

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1)

Serving In A Heavenly Tabernacle

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We have all heard or read the bumper stickers, billboards, and church sign versions of the Gospel according to nominal Christianity. I would like to read a few of them:

Christ is the Answer

God is My Co-Pilot (This is better than the atheist's version, Dog is my co-pilot.)

Come to Jesus—Come to Life

Don't follow me—Follow Jesus

Exercise Daily—Walk with the Lord

Follow the Son for light and for life

Holiness is not the way to Jesus—Jesus is the way to holiness

Jesus became what we are, so that we can become like He is

His pain, your gain

God grades on the cross, not the curve

Jesus built us a bridge with two boards and three nails

And, of course, there is the famous,

What Would Jesus Do? (Also seen as WWJD)

I like this one the best, so I put it last,

Be an organ donor; give your heart to Jesus

Many of these are true enough in their own little ways, despite being awfully corny, but the one thing that they all hold in common is that, despite being more or less true (you can find a nugget of truth in most of those, if not all of them), they are woefully incomplete in providing what Paul calls, “the whole counsel of God.”

Turn to Acts 20, where Paul uses this phrase, so that we can see better what he was talking about, and maybe get some insight. The background on this is that Paul was returning to Jerusalem, after one of his missionary journeys, and he had been told that he would be bound in Jerusalem, and that he was going to be arrested there. He was leaving Ephesus and Asia Minor, and he wanted to have one last meeting with the elders, so he called them all together.

Acts 20:22-27 "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

Now, think about this. If you know anything about the book of Acts (chapter 19), you will remember that Paul was in Ephesus for two whole years, spending that long time among those people, and he got to know them very well, and got close to them. He later wrote this same congregation a letter, after he was in prison in Rome, which we know as the book of Ephesians. If you know anything about the book of Ephesians, there are things in that book that are difficult. The whole first chapter, which seems to be almost one long sentence, is full of the depths of God—the deep things of God. It takes a long time to understand some of those concepts and statements.

Clearly, he told them a lot more than the bumper sticker version of Christianity. He told them a great deal more than to “just believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved,” which does appear in the Bible, in Acts 16:31, and which Paul told the Philippian jailer when he asked him what he should do.

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

That is the beginning. Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. But there is a whole lot more to it than that! His words, in Acts 20, more than suggest that the gospel of the Kingdom is a rather extensive and involved teaching. He took his ministry very seriously. That is what he told them in verse 24. By the time you get down to verse 26, he is actually giving an oath declaring that he was innocent of the blood of all men, meaning that he had done his job so that God would not require his blood because of a lack of doing his job to warn them.

He was innocent. He had done his job. He had declared to them everything that God had given him to speak to them. He had done his job completely. He had done it to the best of his ability, and now he was innocent before God because he had indeed done his job.

What we see, here, is that the whole counsel of God is a multi-faceted, multi-level instruction. Some parts are easy and simple, while some things are deep and mysterious. Some things you cannot understand, even after many years in the church. We have minister's remarks, sermons, articles, or whatever, telling you about some of these things. It just takes a long time to get in our head, and to make all of the connections.

To me, these bumper sticker versions of Christianity seem trite and simplistic. The only good that they might do is that they are somewhat memorable. But Protestants, like Billy Graham, do teach this bumper sticker version of Christianity—"If you give your heart to the Lord Jesus," or, "If you accept His sacrifice on the cross as payment for your sins," or, "If you pray the prayer of faith, and call on Jesus' name for forgiveness," or, "If you come before the altar and repent of your sins, and you accept the grace and love of God in Jesus, you will be saved"—and that is about the extent of it.

From this point on, as far as these nominal Christians go, they think they have eternal salvation. That is it. They are assured a mansion in God's heavenly Kingdom. They are going to be walking on streets of gold, as one song said just a few years ago. They cannot fall away, they are eternally covered by the blood of Christ, and they are eternally secure in God's grace. That is it. That is as far as it goes.

They just accept Jesus, but continue to live as they have always lived. It is like a momentary blip in their life where they are suddenly emotionally filled with this desire to become close to God, and they rush up to the altar, they wave their hands in front of God, they say a prayer that someone else recites to them that they recite back, and then they go home, and nothing really has changed. Nothing changes. And from that point onward, they learn very little more, if anything, about what true Christianity is all

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

about.

If you remember reading some of the Barna Reports, or hearing from us about them, they do this polling every year to find out just how much Christians know about their faith. The results are truly ludicrous. They ask people to name one of the Ten Commandments, and they cannot do it. Or, maybe to name one of the sons of Israel, and they cannot do that either. Or, name a book in the Old Testament, and very low numbers are able to do that, or any other of these very simple things. They do not know anything about the religion that they profess.

Look at what Paul says in I Corinthians 2. Reading a passage like this makes me wonder how many worldly Christians are even aware that such a topic and subject is in the Bible!

I Corinthians 2:6-10 “However” [Paul writes to this church that were babes in Christ, as he says in chapter 3, they were still carnal. But this, here, is what he expected of them:], we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.”

Notice the wording—words like “wisdom.” Wisdom is not something that you are born with. “Mature” shows a process of maturation and growth, going from something simple to more complex. “Mystery” is something that must be dug into, something to be solved. “Hidden” has the same idea as mystery to it, but it is a way, and you have to go seek it, and find it. And of course, Paul ends with the “deep things of God,”—that there is a depth to all of this; it is not superficial.

We all started on a more simple level when we were first converted, but there is a lot more to be found. Even if you think that you know a lot, there is always more.

Paul is not talking about basic Sunday school lessons, by any means. He is not talking about knowing only a few of the parables, or some of Jesus’ pithy sayings. Obviously, God wants us to understand the concept that His Word contains many levels of

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

understanding. And while a child can grasp some of the simpler concepts in it, a mature person, who has been granted the gift of God's Holy Spirit, can only understand God's deep things through great study and meditation.

Even with all that, God must reveal these things to the person. And, even if we had all these other factors, if it were something that God wants to remain secret and hidden and mysterious for now, it will remain secret and hidden and mysterious until He opens it up to us.

One of those great mysteries is, "When is Christ going to return?" He has not opened that up to us. He has given us a few fairly vague indications, but He keeps us guessing all the time, and will continue to do so.

If nothing else, getting back to the bumper sticker style of Christianity, this approach to God deprives people of a great deal of wonder and amazement at the remarkably consistent and tightly interwoven thing that God's truth is.

People who think of God only in terms of "Christ is the Answer," or, "God is my Co-Pilot," miss a lot of faith-building knowledge and helpful, practical instruction. These deeper things go a long way in helping us explain many of the questions regarding the "why" or "how to" of Christian living and doctrine.

But most Christians today are satisfied with just the basics—the bumper sticker approach. Why is this? Because if they learned any more than this bumper sticker stuff, they would have to do more—sacrifice more, and doing all that God has said to do. (Doing equals works to these people—can't have that!)

And so, this way, if they approach it from the bumper sticker perspective, "Follow the Son for light and life," it does not really tell them to do anything. There is nothing specific. And that particular one—they can say that they are following Him. However, whose rules are they following? Whose instruction? It is basically their own heart's will they follow, not the Bible's. We will see this in a few moments (in terms of Israel).

Today, after this long introduction, I want to approach a facet of one of these deep things of God. What we are going to get into is not something hard (and believe it or not, we are not going to be able to get into the details of it until the next sermon I give); it is not something difficult to understand. But it is knowledge that shows the profound connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament, between the worship practices of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, and between the God of the Old Testament and Jesus Christ, who we know to be one and the same.

Knowing this deep thing of God, and making the connections, will help us to appreciate Christ more, and will give us a better understanding of what we are to be doing in our approach to God. Hopefully, by the time that we are done, we will really understand that there is far more to Christianity than simply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."

Before we get into all that, I want to go through a few difficult scriptures. I have chosen these because they essentially show the connection between the law and Christ. Or, we could say that they show the connection between the Old Covenant instruction and the New Covenant instruction. It is very important that we get this straight, because most of the people in nominal Christianity say that the law is done away, and has no bearing on us who are under Christ. I will show you all that in these few scriptures.

I think by the time that we get through all this we will see that the law is fundamental, integral, and absolutely necessary to New Testament understanding. We, in the churches of God, already know this, but I want you to see it in these scriptures that have been totally misread by the Protestant world.

Romans 10:1-4 is one of those gotcha places, where the Protestants try to tell us that we are all off base.

Romans 10:1-4 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Verse 4 is their gotcha verse. "Christ is the end of the law." That is it. They start and stop here. They do not need to explain anything more.

What they do is, instead of being smart and studying into this, they take the poorly translated English version at face value, and they define things in terms of English and not the possibilities of the Greek. They will tell you that when they come to verse 4, Christ is the end of the law, they say, "Ah-ha! See this? Christ is the termination of the law! He did away with it. It is no longer necessary. It has been nullified!"

But the Greek word behind the English word "end" should make them think, at least. It is the Greek word "telos," a very simple word. It has a wide range of meanings in the

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Greek. It does not only mean end. It can mean end, but also completion, and a lot of other things. But honest scholarship, looking at the context of what Paul was trying to say here, shows that it implies completion and fulfillment in terms of being the goal, aim, purpose, pinnacle, object, ideal, or epitome of the law.

Now, have you ever gone across a goal? Let us use hiking as our example. Let us say you want to hike up a mountain. You start at, or near, the base, and you hike up the mountainside, and you have some fun while doing it, looking around, seeing nature, and whatever else; it is fairly arduous. But you have a goal. You are going to get to the end of the trail, which is at the top (pinnacle) of the mountain. And you take a long time, but finally you get there, and you do the happy dance.

But, does the mountain disappear because you have now finished your goal? No! Just because Christ came and was the completion of the law, does the law disappear? No! That is how Protestants look at it! He came and fulfilled the law, they say, and so it is gone! (Poof!) It is no longer there, and has no meaning to Christians.

But, I would say that the national forest service would just love it if other people came and hiked along that same trail you took in our example, and reached that goal also.

In our little analogy here, God is the national forest service regent, and He wants those who come behind Jesus to reach the same goal, to fulfill the law. And is that not what the Archegos is? The Forerunner—He is the One that goes before so that others can follow. That is the way that Paul is using the word *telos* here. Not as an end in itself, and then everything disappears, but an end, a goal, a completion, so that others will see what God really meant. In other words, we can say that Jesus is the complete embodiment of the law.

Let us make that even better. The word law has connotations to it. We should rather say that Jesus Christ is the complete embodiment of God's instruction. Now we are getting someplace, because we can understand that a lot better. Most people, when they think of law, think of something written in a book of rules, or maybe the Ten Commandments alone. They do not think of the broader idea of instruction, which actually the word *Torah* is in the Hebrew, which is standing behind the Greek word Paul is using here.

Jesus is the complete embodiment of God's instruction. He is everything that God taught all rolled up in a Person. So the law was not annulled, and it did not become ineffective. Instead, it was made clear and personal in a perfect life of obedience. He himself said in Matthew 5:17, "I did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it." This is the same idea as "the end"—to fill it to the full; to show what it was like in its grandest,

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

greatest example. He did this when He fulfilled the law in His teaching, as well as in His perfect example.

Now, look at this section to show this in another way.

Romans 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

To paraphrase this, what they did in rejecting the revealed knowledge of God is, Israel fashioned its own set of standards, and thus failed to submit to God's set of standards—God's righteousness. And so, Paul, in verse 4, immediately defines what he means by God's righteousness.

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the [completion, fulfillment] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Do you understand? Paul is defining his own terms. They “have not submitted to the righteousness of God,” and Paul thinks, “I'd better define that; Christ is the fulfillment of the law for righteousness.” Paul is telling them that this is the goal.

Turn this around for just a moment to get a better view of it. The law was available to the Israelites. They had it there in the Book. And had they studied it, and had they followed it to its conclusion (neither of the two did they do), they would have had a vivid foretaste of the Messiah's way of life.

See? Paul put it into the negative here. I have put it into the positive. Had they followed God's righteousness, and had they submitted to it, they would have ended up with the life of Christ as He lived it during His walk on earth. They would have been able to recognize the Messiah when He came, because He was living that life! But they did not, so they did not. Understand?

The Complete Jewish Bible has an interesting translation of this. This is a Bible by Messianic Jews, and they are looking at it from a Hebrew perspective. Notice how they translate verse 4:

Romans 10:4 (The Complete Jewish Bible) “For the goal at which the torah aims is the Messiah who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts.”

That seems pretty plain! It is very clear. Had the Israelites been keeping the Torah properly, then they would have been able to recognize the Messiah, and they would have known God's righteousness. But, they did not keep the Torah correctly, and that is the problem. So, when He came, they did not recognize Him, and they treated Him horribly.

Yet, that was actually all part of the plan.

The second difficult scripture that helps to back this up is found in Galatians 3. My New King James Version titles this section, "Purpose of the Law," but, I do not think that the translators or the Nelson Publishers understood what Paul was saying.

Galatians 3:19-25 What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe [similar to Romans 10:4]. But before [the] faith [of Christ] came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

This here, especially verse 25, is another one of those gotcha places again. They say, "Ah-ha! Once Jesus came, there is no longer any need for the law, and so it was thrown out with the bath water."

That is only what it seems to say. It only seems to say that the law no longer has any meaning to Christians. They say that the law is like a tutor who has been dismissed after the children have grown up, and have no further need for his services. That is how they think of it, that it was just temporary like a servant, and once there was no need for the servant, you fire them, or you could reassign them. They look at it like firing them, because they believe that the law has been annulled, or done away.

Once again, this plays fast and loose with the scripture, primarily because the whole context of the book of Galatians is clearly not talking about the law in general. There are

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

parts where he speaks about the law in general. However, turning to verse 1, you see that the subject is justification, and it is not about the law in total, but just specifically as a means of justification. Do you understand the difference?

There is the Torah—which is the full instruction—which God gave to man. And if God gave it to man, it is good. God only does good things. However, the Jews perverted the law by thinking and teaching that they could be justified before God by the law; that they could be holy and right before God by keeping the law, and that (somehow) the law could make them perfect.

But the law in no way can make someone perfect. There is no way a person with human nature could ever become perfect on his own by keeping the law, or any set of any laws. He would always be one down (at least) to God. And, besides all that, even if he did manage to somehow keep all the law perfectly, he could only save himself—and what good would that do?

But we know that could not happen to an ordinary person without God's Spirit.

Paul, in his letter, is not condemning the law at all. What he is condemning is the use of the law to try to present oneself as holy and pure before God, which cannot happen. What he condemns is trying to use the law to become right with God. This is what legalism really is.

We have been accused, along with most of the rest of the churches of God, of being legalist for decades. And, it just shows you that nominal Christians do not understand what is going on. We condemn legalism just as much as they do, because we believe that we are justified by grace through faith, just like it says in Ephesians 2:8-9—it is plain as day. You cannot be justified by keeping the law in this sense at all.

By the way, *The Complete Jewish Bible* again translates the law in this passage specifically as "legalism." What they do is to try to distinguish the wrong use of God's instruction from the right use of God's instruction. If they want to use the right use, they translate it as Torah, rather than legalism.

Return to the idea of a tutor.

Galatians 3:24 [New King James Version] Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Galatians 3:24 [The Complete Jewish Bible] Accordingly, the torah functioned as a custodian until the Messiah came, so that we might be declared righteous on the ground of trusting and being faithful.

It has a bit of a different meaning. Notice that they did not use the word “tutor”—“as a custodian until the Messiah came, so that we might be declared righteous on the ground of trusting and being faithful.”

This is a pretty good translation, I think, because the word “tutor” in the Greek is *paidagogeos*, or pedagogue, which means, not a teacher, or instructor like we think a tutor is—someone who helps another with schoolwork—but rather a guide who is a protector, as they use it here in the Jewish version above, or a custodian, such as when a young lad is put into the care of someone, they become his guardian, or custodian. He is the one in charge of protecting and helping that young person to get to a certain time or place.

In the Greek, he was a guide and protector, one entrusted with the safety and well-being of young sons of the master of the house. What is interesting to me is that one of his major duties as a custodian was to take these young sons from the house to the school where they would be taught. He did not do the teaching, but he took them to where they could be taught by the teachers. What an interesting sidelight to all of this!

What it all comes down to is that Paul is telling the Galatians that the law—the Torah, the whole instruction—was to hedge Israel in by a legal means so that the Israelites would survive as a separate and distinct people until the Messiah came along. And then, that function of the law ceased. He did not say the law ceased, but just that function of the law ceased. Once the custodial years are over, you no longer need the custodian. But that does not mean that the custodian is useless. He has other duties he can perform. He can be put into some other job to help the household—and that is exactly what Paul meant.

Where was the custodian, the pedagogue, supposed to take the Israelites? I have already told you—to the Messiah. And who was the Messiah? He is the great Rabbi—the great Teacher of Israel. Is that not what He says in John 13, calling Himself, “your Lord and Teacher,” in the instructions regarding the footwashing? “If I do those things to you, shouldn’t you, then, do those things to one another?”

Jesus is the Rabbi. He is the Teacher. So then, this law, the Torah, did exactly what the pedagogue did—he brought the young sons to Christ, the great Teacher, and He would

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

teach them all things, which He said He would do, and still does today.

He teaches us the right applications of God's instruction in the Old Testament. How often did Jesus point back to the Old Testament, and quote it? Very frequently! And this is why, too. I must also bring this up: How does Paul argue this point about being justified by law or grace in Galatians and Romans 3? He does it the same way his Lord and Master did in the gospels—he points back to the Old Testament. One of his major illustrations is the life of Abraham. Paul goes all the way back to the book of Genesis to show that he was made righteous through faith, and not any works that he had done.

We obviously see that Paul was not doing away with the law—the Torah, the instruction. In fact, he used it all the time. Hundreds of times the Old Testament is quoted in the New Testament showing that Jesus and the apostles and all the others who wrote the New Testament understood that the instruction of the Old Testament was still valid and up-to-date, and had to be taught to give us a proper understanding of where God wants us to go, and what God wants us to do.

The law is not done away. Christ is not the end of the law in terms of doing away with it. The law is not a tutor that is fired when its job was finished. It is still pertinent to what we have to do ahead of us now.

We have to ask ourselves at this point: what does Jesus say about the Old Testament in regard to Himself? In this passage, He is walking on the road to Emmaus, and these disciples of His who should have known better were not recognizing Him, and while they were talking about His crucifixion and His recent resurrection, they could not put the pieces together. And Christ says in verse 25:

Luke 24:25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!

The first thing that He does is to point them back to the Old Testament.

Luke 24:26-27 "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

He is not done. He goes back to Jerusalem, and He talks with the other disciples,

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Luke 24:44-45 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

That is the whole Old Testament! He is very clear, here, that He specifically mentions the law of Moses, which is the five books of the Pentateuch, the Prophets, which, according to the Jewish reckoning, began with Joshua and went all the way through to the end of II Chronicles of the historical books, plus all the "major" prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, as well as Daniel, and the "minor" prophets—all considered "the prophets," and then He says, the Psalms, which is actually the third grouping, all the writings of wisdom from Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Esther, and a couple of others. What He is doing is telling us that the whole Old Testament points right at Him! You can find Him everywhere you look in the Old Testament.

He says something very similar in John 5:

John 5:39 "You [Jews] search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

The whole of the Old Testament testify of Him. What does this mean? It is Bible-speak for "it bears witness of Him," or even simpler, "it speaks of Him." It describes Him and explains Him. It enlightens us about Him. He is saying, again, it is all through the Old Testament, when you look in the Old Testament, you should be seeing Christ.

Let us put this all together with Galatians 3:24. Paul says that the Old Testament guided and guarded the people of Israel until Messiah, and when He came and called disciples into His church, that function ceased. Paul was very clear about this in many places. He talked about the Old Covenant, which was about to pass away. He did not need those things anymore to keep the nation of Israel—at this point, the Jews—as a people together to produce the Messiah. It was no longer necessary to keep them together. The Messiah had come.

Those things that were the legalistic parameters for their nation were no longer needed because Israel, in a physical sense, was no longer going to be a physical nation to produce the Messiah. So, those things were not necessary anymore. It does not mean that they ceased to exist, but rather it just simply means that that function stopped. And

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

very soon after that, what happened? The Romans came in, destroying the nation and the Temple, and the Jews were scattered to the four winds. And so, that nation was no longer necessary for that purpose.

Paul goes through Romans 9, 10, and 11 where he says that that is not the end of Israel. God is going to save all Israel. They will be grafted into the tree. So, do not start crying tears for them right now. God just has a different plan for them in the future. He will bring them all back in. We know the prophecies in Jeremiah 30 and 31, about bringing them back into their land. That will be done in the future.

Paul says, by the end of chapter 11, all Israel will be saved. So, do not worry. He has got it all covered.

But, in this sense, this pedagogue function of the Old Testament is gone and no longer needed. That does not mean that the law is done away. Jesus Himself, though, as He has said out of His own mouth in Luke 24 and John 5, shows us that the Old Testament has a greater function than that in terms of instructing us, specifically about Him. He, of course, is the way, the truth, and the life. That is why it is all about Him.

Now we will see the crux of today's sermon. Now that we have this down that the law is not done away with, the purpose that Paul was speaking about there in Galatians 3 is finished, but as we saw it has a greater purpose now. It is the Scriptures. It is the instruction that we need. Paul has just talked about the fact that the Old Covenant was about ready to vanish away (8:13).

Hebrews 9:1 Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.

He is speaking about what the priests did, and the tabernacle—the earthly sanctuary.

Hebrews 9:2-5 For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

Paul takes the time in his argument to mention, and little more than that really, the layout of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and most of its furniture—the holy vessels. He speaks of two sanctuaries. And there were two. The first was the holy place, and the second was the Holy of Holies. There was the outer sanctuary—the holy place, and an inner sanctuary—the Holy of Holies. We should understand that the Temple was laid out so its door faced east. The outer sanctuary was just behind the door, and the inner sanctuary was behind the outer sanctuary, towards the west.

In the wilderness, however, the Tabernacle had a curtain fence around it made of embroidered cloth. This made a courtyard around the Tabernacle. When you came through the gate into the courtyard, what immediately confronted you was the great brazen altar. It was a very large altar made of bronze.

And then, as you walked past it, halfway between it and the door of the Tabernacle was the laver of brass, a very shiny, huge bowl, probably two-tiered—the top bowl for hands, and the lower bowl for the feet. Once you passed the door into the outer sanctuary, on your right (north side) was the table of showbread made of gold on which the bread was put, and the frankincense put on top of the bread. The symbolism we will leave for next time.

Opposite this on the south side (left) was the seven-branched candelabra, or menorah. That was kept lit all the time.

As we walk forward from this place toward the veil which separated the outer sanctuary from the inner sanctuary, or Holy of Holies, before you got to this veil, there would be another small altar, the altar of incense. When used, the smoke from it would rise up from there and go through the veil, symbolically showing the prayers of the saints going through into the Holy of Holies where God is. But the veil was shut.

Behind the veil, the only thing that was there was the Ark of the Covenant. Now the Ark had a top on it, called the mercy seat. It is really a lid for the Ark, and on this lid at each end were two angels with their wings outspread toward each other—the cherubim. It is symbolic of the cherubim that covers God's throne in heaven in the same manner.

Inside the Ark of the Covenant were three things—the gold pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded showing that God had chosen the Levites as His servants of the sanctuary to do His work there, and the two tablets of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments. That was it. It was empty except for these things.

I have mentioned a couple of things that Paul did not mention. Paul did mention that the

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golden altar of incense and the Ark were within the Holy of Holies; what I think he is doing is showing how the altar of incense impacts upon the Holy of Holies—very closely connected, indeed.

I mentioned the altar of sacrifice, and the laver in the outer sanctuary, which Paul did not mention in the scripture above. We will eventually get to each one of these things in more detail at a later time.

Paul's comment, in verse 5, is that we cannot speak of these in detail right now. He does not mean that he does not know about them, but rather he does not have the time for it right now. In understanding these things, he knew that it would take a long time to explain all the ins and outs of these various things, and how they affect us in our worship. And so, he said in this letter that he could not speak about such at this time because it would take him off on a huge digression, taking him off subject, which he did not want to do. So, he said that there is a lot to be learned in these things, but he could not take the time to tell them right now. It must wait for another time.

There is far more to be learned from these items and furnishings in terms of divine service or true worship. And that is what I hope to show in later sermons. In these furnishings, there is a great deal of information on how to approach God, and how to have a relationship with Him. And, like the sacrifices, Jesus Christ is the focus of each one of them. That sort of thing is where we will be going with all this.

Before we do, I need to add another piece of background information for you. He had just been talking, in chapter 7, about how the priesthood had been changed from the Levites to Christ—the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 8:1-5 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

I do not know if you picked up on it or not, but he mentions right away that there is a true

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. And then he goes on to say that the Levites served a copy, not the true tabernacle. What the Levites did, and all the furnishings did, were to shadow and copy the true ones really existent in heaven. And, God was sure to tell Moses to make sure to make all things, and do all these things, strictly according to the pattern that He had given him.

And why was that? It was because if it was not done properly, the wrong things would be taught, and the wrong connections would be made. God was thinking about this symbolism from the beginning. He wanted everything to be perfectly copied from what is in heaven so that a person to whom He gave His Spirit would be able to see the connection between the ministry and worship under the Old Covenant, and the ministry and worship under the New Covenant, seeing how it all works to be the same.

We do not usually imagine Jesus Christ serving as our High Priest in a heavenly sanctuary. We usually just think of Him just sitting there at God's right hand. But what it says here is that Jesus is serving in a heavenly tabernacle as our High Priest. In other words, the Temple of God in heaven contains similar, but more glorious furnishings. What Jesus Christ does in heaven is similar to what the Levites did on earth, but it is now spiritualized in what He does for us. This means, then, that the items that we see in the earthly tabernacle have far weightier spiritual significance than we may have attributed to them. They are not just there to fill out the building. There are some very serious purposes behind each of them. And they all point to Christ. And they all point to our relationship with God. And we, too, can approach God through Christ.

Hebrews 9:11-12 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Hebrews 9:23-24 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Paul shows the very real connection between the physical tabernacle and its furnishings, and the perfect heavenly tabernacle and its furnishings. He also shows how

Approaching God Through Christ (Part 1) by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

much greater and better are the heavenly things because they have been sanctified by the sacrifice of God's beloved Son, not the blood of an animal. Because He has sanctified those furnishings, as it were, with His own blood, He has opened the way for us to approach God's throne to worship Him, having a relationship with Him. In Mark 15, we will be able to see this idea in action. Here, Jesus is on the cross,

Mark 15:37-38 And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Just as soon as Christ died, the veil of the Temple was rent, or ripped apart from top to bottom. That veil was one piece, and very large. It went up maybe something like 30 feet high. (I believe that Herod's temple had an inner and outer curtain. So, it would have had to been both of them.)

What this did was to expose the Holy of Holies to anyone who was in the outer sanctuary. Anyone who could approach God at that point (those Levites allowed to enter the outer sanctuary) normally would not be able to see into the Holy of Holies. If we had continued in Hebrews 9, we would have found that only the high priest could go into the Holy of Holies, and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The Holy of Holies was effectively closed to everyone all the time up until now, except to the high priest, and then only once a year. But when Christ died, that veil was rent, or ripped apart, from top to bottom exposing the Holy of Holies making the way open.

Have you thought about this downward motion? It specifically says that it was from top to bottom. This indicates at least two things. The first is that this event was supernatural and not done by any human hand or human strength. A man would have done it from the bottom up, because he is not 30 feet tall. He would have stood at the bottom, and try to rip it apart going up. But this shows that it was rent from the top down, from heaven downward, which indicates the second thing. The offer of a relationship with God comes from heaven to earth—that is, God opens the way into the Holy of Holies. Jesus was dead at this point. Who rent the curtain? Whether by angel or not, it was done under the auspices of the Father.

Does this not remind us of a certain scripture that Hebert W. Armstrong and the churches of God have long quoted for many decades?

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."

It is God the Father who initiates the relationship. He opens the way, but it could only be done because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice. He gets us in. God opens the way, but it is His blood that gets us in.

To close out today, I want to hit a few scriptures in the book of John, showing you how central Jesus Christ is.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Now that we have put our trust in Him, and have accepted the New Covenant, He is everything to us—the way, the truth, and the life. If we want a relationship with God, it must be through Him. And our lives, spiritual and physical, regarding the relationship with God, and the brethren, Jesus Christ, are all in all.

John 14:13-14 "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

He is our guarantee of answered prayer. He is always there at God's right hand to intercede for us, and to express on our behalf what we cannot express very well ourselves (Romans 8).

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

Jesus is the means of our eventual resurrection to eternal life in the fullness of God's Kingdom. Everything that has to do with real life revolves around Him.

John 10:9 "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

He is the door by which we can gain access to God, and salvation, and eternal life. He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life so that the enemy can be defeated, and the sheep saved.

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

He is the Light by whom we can see the truth, and the right way to walk toward the Kingdom of God.

John 6:35 And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

He is the one whose flesh and blood we "eat" for eternal sustenance and instruction.

John 4:10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

He is our source of living water—the Holy Spirit—that constantly sustains us, refreshes us, washes us, as well as connects us to Him and to the Father.

John 1:29 The next day John [the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Another aspect—He is not only the Shepherd, He is that Lamb who gives His life for the sheep, and for the whole world, as John says.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

As the Word of Life, He is the personified expression of all that God is, and all that God teaches.

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The reason that I went through all these is because we will eventually see most, if not all, of these descriptions of Him in the Temple or Tabernacle furnishings.

To conclude, turn to Hebrews 10.

Hebrews 10:19-25 Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, 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. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

We have such an Advocate for us in heaven that we can have great confidence, not just in prayer, but in our daily walk with God, and our relationship with one another. Christ has shown us the way, and now He faithfully guides us along the way to bring us to glory.

Next time, we will begin to get to the furnishings of the tabernacle.