

## Hebrew 13:7-25

This passage is divided into two parts, the first part tells us how God wants us to relate to him and second part tells us how God wants us to relate to church leaders. It confuses how v7 seven begins with a command it says remember the leaders. Another confusing part is how v7 and v8 are put together. After telling their readers to remember their leaders, v8 says Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever. What is the connection between remember your leaders in v7 and Jesus Christ is the same in v8? These leaders on v7 are those who spoke to you the word of God, they are those who first preached the gospel, they were the original missionaries, they were those who learned from Jesus directly, they were the one who experienced firsthand, the death and resurrection of Jesus. What they have seen they believed and what they believed they preached. They were the ones who spoke to the Jews the word of God. These people were the first generation Christian leaders mentioned in v7. Before the New Testament books were written their message about Jesus as well as their interpretation of the Old Testament had the highest authority. Their teachings and their confessions became the foundation of the church and they were later written down and became the New Testament. The original disciples of Jesus were the first generation Christians, but the people that this letter were addressing to were mostly second generation Christians and there was a huge generation gap between them. The gap existed because of their encounter with Jesus. The first generation Christians saw and heard Jesus themselves. They saw how Jesus came back to life and stood right in front of them. They saw how Jesus was taken up into heaven. They heard angels declaring to them Jesus will come back. Because they have seen Jesus come back to life, the original leaders were not afraid to face persecution, even death. Because they've seen how Jesus was rejected by the Jews, the original leaders were prepared to face rejection too and because they believe the Angel declaration that Jesus was surely come back, they spend their lives entirely for the next life to come. The original leaders of the church were powerful Christians, they live in a reality that is defined by the kingship of Christ and their faith was exceptionally strong because they were privileged to have seen Jesus with their own eyes. But this privilege was not given to the recipients of this letter, they have not seen Jesus, they have only heard of Jesus because he was preached to them. It's easy for the first generation Christians to be zealous for Jesus because Jesus was so real to them. But it is not so for the second generation Christians.

Because we crave an encounter with God, we say to God, Lord I just want to see you, I just want confirmation that you still care about me. I'm living in your plan and walking in your will. Can You make that clear to me today? And this was the struggle of the Jewish Christians who received this letter. The Gospel that they have heard seemed too far away. It's not something they can touch with their hands or see with their eyes. The desire to encounter God was a genuine good desire but satan seized the opportunity and taught them the wrong way to encounter God. Satan gave them a religious experience that is designed to fulfill all their cravings, both good and bad but the worst thing is they were slowly forget how to encounter God the right way. God desires to have fellowship with you greatly. In fact, He is willing to go as far as to sacrifice His own son in order to restore to restore that fellowship with us. However, God did more than just to restore fellowship between God and men. He also told us how this fellowship would look like. This perfect fellowship will come when Jesus returns and brings the whole universe into the new heavens and new earth. In that new world, all evil and suffering will be purged and God will live with its people forever, loving each other with perfect love. But before that day comes, how

should we encounter God? It is simply to hear the word of God and believe. We can encounter the living God when He speaks to us through His living world. In our religion is defined by God word, not by extraordinary experiences that are designed by man.

The Bible that you have, you hearing the preaching of the Words today, here is where God meets us. Some people may not be satisfied with this kind of encounter and want to experience Jesus like the first generation Christians. To that question, the author of Hebrews has the perfect answer. V8 says Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Jesus that the first generation Christian met is the same Jesus that lives now. He has not changed and he will not change. There will be no more confirmation than the word of God written down. As well as the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians. Look into the Bible, look into your heart for the confirmation. Because Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever we don't need confirmation. There's no difference between old Jesus and new Jesus. Therefore, v9 says do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings. Emotion and experience should not be the foundation of our knowledge of God. The true Christian religion must be truth based because only the truth does not change with time.

We must treat the word of God with complete faith and obedience. When you read a command you must obey, when you read a promise you must believe, when you read a sin you must reflect. Since we believe in the same Jesus that the first generation Christian believe we can also live up the same faith that they lived out 2000 years ago. Therefore, the author can confidently say in v7, consider their way of life and imitate. The first generation Christians knew that Jesus was real and because of that, they could face all persecution with courage and the same faith is given to us. We need to know this because the Christian life will have a fair share of trials and persecutions. Precisely because Jesus never changes, we will suffer for faith just as the first generation Christians suffered for faith because even Jesus himself suffered and He promised that all his followers would share His suffering. This fact does not change because He does not change and as long as Jesus lives, we will participate in His suffering. Jesus is the true sacrifice that will give us new life and only the blood of Jesus can wash away sin. It means that we will suffer the same fate. Have the faith like Abraham, willing to sacrifice his most beloved for God. Have the faith of Job, praising God in the lowest point of his life. Have the faith of Peter who said we must obey God other than men, but most of all have the faith of Christ who suffered for obedience in one life so that He will be glorified in the next life. Whenever life becomes tough look at these cloud of witnesses and say I want to be like them. Whenever trials come say I expected this because Jesus told me about it but I also know that Jesus is my help. When this letter was written, some of the first generations Christians have already died and the author was telling them to remember these original leaders. What should they remember? Remember their way of life, remember how they lived out their faith and imitated them.