

ACCESS
The Privilege of Approaching God

Timothy C. Hoelscher,
First Baptist Church of Royal City, WA.

Nearly 3,500 years ago, David wrote,

“Jehovah, our Lord,
How majestic¹ is Your name in all the earth,
Who has given Your splendor above the heavens!

When I look at Your heavens,
the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which
You have firmly placed;
What is man that You remember him?
and the son of man that You visit² him? Psalm 8:1, 3-4.

About 1,00 years after David, when Peter and John returned from the Sanhedrin, the assembly of believers gather and said,

Master, You the one making the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them...and now, Lord, look upon their threats and give to your slaves to speak your word with all boldness. Acts 4:24, 29.

Both passages begin with a reflection upon God’s creative power. David then expressed his amazement that this God of the universe would give any attention to man. The believers gathered in Jerusalem likewise worshipped God as the creator of all things, eventually requesting boldness from God. Whatever else may be gleaned from these statements, both express the idea of access to the God of the universe. While David wondered at this truth, the very act of writing those words expressed his confidence in approaching God. The saints in Jerusalem, likewise, seemed to accept that some form of access to God existed.

Communication with God, popularly called “prayer,” is a privilege. Such communication has not always been granted. Believers today (for the last two thousand years) have frequently taken it for granted that they have such an access to God. Believers have good Biblical support for such an assertion. However, what is our norm is sometimes, perhaps even often read back into Biblical history. It is sometimes assumed that saints prior to the advent of the Church enjoyed the same privileged communication as Church saints.

This study will examine the nature of access to God. It will begin with an historical survey of access. It will examine how God granted men access. It will give greater attention to our access to God. It will consider the impact of access on interpretation of various passages and the role that access has in

¹ אֲדִיר majestic, noble, superior

² פָּקַד perhaps with the idea to oversee.

present tense salvation. This will lead to brief survey of access to God in the future millennial kingdom. It is the goal that we better understand the affect of access on our understanding of significant passages, and also appreciate the generous access we have today.

The Scriptures demonstrate two easily observable divisions: before the cross, after the cross. The student of Scripture can recognize further divisions. The time before the cross involves the time before God gave Israel the Law, and Israel under the Law. The time after the cross involves the time of God's work with the Church, and the time of God's renewed work with Israel. Dispensationalists recognize these as making up three of the dispensations or ways of life: Law, Grace, Fullness of Times. The time prior the Law includes further distinctions: God's work with all mankind, God's work with Abraham and his family. This results in five divisions. The time when God dealt with all mankind is divided into the time before the Fall of Adam, the time prior to Noah's flood, the time between Noah's flood and the separation of Abraham and his family. Dispensational distinctions involve changes in the God-designated lifestyles of the people to whom God gave those dispensations or "house rules." Just as these dispensational distinctions affect or include other areas of truth, they affect our understanding of access to God, since access to God is part of being in a household of God.

Access prior to the Law

Adam & Eve

When we consider Adam, we must modify our concept of access. All the revelation regarding Adam involves God initiating the access. In Genesis 1:28-30, God spoke to Adam and Eve after creating them.³ He revealed both their responsibilities and privileges. The narrative of chapter two backs up to a time prior to Eve's creation. God initiated contact with Adam, and explained what He had provided Adam for food and the one limitation (Genesis 2:16-17). When the serpent approached Eve, he questioned God's forbidding to eat from any tree in the garden (Genesis 3:1). This evidences that the serpent was aware of God's revelation to Adam and Eve. Eve replied by citing what God had forbidden (Genesis 3:2-3). Presumably, Adam had passed on the earlier revelation to Eve after God formed her and brought her to Adam.

After Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, God again initiated contact. Genesis 3:8 reveals that Adam and Eve heard the sound of Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. They demonstrated the nature of spiritual death by hiding themselves from God. God did not have to separate man from Himself. Man separated himself from God. He hid.

God clothed Adam and Eve in garments of skin, meaning that an animal had to die to provide such clothing (Genesis 3:21). The Hebrew word for their garments is כְּתוֹנֹת a word translated garment or tunic. In Exodus through Deuteronomy the word is used exclusively of the linen tunics which the priests wore. In 2 Samuel it is the linen, meaning lightweight garments which the king's daughters wore while in the palace. In Ezra and Nehemiah it is again used of priestly garments. Without pressing this too far, it is interesting the religious use of the garments God made for Adam and Eve. Did God set a new standard, and explain or show to Adam how to sacrifice? Many have speculated at this juncture. Much of what teachers affirm is barely implied. We must tread cautiously about what we affirm.

Cain & Abel

In connection with Adam and Even and God making them clothing, we find Cain and Abel each bringing⁴ an offering (Genesis 4:3-5). The word translated offering in these three verses is מִנְחָה [*minchah*] a word which in the majority of its over two hundred occurrences refers to offerings of produce and grain.

³ The text reveals that God both created *bara* and formed *asah* Adam. Formed or worked upon applies to the physical nature of Adam and *bara*, his immaterial nature. 2:7 has *yatzer*. Genesis one records God's words in a summary of His work, and Genesis two a detailed account of God's work on day six.

⁴ Cain "caused to come" an offering. This is a hifil imperfect (causative stem) of the verb בא meaning to come or go.

Yet God's act of not looking on Cain's offering, without any explanation such that Cain had an improper attitude, implies that his offering was not in keeping with the model set by God. Based upon other Scriptures, we interpret this event to mean that the pre-incarnate Son of God appeared, most likely in a human-like (temporary) form. He looked or gazed [שָׁא' *sha'a*] at Abel's offering and did not gaze at Cain's. This Hebrew word, translated regard, look upon, or give attention, involves the direction of one's attention while he looks. "It is never a casual or disinterested glance."⁵ Cain could see that Jehovah did not give attention to his offering. In other words, Jehovah was granting access to Abel and not to Cain. God even approached Cain regarding the matter, in a sense granting him some access, but Cain refused to approach or access God as God had indicated.

Enoch

Genesis 5:22 states that Enoch walked with God. Though often spiritualized into some daily devotion and prayer type of "walk," it is easier and more natural to understand that Enoch literally took walks⁶ with God. In some human-like form, the pre-incarnate Son appeared, and they walked. This was access. This access brought revelation which Jude later quoted (Jude 14). His access resulted in activity on His part which the writer of Hebrews explained. He believed God existed, and believed God would reward him for diligently seeking Him (Hebrews 11:4-5). Again, the temptation to allegorize "diligently seek" into seeking in prayer, leads away from the idea that God could be found because He was making Himself visible upon the earth and thereby providing men access to Him.

Noah

Genesis six reveals the degradation of the human race, from God worshippers to worshippers of the Nephilim. Genesis 6:4 states that the Nephilim were famous, men of a name, or renown. By contrast, Noah found grace in God's eyes (Genesis 6:8). Nothing reveals whether Noah was in contact with God before God spoke with him in verse 13. Noah's access to God was initiated by God. Was Noah sacrificing, praying, or seeking God out like Enoch had? We don't know, for the text gives us no other details. Peter stated that Noah was a preacher or herald of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). This could mean that Noah was heralding that people should not be enamored with the Nephilim but rather with God. Noah could have been a herald by his life, by his obedience to God, even in the building of the ark.

When Noah and his family disembarked from the ark, Noah built an altar and offered to God a burnt offering of some from every clean animal and bird (Genesis 8:20). This is the first mention of an altar in Scripture. A mitzbeach [מִזְבֵּחַ] was that on which one burned a slaughtered [זָבַח *tzabach*] animal offered as a sacrifice. The altar is evidence that Noah had some revelation about such matters respecting God. Noah either received revelation directly from God or his parents had passed it down to him. Noah knew how to approach or access God by sacrifice.

God instructed Noah to take into the ark seven each of the clean animals (Genesis 7:2). Moses wrote Genesis about 800-900 years after Noah's time. Did Noah understand clean versus unclean or is that a distinction from Moses' point of view. The account in Genesis attributes the words "clean" and "unclean" to God as He spoke with Noah. However, Noah was a vegetarian at the time he gathered the animals. No Scripture indicates that Noah was aware that God would instruct him to eat meat after the flood. Therefore, we might conclude that clean and unclean related to which animals God accepted as sacrifices and which He did not. It is from the clean animals that Noah offered burnt offerings.

⁵ An interesting passage to illustrate this word is in Exodus 5:9 when Pharaoh increased the labor of the Israelis so that they would not pay attention to lying words. Here the idea of attention is plain because it is words, not a visual object on which they could focus. "The basic idea of שָׁא' 'to look at with interest.'" Herman J. Austel in *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament*, eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke. (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980). electronic edition.

⁶ I haven't found an occurrence of the verb הִלֵּךְ in a metaphorical sense. It is always literal ambulation, strolling, moving, or walking.

After the offerings, three pairs of the clean animals were left to breed and fill full the earth. Yet among the animals later recognized as clean, such as sheep, goats, cattle, none produce numerous young. Sheep and goats normally have single or twin births and cattle more commonly give birth to one calf a year. The significance of this fact is that it isn't likely that Noah was offering burnt offerings regularly. If so, the population of clean animals would have been decimated in a short time. This is applying some logic and science to Scripture, but it is only intended to point out that Noah may not have been sacrificing as part of a his contact with God. He may have offered sacrifices perhaps once a year or less.

Job

Job lived at a time when fathers acted as priests on behalf of their families. After his sons and daughters completed their celebrations, Job sent for his children and offered burnt offerings for each⁷ of his children (Job 1:5). The verb “offer” is hiphil and tied to three other verbs: send, set apart [consecrate NASB, sanctify AV], rise early. All four verbs are connected as part of Job's one objective to set his children apart in the event that they sinned and cursed⁸ God in their hearts. Job is likely a contemporary of Abraham, and certainly lived before the Mosaic Law was instituted. This was not a one time act by Job, but a regular activity. He did this priestly work, “all the days.” Therefore, Job had some revelation about how to approach God with a burnt offering.

Abraham

The history of Abraham begins at the end of Genesis 11. Joshua revealed that Abraham's family served other gods (Joshua 24:2). So it is interesting that God approached this idolator and made a promise to him (Genesis 12:1). Abraham traveled to Shechem (Genesis 12:6). Jehovah appeared to him, made a promise of the land to him, and Abraham built an altar (Genesis 12:7). Altar implies sacrifices. He then traveled a little further south to Bethel. He built another altar there and called on the name of Jehovah (Genesis 12:8). The altar and calling indicates access. After Abraham and Lot separated, Abraham traveled south near Hebron and built another altar (Genesis 13:18).

In Genesis 15:7 God made it clear to Abraham that He was the God who appeared to Abraham when he was still in the Ur of the Chaldeans. Through most of the historical account of Abraham, it was God who instigated contact. When God was present, Abraham spoke freely. In Genesis eighteen, when the Lord appeared to him, Abraham ran to meet the three men (18:1-2). It is hard to discern in this account if Abraham knew at the beginning that one of these men was Jehovah (the pre-incarnate Son) or whether he came to learn this during the ensuing conversation. If Abraham knew that one of these was God, then in a sense Abraham initiated contact, but only after Jehovah chose to appear. The account of Abraham and Abimelech ended with Abraham praying [פָּלַל -*palal*] to God, perhaps for Abimelech and his family (Genesis 20:17). Abraham's most significant sacrifice or offering is found in Genesis 22. Like many before it, God initiated the contact with Abraham and designated for him to offer⁹ a burnt offering (Genesis 22:2). Isaac's question to his father in verse seven may indicate that Isaac was familiar with burnt offerings (22:7). It is significant that the mountain on which God instructed Abraham to offer Isaac, is likely the Mount Moriah where Solomon built the temple (2 Chronicles 3:1). To summarize, in Abraham's life, God was often the initiator of contact between God and Abraham, though we do have instance of Abraham building altars and calling on God's name.

⁷ This is an interpretation of the word “the number of all them” מִסְפָּר כָּלֵם .

⁸ The verb is a piel of בָּרַךְ more commonly translated “bless.” Here it is thought to be used in irony. Some who have a lower view of inspiration have suggested that the text was changed to avoid God being cursed.

⁹ עָלָה עֹלָה both words indicate a burnt offering, the first a hiphil imperative “cause to offer” and the second the noun “burnt offering.”

Melchizedek

When Abraham returned from the war of the kings, Melchizedek king of Salem came out to meet him (Genesis 14:18). He was not only king but priest of God Most High. This is the first occurrence of the noun priest. A priest carried out designated religious activities before God on behalf of others. On the verb כָּהֵן [cahan], William Gesenius wrote, “The signification of *priest* is kindred in Heb. כָּהֵן, inasmuch as prophets and priests were alike supposed to intercede between the gods and men.”¹⁰ We do not know the source of Melchizedek’s information regarding his priestly activities. We assume that God appeared to him and revealed what religious activities to perform and how to perform them. Being a priest, Melchizedek knew something about approaching or exercising access to God.

The writer of Hebrews revealed that Christ’s priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6; cf Psalm 110:4). The main point in Hebrews is that the Levitical priesthood was not a perfect order. If it had been a priesthood which could have brought the people of Israel to maturity, then no additional and different priesthood would have been necessary (Hebrews 7:11). God revealed to David that David’s Lord [*Adonai*] would be a priest, but a priest of a different order.

Hagar

Hagar was an Egyptian slave of Sarai (Sarah, Genesis 16:1). After Hagar conceived a child by Abraham (Sarai’s plan to fulfill God’s promise), Sarai despised her (Genesis 16:4). Hagar fled and the angel of the Lord (pre-incarnate Son) appeared to her (Genesis 16:7). God initiated contact with her and made promises to her and regarding her son (Genesis 16:7-12). God appeared to Hagar again when Sarah had Abraham send her and her son away from them (Genesis 21:17-20). God again granted access by choosing to appear to an individual.

Abraham’s Servant

Abraham sent his servant to Haran to find a wife for Isaac. When the servant arrived in Haran, he asked God to help him discern what woman he should take for Isaac (Genesis 24:12-15). Even this servant knew something about approaching God, though nothing is stated about how he made this request.

Isaac

Abraham’s son Isaac pleaded¹¹ to God for the sake of his wife Rebekah (Genesis 25:21). Isaac knew something about communication with God. The norm to this point is that God literally appeared to people. Men were not speaking with some invisible deity, some voice in the ether, but with the God who appeared often in a form that appeared human.¹² The verb plead occurs first as a qal when Isaac speaks to Jehovah, and then as a niph'al when Jehovah responds or allows Himself to be intreated.¹³ Jehovah also appeared to Isaac to instruct him to remain in Gerar, and later to extend to him the promise He had made to Abraham (Genesis 26:2-5; 26:24). On this last occasion, Isaac built an altar and called on the name of the Lord (Genesis 26:25). Sometimes Isaac initiated contact or communication with God and at other times God initiated.

¹⁰ William Gesenius, *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* trans. Samuel P. Tregelles, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1979) p. 385.

¹¹ The verb עָתָר meant to plead or intreat, and involved the idea of power as though one were hoping to overwhelm with pleadings the one to whom request was asked. See *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies*, David K. Spurbeck, Law Communication with God Versus Grace Communication with God a paper presented at the 1993 Theological Forum on Contemporary Issues.

¹² These were not incarnations, but temporary manifestations of deity for the purpose of communicating with men.

¹³ This Niph'al could be classified as a “Tolerative” use. See Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967) p. 29.

Rebekah

God answered (allowed Himself to be intreated) Isaac's pleading regarding Rebekah because she had no children. She conceived twins, and the two were crushing themselves within her (Genesis 25:22). Rebekah went to seek¹⁴ Jehovah about this matter (Genesis 25:22). The verb הָלַךְ [halak] preceding "inquire" seems to indicate that she went to an established location at which she would ask Jehovah about the children. "Where and how she looked for a divine revelation in the matter, is not recorded, and therefore, cannot be determined with certainty. Some suppose that it was by prayer and sacrifice at a place dedicated to Jehovah."¹⁵ Wherever Rebekah went, she knew there was a place and means by which she could approach God.

Jacob

Jacob is an interesting character. After getting his brother's birth-right and stealing his brother's blessing, Jacob fled north to Haran. Jacob was not a believer, yet during a night on his journey north, God appeared to him in a dream (Genesis 28:10-15). Jehovah revealed to Jacob that He was the God of both Abraham and his father Isaac (Genesis 28:13). Jacob did not seek the appearance. God initiated. Jacob, an unbelieving man, did not understand the nature of God. "Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I did not know" (Genesis 28:16). Jacob named the place Bethel, house of God, thinking that this was God's house. This was an idea common among idolators, that their deities lived in specific locales. Jacob then made a vow to Jehovah.

Years later, on his return to the land Jehovah had promised to him, he asked God to deliver him from the hand of his brother (Genesis 32:9-12). That night, God appeared to Jacob. This time Jehovah was clearly in a human form and wrestled all night with Jacob, as Jacob would not let Him leave without blessing him (Genesis 32:24-32). This was a face to face meeting with God. Again, Jacob did not seek this meeting. It was initiated with Jacob.

Eventually, Jacob returned to Bethel and built an altar (Genesis 35:5-7). Remember that Bethel is where God first appeared to Jacob and where Abraham had built an altar many years earlier. God appeared to Jacob and confirmed the promise of land to Jacob, which He had promised to Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 35:9-13). God went up, that is, He left the location. Jacob poured out a drink offering and oil on the altar (Genesis 35:14). Again, a location and an altar played an important role in addressing God.

Leah & Rachel

Though no specific statement is found regarding Leah and Rachel, both did apparently address God. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah, and then allowed him to later marry Rachel (Genesis 29:25-28). However, Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, in fact he hated¹⁶ Leah, and a conflict between the sisters ensued (Genesis 29:30-31). In this conflict, the sisters apparently made appeals to God. Leah bears the first child and acknowledged that God saw her affliction (Genesis 29:32). Verses 29:33; 30:17, and 22 indicate that God heard Leah and then Rachel. Does "hear" indicate that they specifically called to God for a child, or does it mean that God heard their despair? The latter is more likely, but the text provides us no certainty. We do know that God was paying attention to and responding to the situation of these two sisters.

Joseph

For all that we read of Joseph, and his recognition of God's work with him, it is amazing that no communication from Joseph to God is recorded. This doesn't mean that Joseph didn't communicate to

¹⁴ הָלַךְ to inquire or search.

¹⁵ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. I*, trans. James Martin, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) p. 267. This volume was done by C. F. Keil.

¹⁶ שָׂנְאָה to hate, or be hateful towards another.

God worshipping, thanking, asking, etc., but nothing specifically is stated. Joseph gives God credit for the ability to interpret dreams. After the death of their father, his brothers were certain Joseph would avenge their former hostility against him. He credited God with the events. He knew that God meant for it all to save many people. Did Joseph communicate with God. Almost certainly. Do we know how he communicated? No.

Access under the Law

The Mosaic Law also known as the Covenant at Sinai introduced significant changes affecting men's access to God. In review of the 2500 years prior to Sinai, God appeared personally to many people. People spoke with God in many places, building altars in various locations, and approaching God with and sometimes without sacrifice. The Mosaic Law changed this.

When God initiated contact with Moses, it was in response to the cry of the Israelis and in remembrance of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:24). The words "cry out" and "cry for help" in verse 23 are זעק and שִׁוּעָה respectively. Both words involve some aspect of crying out for help while under distress. In the case of זעק the occurrences of crying to the Lord versus crying to someone else are about even. שִׁוּעָה is a cry to God in most of its few occurrences. However, neither word implies that God is the one to whom the subject cries. In Exodus 2:23, God is not specified as the object of their cry. It would seem odd if God answered a cry directed at idols. Therefore, it is better to conclude that they were crying out to the God of their fathers, or to no one in particular. This was the state of affairs when Moses opened the Exodus narrative.

The change in access began after God delivered His people Israel from Egypt. He led them into the wilderness of Sin, and at the mountain of Sinai confronted them with hearing His voice and guarding the covenant¹⁷ (Exodus 19:5). Israel pledged to do everything God had said (v. 8). The relatively open access to God, which men had experienced, changed. God immediately responded by coming in thick darkness (v. 9). He commanded Moses to put up boundaries or borders¹⁸ (v. 12). Establishing such boundaries demonstrated that access to God would be limited from that time. When God came down upon the mountain the people were terrified (vv. 16-18; 20:18-20). Exodus 20:20 seems ironic, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." The people did fear. The fear of God was upon their face. Their access to God was changing.

The next aspect of change was introduced after God spelled out some particulars to govern the lives and acceptability of the people. In Exodus 25:2 God told Moses to take a free-will contribution from the sons of Israel to construct a holy place (sanctuary) (Exodus 25:8). It was a holy place because God would dwell among Israel and yet remain separate (holy). He instructed Moses to build a box with a lid,¹⁹ on top of the lid were two cherubs (Exodus 25:17-21). God would appoint the place between the cherubs and above the lid of the box as a place to meet with Moses, speak with Moses, and give to him commandments for the sons of Israel (Exodus 25:22). This holy place was a tent until Solomon built the more-permanent temple. The tent was designated "the tent of meeting" for it was there that God would meet with the sons of Israel (Exodus 29:42-44). The tent both limited and granted access to God. On one side, "What great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is Jehovah our God whenever we call upon Him?" (Deuteronomy 4:7). On the other side, though Jehovah was near by being present in the tent above the ark, God would limit who could approach and how they would approach.

¹⁷ This was either the covenant of circumcision given to Abraham or the land covenant given to Abraham.

¹⁸ A hiphil verb יָבַל, to establish a border. The second word border is חֲזָקָה a place for cutting off, i.e cutting off progress, hence a border.

¹⁹ Most English Bible translate this mercy seat, though neither the word mercy or seat occur in the Hebrew. It not only served as a cover to the box (ark) but also the place of yearly covering for the sins of the people. "The word, however, is not related to mercy and of course was not a seat. The word is derived from the root "to atone." The

God limited who could come before Him by designating a specific priesthood. God specified that Aaron and his sons were to serve Him as priests (Exodus 28:1).²⁰ No one but Aaron and his sons could attend to the priestly duties behind the veil. Anyone else who approached as considered a stranger and died for approaching. Four passages use the same phrase²¹ “the approaching stranger will be caused to die” (Numbers 1:51; 3:10, 38; 18:7). The NASB has chosen well to translate the noun זָר “layman.” “The basic thought is of non-acquaintance or non-relatedness.”²² The work or privilege of approaching God in the tent and before the ark was restricted to one branch of the family of Levi.

In addition to restricting who could enter within the tent, God specified physical qualities, clothing, and activities of those divinely selected to approach Him. God gave these priests requirements as to priestly dress and as to washing rituals so they would not die (Exodus 28:35, 43; 30:20-21).²³ The warning of death over clothing and washings demonstrates a serious tone to this change of access to God. These warnings continued during the seven days of their inauguration into the priestly office (Leviticus 8:33, 34). They were warned from drinking wine or strong drink when they went to serve at the tent of meeting (Leviticus 10:9). Any from the family of Aaron who had any type of physical deformity could not approach. They were allowed to benefit from the provisions for the priesthood (meat and grain) but could not engage in any of the priestly actions (Leviticus 21:-22:16). These restrictions even addressed whom a priest could marry, or for whom he could become unclean because of a death in the family.

The people of Israel approached God through the priests. They were not able to enter the tent, or go before the ark, but they entered the outer court or fenced area with offerings and sacrifices which they presented to God through the priests. These people also had to meet conditions. The first chapters of Leviticus explain the various sacrifices and offerings which the people were to bring and the proper ritual which the priest was to perform on behalf of the individual. One of the words used in the section is the verb *qarab*²⁴ meaning to come near, bring near with the idea or object of offering it, hence it is sometimes translated “offer.” The cognate noun *qorban*²⁵ described the thing brought near or offered. Often the context describes what is offered or brought near. So in Leviticus 1:3 the offering [*qorban*] is a burnt offering an *olah*²⁶ or thing sent up in smoke, where the whole offering was burned. If he sinned he was to bring a sin offering, a *chatath*.²⁷ Sin offerings covered sins done unintentionally (Leviticus 4). An Israelite could also offer a guilt offering [*asham*]²⁸ (e.g. Leviticus 5:1-7). Guilt offerings covered intentional, unintentional and careless sins. The reason for these offerings was to make a covering [atonement] for sin. In order for the individuals to maintain the ability to come before God, they had to bring sacrifices to cover their sins. All these offerings and sacrifices were presented to the priests, none were carried out by

Greek equivalent in the LXX is usually ἱλαστήριον, “place or object of propitiation,” a word which is applied to Christ in Rom 3:25. The translation “mercy seat” does not sufficiently express the fact that the lid of the ark was the place where the blood was sprinkled on the day of atonement.” R. Laird Harris, in *TWOT*, op cit.

²⁰ קָרַב is the verbal form of “priest”, in this passage. This verb only occurs as in the piel stem, giving it intensity.

²¹ The Hebrew phrase is וְזָרָה הִקְרַבְתָּ בְּיָדְךָ. The essence of these words is repeated also in Numbers 3:4 and 26:61 where strange is applied not the individual coming near but the fire Nadab and Abihu offered and died.

²² Leon J. Wood in *TWOT*, op cit.

²³ All four of the warnings about death are qal stems, the second a perfect and the other three imperfects.

²⁴ קָרַב Alexander Harkavy, *Students' Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary to the Old Testament* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1914) p. 641. This verb occurs 102 times in Leviticus.

²⁵ קָרְבָּן see Harkavy, p. 642.

²⁶ עֹלָה see Harkavy, p. 525.

²⁷ חַטָּאת see Harkavy, p. 162.

²⁸ אֲשָׁם was a immoral act or ceremonial failure under the Mosaic Law which brought guilt.

an individual for himself. This was a restriction. Another person, a priest, always stood between the one approaching and God.

While the people approached God through the priests, God required the people to be qualified to approach the priest at the tent and later the temple. God gave Israel dietary laws, not because certain animals were clean and others unclean, but because God was making Israel different. “For I am Jehovah your God. Cause yourselves to be holy, and be holy for I am holy” (Leviticus 11:44). In this context God warned the people not to make themselves unclean by touching or eating these things (Leviticus 11:1-43). God gave women requirements for being cleaning after bearing children (Leviticus 12:1-8). God gave Israel requirements for being clean with regard to various skin diseases, designated broadly by צרעת [tsarath] and translated “leprosy” in most English Bibles (Leviticus 13-14). Finally Leviticus 15 addressed various fluid discharges that rendered individuals and any who touched them unclean. These regulations may appear arbitrary and naive to the modern reader. God gave these specific requirements to demonstrate to Israel and all people in general, how difficult it is to do everything God asks. God was proving how difficult it is to approach God based upon one’s own righteousness such as in the forms of ceremonial observance described in Leviticus.

The specific terms for approaching God may have given rise to some of the Psalms. Because Israel approached God through priests, and because they approached God at the tabernacle and later the temple, it is logical that some would record what they wished to say when they arrived at that location. The spontaneity with which the modern believer communicates to God can make it difficult for the modern interpreter to consider the effects of communicating through a priest and at a specific location. While at home, a believer may know exactly what he wishes to say to God. However, his journey to the exact location might cause him to forget or lose some of the specifics. In this way, some of the Psalms may have been written while one was away from the tabernacle. The written document was then taken to the tabernacle. At the tabernacle the writer may have read the psalm or had the priest read it. Allen P. Ross sees a tie to the activities at the tabernacle and later the temple. He wrote, “Many of the psalms were probably connected with ritual and worship in David’s tabernacle and/or Solomon’s temple. Too often conservative commentators are oblivious to the worship setting of the tabernacle and the temple.”²⁹ F. Delitzsch saw such a connection but related it primarily to the worship.³⁰ In this way, the Psalms present the modern Bible student with an interesting look into the communication side of temple activity.

God promised Israel blessings for obeying the law and curses for disobeying. Among the curses was the curse of being defeated by other nations (Deuteronomy 28:25). Those nations would eat Israel’s crops and livestock, take their children and wives, and oppress the people (Deuteronomy 28:30-34). As horrible as such curses were, they were not the worst penalty for disobedience. God told Moses that when the people would forsake Him and break His covenant, that He would forsake them and hide His face from them (Deuteronomy 28:15-20). “Hide My face from them” meant that they would not have access to God. They might pray, but God would not be listening. This inability to access God would be punishment on Israel. God promised to reverse that punishment when He will bring Israel back to Himself (Deuteronomy 30:1-6; Ezekiel 39:29).

Examples of the Seriousness of Access under Law

Israel took the ark to war against the Philistines and the Philistine captured the ark (1 Samuel 4:3-4, 11). That day Eli fell backward, broke his neck and died, and his daughter-in-law named her newborn son Ichabod, because the glory, God’s glory, had departed from Israel” (1 Samuel 4:18, 20-22).

²⁹ Allen P. Ross, Psalms in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, (Wheaton, Victor Books, 1985) p. 787.

³⁰ Keil and Delitzsch, *op cit*, vol. 5, p. 31.

God dwelt above the lid of the ark, between the cherubs and that ark was gone. Israel's access to God had been removed.

After God punished the Philistines, the Philistines sent the ark back to Israel. After offering burnt offerings and sacrificing sacrifices to Jehovah, Jehovah killed 70³¹ men of Bethshemesh for looking into the ark (1 Samuel 6:15, 19-20). Regardless of intentions, the ark was to be handled only by the Levites, and these men broke that Law. These men broke God's protocol for approaching Him. God required Israel to treat Him as holy, especially in their access before Him.

The ark was then moved to Kiriath-Jearim³² (1 Samuel 7:1) and remained there for nearly 100 years until David moved it (2 Samuel 6:2). David attempted to move the ark from Baale-judah [Kiriath-jearim (Joshua 15:9; 2 Samuel 6:1-2)]. While en route, Uzzah, a descendant of Abinadab the man in whose house the ark had been kept, reached out the steady the ark when the oxen nearly upset it (2 Samuel 6:6-7). Again, regardless of intentions, God had specified how the ark was to be handled and by whom. The ark then remained in the house of Obed-edom whom God then blessed (2 Samuel 6:11). Three months later David finished moving the ark to the city of David. When it arrived, David placed it in the tent (2 Samuel 6:17). The ark remained in the tent until Solomon moved it to the newly built temple (1 Kings 8:6-8). Above that ark, God met with Israel through their priests. The Law did not allow for exceptions in handling the ark.

David celebrated God's presence in the tent in the city of David. He determined to spend the remainder of His days at the house of the Lord (Psalm 23:6; 27:4). He loved God's habitations because that was where God's glory dwelt (Psalm 26:8). David wanted to experience the unprecedented access to God at the tent near his palace.

The Temple became the new location at which Israelis could access God, for the temple was the location of the ark, and the earthly location at which God placed His glory and dwelt within the cloud (1 Kings 8:10-12). It was toward [בַּיָּמִין] the temple that the people were to pray (1 Kings 8:30). It was the location at which they made their oaths and confessed or made known God's name (1 Kings 8:33-34). The idea of "toward the house" (temple) is important, because the direction of their prayer demonstrated an understanding of God's location with respect to the people. In keeping with the specification of the tent given in Leviticus, the "toward" idea would indicate that the people physically came to the temple and addressed their communication there. Daniel's prayer in Daniel 9 can not be properly understood apart from Solomon's speech. Solomon explained in detail Israel's communication even if they were taken captive and were away from the land (1 Kings 8:46-49). Even when absent God gave Israel a protocol for access to Him.

Israel repeated her failure to obey God's law, and turned to idols. God showed Ezekiel, that though the people of Judah were going through the motions of temple service, the elders were worshipping every abominable thing (Ezekiel 8:10-12). God thus vacated the temple, pictured by the glory departing (Ezekiel 9:3; 10:18; 11:23). God had told Israel to seek Him while He could be found (Isaiah 55:6). From that time, God could no longer be found in Israel. They would seek but would not be able find Him.

Access Now in the Dispensation of Grace

Jesus indicated a change in access in John 14:6. He told His disciples, "I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life." While often taken in an evangelistic sense, Jesus was speaking to the eleven believing disciples. He was responding to the issue of their hearts being troubled (John 14:1). He was assuring them

³¹ Some mss have 50,070. See John J. Davis, *The Birth of a Kingdom*, (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1970) p. 40 for a brief discussion of the issue.

³² Davis has a brief but helpful suggest of why the ark was not returned to Shiloh. Archeology suggests that Shiloh may have been destroyed. op cit. p. 40.

of His return for them (an allusion to the Rapture; John 14:2-4). To this Thomas questioned, “Lord we do not know where you go. How are we able to know the way?” What Thomas and the other disciples did not understand was that God was about to make a number of changes, many of which would involve the ascension and present activity of Christ.

Towards the end of Christ’s time upon the cross, the veil in the temple was torn. All three synoptic gospels record this fact. Matthew and Mark record the fact, Luke clarified that it was before Christ spoke His final words and died (Luke 23:45-46; Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38). Therefore, the dividing of the veil was connected with Christ’s spiritual suffering or spiritual death while He was physically alive upon the cross. His spiritual death addressed the separation between man and God. With that addressed, there was no longer any reason to restrict access to God. The torn veil symbolized this soon to be realized benefit. God would no longer restrict access to the earthly priests in the earthly temple.

After His resurrection, Christ ascended. The evidence of Scripture favors an ascension on the morning of His resurrection, and a final formal ascension when He sat down about 40 days later. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-17). He instructed her not to “touch” Him (v. 17). The verb meant to touch³³ such as when Jesus touched the eyes of the blind. It does not mean “cling” or “grasp.” His reason was that He had not yet ascended to the Father. Yet later, perhaps that same morning, Jesus appeared to the other women who were originally with Mary (Matthew 28:9). On this occasion they did cling to or grasp³⁴ His feet and He gave them no warning. The indication being that He had ascended to the Father in completion of His death and resurrection. He had now returned to set things in order before His “official” ascension before the disciples.

When Christ ascended, having provided a cleansing with regard to sins, He sat down at the right *hand* of the Greatness in High (Hebrews 1:3). The writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 110:1, where the Father speaks to the Son, “Sit at My right *hand*” (Hebrews 1:13). In Hebrews 1:3 the author employed the causative verb καθίζω³⁵ and in 1:13 the verb κάθημαι. The former is the act of sitting more generally, while the latter also involves being settled down and accompanying authority.³⁶ He is seated because unlike the Levitical priests, He offered one sacrifice, Himself, a sacrifice which produced maturity (Hebrews 10:11-13). Therefore, having offered such a sacrifice, He sat down in God’s right hand. Sadly, many in Christendom equate His sitting with ruling. They believe Christ has already begun to rule. However, He is not yet on His throne, meaning, He is not yet ruling (cf Hebrews 2:8; Matthew 25:31ff). His seated position beside the Father is where He is acting as priest, not king.

When Christ ascended, He ascended as a man (Hebrews 9:12). He did not need to ascend as God, for He remained omnipresent. When Christ ascended and before He sat down, He entered the greater tabernacle (tent)³⁷ (Hebrews 9:12). He entered that greater place by means of His own blood, i.e. He carried it in (cf. Hebrews 12:24 where it is still present on Zion). Just as the Old Testament priest entered the earthly tent with the blood, so Christ entered, but with His own blood. Whereas the blood was part of the cleansing rituals for Israel under the Law, so Christ’s blood cleanses us, specifically our conscience

³³ ἄπτω is inaccurately translated “clinging” in the NASB. Such definitions are given in the lexicons, see G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1937) p. 64 for an example. However, no such example can be found in Scripture. It is always a lighter touch.

³⁴ κρατέω does mean to grasp firmly, “to be strong, mighty”, “to get possession of, obtain, take hold of” or “to hold, hold fast” Abbott-Smith, op cit, p. 256.

³⁵ The -ίζω ending is causative. He was made or caused to sit.

³⁶ See *Mounces Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* editor William D. Mounce, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) pp. 660-661.

³⁷ The words “tabernacle” or “tent” means it is temporary. It will be replaced by a temple comprised of God’s people³³ in the future (Revelation 21:22).

(Hebrews 9:13-14). It affects our conscience, so we can approach God without a sense of guilt. We are not free of guilt because of some action or ritual we have gone through, though real Christians often form rituals for being acceptable to God. We are free because of what Christ did and what He is doing now as our living High Priest. Free of guilt, with a clean conscience, we are able to engage in priestly service [*latreuō λατρεύω*] to *the* living God (Hebrews 9:14).

God appointed Christ as a priest (5:1-2). The Father has taken Him from among men (in the realm of the Son's humanity). His priesthood depends on His being human. As a man, He is able to deal gently with those in spiritual need (5:2). He helps those who are ignorant. He helps those who are lead astray. How He does this is explained in Hebrews 7. He did not become a priest of His own initiative (5:5-6). The Father has begotten (celebrated) Him as priest upon His arrival in heaven (5:5). The Father designated Him a priest after the order of Melchizedek not the order of Levi (5:6). The Melchizedekian priesthood is superior to the Levitical (Hebrews 7:1-10). It is a priesthood which can produce maturity in contrast to the Levitical (Hebrews 7:11, 19, 25). It is a priesthood which required a change of law (Hebrews 7:12-15). It is a priesthood based upon power of an indestructible life (Hebrews 7:16, 24). It is this priesthood of our Savior that provides us access to God.

When Christ ascended, He has entered inside the veil of the heavenly tabernacle (Hebrews 6:19-20). He entered in and thereby has established the hope for us (6:19). That hope acts as an anchor for our souls (emotions and senses). That hope is mentioned again in Hebrews 7:19 where it is called a better hope, that is, better than the hope under the Law. The hope under Law was that one could be clean, approach with the proper sacrifices and have access to God at the tent of meeting. For us, Christ is our forerunner. He has gone on ahead, and we are to follow Him (6:20). That hope involves Christ being at the Father's right hand, for He entered into the heavenly tabernacle. That hope is the means through which we draw near to God. Therefore, we draw near [*engidzō ἐγγίζω*] through Christ.

The veil of the earthly temple was torn. Christ passed through the of the heavenly temple. Christ Himself is now the veil. He is alive in a real human nature. Therefore, because there is real living man sitting in the Father's right hand, His human nature, even His body constitutes the curtain, the veil (Hebrews 10:20). As the earthly priest had to pull the veil aside to enter the holy of holies, so we enter the presence of God through the person of the Christ, who is sitting in His real, living human body.

He has a priesthood by which maturity may be achieved (7:11). The change to a new priesthood was due to the first system's (law) failure (7:11). The change of priesthood involved a change of law (7:12). The law specified a different tribe for the priesthood than that from which Christ descended (7:13). The law was weak and unprofitable (7:18). The law brought nothing to maturity (7:19). The change made maturity possible (7:25). As priest, Christ intercedes for the individual believer. The goal of His intercession is the believer's maturity and conformity to Christ's image (Romans 8:26, 28-29). The believer draws near to God through Christ His High Priest. The drawing near is for rest (cf. Hebrews 4:16). Both the drawing near and rest are necessary for maturity.

The believer's present access to God is based upon the person of Jesus Christ. It is based upon Christ's sacrifice. It is based upon Christ's ascension and present seated position at the Father's right hand. It is based upon how His sacrifice has affected the believer. Christ provides the believer access to the Father through His person.

Analysis of passages using the terms for access

The believer's access has a vocabulary. Jesus Christ is the means of the believer's access. These words and their contexts indicate how that access operates. Two words specifically indicate the access. One word describes the act of approaching and a fourth describes the attitude of one who approaches.

Passages using προσάγω and προσάγωγη

These two words are a combination of the preposition *προς* [*pros*] meaning before or facing and the verb *άγω* [*agō*] meaning to lead. The derived idea is to lead before. It's usage in New Testament times is reflected by our English translation "access" or the ability to come before a person or location. That access is granted, either because someone has blazed the path ahead of another, or because someone is leading another.

The verb *προσάγω* [*prosagō*] is used one time regarding access to God.³⁸ It occurs in 1 Peter 3:18, where Christ has led us to God. At first glance this passage appears to present an act at the point of initial salvation. This verb is used in a *ἵνα* purpose clause, which follows the act intended to achieve the purpose. "Christ died...that He might bring us to God." However, if we continue through the context, we find in verse 22 that Jesus Christ is in God's right hand. Like the writer of Hebrews, Peter saw Christ seated next to the Father and this becomes the basis of our access. So, what at first looks primarily as a passage about initial salvation, in reality has significance for the believer's present tense salvation, his access to God in the present.

The noun *προσάγωγῆ* [*prosagōgē*] occurs three times and each passage pertains to the believer's access to God. The first passage is Romans 5:2, "through whom also we have the access because of this grace in which we stand..." The through Whom refers to the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of 5:1. In 5:1 the Lord Jesus Christ is our means of having peace facing [*προς*] God. Having is a present tense verb, thus emphasizing the present reality. Having peace is predicated on our being declared righteous, which is expressed by an aorist passive participle. God's act of declaring us righteous resulted in our having peace in the present as we face God and this through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This peace is extended to access. Our Lord Jesus Christ is our means of access to God. The NASB translates this "introduction by faith into this grace." This appears to be an attempt to represent the perfect tense verb "have" which precedes the noun under consideration. The idea expressed by this perfect tense verb is that we have or were given access in the past with the present or continuing result that we still have access. Most translations handle the preposition *εἰς* with a directional force and translate it with an idea related to "into." However, *εἰς* also has a causal sense, "in view of."³⁹ Without giving the full flavor of the preposition, the English translation "because of" represents the sense simply. The verb "stand" is also in the perfect tense; "We were made to stand in the past with the continuing result that we still stand." So we have continuing access, and we have a continuing stand, both fixed securely upon an action of God in the past. If our peace facing God and our access to God were based upon our activity, or our performance, then at best, both would be sporadic and more likely nonexistent. But both are fixed on a work of God: God's justification of the believer, and God's attitude of grace toward the believer. Both are tied to the believer in Christ. The believer is justified (declared righteous) in Christ and all that God says and gives the believer in Christ is by God's grace (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:6; cf 2 Timothy 2:1). Since both are settled with God, both are secure. Our access is because of God's grace in which we stand. Because it is grace it does not involve our merit (Romans 11:6). Since it does not involve our merit, every believer has the potential for access every moment of our lives. All believers have peace as we face God, because we stand before Him in grace.

Prosagōgē occurs next in Ephesians 2:18. Paul was attempting to unite the believers of the Ephesian church by focusing them upon Christ's work, their jointly-seated position in Christ and the work

³⁸ It occurs a total of four times but the other three do not involve access to God (Luke 9:41; Acts 16:20; 27:27).

³⁹ It is not "in view to" which would be a goal, but "in view of" which is looking backward. H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, (Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1955) pp. 103-104. James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1979) pp. 57-58.

of the Spirit. Jesus Christ removed the wall of hostility which separated Jews and Gentiles, so that now in Christ Jewish believers and Gentile believers are one new man (Ephesians 2:15). Similar to Romans 5:1-2, Paul pointed out the peace which Jesus has made.⁴⁰ Jesus then came and announced as good news this peace (Ephesians 2:17). He announced it to the Jews who were near and the Gentiles who were distant. He announced the peace through the apostles He sent out, and now through those who teach His word (cf. John 17:20).

Not only did Jesus provide us peace but access to God (Ephesians 2:18). That access is through [δὲ] Him and by [ἐν] the Spirit. Interestingly in Ephesians 3:12 the next passage where προσαγωγή occurs, the access is in [ἐν] Christ. The change is due to the emphasis on the believer's position in 3:12, while 2:18 Christ is the channel. In 2:18 the believer is not stopping in Christ but approaching the Father through Christ. In 2:18 the Spirit is the one who affects access for the believer. Just as the Spirit is the one who produces the fruit, though He is using the new nature from the Father and the eternal life from the Son; just as the Spirit is the one who causes the new birth, though we are born from the Father, so here the Spirit is the one who actually enables the believer to access God. That enablement can only be understood if we know that this access includes communication with God. Why can we talk to God no matter where we are? Because God is omnipresent? It would seem logical, but Scripture presents the Spirit directly connecting us to God. Paul speaks of this work of the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18. It is a result of being filled by the Spirit. That filling allows one to engage in at least three forms of communication to God: singing, psalming, and thanking (Ephesians 5:19-20).⁴¹ The Spirit fills the believer with the qualities he needs and the believer exercises some of those qualities towards God through means of Christ his access.

The last occurrence of προσαγωγή is in Ephesians 3:12. Paul adds the element of boldness to the access. The Greek construction article-noun-*kai*/conjunction-noun falls within the realm of studies by Grandville Sharp, which he identified under his rule IV, that impersonal nouns are distinct in such a construction and do not refer to the same person.⁴² While access and boldness are not identical this construction does join them in an area of commonality. In Paul's mind they go together. The word boldness translates παρρησία. W.E. Vine explained this word, "(a) primarily, freedom of speech, unreservedness of utterance,... (b) the absence of fear in speaking boldly."⁴³ A. Skevington Wood added that it was "literally, 'telling all.'"⁴⁴ The boldness and access are in the sphere of confidence, or a state of persuasion. Therefore, the believer is able to come to God in Christ. When he comes, he comes and is able to speak freely. Have we ever compared the freedom of speak with which David addressed God under the Law? Yet in this present dispensation of Grace with a greater access than David had, how seldom do believers speak freely. We don't talk to God about the things we really want to say or ask. We stop far short of really enjoying our access to God. Yet at the close of this section in Ephesians 3:20, Paul reminds the Ephesians that God is capable of doing far more than anything we ever ask, and even more than that of which we are mindful. Even this statement reveals Paul's knowledge that often we have something in

⁴⁰ The verb "establishing" peace in the NASB and "making" in the AV, ASV, ESV, and NET Bibles translates the aorist participle ποίων from the verb ποιέω "to make" or "do."

⁴¹ While thanking is easily identified as a form of communication with God. Singing and psalming are not so easily confined. If psalming has any derived meaning from the Psalms, then it encompasses obviously praise, but also requests in various forms, which are often made by the psalmists (cf Psalm 25:1-2; 26:1; 27:9-12). Singing can be tied to both praise and worship.

⁴² "Yet it is otherwise when the nouns are not of personal description or application." Grandville Sharp, *Remarks on the Uses of the Definite Article in the Greek Text of the New Testament Containing Many New Proofs of the Divinity of Christ* (Philadelphia: B.B. Hopkins, 1807) p. 10.

⁴³ W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (Mc Lean, VA; MacDonald Publishing, nd) p. 140.

⁴⁴ A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians in The Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. II*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1978) p. 48.

our mind, but we don't ask, much less talk to God about it. It is possible that we underestimate God's kindness and graciousness in the avenue of access.

Some additional thoughts on Ephesians

The following are some additional thoughts on access in the context of Ephesians. God designates us sons in Christ (Ephesians 1:4-5). Since our access is in Christ, is it possible that our access to the Father is tied to our being sons in Christ? Paul pointed out that in the ages coming, God will show the riches of His grace to us by means of kindness (Ephesians 2:7). That kindness expresses God being approachable. Certainly, all that Paul is explaining about access demonstrates that by kindness God presents Himself approachable to us, even now! It is plain that the Gentile believers in Ephesus were formerly without promise, as God had not granted them any access (2:12). As Paul points out in 3:12 our access involves faith, and that faith must have a promise to consider. That promise is this access. That promise is singular in 3:6, "joint-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus." It is singular, because it is the promise of access to God. All this is tied together finally in 3:9 that today, the lives of God's people are governed by [dispensation/administration] God's grace, which was formerly, prior to Pentecost, a mystery, an unrevealed part of God's plan.

Passages using προσέρχομαι

προσέρχομαι [*proserchomai*] is built on the preposition προς and the verb ερχομαι [*erchomai*] meaning to come or go. Combined they mean to come before or approach. It occurs over eighty times in the New Testament. Most of its occurrences having nothing to do with our access to God, but describe people approaching locations or other people. This word occurs as the noun proselyte, which is an individual who has been brought into another religion, i.e. a non-Jew joining in keeping the Mosaic Law with its rituals. The result was that the proselyte was able to approach the temple area and priests. Only the verb contributes to our understanding the believer's access to God.

We have seen that our access rests on the present state of our Lord Jesus Christ: raised, ascended and seated at the Father's right hand. With that firmly in mind, the writer of Hebrews challenged his readers to "come boldly before the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16). Like Paul's words in Ephesians 3:12, this approach is accompanied with [μετα *meta*] boldness, the same freedom of speech [παρρησία]. That boldness is strengthened by the fact that we approach the throne of the grace. Because that throne is characterized by the grace of God, it excludes our merits. We do not approach God because we deserve to approach Him, because we have done a series works, or have met qualifications. Grace excludes our works (cf. Romans 11:6). By approaching this throne, the believer in need of mercy and grace is able to receive mercy and find grace.

Remembering that the throne of grace excludes our works, we jump to Hebrews 10:19-22. The writer encouraged his readers to enter, to draw near [προσέρχομαι] (v. 22). He encouraged this because they have boldness [παρρησία] for the entrance [εἴσοδος]⁴⁵ (v. 19). That boldness is by means of the blood of Christ, that Christ Himself is the veil through which one approaches, and that Christ is a great priest over God's household (vv. 19b-21). Christ does not have to be re-sacrificed. His sacrifice was once for all. His blood is literally present in heaven as testimony to this sacrifice (Hebrews 12:24). The believer does not enter by the blood of an animal sacrifice, as the Jews at the Jerusalem temple were doing, but by Christ's once-for-all sufficient sacrifice. On this basis, the believer is encouraged to draw near.

The writer listed several accompanying qualities and/or attitudes for approaching. All were very visual ideas that the Hebrews had observed at the temple. The writer of Hebrews took these very real physical activities and pointed to a present counterpart in the work of Christ. No earthly priest could ever sprinkle a heart to clean it from an evil conscience, but Christ did and can. This is tied the throne of grace. Because these Jews were excluded from the temple and its rituals, they worried about their ability to

⁴⁵ The NASB represents this articular noun as an infinitive verb "to enter."

approach God. They no longer had access to an earthly priest who could sprinkle them with blood and wash them so they could approach God. The writer explained that they had no need to approach the earthly temple, but could approach the heavenly temple through Christ. If they would grasp the effects of Christ's work in the past and His present priestly work, they will not have a conscience problem about approaching God without ritual cleansings. The believer can know that he has been cleansed, and made fit to approach God, not on the basis of his own works, but Christ's. This is again, because it is a throne of grace. Christ's work, both past and present, make possible this approach with freedom of speech.

Among the qualities listed is "a true heart." We can approach because we are in Him. Only He knows that we are approaching. No one else can observe a spiritual act. Under the Levitical system, a Jew could approach the temple with other than a true heart. He might approach out of desperation but not be willing to change or fully trust God. This was true in Ezekiel's time. God showed Ezekiel that many were going through the rituals of temple worship, while actually praying to false gods (Ezekiel 8:4-17). The New Testament believer can approach God with a heart that is genuine, really desiring what God desires.

Back in Hebrews 7:25, we find that Jesus Christ is able to save completely those who come to God through Him. The word "completely" translates παντελής [*pantelēs*] which literally rendered is "all end." This word can not refer to finished salvation as though this was a reference to eternal security. If it were so interpreted, it would present a conditional security, only for those who are coming to the Father through Christ. What about believers who don't come? Rather, this should be understood of maturity. The τελής root often applies to maturity as a goal. John, though being mature, assured his readers that not even he could claim sinlessness yet (1 John 1:10-2:1). So the writer of Hebrews was not thinking of sinless perfection during this life. Paul knew that even as mature as he was, there was still more maturing (Philippians 3:12, 15). So the writer of Hebrews is not presenting a level at maturity beyond which there is no more. However, John also presented various levels of maturity in 1 John 2:12-14. The group described as fathers had the same description in both references. This is because the goal of maturity in this life is to experientially know Christ, the one who is from a beginning. This was Paul's goal in Philippians 3:9-10, "to know Him." Paul did know Him, but Paul wanted to know Him in this way more consistently or with less interruption. It is to this goal of knowing Him, of knowing Christ that Jesus Christ Himself is able to move the believer who is coming to God through Him. This fact is supported by the frequent references in Hebrews to the person, work, present and future standing and activity of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not an unattainable goal. It does require the believer to come to God, and to do so as outlined elsewhere in this letter, at a throne of grace, through the veil which is Christ. Our access to God is part of the maturing process.

Christ's ability to mature those who come to God through Him is contrasted to the Law's inability to mature those who approached [προσέρχουμαι] with sacrifices (Hebrews 10:1). The Israelis and their priests approached God at the tabernacle/temple. They met the God-given requirements to approach God's tabernacle. They brought the God-ordained sacrifices. Yet these activities did not bring those people to maturity. They didn't mature, because their sacrifices provided only temporary cleansing (10:2). Their sacrifices reminded them that ultimately their sins were not taken away (10:3-4). By contrast, Christ offered one sacrifice for sin, and by that offering has matured into an ongoing state (10:12-14). The verb "matured" is in the perfect tense, meaning maturity was accomplished in the past with a continuing result that they are matured. The verb is modified by the prepositional phrase "into the perpetuity" or "into the ongoing state." The prepositional phrase involves the adjective διηνεκής which comes from the verb διαφέρω "to carry through."⁴⁶ The adjective describes that which, being carried through, is "unbroken, continuous...perpetually, forever."⁴⁷ This maturity is positional, that is, it exists in Christ as God credits

⁴⁶ G. Abbott-Smith, op cit. p. 112.

⁴⁷ G. Abbott-Smith, op cit. p. 115.

each believer to be in a state of maturity. “But Christ has ‘perfected’ the sanctified in this way: through His perfect sacrifice those who are set apart, ‘by the will of God’ and ‘through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all,’ have a position before God that is perfect; for our acceptance is in God’s beloved Son.”⁴⁸ The contrast is then between those who approach God through Christ in Hebrews 7:25 and those who approach the temple with sacrifices in Hebrews 10:1. The former group is matured and being matured by the work of Christ, and the later can not mature under that legal system. Therefore, our access provides a means of our maturing, contrasted to the limited access under law.

Hebrews 11 provides examples of individuals and groups who exercised faith. The examples were not faith for initial salvation. These were examples of faith during one’s life. It was an encouragement to the Hebrew saints to also direct faith at God’s promises. Every example ties to some aspect of the Hebrew saints’ needs. In 11:5 Enoch is cited as an example of one who was pleasing to God because of faith. 11:6 explains that Enoch approached God by believing that God exists, and by believing that God would reward the one seeking Him. The believers could not have found God in the earthly temple. Like Enoch, the Hebrew believers were to seek God, but in the correct location, the heavenly temple. If they did, if they would rise to their position in Christ, God had a reward for them (cf. Hebrews 10:35).⁴⁹

The writer of Hebrews used the verb προσέρχομαι two more times in chapter 12. He contrasted his readers, who were New Testament believing Jews, to the Jews who approached Sinai (Hebrews 12:18). New Testament believers have not approached Sinai. The verb approach is in the perfect tense. The writers was telling these saints that they had not come to and remained at Sinai. Paul compared the Sinai on the Arabian peninsula to the earthly Jerusalem (Galatians 4:24-25). The contrast in both passages is that Grace believers do not continue to stand before the location from which the Law was given. The Law has ended with its restrictive access. The writer of Hebrews reminded his readers of what standing at Sinai was like.

“For you have not come to one being touched (i.e. a mountain) and lit on fire, even darkness and gloom, and storm, and echo of a trumpet and sound of utterances, which the ones having heard begged that not a word be added to them, for they did not bear the thing having been commanded, ‘If even *an* animal should touch the mountain, it will be stoned.’ And in this way the thing appearing (i.e the sight) was fearful, Moses said, ‘I am really afraid and trembling.’” (Hebrews 12:18-21).

By contrast, the readers have approached to Mount Zion even *a kind of* city characterized by the living God (Hebrews 12:22). This city is the one coming (Hebrews 13:14). It is not yet here. Yet in 12:22 the writer again used the perfect tense. As he has done previously, so here, the writer has focused his readers’ attention on the position. That is where their access exists. That heavenly Jerusalem is a real city, not some ethereal idea in the believer’s imagination. As Sinai was real in Arabia, so this is real in heaven, and will one day descend out of heaven. Yet, when the believer approaches God through Christ, he has approached this city. By contrast to the terror of Sinai, this city is marked by angels in a festive assembly,⁵⁰ by the assembly made of firstborn ones⁵¹ which is

⁴⁸ E. Schuyler English, *Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, (Travelers Rest, S.C.: Southern Bible House, 1955) p. 301, see also Robert G. Gromacki, *Stand Bold in Grace*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984) p. 164.

⁴⁹ The noun “rewarder” [μισθαποδότης](1x) and “reward” [μισθαποδοσία](3x) occur only in Hebrews.

⁵⁰ πανήγυρις “an assembly of an entire people; a solemn gathering at a festival; a festive convocation” see Mounce, p. 1231.

⁵¹ The noun is plural and refers to the people who make up the assembly. Robert Gromacki wrote that it “designates all believers of the church age who have spiritual birthrights in Christ.” op cit, p. 210.

enrolled⁵² in heavens, and God, judge of all, and spirits of righteous ones⁵³ who have been matured, and Jesus, mediator of a fresh covenant, and blood of sprinkling.⁵⁴ The heavenly Jerusalem is a much more inviting place to approach. The Grace believer has a relationship to this city in the future, and a positional relationship to this city now.⁵⁵

Peter drew a picture of believers forming a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). This house provides a location for offering spiritual sacrifices. Christ is the God-chosen living corner stone and believers are living stones (1 Peter 2:4-6). Believers approach Christ the living stone. Our verb προσέρχομαι occurs here as a present participle, indicating a regular activity.⁵⁶ Believers form a royal priesthood and this explains how the believers are offering spiritual sacrifices (1 Peter 2:9, 5). The priestly believers can offer a sacrifice of their living bodies, of faith, of giving, of doing good, of fellowship, of praise (Romans 12:1; Philippians 2:17; Philippians 4:18; Hebrews 13:15-16). The approach (access) is for the purpose of presenting those sacrifices before God.

When the Grace believer approaches God with these sacrifices, he does not approach as did the potentially nervous Old Testament individual. Recall the qualifications required of the Old Testament person to approach God. In light of this, how do we understand 1 Peter 2:3, “Since you have tasted that the Lord *is* kind?” Does this verse also tie to the following phrase? Most Bibles end this phrase with a period, so that it completes the preceding imperatival phrase, “crave the pure logical milk.” The ASV ends this phrase with a colon, meaning that the information to follow will expand what Peter has said. The ASV’s punctuation appears to better represent Peter’s thought. In verses 4 and following, Peter expanded on the growth and the effect of tasting that the Lord is kind. Since his readers had tasted that the Lord is kind, it was logical that they should approach Him, that they should bear [ἀναφέρω *anaphero*] those spiritual sacrifices before Him. Growth and experience with God’s kindness removes the fear or nervousness of approaching God with such sacrifices.

The word kind [χρηστός] (1 Peter 2:3) is a gentleness which puts others at ease, “*good; hence comfortable, kindly, not pressing.*”⁵⁷ Peter’s point in this letter is to give witness for his readers to a true kind of God’s grace (1 Peter 5:12). Some had assumed that hardships and persecutions were outside the sphere of God’s grace. Kindness, or the act of putting others at ease, is one way in which grace is seen or expressed. In demonstrating that their experience was consistent with how God’s grace can operate, Peter encouraged them to grow by the logical guileless milk⁵⁸ into or because⁵⁹ of salvation. Part of that growth entails approaching the living Stone and bearing spiritual sacrifices before God.

⁵² The verb ἀπογράφω designates citizenship. The perfect tense emphasizing the fixed and abiding citizenship of the Grace believer in heavens, not earth. Luke uses this verb three times in his narrative of the census which God used to move Joseph and Mary back to Bethlehem.

⁵³ These are Old Testament saints, not designated Jews or Israelis because this group may be those from Adam to the time of Abraham.

⁵⁴ Note that the Spirit is absent. This is true both in the present situation, as He is resident upon the earth working in the believers of the Church, and in the future 1,000 year portion of the kingdom when He will be poured out on all flesh.

⁵⁵ This interpretation implies that the picture of the throne room in heaven is located in connection with the New Jerusalem which is also in heaven and hence is called the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly city. Twice Christ is called the choice stone laid in Zion, an image which ties to Christ the stone in the foundation of the Church (Romans 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6). Zion isn’t the church, but the location where God see’s it complete.

⁵⁶ This is probably an Iterative present, an activity that is done regularly but with breaks or interruptions.

⁵⁷ Alexander Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1916) p. 284.

⁵⁸ “The logical guileless milk” is a reference to λογος [*logos*] in 1:23 and ρημα [*rhema*] in 1:25.

⁵⁹ Both are possible translations of εις in this context, though the latter makes more sense.

Boldness - παρρησια

In addition to nouns and verbs expressing the very act of approaching or accessing God, the noun *parrēsia* expresses a key attitude of the one who approaches God. This word is a combination of πᾶς “all” and ῥῆσις “speech” or the act of speaking.⁶⁰ We presented a definition of this word under our consideration of Ephesians 3:12. Translated “boldness” in many English versions, the word involved the idea of a freedom of speech. This noun is used in the gospels of Jesus and others speaking “plainly” as opposed to hidden speech, or cryptic, parabolic speech (Mark 8:32; John 7:13; John 11:14; 16:25; 29). Therefore, we can further define *parrēsia* as plain or direct speech as opposed to speech which is afraid to ask or speak plainly what is on one’s mind. Believers are often afraid to talk to God about what they are genuinely thinking or concerned about as if our omniscient God doesn’t already know. Access to God, without the ability or attitude to speak freely would be a limited access. Therefore, it is important to notice that this idea of speaking freely is often tied to the believer’s access.

We have seen passages which tied *parrēsia* to access and approaching. We know want to consider passages involving *parrēsia* itself. Most of this word’s occurrences regard bold, confident speaking and do not involve someone addressing God, but a few are gems. The word occurs twice in Hebrews apart from other access terms. In Hebrews 3:6, the writer conditioned whether the Hebrews were members of Christ’s household on whether they held firmly the boldness and boast. The verb “hold fast” [NASB] is κατέχω meaning “to possess, hold fast.”⁶¹ It can be used negatively, to hold for the purpose of restraining or suppressing, or positively, as here, with a firm goal because one recognizes its value. In Hebrews 10:35 the writer warned his readers not to throw away their boldness as it has a great reward, or payback. We have seen that one benefit is maturity. So this boldness or freedom of speech has a value.

The household in Hebrews 3:6 is not the Church, the body of Christ. It is the household over which Christ is a quality of Son. In John 8:34-35, Jesus explained that the Son is at ease⁶² in the house, into the age, while the slave is not at ease in the house. Christ relates to the others in His house as brothers not as slaves (cf Hebrews 2:11-12). Moses was a household servant [θεράπων *therapōn*] in God’s house. Christ is a Son **over** His house (Hebrews 3:4-6). Those who chose to live like Moses, as those under Law with its requirements for approaching the temple, they could not be like a son, they could not be at ease. A household servant or a slave could not approach the head of the house with the boldness as a son. They may be in a house, but they are not of the house.⁶³ We previously saw under **Additional thoughts on Ephesians** that the idea of access appears to have a connection with the believer’s sonship. This passage reinforces that idea. To act with boldness or speak freely is to speak like a son.

John used the word *parrēsia* four times in his first letter. Twice he applies it to communication [prayer] and twice to the believer’s attitude about the future (1 John 2:28; 4:17). The latter two instances involve an issue of immaturity. Immaturity is the opposite of living out one’s position or status as a son. Immaturity involves a group of problems, one of which is fear or uncertainty about the future. John advised that the best response is to abide in Christ [Him], and that would provide boldness or confidence (1 John 2:27-28). Later, John returned to that issue and assured his readers that they did not need to fear the future, because they have the same standing with reference to the world that Christ has (1 John 4:17). This produces boldness. Just as immaturity can cause one to fear or be nervous about the future, so it can interfere with one’s access to God in the present. It is easy to have this boldness when one’s heart do not

⁶⁰ The -σις ending expresses “the abstract name of an action.” Bruce M. Metzger, *Lexical Aides for Students of New Testament Greek*, (Princeton: Theological Book Agency, 1983) p. 42.

⁶¹ Abbott-Smith, op cit. p. 241.

⁶² The idea of ease, or remaining at ease is the theological meaning of the verb μενω.

⁶³ The distinctions in and of represent the preposition εν with the Locative case versus the Genitive (of source) case of the the relative pronoun “of whose” referring back to Christ and His house.

accuse⁶⁴ him (1 John 3:21-22). However, if his heart does accuse him, it is necessary to go back to the facts: God is greater than our heart, God knows all things (v. 20). God's view of the believer in Christ does not change, even when his heart accuses him. The believer's standing is not based upon earthly performance but upon God's attitude of grace toward him. With this fact, John wrote, "We will persuade our heart in front of Him" (v. 19). Simply, sometimes the believer has a "guilty conscience" but he must persuade himself that his standing has not changed, and his boldness or freedom of speech is based on who he is in Christ.

Finally in 1 John 5:14-15 we read,

This is the boldness which we have facing him, that whatever we might ask by the standard of His desirous will, He hears us. And if we know as a fact that he hears from us whatever we might ask, we know as a fact that we have the thing asked, which we asked from Him.

First, John seems to write an awfully big check, "Whatever." Second, John added one condition to boldness and asking, the asking is to be by the standard of God's desirous will. If God has expressed His desire for the believer - in Scripture - then the believer's asking should be in keeping with that, not contrary to it. There is no confidence in asking for that which God does not wish. Like Paul's words in Ephesians 3:20, God can and is willing to do so much, even more that we might ask or be mindful of.

As a concluding thought on the issue of boldness or freedom of speech, we might consider the psalmists. As Fundamental Evangelicals, we affirm the inspiration of all Scripture; we affirm that the Spirit bore those writers along to record precisely what God desired to be written. Yet the Spirit used the concerns, desires, and even frustrations of the writers to express real matters. The Old Testament psalmists did not have the degree of access which the Grace believer enjoys, and yet they wrote at times with real candor, addressing real concerns to God. Consider three brief examples. In Psalm 25:2 David did not wish to be ashamed, apparently by God not upholding His promises to David. David went on and assured himself that God would, but the initial concern was no less real. In Psalm 26:1 David asked God for vindication.⁶⁵ Then in Psalm 27:9-12, David asked God not to hide His face from David, nor to turn him away in anger. He did not want God to abandon him nor, in verse 12, that God should deliver him to the desire [soul] of his enemies. If David could speak and write with such candor towards God, we should be able speak with candor, or else what is our freedom of speech?

Access in the future

One of the objections to the Biblical teaching of a literal millennium is the revelation that the sacrificial system will be resumed. Louis Berkhof listed the sacrifices among what he called "absurdities" which arise from belief in a literal one thousand year earthly reign. He wrote, "And even sin and trespass offerings will again have to be brought upon the altar, not for commemoration (as some Premillenarians would have it), but for atonement, Ezekiel 42:13; 43:18-27."⁶⁶ We have already seen that the Old Testament sacrificial system was not about salvation. I would suggest that the theological use of the term atonement,⁶⁷ has led in part to this confusion. Such a confusion also rises from a general misunderstanding of the sacrificial system.

⁶⁴ Accuse is a better translation than condemn. The verb καταγινώσκω has the idea of having knowledge against, and therefore accuses one with that knowledge.

⁶⁵ Literally, "judge for me." "For me" is interpretive as it is a pronominal suffix "me."

⁶⁶ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1941) p. 713.

⁶⁷ About sixty years ago, Lewis Chafer noted the inadequacy of this word. "Whether it be accurately or inaccurately employed, the student will become aware of the fact that the word *atonement* (Lev. 5:10) is the term upon which men have seized to express the entire work of Christ upon the cross. That such a word is sorely needed cannot be doubted. The almost universal use of *atonement* for this purpose may go far to give it authoritative acceptance regardless of its inaptitude for the immense service thus thrust upon it. Objection to the use of the term as employed

Amillennialism is faced with the challenge of accounting for the detailed description of the temple and the land of Israel given in Ezekiel 40-48. It does not describe the rebuilt temple, for it is larger in scale and is not situated within the rebuilt city of Jerusalem. It does not describe the Herodian temple for that was merely the rebuilt temple made more ornate. Yet if the millennium is to be allegorized, then why all the detailed measurements given in three consecutive chapters or 95 consecutive verses? The answer is that a real 1,000 year portion of the kingdom will exist. God will institute a real ritual for the people of earth, in a real earthly temple, including real sacrifices.

God revealed through Ezekiel that a sacrificial system will be in effect when the temple is rebuilt, following the regathering of Israel to their land. Ezekiel is not alone in revealing a future sacrificial system. Isaiah wrote of priests in that future time (Isaiah 66:20-23) and Jeremiah added that those priests will be offering offerings and sacrifices (Jeremiah 31:14-18). That sacrificial system will even involve sin offerings⁶⁸ and atonement (Ezekiel 45:17). In chapters 40-46, sixteen times we find God's instructions regarding the sin offering. The difficulty in appreciating these offerings arises from a difficulty to understand them under the old Law. The sacrificial system was never saving under the Law. The system allowed the people as a whole to approach God for the purpose of worship and communication. The system allowed individuals to remain among the people of Israel, and to cover (atone) and cleanse themselves from trespass and sin for the purpose of approaching God. They were not covered or cleansed for salvation. Ezekiel 43:27 states that God would be pleased⁶⁹ with them. The NASB has tried to communicate the result of being pleased by translating this verb "accept." The pronoun you is plural, it is the people of Israel approaching God. So in the millennium, these people are not offering sacrifices for salvation, but for the ability to approach the earthly temple, and enjoy access to God.

Many have pointed out that Christ has made one sacrifice for sin and that there remains no more sacrifice for sin. This is plainly stated in Hebrews 10:12, 26. As we have seen, the issue in Hebrews was not initial salvation. It was also about having and exercising access to God. It was about leaving the Law behind and being carried on to maturity by approaching God rather than an earthly structure. However, that situation is true for this present dispensation of Grace. The Millennium will again be a legal type of dispensation. The law will go out from Zion (Isaiah 2:3). Christ accomplished many benefits by His death upon the cross. Lewis Chafer noted seventeen accomplishments of Christ.⁷⁰ H. Lavern Schafer listed twenty-six accomplishments.⁷¹ Not every one of those benefits is applied or can be applied to every individual. Christ accomplished a redemption that bought Israel out from under the Law (Galatians 3:13). The "us" referred to those under the works of the Law (Galatians 3:10). Gentile believers were never under the Law, and therefore, not redeemed out from under the Law. This is a benefit which had application for Jews who had been under Law. It certainly has implications for Gentiles: why live under that out from which Jews were bought? Likewise, the benefit of access to God through the person of the Son and that based on God's gracious attitude, will not be true during the Millennium. Like everyone who has been saved in history, those saved during the Millennium will be saved on the basis of the death Christ and by faith in God. Their access to God will be based upon a legal ritual. Like the Old Testament Law, the sacrifices will be about a way of life, not a way of salvation.

generally, arises from the fact that the word is not a New Testament term, and when used in the Old Testament some seventy-seven times it is a translator's attempt at interpretation and poorly represents the meaning of *kāphar*, which it purports to translate, which word originally meant *to cover*. Though etymologically the word *atonement* suggests *at-one-ment*, it feebly relates itself to the New Testament truth which presents Christ as the Lamb of God *taking away* the sin of the world." *Systematic Theology* vol III, (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) p. 127..

⁶⁸ Sin offering is indicated by the noun חַטָּאת [chattath] the feminine of חָטָא [chateh] "sin."

⁶⁹ This is a simple Qal perfect of חָטָא.

⁷⁰ Chafer, vol. III, op cit., pp. 55-115.

⁷¹ H.L. Schafer class room notes in Soteriology, Dispensational Theological Seminary.

When the temple is rebuilt, God's glory will return (Ezekiel 43:4-7). Jehovah promised that He would return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:3). Many people will choose to go to the center of God's earthly government so He might teach⁷² them His paths (Isaiah 2:3; cf Jeremiah 31:6; Micah 4:2). The peoples, even those of other nations will go up to Jerusalem to entreat⁷³ Jehovah (Zechariah 8:20-22). In fact ten men from among the Gentiles will ask to accompany a Jew, for they know that God is with them (Zechariah 8:23). These people will have access to God. That access will be at the earthly temple and by means of sacrifices.

Some closing thoughts: access and its relationship to dispensationalism.

Believers in every dispensation have enjoyed some form of access to God. However, as this brief survey has demonstrated, the nature of the access: requirements, location, extent; have all changed through the dispensations. The last twenty years has seen proponents of classic dispensationalism make real efforts to clarify distinctions and to reaffirm essentials. Yet many of our dispensational brothers continue to struggle with the real impact that understanding the dispensations should have on believers. For some, the significance is still confused with initial salvation; men have always been saved by God's grace, that is not the significance of the dispensation of grace. For others, it is primarily an eschatological issue; it definitely is interwoven with key eschatological themes. Yet one of the key points of significance, and often neglected, is that the believer in the dispensation of grace leads a radically different life than believers prior. In some respect this difference is true if we would compare people of any distinct dispensations to each other. Believers need to hear how distinctly God governs their lives by His grace. They need to know how that grace works in day to day living in contrast to law, or in contrast to living in anticipation of future covenant being fulfilled, etc. Dispensational distinctions most significantly define different life styles for the various peoples of God.

Access is a good illustration of a lifestyle change. Whatever might be said about communication with God before the Law, or under the Law, we know that we are to worship [AV pray] without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:19). We know that our lives are to be characterized by communication with God, not just in church, in the morning, or at the dinner table, but throughout our day; we don't sign off; we don't hang up; we pause and resume. Yet that is a change from previous dispensations. We have no waiting for a priest, seeking a location, bringing a sacrifice. The grace believer is always seated in Christ, and therefore is always able to enjoy access to God, anytime, anywhere!! As a personal note, I have had some of my best talks with God while running or laying in bed in the middle of the night. Failing to grasp what a significant change has been made has hampered and even altered grace believers' communication with their Father. They sometimes draw not only prayer promises, but prayer restrictions from the Old Testament and gospels. It is a very simple fact that our access to God is unprecedented in history. Studying the past communication should encourage the present day believer with the immense openness God extends to us. That openness, that access is based on what Christ has done, on who Christ is, and therefore God's grace. This unprecedented access to God is one of God's provisions for the believer in the dispensation of Grace.

⁷² A hiphil imperfect of הָרָה , from which the noun Torah derives.

⁷³ This verb occurs as a piel infinitive in both verses 21 and 22. It is the verb הָרָה meaning in the piel, "to stroke, to smooth any one's face ... (b) of asking or intreating, imploring any one's favor." William Gesenius, op cit, p. 279. Apparently it originally had the idea of stroking perhaps the ego of a king or noble with the hopes of finding some favor from them.