

WitnessKit 3

God and Religions

Integrating the Worldviews of the Old and New
Testaments,

Guided by the Book

Letter to the Hebrews

Class 23

Hebrews Chapter 10—The Covenant
Explained Further
with Greek Thought Forms

Hebrews 2:18



“For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.”

God's Covenant by Sacrifice

Was the theme of the Hebrew Scriptures. God gave the Covenant. People had to choose to become part of the Covenant.

Psalm 50

Psalm 50 has a puzzling passage. It defines the godly ones, the saints of God, as those who have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. Then it turns around and says God is not interested in their animal sacrifices.

Psalm 50:5-15 is much clearer now than before because...

The Letter to the Hebrews makes it clear.

Psalm 50: 5 "Gather **My saints** together to Me, Those who have made a **covenant with Me by sacrifice.**"
6 Let the heavens declare His righteousness, For God Himself *is* Judge. Selah⁷ "Hear, O My people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you; I *am* God, your God! ⁸ I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices Or your burnt offerings, *Which are* continually before Me...."

Who are God's holy ones?

- God's holy ones or saints are those who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice.
- The covenant by sacrifice confers holiness or righteousness.
- The sacrifice is very important.
- Yet the sacrifice is not the offering of bulls or goats.

God's saints are those who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice.

- Psalm 50: 5-15 “⁹ I will not take a bull from your house, *Nor* goats out of your folds. ¹⁰ For every beast of the forest *is* Mine, *And* the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know all the birds of the mountains, *And* the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine. ¹² “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness. ¹³ Will I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of goats? ¹⁴ Offer to God thanksgiving, *And* pay your vows to the Most High. ¹⁵ Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

Hebrews 10 explains how the covenant by sacrifice is universal.

- Psalm 50 shows that THE sacrifice of the covenant by sacrifice is not the same as the offering of animal sacrifices.
- The offering of animal sacrifices was not for the purpose of “feeding God,” either, as the surrounding nations thought about their gods.
- The universal sacrifice is above and beyond the particular sacrifices of bulls and goats in the temple system.
- Hebrews 10 reveals the sacrifice for the universal covenant by sacrifice.

Hebrews 10 explains how the covenant by sacrifice is universal.

- We know from Biblical history that God heard Daniel's prayers, which he prayed toward the temple of Jerusalem, even after the temple was destroyed. The sacrifices of the temple were symbolic, but Daniel was covered under the real sacrifice, yet to occur in his era.

We can see that the covenant by sacrifice is based upon

Reasons to consider the universal covenant

a Universal Sacrifice for the following reasons.

1. **The law is the shadow of the heavenly form of good things to come.**
2. The blood of animals cannot take away sins.
3. The Psalms describe the problem and Messiah is the solution.
4. The forgiveness from Messiah's universal sacrifice is eternal.

Hebrews 10

¹ For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. (NKJV)

The law is the shadow of the heavenly form of good things to come.

Here we see Greek thought applied to Biblical ideas. The shadow is the **particular**, whereas the heavenly form or image is the ideal or **universal**. Greek thought from the time of Plato recognized the necessity for universals or ideals to exist in order to know things. The ancient Greeks understood that some concepts were particulars which applied to specific times and places, whereas other concepts were universals that always applied everywhere.

The law is the **shadow** of the heavenly **form** of good things to come.

- Greek was the universal language of the Roman Empire, and its thought forms were understood by everyone. Its thought forms match the way people think.
- This passage in Hebrews expanded the particular understanding of Israel's ancient faith to be inclusive toward everyone.
- This fits prophecy in Isaiah chapter 49, where Messiah extends salvation to the whole world.

Isaiah 49:5-6

⁵ "And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb *to be* His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, And My God shall be My strength), ⁶ Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.' " Isaiah 49:5-6 (NKJV)

One of Messiah's Purposes Matches the Command in Psalm 50.

- Isaiah 49:5 “Who formed Me from the womb *to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him*”...
- Psalm 50: 5 “Gather My saints together to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.”
- We see these two passages intertwined. The Isaiah passage extends Messiah's purpose to the Gentiles— “That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.”

The law is the shadow of the heavenly form of good things to come.

- The author of Hebrews reasoned that the sacrifices of the temple were particulars, and had to be offered repeatedly. Therefore, they did not make people perfect, but were a temporary measure.
- That meant the **particulars** did not actually take away sins—but the **ideal** did instead.

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The blood of animals cannot take away sins.

- ¹ For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. ³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. Heb 10:1-4 (NKJV)

This concept matches Psalm 50.

“⁹ I will not take a bull from your house, *Nor* goats out of your folds. ¹⁰ For every beast of the forest *is* Mine, *And* the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field *are* Mine. ¹² "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world *is* Mine, and all its fullness. ¹³ Will I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of goats?

Psalm 50 recommends a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Why do you think that is so?

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The Psalms describe the problem.

Hebrews 10:5-9 quotes Psalms 40 verses 6-8, but from the Septuagint where it is numbered as Psalm 39:6-8.

⁵ Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: *"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. ⁶ In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. ⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.' "* ⁸ Previously saying, *"Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them"* (which are offered according to the law), ⁹ then He said, *"Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God."* He takes away the first that He may establish the **second.** Heb 10:5-9 (NKJV)

The Psalms describe the problem.

- God takes away the first—the particulars—by no longer desiring burnt offerings—in order to establish the second—the ideal or universal sacrifice.
- Psalm 40 predicted that such a time would come, when Messiah came to do God's will.

Messiah is the solution to the puzzle of Psalm 50.

- Hebrews 10:10-13 ¹⁰ By that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹ And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. (NKJV)

Messiah is the solution to the puzzle of Psalm 50.

- The phrase, “waiting till His enemies are made His footstool,” is a quote from Psalm 110:1--
1 A Psalm of David. The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." (NKJV)
- We have already discussed this Psalm in the explanation of Messiah's priesthood. This Psalm presents Messiah as King, Priest, and Judge. In some thinking, the temple was God's footstool, so there is a hint of bringing enemies into the position of becoming God's temple. There is a second hint of defeat of enemies.

Messiah is the solution to the puzzle of Psalm 50.

- Do you think God would rather defeat enemies through conflict or through redemption?
- Both methods accomplish the purpose of defeating enemies of all that is good. In God's goodness, which do you think is His preferred method?
- In God's justice, which do you think is the ultimate method, for the protection of heaven? *"No evil dwells with God."* (Psalm 5:4)
- Read 2 Peter 3:3-10. What causes God to delay judgment against evil?

Messiah is the solution to the puzzle of Psalm 50.

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- Because Jesus' sacrifice was infinite, it is a once-for-all sacrifice—the universal sacrifice.

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The forgiveness from Messiah's universal sacrifice is eternal.

Hebrews 10:14-18 ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. ¹⁵ But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, ¹⁶ *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"* ¹⁷ then He adds, *"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."* (Jeremiah 31:31-34) ¹⁸ Now where there is remission of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin. (NKJV)

The forgiveness from Messiah's universal sacrifice is eternal.

- We have the witness of the Holy Spirit in our lives to confirm the covenant by Universal sacrifice.
- That covenant is the same as the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34. The remainder of that chapter emphasizes that the New Covenant is for Israel. Joel 2:28-32 applies the New Covenant to all nations and to all classes of people, rich, poor, male, female, young, old—all humankind. Joel's prophecy brings the promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit to all who receive the covenant.

The New Covenant for Israel: Jeremiah 31:31-34

- ³¹ "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

The New Covenant for Israel: Jeremiah 31:31-34

- ³³ But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (NKJV)

The New Covenant Extended to All People: Joel 2:28-29

- ²⁸ "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out *My Spirit* on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on *My* menservants and on *My* maidservants I will pour out *My Spirit* in those days.

Because the New Covenant is Extended to ALL

- We can trust God with people we care about. We cannot redeem each other's souls, but we have our heavenly Father who cares just as much about them as about us. He will send His Holy Spirit to draw them to Himself. He makes allowance for those who cannot understand—such as those who are very young or who are handicapped in understanding—His atonement is infinite and includes the helpless. He can give us extra grace toward reaching those we care about, and our prayers matter to Him, even when they don't listen. He can send someone to them that they will hear.

Because the New Covenant is Extended to ALL

- In some ways this is like being in a flood (of ideas)—you cannot help others find their way to safety until you make your own footing firm. So caring about others is all the more reason to trust God for yourself.
- The Apostle Paul promised “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, and your house.*” That was a specific promise for a specific person and his family, but the principle is true that God reaches family members through the faith of the first ones who trust.

Because the New Covenant is Extended to ALL

- Sometimes we are concerned about relatives and friends who have already entered eternity.
- It is not always possible to know their situation, but we do know that God is perfectly fair, and we can trust Him with them.
- Sometimes people delay trusting Him until they know life is short. Facing death can sometimes bring a great clarity of thought, and trusting God may be part of that.
- Ultimately, each individual must make their own decision. When we trust God, we can help any who will listen.

Because the New Covenant is Extended to ALL

- The New Testament book of Acts chapter 2 teaches us that God poured out the Holy Spirit on those who had trusted Him on the day of Pentecost. From that point onward, receiving the atonement of Jesus' sacrifice of His infinite life, and receiving His Kingdom in your heart brings the Holy Spirit into your life to remain with you always. Requirements are to repent of sins and to ask for this gift. What gift could be better than that?
- This is the way to sign on to the New Covenant as an individual.

We should receive the Universal Covenant by sacrifice

Consequences
for
Individuals
who
receive the
universal
covenant

because of its consequences for us individually.

1. **Confidence to enter the holy place for communion with God.**
2. Assurance of God's faithfulness
3. Motivation for love and good deeds
4. Encouragement for fellowship
5. Discipline for those who err
6. Endurance to do God's will even when suffering
7. Preservation of the soul.

Confidence to enter the holy place for communion with God.

- Hebrews 10:¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and *having* a High Priest over the house of God,
- ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:19-22 (NKJV)

Confidence to enter the holy place for communion with God.

- Entering the Holy Place is a privilege only He can give. Our confidence does not rest upon our own strength of goodness, but upon our Priest's perfection.
- He wants us to draw near to Him. Let us do so!
- What an amazing thing—that God wants communion with us! That He was willing to pay the ultimate price to give us that opportunity!

Confidence to enter the holy place for communion with God.

- In the earlier times, God's holiness was emphasized so strongly, that access to His Presence was strictly limited. He wants those barriers taken out of the way. **He wants to make us holy, so that** we can spend time in His Presence.
- We can enter His Presence in prayer with bold confidence, because He opened the way for us.

Confidence to enter the holy place for communion with God.

Just as the priests in the earlier temple had to be clean and pure from sin, we too must be cleansed of sin to enter God's presence in prayer. Hebrews 10: 22 **“let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”**

Jesus Christ demonstrated such cleansing when He washed the disciples' feet. We must daily seek cleansing from the Lord in prayer.

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Assurance of God's faithfulness

- ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. Hebrews 10:23 (NKJV)
- God's Holy Spirit supplies us with His power to do what is right. We can count on His faithfulness to make us consistent—to hold onto hope without wavering. His promises are faithful. We can depend on them.
- We choose to hold fast. He helps by empowering us to be consistent with our choice. He is faithful.

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Motivation for love and good deeds

- ²⁴ And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting (encouraging) *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25 (NKJV)
- God's goodness is revealed on this earth when we encourage each other to do good works in an attitude of loving kindness.

Motivation for love and good deeds

- It is possible to fail God by doing something wrong. It is also possible to fail God by **not** doing something that **needs** to be done.
- Often we need encouragement to bravely go ahead and do the right thing—especially such things as witnessing to others about Jesus, or going into a situation that carries danger in order to help someone—as when persecution is common.
- Make it your goal to become an encourager!

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Encouragement for fellowship

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Encouragement for fellowship

- Prophecies about “seeing the Day approaching,” indicate that persecution of Christians will increase around the world as the end time grows near. Encouragement for assembling to worship is needed in such circumstances.
- Worship can become the target of organized persecution. That can tempt us to become isolated, in order to avoid persecution. But we still need fellowship and others need us.

Encouragement for fellowship

- When we are unable or unwilling to meet together, we lose the support of our brothers and sisters, and are more likely to fail in our attempts to do what is right. The more persecution, the harder it is to assemble. The more persecution, the more we **NEED** encouragement.
- We need to pray for ourselves and others to have the wisdom to stay out of persecution traps. We need a way of seeing that helps us recognize others who are truly our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Encouragement for fellowship

Real fellowship requires gentle honesty and thoughtfulness. The New Testament is somewhat flexible about Sabbath keeping and fellowship—see Romans 14. Some of this may be due to persecution issues. The core truth is that we must make room for fellowship and assembling together.

Within the context of choosing life, we can take risks for the purpose of assembling together.

Encouragement for fellowship

If circumstances are free of persecution, we should assemble regularly and publicly.

The catacombs of Rome were not exactly public worship places, during Roman persecution.

□ The warnings of the next few verses are added motivation, from the negative side, to persevere in faith. If we fail to do what is right, we can expect God's discipline.

Encouragement for fellowship

Before we go on to those verses, we should look at the issue of Sabbath Keeping more clearly. From the beginning of the Bible, God established the Sabbath for us, as a day of rest, to commemorate His creation of the world in 6 days and His rest on the seventh day. He also gave rules for a series of yearly Sabbath vacations for His people, special holidays and festivals and fasts, to take time to seek Him in fellowship with others—Leviticus 23.

Encouragement for fellowship

- A corollary for that is: God does not like interference in that plan. His treatment of the ancient Pharaoh of the Exodus is an example. “Let My people go that they may worship Me.”
- When organized assemblies of God’s people for worship become targets for persecution, guess which side of the issue is accumulating God’s wrath?

Encouragement for fellowship

In Jeremiah 17:19-27, the nation of Israel was standing on a judgment precipice because the nation had abandoned the real God for idols, and had abandoned His laws for their well-being, including loss of valuing human life by allowing violent idol worship, and including slavery—forced and perpetual rather than voluntary and temporary. What would turn the situation around? God said, Sabbath keeping would turn it around. Their survival from Babylonian attacks was assured in their land if they kept the Sabbath.

Encouragement for fellowship

The early church was so full of enthusiasm for the word of God that they met daily and from house to house, so a portion of every day became a sort of Sabbath. They met on the first day of the week to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the eternal life He provides.

One of the ten commandments is “*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.*”

Encouragement for fellowship

It is not legalism to keep the Sabbath. Instead, it is survival. The worse persecution becomes, the more we need those times of refreshing from the Lord.

We also have a mandate not to become a part of persecution within the church. Church history has been polluted by persecution, and we must not stand for it or become a part of it. Matthew 24:9-13 and 24:45-51, and 25:31-46 have strong words about those types of problems.

Encouragement for fellowship

A book called *Candles behind the Wall* describes the role of churches in the peaceful transition to freedom from communism in East Germany, during the late 1900s. Church members learned to identify and peacefully surround *agents provocateurs* to prevent them from causing harm to others or from causing the situation to become violent.

We have been comfortable in western churches for a few hundred years. We must learn again how to cope with persecution.

Encouragement for fellowship

God sees the heart. He knows what is going on, and He can see straight through deceivers. His commands for Sabbath Keeping are matters of the heart as well as external appearance. It should be our desire to walk so close to Him that a Sabbath of the heart is going on all the time. We need to walk close enough to Him to have His good guidance for our external Sabbath activities.

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Covenant by sacrifice because of its consequences for us individually.

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Discipline for those who err

- ²⁶ For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. ²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.
Hebrews 10:26-31 (NKJV)

Discipline for those who err

□ 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know Him who said, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord. And again, "*The LORD will judge His people.*"³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Hebrews 10:26-31 (NKJV)

Discipline for those who err

- God provides the power to do what is right, in the Presence of His Holy Spirit.
- Where much is given, much is required. It is tremendously important to persevere in doing what is right.
- The power to do right brings the responsibility to do right.
- During times of persecution, we must endure and not throw away our confidence.

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Endurance to do God's will even when suffering

- **32** But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: **33** partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;

Endurance to do God's will even when suffering

□ **34** for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. **36** For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

Endurance to do God's will even when suffering

- *37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.
38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." (Habakkuk 2:3-4, Septuagint)³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition (destruction, loss), but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. Hebrews 10:32-39 (NKJV)*

Endurance to do God's will even when suffering

- The single most important proof of salvation is faithfulness to the truth. Drawing back to one's former way of life is a serious matter in every way.
- True salvation is transformational.
- If the transformation is only temporary, it is questionable.
- If the transformation is real, and then a person draws back, he can expect discipline from His heavenly Father. We will see that in a future chapter of Hebrews devoted to the subject.

Endurance to do God's will even when suffering

- Remember the parable of the Sower: The four categories of people included some who heard the message but either did not understand or did not put down roots—no real commitment—and they fell away. They needed to fully place their trust in Christ.
- The third and fourth category included those who got distracted and became unfruitful, and those who persevered. This passage in chapter 10 of Hebrews encourages us to STAY in category 4.

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Preservation of the soul.

- ³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. **Hebrews 10:32-39** (NKJV)
- Faithful endurance and perseverance in faith is one proof of eternal salvation. The forgiveness Messiah provides is eternal. He preserves our souls forever.
- We can and must trust Him for our eternity.



Homework

In 3 Sets

I Thessalonians 5:21

But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1 Read the references in this essay.

Requirements of the Covenants and Recognizing Messiah

- God gave His Covenants specifically to one nation, and specifically to every individual who will receive them. In this world there are many cultures, but only one human race—Acts 17:26-27.
- As one human race we have universal Moral Law expressing the requirements of God's love and perfection in the way we carry out our lives. We are a family. We are equals before God.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1 Read the references in this essay.

- We also face universal moral accountability. That is where the problem arises. None of us can meet the requirements of God's Moral Law perfectly—Psalm 130:3. The Apostle Paul thought he could meet them until he learned commandment ten – “*You shall not covet.*” When he learned that one, he found himself coveting every time he thought about it. (Romans 7:7-12)

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- We don't have to know the Ten Commandments in exact words to be accountable for them. Romans chapter 2 says God has written them on our consciences, and He will judge individuals on how well they obey the law written on their consciences. Nobody with enough mental faculties to have a conscience is able to avoid accountability before God. He will judge. He also does not let people off because they have seared their conscience. At their judgment, the conscience He gave them will be the standard, not their conscience after they destroyed it.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- Sometimes you will hear people say that “sin is sin,” as though they mean one sin is just as evil as another. It is true that all sin separates us from God—James 2. But God will judge based on our deeds. There will be degrees of punishment and rewards based on the severity or goodness of the actions—I Corinthians 3, Revelation 21:7-8, Psalm 21:4 & 8-9, and 11:4-7.
- Thankfully, God also gave us a universal promise. If we will seek Him with our whole hearts, we will surely find Him—Deuteronomy 4:29, Jeremiah 29:11-14. If we find Him, we can find His atonement and He is able to take our sins away. He satisfied the raw requirements of justice, so that He can extend mercy to us.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- There is a right response and a wrong response to the knowledge of sin. The wrong response is to run from the idea, or to deny one's own failures, or to try to make up your own rules about how to solve the problem. People choose many different routes to accomplish this goal of avoiding the issue.
- One route is to believe evolution to the exclusion of believing in God. If no Judge exists, a person can deny accountability. If no King exists, who says what are the rules? If people are just animals in clothes, where does the idea of right and wrong have authority? If no God exists, death is destiny.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- Another way is to assume that one can balance bad deeds with good deeds, like they cancel each other. However, God does not allow that because all bad deeds are an affront to His perfection. His justice must be perfect, because He is perfect. Doing what one ought to do in the first place does not erase doing something bad.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- The right response to the demand of moral Law is to face the wrong and admit it to God and ask His forgiveness. That forgiveness is available because Jesus paid the penalty for the sin in question, so that justice has been satisfied. He can erase the sin. He will remove it from us as far as the east is from the west if we repent and ask Him to remove sin.—Psalm 103:8-18.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- So what is repentance? Repentance is facing the wrong and forsaking it, asking forgiveness with the hope of not repeating the wrong—Hosea 14:2. That hope is valid because of the gift of the Holy Spirit, who provides power to do what is right. Humility is involved, because it is humbling to face one's wrongs. Faith is involved, because of trusting God's power and good wishes to take away the sin and to help with future temptation situations. Of course He wants to help. He is Good.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- Atonement is the price He paid to let us know He wants to help. It was an enormous price, painful in the extreme—Psalm 22:1-24. It was a price big enough to demonstrate the existence of hell. It is a price big enough to meet the entire demand of justice.
- God wants us to love what is good and to hate what is evil. We trust Him because He is good. We love Him because He is good. He is worthy of our trust and we are silly to want to trust our own goodness instead of His.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- The two Covenants give us ways to recognize the real Messiah. It matters to God for us to find the correct Messiah. Truth matters to Him. He gave many clues in the Hebrew Scriptures to help us recognize the correct one.
- The fact that the requirements of the two covenants are very similar, and that Christians accept the requirements of the New Covenant as the means of becoming Christians, are clues that point toward Jesus as Messiah. Many other clues exist as well. The New Covenant is expressly both for Israel and for everyone.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- Isaiah 49:5-6 identify Messiah as the One who not only would restore Israel to God (and by implication to the land since these prophecies were related to prophecies about Babylonian exile) but who also would extend God's salvation to the ends of the earth.
- The case can be made that Jesus has extended God's salvation to the whole world – and that belief in His Word exists all over the world because of Jesus' atonement for sins and the transformed lives of His true followers.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- Isaiah 11: 1-16 further clarifies Messiah and the restoration to the land as relating to the second time Israel would be restored. The second restoration to the land occurred in the aftermath of World War II. **So the question is, in what way was Messiah involved in restoring Israel to the land the second time? Is there some clue in recent history as to who the real Messiah is?**

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- A Small History Excursion, with appreciation for *Truman*, a biography by David McCullough.
- President Truman was instrumental in bringing the United Nations to acceptance of Israel's national rebirth. Truman's own ascendancy to the Vice Presidency and from there to the White House could be called Providential. It was totally unexpected when he became Vice President, and then Roosevelt's death brought him to the Presidency.
- Truman stood against the British in favoring Israel. The British had been in charge since World War I, when they had taken the region from the Turks. Their rule was set to expire in May of 1948.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- In 1946, Truman called for admitting 100,000 Jews to Palestine, against the wishes of the British who were ruling there. Truman stood against the wishes of his own State Department in favoring an Israeli homeland. He worked for the UN vote in November of 1947 establishing an Israeli homeland inside the British Mandate.
- Truman had to undo the work of his own State Department as the time approached for the British to leave. The State Department tried to postpone establishing an Israeli state, and went public with that policy in contradiction to Truman's promises.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- Truman received many letters in support of Israel from both American Jews and Christians. He was from a Bible-believing Christian background. His faith played a strong role in his decisions about Israel, and in the face of all the advice from the experts to the contrary, may have been a deciding factor. When later the chief Rabbi of Israel, Isaac Halevi Herzog told Truman, “God put you in your Mother’s womb so you would be the instrument to bring the rebirth of Israel after 2000 years,” tears ran down Truman’s face.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- President Truman formally recognized Israel eleven minutes after the British Mandate expired. He represented the most powerful nation on earth in doing so. In Isaiah's time, that nation was at the end of the earth. (TRUMAN, by David McCullough)
- Even though the help of the United States was very limited at that time, its help was critically important to Israel's statehood.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- During World War II, Satan attempted, through the evil decisions of powerful human beings, to wipe out the Jews. The war in Europe had to be won by the allies to end the Holocaust. The horror is unimaginable that the Nazis inflicted even though they lost. That horror would have multiplied beyond comprehension had they won.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- On the other side of the world, some generations earlier, Christian missionaries had carried the news of the New Covenant, at great personal risk, to head-hunting tribes in the Solomon Islands. Some Islanders had become Christians, and many had not.
- During World War II, the Solomon Islands were where the coast watchers protected the Allied naval forces of the Pacific by letting the command in Australia know what the Japanese were doing. The coast watchers operated behind enemy lines. The Solomon Islanders protected the coast watchers along religious lines.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- The Christians sided with the coast watchers. The other Islanders sided with the Japanese out of fear. The war in the Pacific required fewer men and resources because of the actions of the coast watchers. They were the key to Allied wins in some of the critical sea battles of the Pacific. (*Lonely Vigil*, by Walter Lord.)
- These seemingly insignificant people all the way on the far side of the world allowed the war in Europe to finish before the war in the Pacific. Some Jews survived only because the war ended when it did.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- Because of the coastwatchers, men and military equipment could be concentrated in Europe while the Pacific strategy was “island hopping.”
- Victory in Europe took place months before victory in the Pacific. The Solomon Islanders had a role to play in the second restoration of Israel to the land. The war in Europe needed to finish quickly for Israel’s sake.
- Both the United States and the Solomon Islands qualify as the ends of the earth from Isaiah’s time.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- Messiah had brought salvation to both places through the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who believed in Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit can transform human hearts. The Holy Spirit leads people into all truth – John 16:13, II Corinthians 3:18, 5:17. When powerful evil forces take center stage in a world war, only people who believe in truth can defeat them.
- In ordinary human terms, the Solomon Islanders do not seem like “celebrity material.” The early missionaries valued them because God values them. God turned their value toward helping Israel.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- God's love says there are no insignificant people. Every individual matters to Him. There will be a "celebrity of heaven" where "the last shall be first and the first shall be last." Your life matters to God. He can accomplish eternal good through your one individual life.
- We have taken a thoughtful look at events that bring us face to face with the question of evil and the existence of God's goodness. We live in a world where human choices are real. Humans are capable of making both good choices and evil choices. Evil choices cause horrible suffering.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- God intervenes, on occasion, with miracles that are direct and obvious. More often, He intervenes by motivating the right decisions of human beings as they go about their ordinary lives.
- Millions of people suffered because of the evil choices of powerful human beings in World War II. Their freedom to make such terrible choices does not negate the righteousness of God. In every single evil choice, they were going against God's wishes. We know their deeds were evil because He wrote His good law on all our hearts.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- The terrible level of evil in human choices reveals the logical necessity for a place of punishment of evil beyond death—Genesis 18:25, Job 21:17-19 and 24:19-20. A just God cannot allow evil to triumph, but must justly punish it. Hitler could NOT go to heaven, and even annihilation is too good for him. The extremely wicked demonstrate the necessity of hell, because God is Just. You can only accept the absence of hell ***in the face of evil*** if you are willing to believe God is either not good or not powerful.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- Because of the existence of hell, we have an additional responsibility before God to search for His good wishes for our own lives. He wants us to choose life, and to choose eternal life even more.
- We cannot undo the evil choices other people made in the past, but we can prevent **ourselves** from becoming a cog in an evil machine by finding God's good path for our own lives.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- The missionaries who carried the news of Jesus to Solomon Island head hunters **at great personal cost** did not know how God would use their efforts generations later.
- The people who worked to create religious liberty in the United States **did not know** the effects of their efforts on a specific President at a specific time, generations later.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 1

- Every right decision ripples out through time and eternity—Psalm 112:9. The Bible still exists and speaks to us because of right decisions individuals made over the 1500 years of its being written and over the 2000 years since.
- God's righteousness can be seen in the cumulative total of those right decisions.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- How does Messiah in the Old Covenant fit the issues of the New Covenant?
- The common denominators in the two covenants are Moral Law and Grace, Repentance and Atonement, and God's Identity and His Word, and Faith. We have mentioned Moral Law and Grace, and Repentance and Atonement in the earlier lessons.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Now we need to address God's Identity and His Word, and Faith. The New Testament gives very specific information about God's Identity because of Jesus Christ's appearance on the earth, where the Old Testament gives more general information. We want to look at the common denominators between the two testaments regarding God's Identity.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- The Hebrew Scriptures are very clear that God is One. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) We know from those scriptures that God is our creator (Genesis 1:1 - 3:28), that He also created us individually (Psalm 139:1-18), that He was involved in protecting us and putting us together during gestation. We know that He is alive, that He has Personality. He is not just some impersonal force. He has Mind. He is morally upright, Holy. (Isaiah 55:6-11) He is Just and He is Merciful.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- He knows all about us, both corporately and individually. He sees our hearts. (Psalm 33:13-15) He has to be infinite, to be able to see all of us “under a microscope” at the same time that He sees the whole universe and its course. (Jeremiah 23:23-24) He knows all things and nothing is impossible to Him, within the bounds of His Holy Goodness. (Genesis 18:14) He knows all our prayers, but His Holiness only allows Him to hear prayers from purity of heart with approval. (Psalm 145:17-21, Psalm 103:11-12, 66:18) He wants to remove our sins from us as far as the east is from the west.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- There are hints throughout the Hebrew Scriptures that God is One and a complicated One. Here are some of the hints. The word for God – Elohim – is actually a plural word. Just as the word Trinity expresses a compound unity, so also does Elohim. In fact, Elohim is the Biblical word, and Trinity is a derived word from reasoning about the facts of Scripture.
- Elohim is a bit more vague about the number of persons in the compound nature of God, but specific examples from the Hebrew Scriptures shed quite a bit of light on that idea.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- The very first chapter of Genesis expresses the idea that the Spirit of God hovered over the fluid earth during creation. While God Himself says that He fills heaven and earth, so that no house could contain Him (Isaiah 66:1-2), yet He is seen as being able to dwell with humans (Exodus 25:8-9), to stay with Israel localized to the tabernacle (Exodus 33:9) and the temple (I Kings 8:11-13), and His Spirit to rest upon humans who were called to some particular mission. (I Samuel 16:13,) Thus His Spirit is seen as both being God and being separately identifiable by His actions –Isaiah 48:12-16.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- In addition, Messiah is sent from God to accomplish deliverance for humans. Some of the passages about Messiah sound like He lives as a human being and others sound like He does amazing everlasting things that only God can do.
- Who else but God can open the eyes of the blind, bring justice to the nations, or be appointed as a covenant to the nations—Isaiah 42:1-8?
- Who else but God could cause an earthquake by descending from heaven and standing on the Mount of Olives—Zechariah 14:4?
- Who else but God could destroy the wicked by the breath of His mouth—Isaiah 11:4?

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Who else but God could be called Everlasting Father, Eternal God, whose kingdom will increase without ever ending, and yet who would be born and given to us as a Son—Isaiah 9:6-7?
- Who else but God could be sent from the womb as one individual to bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth—Isaiah 49:1-6?
- Who else but God could be cut off from the land of the living, and yet see light and see His offspring and take away the sins of people and heal us by His wounds—Isaiah 53:1-12?

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Who else but God could sprinkle the blood of atonement for many nations—Isaiah 52:15?
- Who else but God is our Refuge? Yet we are told to take refuge in the Son in Psalm 2, and to do homage to Him and to fear His wrath lest we perish.
- In this Psalm, God is described both as sitting in the heavens and as installing His King upon His Holy Mountain. Thus Messiah is the King chosen by God, and called God's Son.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- In the first five books of the Bible, Messiah is described as a Prophet like Moses—Deuteronomy 18:15. Moses conversed with God face to face—Exodus 33:11. Moses offered to give up his place in the book of life to atone for the sins of the people, although God rejected that offer—Exodus 32:30-35. Messiah made the same offer (John 10:15-18), and God accepted His offer, because Messiah is perfect and holy and morally pure and infinite – the idea in Isaiah 52 and 53.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Even the resurrection of Messiah is explained in more than one passage. In Ezekiel 37, the vision of dry bones is about the nation of Israel, brought to death during the Babylonian exile. “Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.” The restoration of the nation to the land is seen as a resurrection, where God joins bone to bone and brings a great army back to life and to their home. Isaiah 52:14 says that just as people were astonished by the death and following resurrection of the nation, so they will be astonished at the death and resurrection of Messiah – even Gentile Kings will be astonished.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Earlier portions of the chapter reveal that God brought Israel back to life **so that all the ends of the earth would see the salvation of God**—Isaiah 52:9-11. In Isaiah 49, Messiah is formed from the womb to bring Israel back to God, and also to bring God's salvation **to the ends of the earth**. Both Israel and Messiah are called God's Servant—Isaiah 42:6-8. The parallels are given to make Jesus' resurrection the perfect clue about who is the real Messiah.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- God has woven the clues together in His word so that anyone who searches with his whole heart will surely find Him.
- As human beings we often take the paradoxes listed above as either contradictions or as literary devices, so that we turn away from the truth of God's word by interpreting it loosely.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- The amazing thing is that all the paradoxes are resolved in One Idea – the idea of Trinity, which is contained in the idea of Elohim. The fact that they all resolve in this complicated idea of God's Identity – that fact gives us a strong reason to believe the idea of Trinity is correct.
- The four verses in Isaiah 44:3-6 include the LORD—the King of Israel; and His Redeemer—the LORD of hosts; and the LORD'S Spirit, so that the same complicated identity of God is seen in this brief passage as is seen in the entire New Testament.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- The resurrection of Messiah and His atonement for our sins reveal that we are eternal beings who can ask for eternal life from Him (John 17:2). He has the power both to take away our sins (John 1:29) and to restore us to life after death. This idea also occurs in the Old Testament—Psalm 21:4, Psalm 61:5-8. The King whose life will be as many generations is Messiah, and because it is so, I will praise God's name forever.
- Jesus said, in reference to Exodus 4:5, that “God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God is the God of the living and not of the dead.” In Genesis 49:33, Jacob was gathered to his people when he died, *before* his remains were carried back to the tomb of his fathers. So he had to be gathered to his people in heaven.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Thus, the idea of eternal life exists even in the first five books of Moses, and the salvation of God is revealed as eternal in Isaiah 25:1-9, and in Deuteronomy 5:29 as referenced by King David in Psalm 133:4 and Psalm 21:4, and Psalm 17:15, and Psalm 102:25-28.
- The idea of eternal life and of Messiah's identity as Immanuel, God with Us, is seen in John 10: 27-30. "My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me. And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and My Father are One."

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Abraham was counted as righteous—Genesis 15:6—because He believed God, even though he did some things that appear quite lawless by modern standards. How are faith and trust and law and righteousness related?
- Jacob craved the blessing, and the blessing he really wanted was the one God gave him at Bethel. “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham (already in heaven at that time) and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your Descendant shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- When Jacob was dying—Genesis 48-49, just before he was gathered to his people in heaven—Genesis 49:33, he blessed his sons and Joseph's two sons with blessing appropriate to them, believing that they would inherit the land according to God's promise.
- Jacob was exercising faith even as he was dying. He died in Egypt, and his bones were carried back to the tomb of his fathers near Hebron—Genesis 50:1-14.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- The resurrection spoken in Ezekiel 37 also relates to the return of all the believing dead to life and to the land after Messiah returns to reign, and Jacob will return again then.
- In Isaiah 25:1-9 and 26:19-21 and 45:17, the last enemy to be conquered is death, and the wonderful feast God provides, where He wipes away all tears, will be for all His people in Jerusalem.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Faith means believing God's promises. God has a right to be upset if we refuse to believe Him – Psalm 78:21-22. Faith means searching for God with all one's heart. But most of all, faith means trusting God with one's own eternal future, based on the atonement for sins that He provided already through the death and resurrection of Messiah. Trusting God allows the atonement for sins to apply individually. Repentance followed by trust makes atonement effective. Trust is woven into the command to love the LORD our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and with all our strength.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- When we learn the truth that Jesus really is Messiah, faith means trusting God enough to follow Jesus. All of us face daunting barriers that seem to separate us from such trust. This is the point—when one is convinced that Jesus really is Messiah and that His death and burial and resurrection paid for all one's sins – then one must choose to exercise trust.
- A trusting prayer will tell God of one's willingness to follow Jesus and will ask God for the strength to carry out that commitment, and for the wisdom to understand what is required step by step.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Remember that the New Covenant promises the Holy Spirit to everyone who meets the requirements of that covenant. Faith clings to that promise. Faith means also being willing to ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit to give an individual the power to do what is right – Luke 11:13 – inviting Jesus into one's own life, with the promise of dining in that amazing feast in Jerusalem after the resurrection—Revelation 3:20.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- Usually at this point, one will think of a certain problem in life that seems impossible. The power of Jesus' resurrection is much stronger than that problem. Just place that problem before God as well, and take the step of trusting prayer. God may solve the problem immediately, or He may solve it over time. Either way, He will solve it for eternity—Ephesians 1:18-20.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- The ultimate frustration of trying to be perfect in one's own strength is described in Galatians chapter 3:1-13. That effort is described as a curse. Everyone who is trying to achieve his or her own righteousness by keeping the law perfectly is described as being under a curse. And yet, God's Presence is a perfect place. So there is a dilemma with the two covenants. How can we be perfect enough to merit God's perfect Presence when we cannot keep the Law perfectly?



Homework Lesson 23 Set 2

- The dilemma is resolved in two places: in the covenant with Abraham, where “Abraham believed God, and God accounted it to him as righteousness,” and in the cross, where Messiah took our curse for us.
- As verse 13 says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’—in order that in Christ, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”
- In this manner, Jesus Christ rescues us from the curse of perfectionism. It is not a rescue that gives us license to do wrong. It is a rescue that gives us power to do right and the freedom of His mercy when we try, but fail.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 3

- Read Galatians 3:1-3. What is the mechanism that brings God's power into human lives?
- Anyone who has attempted, in their own strength, to change their lives can relate to the difficulties described in this chapter. When God is described as "working miracles among you," in verse 5, the difference between one's own effort and God's transformation of a life is a personal miracle which makes His existence obvious. One of the reasons many Christians are resistant to apologetics is that they have experienced this kind of miracle, so their doubts have been satisfied by experience. They have difficulty understanding why anyone would need more reasons.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 3

- On the other hand, people experiencing the difficulty of perfectionism may have such a long history of frustration that they need apologetics even more, because their emotions are part of their difficulties. They need to have a rational basis for faith that is independent of their emotions.
- People struggling with perfectionism often have difficulty telling the difference between moral universals and cultural rules or even rules of their family that may be very specific. Thankfully, we can know that God's Holy Spirit is able to tell the difference and to guide us into all truth.

Homework Lesson 23 Set 3

- Notice also that success in this kind of life-change hinges upon God's Good Wishes for human lives. This means that people who try to tear down His good wishes for people's lives are acting with hostility toward God. If we find ourselves being treated badly by them, we can allow God to handle that.
- In verses 15-18, what is the basis for ratification of the covenant of faith?
- This chapter in Galatians reveals that there were three covenants of importance to all of us, and which one was the earliest?

Homework Lesson 23 Set 3

- Why is that important? And how does the earliest covenant relate to the other two covenants we have discussed?
- Given that focus, what was the reason for the covenant of Law, according to verses 19-24? How does receiving justification by faith make us part of Abraham's family?
- Read Galatians 4:1-7. What word is used to describe our former relationship of trying to establish our own righteousness by keeping the law?
- What words describe our new relationship of promise?
- Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. These verses describe our separation from the world and separation to God under the New Covenant. What words are used in verse 18 to describe how God sees us?

Homework Lesson 23 Set 3

- People often live one of three ways. One way is legalism, of trying to keep detailed rules in their own strength, to earn standing with God. Another way is license, ignoring the rules, or “making their own rules” or bending the rules to make them easier. The third way is called living by grace through faith. It is humble and self-effacing to admit one’s sins to God and seek His grace and power to remove and overcome them. It is an experiential blessing, though, and a very personal form of living in the miraculous right now. He really does transform lives.