to the Father the glorious perfections of Holiness and Righteousness that only God has- is now laboring to assure that all of God's enemies are conquered and subjugated and are bowing down at God's Feet- thus becoming His Footstool.

So, what are God's enemies that must be conquered? Everything that *dishonors* or *belittles* God's Glory- such as:

- **Sin**- of every sort
- **Division** between People
- **Death**- both physical and spiritual

So, some of our songs are not correct when they say that there will come a time when we will crown Jesus as King and Lord. No, we won't. Jesus has *already* been crowned as Lord- way before He ever ascended into

Heaven. In **Matthew 28:18**- Jesus said,

**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**

And the verb here is in the past tense. So, at some point BEFORE He made this Statement- God the Father had given Jesus all Authority in both Heaven and earth. So, as He now ministers in His full Deity and in His place of both Power and Strength- Jesus is ruling and reigning until every single one of God's enemies are subjugated and bow before Him.

Now keep in mind that *everything* about Redemption is connected to the Church. Every aspect of God's Determination to display or show the Glory of His Grace in the earth (**Ephesians 1:6**)- is connected to the Church. Every part of the overall "Order of Salvation" (Ordo Salutis) is connected to the Church. Every portion of the Return of Jesus to this earth is connected to the Church. And therefore, every aspect of Jesus' present- day Ministry in Heaven to rule and reign until all of God's enemies become a footstool for His Feet- is also connected to the Church.

There is no such thing as anyone being truly saved and NOT being a part of Christ's Church. Every soul, who has truly experienced the Miracle of the New Birth- has been adopted into the very "Body of Christ"- which is simply another way of understanding the Church.

**Ephesians 1:22&23**

**And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**

So, in the New Testament, there are different ways that being a member of the true church of Jesus Christ is phrased:

- **Body of Christ**
- **Family of God**
- **In Jesus Christ**
- **United with Christ**
- **Saved**
- **Sanctified**

... these are all just synonyms of the Church. To be "in" Jesus Christ- is to

be saved. And to be saved- is to be part of the true Church. To be adopted into the Family of God- is to be in the Church. And to be a part of the Body of Christ- is to be a part of the Church.

Now we live in a very individualistic culture. Many people today are loners and people, who keep to themselves and don't make friendships easily. In fact, it is so ironic, that in a nation of over 320 million people- one of the most *prevalent* mental disorders today is "Loneliness". Our modern American culture has become very isolated and divided- even to the point of defining just what a "Friend" really is.

But as you read the Bible- you see that the common theme that identifies the Church of Jesus- is a concept of "togetherness". Another way that the Bible phrases this is in the many "one another" Passages that fill the pages of the New Testament.

And so, when the Church is illustrated in the Bible- we see a "gathering"; an "assembling"; and a "uniting" in a group. And this "togetherness" is the Hallmark of biblical Christianity and a true Church. And that is so true- that without this "one another" way of life- we really don't have a genuine Church.

Another way of looking at this concept of being assembled together is to see the great contrast between the Old and the New Covenants. Under the inferior Old Covenant, that was identified by Signs and Symbols and Shadows- you see many examples of *individual* believers that God used. And we call these people our "heroes"- and they are. But what they really are- the reason they are in the Bible- is that they are simply "types" of Jesus Christ. Each one of the men and women that the Old Testament singles out- had one or more characteristics that Jesus had.

But we can also see that each one of these human examples also had sin and flaws that the Bible doesn't hide. As a young believer, one of the reasons I became convinced that the Bible was true - was because it doesn't hide any of the atrocious sins of the heroes of our Faith. The Scripture airs out all the dirty laundry- the failures and despair and unbelief and the blackness of each heart- of the people that God used.

And this is NOT done to teach us that Sin doesn't matter- but rather to show us the Majesty of Grace. Every single Prophet or Apostle or Judge or Leader that God used- sometimes mightily- were all sinners saved by Grace. They all had "feet of clay"; and they all needed Forgiveness; and they all failed God- sometimes horrifically. And yet God loved them; and forgave them; and saved them; and used them.

Yet most of the people of the Old Testament never knew each other. Most of them never met. For example, all of the people illustrated in the Book of **Genesis** (including Job) lived many hundreds (thousands?) of years BEFORE Moses. God sovereignly *revealed* the contents of **Genesis** to Moses as he was in the mountain with God. And so, while we wonder after how God used these people in spectacular ways- most of them were not connected to each other at all. They didn't pray together; or even talk with each other.

For the most part- the people of the First Covenant that God used- didn't share each other's burdens. There was no Fellowship between them; no Unity; no Oneness; no times of confessing sin to each other; or even holding each other accountable. They didn't weep with each other during times of sorrow; and neither did they rejoice with each other when God moved to bless them. So, in most every measurement- the heroes of the Old Testament were loners. They operated by themselves as God directed them.

Another interesting aspect is that all of Jewish life under the inferior First Covenant was centered around the Temple in Jerusalem with the Levitical priesthood; and animal sacrifices; the Holy of Holies; along with yearly pilgrimages to the great city. That's what God told His people to do in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was the Pharisees who instituted various "teaching centers" throughout Israel called "Synagogues". The Old Testament Scriptures mention *nothing* about Synagogues. So, their existence reflects the willingness of the Jewish religious leaders, from the third Century BC until our present day, to *minimize* or outright *ignore* the inspired Old Testament.

To get an idea of what the average Jewish believer did- we can look at Joseph and Mary- the foster father and mother of Jesus. They went to Jerusalem, to the Temple, to offer a sacrifice for their first- born Son; and to have their eight- day old Son circumcised. That's what genuine believers under the First Covenant did. But Joseph and Mary were so poor- that they had to offer a "poor man's" sacrifice of two pigeons- because they couldn't even afford a lamb.

So, it was the influence of the Pharisees that dominated religious life in Israel during the first Century- and NOT the 39 Books of the Old Testament. So, for example, we read in **Luke 4:16** that Jesus,

**... came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom,**

**He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.**

So, Joseph and Mary raised Jesus to faithfully attend the Synagogue that was in His hometown of Nazareth. And there is no mention of Jesus ever going to the Temple in Jerusalem- until just before He was crucified.

So, all throughout His entire Ministry of about 3-1/2 years- Jesus lived under the Man-made system of the Pharisees- which is why He condemned it and refused to obey it. For example, there is no mention of Jesus (or His followers) ever offering an animal sacrifice; and Jesus was *routinely* criticized by the religious elite for desecrating the Sabbath; and of not following their warped interpretation and application of what God infallibly spoke in the 39 Books of the Old Testament. One of the common Condemnations that Jesus gave to these unsaved rulers was,

**“Have you not read?”**

... because what the Pharisees were teaching and how they were applying Divine Truth in the way they lived their lives- was NOT in accord with what God had revealed to Moses or the Prophets. But as Jesus was nearing His time to die- *for the first time*- He introduces a new, strange word and a radical concept to His disciples. And this word is found in **Matthew 16:18**:

**I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.**

Now this is the first time that Jesus used the word, “**Church**”. And as the Apostle Levi (Matthew) was writing this down- he wrote it, originally, in the Greek language. And the Greek word for Church, is “*ekklesia*”. But Jesus never spoke Greek. Jesus spoke all His Words, during His entire earthly Ministry- in the ancient, dead language of Aramaic. And the word for “Church” in Aramaic is: *kehala*, which, translated into Hebrew is *gahal*, which corresponds to the Greek word, *ekklesia*.

Now the reason this matters- is that, at the time that Jesus used this word- *kehala* or *ekklesia*- both the Temple in Jerusalem and the Synagogues were up and running. God had revealed the concept of the Temple from the very beginning to Moses; and the concept of Synagogues had been created by unsaved Jews back in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC. And there were three different Hebrew words that identified the Synagogues:

- *Bet ha-tefilla* (“House of Prayer”)
- *Bet ha-kneset* (“House of Assembly”)
- *Bet ha-midrash* (“House of Study”)

... yet Jesus did not use *any* of these words. Now He *could* have- but He didn't. And that is significant. Jesus also did NOT use the word for “Temple” here in **Matthew 16**. And that tells us that the concept of the “Church”- did NOT flow out from the concept of Synagogues- which were purely an *invention* of the unsaved Pharisees. But it didn't flow out from the Temple either. No, the “Church” is an entirely *different* and *unique* concept- brought about only through the New Covenant.

Now to emphasize this point- other than the time He entered the Synagogue in His hometown to preach to His fleshly relatives- Jesus completely ignored the Synagogues. And what is fascinating, is that while we are going into the third millennium without a Temple in Jerusalem- Synagogues are still in operation to this day. Yet neither God nor Moses nor the Old Testament created Synagogues. The Jewish Synagogues of our day are a Man-made religious relic from the days of the Pharisees that have nothing to do with *anything* in the Old Testament.

But God spoke through Moses and commanded the Jews to have a Temple in Jerusalem. And for many hundreds of years- God's people engaged in worshipping God in, by, and through the Temple. But look what Jesus said in **Luke 21:5&6**:

**And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, "As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down."**

... and in verse 7, Jesus disciples asked Him:

**Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?"**

... what “things”? In context, the “things” that the disciples are asking about here- has nothing to do with what will happen to us- just before Jesus

returns. The context of verses 8-36 of **Luke 21** have to do with *when* the Temple in Jerusalem will be torn down to the degree that not a single stone will be left standing.

Now *why* would God the Son be interested in *tearing down* something that was the very *core* of the Worship of God- that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit had instituted through Moses? Because the Temple represented the *inferior* Old Covenant that was being now being forever *replaced* by the infinitely *superior* New Covenant. And since God is the One, Who *established* the Old Covenant- only God could replace it. But with the destruction of the Temple- everything else that was central to the Jews and the Old Covenant Worship of God was destroyed as well- such as:

- The Levitical Priesthood
- Animal Sacrifices
- Pilgrimages to Jerusalem
- Passover
- Jewish Feasts
- The Dietary Laws
- The Ceremonial Laws
- The various Divisions between people
- The Separation between God and His people

... all of that came to stretching halt when the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed with such violence and ferocity that it was seen as the very Judgment of God upon an entire System that was being *eternally* replaced with a better one.

Now the Greek word, "*ekklesia*" (Church) is literally a compound of two other words: "*ek*", which means: "*out of*"; or "*out from*" and "*kaleo*" which means: "*to call*". So, Jesus is creating a brand- new concept here, that is *categorically* different from the concept of the already existing Temple and Synagogues- in which the emphasis is no longer on a particular location; or a particular physical structure (Temple)- but on what God has sovereignly done *to* and *for* individuals.

So, the Christian "Church" then, is the *gathering* or the *collection* or the *assembling* of those individuals- who have been "*called out*" from the world and from sin. But, as with any language- to simply be "*called out*"

doesn't give us the full meaning. So, to be consistent with the *intent* of the words that Jesus (Aramaic) and Levi (Greek) actually used- *in addition* to being "called out"- the Church is made up of individuals who have also been "called into" the *following*; and the *loving*; and the *obeying* and the *enjoying* of God.

Now what is interesting, is that the language of both the Aramaic and the Greek- have to do with God's Sovereignty. So, this "*calling out*" and this "*calling into*" are both sovereign Acts of God toward underserving individuals. And we call *that*- "Grace".

The point here- is that without the people- there is no Church. So, simply being "*called out*" from sin and the evil world is not enough. Yes, it means you have been "*called out*". And that is wonderful. But all of those who have been "*called out*" must *also* be "*called into*" an ever- growing "delighting" in God; and in His Word; and in His Will- or you still don't really have a Church. And that means that without a *gathering*; or an *assembling*; or a *collection*- of those people- a Church does NOT exist. So those individuals- who have been both "*called out*" and "*called into*" **MUST ASSEMBLE TOGETHER**- or we are NOT fulfilling the concept of what Jesus sovereignly created in **Matthew 16**.

And this is *why* we have all that language in the New Testament Books about "**one another**". Now those words, and this concept, were *always* God's intent. And so, we see these words 49 times in several of the 39 Books of the Old Testament. But under the First Covenant- these words pertained to ONLY the ethnic Jew and national Israel. What the New Covenant did- was to greatly *expand* these words (109 times) to pertain to ALL of the individuals that God has sovereignly and graciously "called out" from the world and "called into" Christ's Kingdom.

### **The Revelation 5:8-10**

**When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."**

So, as we get to the later half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century (around 68AD)- 20

of the 27 New Testament Books had already been written. And they had been copied and distributed as far West as Great Britain and as far East as India. And Christianity was the fastest growing religion in the history of the world. And yet, many of the saved Jews were still clinging to the ways of the Old Covenant. And so, God the Holy Spirit “carried along” this unknown writer to clarify the uniqueness of the Christian Church- as opposed to what these Jews had known their entire lives. And so, he said,

**Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.**

So, let’s look carefully at this Passage- keeping in mind that it was written to saved Jews- who had lived their entire lives underneath the Old Covenant.

The writer begins this Passage with the words, “**Therefore**”- signifying that what he has been teaching now for over 9 Chapters is all true- and now he is now going to draw a Conclusion to what he has already taught. Also notice that the second word in this Passage is, “**brethren**”- meaning that this Passage pertains ONLY to those who are saved. This Passage does NOT apply to the other two groups of Jews, who were also in this small 1<sup>st</sup> Century church. And then the writer rehearses everything he has been teaching now for 9-1/2 Chapters:

**... since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God ...**

Now this section of the Passage is filled with Old Testament imagery that would mean much to the Jews, who would read it. Things like, “the

Holy Place”; and “the Veil”; and “Priest” and “House of God” are all things that applied to the Temple in Jerusalem- but NOT to any of the Synagogues. And all of his Jewish readers would have been very familiar with this imagery.

But now notice that in each and every case- the writer teaches that Jesus Himself has *fulfilled* each one of these Old Testament Symbols:

- Saved people now enter the Holy Place through the Blood of Jesus
- That incredibly radical Blessing was given to us through the Flesh of Jesus- which was *represented* in the Old Testament by the Veil in the Temple (not the Synagogues) that divided the people from the Presence of God
- Jesus is the “great High Priest” Who is “over” or who is “in charge”; or who “rules over” or who *governs* the House of God

And now, since Jesus did all of that; and since all that is true- NOW THEREFORE- we should draw the following Conclusion. And there are three phrases in the Conclusion that the writer makes that begin with the phrase, “**Let Us**”:

- **Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.**
- **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and**
- **Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.**

... and the context of the verbs tells us that the context that the writer had in mind is that when he said, “**Let Us**”- he meant that all the “**brethren**” should do all of these things- TOGETHER! So, let us look closely at these three different Conclusions:

**1)Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with**

**pure water.**

The writer teaches that since all of this is true- **Therefore, brethren, let us draw near...** Draw near to what? To the Temple? No, Jesus IS the Temple. Draw near to the Synagogues? No. Jesus never spoke anything good about this Man-made system of worship. Draw near to what? To God. But why do we need all of this to be drawn to God? Because Sin (our own personal sins and the Sin of Adam) *separated* us from God. And the Old Covenant method of animal sacrifices; and Signs and Symbols and Types; did NOT have the Power to bring undeserving sinners to God. How do we know that? Because if *anything* in the Old Covenant could have drawn sinners to God- there would have been no need to ever have a *Second* Covenant.

**Hebrews 8:7b**

**... if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.**

Only God the Son can draw sinners to God the Father. And so, the final, best, highest, and most decisive “Good” of the Gospel- *to which* all of the other “good things” about the Gospel point; and *without which* nothing else in the Gospel would be “Good”- is Jesus Christ- glorified and adored by redeemed souls. So, the Goal of the Gospel- is NOT merely that we are forgiven and will miss hell. It is NOT that Jesus set us free and so we can live our lives with no fear of death. The primary Goal of the Gospel is also NOT Heaven. It is NOT the streets of gold or the gates of pearls. It is also NOT being re-united with loved ones who have gone before us. Now all of those things are true and wonderful and great and I’m not minimizing any of them. I rejoice over all of them. But Jesus is *better* than all of them. He is *infinitely* better. And to prove that this is correct- we need to look no further than all of the Scriptures that tell us what we will be doing throughout all of Eternity when we get to Heaven. We will be worshipping Jesus. And we will be singing praises to His Name and to Who He is and because of what He alone has done! And that is because Jesus is better than *anything* in Heaven or on earth. And that is *why* Jesus is the focus of everything in Heaven. And so, the ultimate Goal of the Gospel- is God! And so, *primarily*- Jesus died to bring unworthy rebels to God.

**1Peter 3:18**

**For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;**

But there is another aspect of this “drawing near” that we need to understand. Unlike the Old Covenant- God does NOT use individuals like He did under the inferior First Covenant. No, under the New Covenant- God uses His Church- *together*. The Body of Christ flows- *together*, they grow- *together*, they worship- *together*, they sing- *together*, they pray- *together*, they fight- *together*, they love- *together*, they act- *together*, they weep- *together*, and they rejoice- *together*. There is no such thing as “Self-appointed” and “unaccountable” people in the New Covenant. And *nobody* is exempt from this.

Every truly saved person is to be *gathering together* with other believers- *on a regular basis*. And they are to *all* be consistently taught together by qualified Pastors and Teachers. And they are *all* to be served together by qualified Deacons. And *everybody* is to be under subjection to qualified Elders- *together*. And they are *all* to be held accountable to Scripture- *together*- or they are to be disciplined. And, with rare exceptions, if people are not doing all of this- *together*- they are sinning. So, when people say, “*I’m under subjection to no Man- I’m only under subjection to God!*” they aren’t being spiritual- they are simply being rebels.

The entire concept of the New Covenant is about different people; with different backgrounds; and different ways of seeing things; all having different personalities; even coming from different cultures; and speaking different languages- all coming TOGETHER into ONE Body- the Church.

### **Romans 12:4&5**

**For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.**

### **1Corinthians 12:12-28**

**For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a**

part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

... so, in *addition* to drawing us near to God- we are to also draw near to each other as well.

Now there is a lot of talk today about "Racism". But I don't believe that this is really the Issue. I am simply not willing for the lost, pagan world to define the important Issues that believers are to be concerned about. I look to God's Word to tell me what is wrong; and how to fix it. And rather than "Racism"- what we are really seeing is "Division". And this Division is imbedded in the very DNA of fallen Humanity. And this Division stems from the "Confusion" that God Himself created when He destroyed the Tower of Babel and confused their languages- so they would be scattered **"over the face of the whole earth."** (Genesis 11:8).

And it is this Division caused by the Divine Judgment of Confusion as to why there are the various nations of the world. And so, each of these nations now have their *own* culture; their *own* language; and even their *own* religion. So, now the people of the earth are divided. And we are divided from one another in several ways:

- Male versus Female
- Old versus Young

- Educated versus Uneducated
- Powerful versus Helpless
- Rich versus Poor
- Slave versus Master
- Cultured versus Uncultured
- One Race versus another
- One Nationality versus another

... and you would think that is just the way it is going to be. But what God sovereignly created- He also promised to end:

### **Zephaniah 3:9-11**

**For then I will give to the peoples [plural] purified lips [one language], That all of them may call on the name of the Lord, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder [together/unity]. “From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, Will bring My offerings. In that day you will feel no shame Because of all your deeds [sins] By which you have rebelled against Me; For then I will remove from your midst Your proud, exulting ones, And you will never again be haughty On My holy mountain.**

... but perhaps the *best* Prophecy to look at is found in **Joel 2:28-32:**

**“It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions. “Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. The Day of the Lord “I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. “The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Will be delivered; For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the Lord has said, Even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.**

Now this Prophecy was given by Joel- around 800 years *before* Jesus was born. And, unlike the parameters of the Old Covenant- we can see that God, through Joel, promises to *end* the Division and deliver (save) people from every nation, tribe, language, and culture- who are “called out” from the

world and “called into” Jesus- and NOT merely the Jews or the nation of Israel. So, *when* was this Prophecy fulfilled? On the Day of Pentecost in the Upper Room.

### **The Acts 2:5&6**

**Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. 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.**

... here the Divine Judgment at the Tower of Babel- that God placed on a sinful world in confusing their language and *dividing* the people of the world with a myriad of separations- was now being sovereignly *undone*- through Faith in the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. Now look what else Peter said that day:

### **The Acts 2:7-12**

**They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each; hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God." And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"**

Everyone knew that, because they could now hear the “mighty deeds of God” IN ONE LANGUAGE- that truly something earthshaking was happening. But they weren’t clear as to just what God was doing. So, they asked, “**What does this mean?**” Now look at Peter’s infallible interpretation of both the Prophecy of Joel 2 and what was going on in the Upper Room on that day:

### **The Acts 2:14-21**

**But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose,**

for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

**'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says,  
'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND;  
AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY,  
AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN  
SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN  
AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT  
And they shall prophesy. 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY  
ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND  
VAPOR OF SMOKE. 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS  
AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND  
GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. 'AND IT SHALL BE  
THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL  
BE SAVED.'**

Notice what Peter said.

... this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

.. and the “**this**” that Peter was referring to is- what was going on in the Upper Room on that day. So, what those people, who had come from every nation on earth were hearing; and what they were witnessing- in the Upper Room in Jerusalem on that day- was God sovereignly *ending* the “Curse of Division and Separation” that He had sovereignly brought about at the Tower of Babel back in **Genesis 11**. And this was the *fulfillment* of the 800 year-old Prophecy of **Joel 2**. *That* is what the Bible teaches that Peter said.

Yet the nations of the world are as divided this morning as they have ever been. So, in what way has this “Division and Separation” been sovereignly brought to an end? *In, by, and through* Salvation in Jesus Christ! Look what the Apostle Paul taught- as he was “carried along” by God the Holy Spirit from **Galatians 3:26-29**:

**For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.**

So, now, through the Miracle of the New Birth- there are no more Division or Separation in the Church! At all! Not with Race; not with Sex; not with Culture; not with Language; not with Nationality; not with Education; not with Money. In Jesus Christ- through the auspices of the superior New Covenant- as made manifest through the Miracle of the New Birth- in the Church- THERE ARE NO DIVISIONS! None!

### **1Corinthians 12:20-26**

**But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

So, God has determined that the "Glory of His Grace" (Ephesians 1:6a) is best seen; and more vividly demonstrated; and more appropriately marveled at- when there are *many* people in the Church than when there is just one person. And so, God has "called out" from sin and the world people from every walk of life. And He has also called them "into" to all be washed in the *same* Blood; all filled with the *same* Spirit; and all under subjection to the *same* Scriptures; who attain to the zenith of their own Joy- when Jesus looks magnificent! And that is what a real, biblical Church looks like. And in that Church- in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church that Jesus created- there are no Divisions or Separations- and Jesus Christ is Lord of all!

**Amen. Let's pray.**

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.