

A STUDY GUIDE ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS  
FOR CHURCH LEADERS

Rev. Jeffrey A. Borden, M.Div., Th.M.  
MINTS (English) Africa Coordinator  
MTW (Mission to the World)  
U.S. Cell: 540-908-3102  
E-mail: [JBorden@mtwafrica.org](mailto:JBorden@mtwafrica.org)

MINTS International Seminary  
14401 Old Cutler Road  
Miami, Florida 33158  
USA  
Tel. 786-573-7000  
[www.mints.edu](http://www.mints.edu)



**MINTS®**

## INDEX/TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGES
PREFACE	2
SYLLABUS	3-4
CHAPTER ONE	Introductory Matters on Hebrews 5-9
	Heb. 1:1-4 10-12
	Questions for chapter one 12
	Supplement on Christology 13-14
CHAPTER TWO	Heb. 1:4-14 15-18
	Supplement on Angelology 18
	Heb. 2:1-18 19-23
	Questions for chapter two 24
	Supplement on Bibliology 25
CHAPTER THREE	Heb. 3:1-19 and 4:1-13 26-34
	Questions for chapter three 35
CHAPTER FOUR	Heb. 4:14-5:10 and 5:11-6:20 36-46
	Questions for chapter four 47
	Supplement on Hebrews 6 48-49
CHAPTER FIVE	Heb. 7:1-28 and 8:1-13 50-59
	Questions for chapter five 60
CHAPTER SIX	Heb. 9:1-28 and 10:1-18 61-70
	Questions for chapter six 71
CHAPTER SEVEN	Heb. 10:19-39 and 11:1-40 72-83
	Questions for chapter seven 83
CHAPTER EIGHT	Heb. 12:1-29 and 13:1-25 84-91
	Questions for chapter eight 92
BIBLIOGRAPHY	Including website resources 93-99
BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR	100
INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL	
	Questions and brief answers 101-111

## **PREFACE**

The inspiration for this course started with my time in rural Zimbabwe at Rusitu Bible College. We moved there in 1993 to train church leaders, but in terms of culture and the stronghold of African Traditional Religions [henceforth ATR], there was thankfully a role reversal - I was very much the eager “student” and “learner” and the students became my faithful and patient teachers, giving rise to many hours of conversation both within the classroom and without.

My second year as a “lecturer” there I was assigned to teach Apologetics (defend the faith against the background of questions asked by non-believers). By then I at least had enough sense and awareness NOT to even open my Western apologetics textbooks from seminary! Rather, I conducted a survey at the end of the prior semester with all the prospective graduates, asking them to list all the questions they could think of that they were asked during their 3-years of ministry in the community and back in the home areas. The next step was to organize these questions into categories, and then I designed the entire course around answering those contextual questions, both biblically and in a culturally-sensitive and relevant manner. Back in those days our so-called “lectures” were 85 minutes long, but there were no “lectures”! The in-depth discussions and the high level of very helpful participation by all the “learners” (including me!) seemed to go by so fast that at times we kept going. As I reflect back on that time, guess who learned the most? Before my eyes, I saw “students” become “teachers” as they grappled with these issues as a group and shared biblical answers in culturally appropriate ways.

This study seeks to be first and foremost “exegetical” – that is, it seeks to “draw out” the true meaning of the text as inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is God’s truth for all people, of all time, in all cultures. It is not a book merely for the West or East or North or South, but for ALL! Secondly however, non-believers in the West, East, North, and South can and do hold to a different set of beliefs reflecting a different cultural background, and thus are asking a different set of questions. Thus this study also seeks prepare the learner to recognize, address and answer these questions in a culturally appropriate and effective manner, solidly based on the texts of Scripture. I trust that as you work through this, you will also be transformed from a “learner” to a “teacher”, starting in class and group discussions with one another, then extending to your various ministries, both to those who personally know our Great High Priest Jesus Christ and to those who don’t (yet!).

May the Lord bless you greatly as you reflect upon the person and work of our Great High Priest as recorded in His great Word! And may He use you in a great way to extend His kingdom of light and life in this dark and dying world (Matt. 5:13-16).

## SYLLABUS (STUDY GUIDE)

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is for students to grow in their knowledge of the book of Hebrews. In addition, an understanding of Hebrews will help one grasp the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. It's like a bridge connecting both, and the Bridge is Jesus Christ!

### COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

The course is divided into eight (8) lessons. As first and foremost an exegetical study, it follows the text of Hebrews section by section, paragraph by paragraph, verse by verse. The lessons follow the book of Hebrews and therefore should be studied in order.

### COURSE MATERIALS

The lecture notes are a full exposition for this course. The students are required to read them thoroughly along with the Scripture texts covered. Students are also required to answer the study questions at the end of each chapter.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To study and learn the book of Hebrews with other students;
- to develop a deeper understanding of God's work in this world;
- to grow in knowledge of how God deals with His children;
- to master the book of Hebrews in order to use it in preaching, teaching and pastoral counseling;
- to master the book of Hebrews to gain an understanding of the tremendous cultural relevance of this book.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participate in at least 15 hours of common teaching time.
2. Read this entire MINTS course, and the book of Hebrews, which is included in the notes. Please note: the clauses of the Biblical passages are *intentionally* spaced to show various characteristics such as parallelisms, chiasms, inclusions, repeated words and phrases, etc. in order to assist you in learning and in doing your own study of the text itself!
3. Complete the study questions/exercises at the end of each of the 8 lessons.
4. Read the required number of pages of collateral reading based on your program(me) level.
5. Write a sermon or teaching lesson plan on a theme from Hebrews of no more than 4 pages at the Diploma level, 7 pages at the Bachelor's level and 12 pages at the Master's level.

6. Complete the exam on Hebrews based upon the questions at the end of each chapter.

## **COURSE EVALUATION**

1. Student Participation (15%): one point may be given for each class hour attended.
2. Student Homework (25%): points will be given for completing the questions at the end of each lesson.
3. Student Readings/Reports (25%): students will be given credit for completing the required reading and summary reports on that reading.
4. Student Essay (25%): students will submit one biblical-based essay on a topic of their choice based on Hebrews. Some suggestion topics are:
  - a. Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest and only Mediator
  - b. Jesus Christ is only true “the Lamb of God” (sacrifice)
  - c. Compare and contrast the order of Aaron and the order of Melchizedek
  - d. Discuss the Contribution of Hebrews to the Gospel Message for Africa
  - e. The Problem among the Hebrew Christians and It’s Application for Today
  - f. The Importance of the Book of Hebrews for the Church Today
  - g. How Hebrews 1:1-2 shows that God’s Revelation to Mankind is Complete
  - h. God’s Purpose in Giving the Old Covenant and How it Prepares for Jesus
  - i. Contrast the Old Covenant with the New Covenant
  - j. What does Hebrews 1-2 Teach about the Spirit World?
  - k. Contrast the Old Testament Temple and the New Testament Church.
  - l. A Tricky Question: Do we have Priests Today?
5. Student Exam (10%): the questions for this will be drawn from the 80 questions at the end of the eight chapters, according to the selection by your MINTS local coordinator.

## **BENEFITS OF THIS COURSE**

The course will ground students in the crucial promise-fulfillment relationship between the Old and New Testaments. It will show them how Jesus the Son of God and our great High Priest triumphed over the enemies of sin, death and the devil, and is seated on His throne at the place of highest honor in the universe, from where He rules as Lord over all.

The response to this course in in some of the townships around Cape Town has been life-changing for many as their understanding of God’s Word has grown, as well as their ability to teach and preach His Word to those under their care. My prayer is that you may know in a deeper sense that Jesus is indeed *both* our Great High Priest *and* the Lamb of God who offered Himself up for our sins, as well as the One who is now making intercession for you from His royal seat at the Father’s right hand!

## CHAPTER ONE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

For free online resources regarding introductory matters, you may consult these commentaries<sup>1</sup> and those listed in the Bibliography.

### I. AUTHORSHIP

Hebrews is the only New Testament (abbreviated NT from now on in our study) book whose human authorship still remains a mystery.

Origin, an early church theologian, said, "But who it was that really wrote the epistle, God only knows". He also said that although the thoughts were similar to those of the apostle Paul, the style and diction were certainly not Paul's.<sup>2</sup> We agree.

#### CHARACTERISTICS ABOUT THE AUTHOR EVIDENT FROM THE BOOK ITSELF (This is often called the "internal evidence" for authorship.)

- A. He had great literary skill - his style of writing is closer to that of high classical Greek than any other NT book, similar to Luke/Acts written by Doctor Luke!  
Note: most of the NT was written in Koine (meaning 'common') Greek.
- B. He was not a first generation disciple or apostle - see Heb. 2:3 for evidence.  
Paul would *never* have said this of himself! He claims the opposite in Gal.1:11-17.<sup>3</sup>
- C. He knew the Old Testament (abbreviated OT from now on) very well. He quoted from the Septuagint (Greek translation of OT, c. 150 BC; abbreviated LXX) almost exclusively, thus he was most probably a Greek-speaking Hellenistic Jew.
- D. He was likely a Jew since he used the first person plural, "we", at times when addressing his audience, who were mostly if not exclusively ethnic Jews.
- E. He was a friend of Timothy; may have been on Paul's travelling team (Heb.13:23).
- F. He had very strong teaching abilities, and had extensively thought through the relationship between Christianity and Judaism.

Suggestions for authorship include the following: Apollos, Barnabas, Paul, Luke, Priscilla and Aquilla, Clement of Rome, Philip, and Silas. The first two are the modern favourites. Most in the past assumed it was written by Paul, though this is now thought to be very unlikely as the level of the Greek, vocabulary, the highly rhetorical structure, and certain *emphases* are very different from Paul (though certainly not in disagreement!).<sup>4</sup> Arguments for and against each are beyond the scope of this introduction. Please consult a major commentary listed in the extensive Bibliography at the end of this course.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, vol. 22, trans. by John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1603). Robert Jamieson, "Commentary on Hebrews". *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*. <http://www.studydrive.org/com/jfb/view.cgi?book=heb&chapter=000> 1871.

William Lane. *Hebrews*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 47a, b. (Dallas: Word, 1991), xlvii-clv (extensive).

<sup>2</sup> Victor Pfitzner. *Hebrews*. (Nashville: Abington Press, 1997), 25.

<sup>3</sup> Calvin, 55, "this passage indicates that this epistle was not written by Paul;" 358 - proposed Luke or Clement.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Ellingworth. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGNT (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1993), 2-21.

<sup>5</sup> The historic position is that Paul was the author, seeing the varied Greek style due to Paul's practice of using an amanuensis, or scribe. See William Gouge, *A Commentary on the Whole Epistle to the Hebrews*. Vol. 1. (London: James Nisbet and Co, 1866), 5-6

## II. PLACE WRITTEN FROM

Since the location is closely related to authorship, this issue is also very uncertain:

- if Apollos wrote it, he would have probably written from Alexandria in Egypt;
- if Barnabas, he would have likely written from Antioch in Palestine.

## III. DATE – the mid-late A.D. 60's, likely just prior to or in A.D. 68.<sup>6</sup>

- A. Most in the audience had been Christians for quite some time (see Heb. 2:3; 5:12; 10:32; 13:7).
- B. Timothy was still alive (12:23), yet some of the original leaders had already died by the time Hebrews was written (13:7).
- C. There is no mention of the Jewish-Roman conflict in A.D. 68 (which could have been the actual *occasion* for the writing of the book).
- D. There is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which could have served as a key to prove his entire argument for the end of Judaism, especially the entire Levitical system (which we will discuss in great detail)!  
Yet, he did imply that something like this would take place soon (12:26, 27).

## IV. AUDIENCE (the people to whom the book was originally written)<sup>7</sup>

- A. John Stott says that the title is not original, but that it is nevertheless accurate. That is, the audience were certainly Hebrews (Jews).
- B. They were likely a group in one place whom the author knew well (13:19, 23).  
This calls into question the categorisation of Hebrews as a “general epistle”.
- C. It was probably written to Hellenistic Jewish Christians in Rome who had been persecuted, should have been mature and teaching others by then, were generous, and very familiar with the OT. (Hellenistic means that they had been strongly influenced by Greek culture, and spoke Greek).
- D. There are at least 2 arguments in favour of the audience being in Rome:
  - 1. they had not seen or heard Jesus (2:3), and
  - 2. they had assisted other Christians (6:10), while poor Christians in Palestine, especially Jerusalem, had actually received aid from others.
- E. Some say it was written to a mixed group (Jews and Gentiles); if so, he would have been seeking to tear down the “dividing wall” between them (Eph. 2:11-16).  
If this is the case, then the designation “General Epistle” is an acceptable category.
- F. It was *possibly* written to Italians away from Italy (Rome) sending greetings back home (13:24). Heb. 13:24 is ambiguous (that is, it could be taken in 2 ways) - it could mean that the author was in Italy sending greetings back to Hebrew Christians in Palestine; *or* that they lived in Italy and their friends from Italy sent greetings back home. A Greek preposition meaning “*from*” supports the latter option.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ellingworth, 29-33.

<sup>7</sup> Ellingworth, 21-29.

## V. STYLE

The author calls it "*a word of exhortation*" (13:22); it is also an exposition and carries 5 severe warnings. Many see it as an early and extensive *homily* (sermon).

*"It therefore seems best to conclude, while fully recognizing the oral features which have led a majority of scholars to describe the body of Hebrews as a sermon, that Hebrews in its present form may be considered as a letter or epistle, in which its author displays skill in both written and (indirectly) oral communication."*<sup>8</sup>

## VI. OCCASION/BACKGROUND<sup>9</sup>

These Jewish Christians were considering turning back to Judaism due to **both** *external* persecution and an *internal* misunderstanding of the relationship between their relatively new Christianity and their background in Judaism.

Likely they were wrestling with this major issue or question:

*should they continue to interpret the OT according to the tradition which they had been taught by the Jewish rabbis (teachers), or should they now reinterpret the OT in light of God's new and final revelation in His Son Jesus Christ?*

## VII. PURPOSES

- A. To deter them from turning back to Judaism (so as to avoid persecution) by showing the superiority of Jesus Christ as the completion of God's revelation through the prophets (chapters 6 and 10 suggest that they were tempted to forsake Jesus).
- B. To remind them that what they now possess in Christ is far "*better*" (this is the key word of the book; see the chart on page 10) than Judaism!
- C. To warn against and counteract false doctrine (especially Philo's teaching) and empty ritualism (going through the motions without true faith in their hearts).
- D. To help them endure persecution; for example, they are to be encouraged and challenged by many OT heroes in chapter 11.
- E. To challenge these Jewish Christians to mature in their faith and to embrace the Great Commission (see Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) given by Jesus Christ.

## VIII. THEMES

- A. Hebrews deals with the most basic historical problem of the NT church, the relationship of Judaism to Christianity, by outlining the superiority of Christianity over Judaism as the fulfilment (the culmination) of the OT system, especially through the use of *typology* and *contrasts* (see #2 next for an example of each).
- B. Jesus Christ is the ultimate realization of the OT system as The Perfect Priest-King who offered Himself "*once for all*" as The Perfect Sacrifice!

---

<sup>8</sup> Ellingworth, 62.

<sup>9</sup> Ellingworth, 78-80.



1. an example of *typology*: sacrificial lambs in the OT point forward to Jesus as The Lamb of God (John 1:29). Key terms: shadow/copy, *type* and *antitype*.
  2. an example of *contrast*: the permanent/eternal nature of Jesus' priesthood as opposed to the temporary OT priestly system.
- C. John Stott says the theme is "the finality of Jesus Christ" and "the finality of the new covenant." We could also add the theme of the finality of God's revelation to man "in His Son" (1:2).
- D. An exhortation to "*consider Christ*" (3:1; 12:3), so that their faith may endure their present and future trials.

**Note:** Heb. 10:38, Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11 all quote Hab. 2:4 which says "The just shall live by his faith". Therefore, it has been suggested that these three books form a trilogy (a set of three), each explaining a different aspect of Hab. 2:4:

- Romans especially explaining the meaning of "just";
- Galatians showing us how to "live" under grace;
- Hebrews focusing on "faith" (especially chapter 11).

#### **IX. SOME KEY VERSES** – what is the major idea of each verse or passage?

- A. 1:1-2
- B. 2:3
- C. 2:17-18
- D. 4:14-16
- E. 8:1-2, 6
- F. 9:11-14
- G. 10:19-25
- H. 11:1, 6
- I. 12:1-2

#### **X. SOME KEY WORDS**

- A. better (see also related words like "more excellent", "perfect", "eternal")
- B. shadow/copy
- C. covenant
- D. once (and once for all)
- E. (high) priest
- F. sacrifice/offering/blood/death
- G. perfect

#### **XI. STRUCTURAL CHART** (on the next page)<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of the chart is to give us a "helicopter" view, that is, an overview, of the entire book before we launch into a detailed study of each section.

It seeks to show us the "big picture." This helps us to understand how each section fits into the book as a whole, and to interpret each text in its broader literary context.

---

<sup>10</sup> Ellingworth, 50-59, and Lane, lxxxiv-xcviii are especially helpful and insightful.

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS:  
EVERYTHING IS "**BETTER**" BECAUSE OF JESUS CHRIST!

TEACHING - JESUS CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO ...								APPLICATION - SINCE JESUS IS SUPERIOR ...			
A <b>BETTER</b> MEDIATOR AND MINISTER OF A <b>BETTER</b> COVENANT								A <b>BETTER</b> WAY OF LIFE			
1:1-4	1:4-2:18	3:1-19	4:1-13	*4:14-7:28	8:1-13	9:1-10	*9:11-10:18	10:19-39	11:1-40	12:1-29	13:1-25
The Son is <b>superior</b> to the prophets!	The Son is <b>superior</b> to the angels!	The Son is <b>superior</b> to Moses!	The Son is <b>superior</b> to Joshua!	The Son is <b>superior</b> to the High Priests!	A <b>Better</b> (New) Covenant	A <b>Better</b> (heavenly) Sanctuary	A <b>Better</b> Sacrifice in a Better Sanctuary	... <b>Let us</b> pray, press on and provoke!	... <b>Let us</b> live by faith!	... <b>Let us</b> endure in hope!	... <b>Let us</b> walk in love!
	First <u>Warning</u> : don't neglect this final revelation 2:1-4	Second <u>Warning</u> : check your heart for the sin of unbelief 3:7-19		Third <u>Warning</u> : don't fall away from The Son 5:11-6:8				Fourth <u>Warning</u> : don't reject The Son of God 10:26-31		Fifth/final <u>Warning</u> : don't refuse this better revelation 12:25-29	
			"Let us" fear and be diligent!	"Let us" hold fast, draw near and press on!				"Let us" draw near, hold fast and stimulate!		"Let us" lay aside, run with endurance and give thanks!	"Let us" go to Him and offer praise!
	"Better" than angels			"Better" things, hope, covenant	"Better" ministry, covenant, promises		"Better" sacrifices	"Better" possession	"Better" country, resurrection, promise	"Better" blood	
THE <b>PERSON</b> OF JESUS CHRIST					THE <b>WORK</b> OF CHRIST			THE <b>WAY</b> OF CHRIST			

**I. THE FIRST MAJOR CONTRAST: GOD'S REVELATION "IN HIS SON" IS SUPERIOR TO HIS REVELATION "IN THE PROPHETS" (1:1-4)**

**A. OPENING CONTRAST: PAST PERIODIC REVELATION VERSUS PRESENT COMPLETE REVELATION (1:1-2a)**

*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son ... (1:1-2a, NASB)*

These opening words *set the stage for the entire book* as they contrast the former ancient revelation under the Old Covenant, revealed primarily through Moses, with the final present revelation "in His Son" Jesus Christ under the New Covenant, which He established with His blood (compare Mt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:20; 1Cor. 10:25-27; Heb. 9:12ff).

The tense "aorist", normally a once-for-all action in the past, of the verbs "*spoke*" and "*spoken*" indicates that God has now *finished* telling us His final and complete revelation "*in these last days*".

<b>GOD SPOKE IN THE PAST <sup>11</sup></b>	<b>AND IN THE PRESENT (the author's day, the NT)</b>
"long ago", the Old Testament; note the past frame of reference	"in these ( <i>note the present tense!</i> ) last/final days" (this was a rabbinical phrase for the entire Messianic or church age)
"to the fathers"	"to us" ( <i>note that this makes it very personal!</i> )
"in the prophets" ( <i>plural</i> )	"in His Son" ( <i>singular</i> ) THE Great(est) Prophet!

**A contrast of these two major eras of God's revelation** (Let's discuss what some of these terms mean):

OT revelation was past, periodic, partial, preparatory, and promissory!

NT revelation is current, concentrated, complete, culminative and climactic!

**Caution:** Thus, to speak of further revelation today implies that there is revelation that surpasses Jesus the Son. This is what Islam does by teaching that Allah gave further and better revelation through their 'prophet' Mohammed, but this denies Heb. 1:1-2a!

We encourage all shepherds to be very careful here, so that their sheep understand that all of God's Words for them are already revealed in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. God does not *reveal* more truth through shepherds, but the Holy Spirit does use preachers/teachers to *illumine* and *apply* His Word to the hearers.

**Illustration:** the OT might be compared to the *plan or preparation* (copy/shadow) for

<sup>11</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, volume 22, trans. by John Owen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1603), 31. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom44.vii.i.html> (accessed Sept. 12). Ellingworth, 91.

the house, and the NT to *true* house, a building in which Christ Jesus Himself is the chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:18-20). The testaments are harmonious, but not equal. The latter *builds* upon the former. Therefore, we need BOTH.

We can't understand either testament properly without the other.  
Hebrews greatly helps us to understand the OT.  
It especially helps us to see that OT revelation looks forward to Jesus Christ.

**Lesson:** in the Son, we have the *fulfilment* of what the OT only *promised*;  
in the Son, God has spoken His final and complete revelation “to us”!

**Conclusion:** the Bible is the complete revelation of God for ALL, not just Jews!

## **B. EIGHT TRUTHS WHICH SHOW THE SON'S SUPERIORITY TO THE PROPHETS AS A UNIQUE DIVINE MESSENGER (1:2b-4)**

... whom He appointed heir of all things, through [by] whom also He made the world.  
And He is the radiance of His glory [2:7, 9, 10]  
and the exact representation of His nature,  
and upholds all things by the word of His power.  
When He had made purification of sins,  
He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; [1:13]  
having become as much better than the angels, [used 11 times in 1:5 – 2:16]  
as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. (1:2b-4, NASB)

Note that this passage discusses both Jesus' Person<sup>12</sup> and His work, and has many parallels to Colossians 1-2, some of which are noted below.

Here we learn many wonderful truths about our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the:

1. **Owner** – the “*Heir* [Inheritor] of all things”, because He is both Creator and Redeemer (see below).
2. **Creator** – He was the Agent through whom God created the whole world.  
See also Col. 1:15ff. Thus, this also teaches us that He is eternal. Jn. 1:1-4.
3. **Revealer** - the 'Shekinah' glory of God *radiated* from Him; this implies Jesus' unity with the Father (Jn. 10:30). See Ex. 13:21-22 and 40:34-38.
4. **Co-equal** - the exact *representation* or visible reproduction of the Father's character; see Col. 1:15, 19; 2:9. Consider Jn. 10:30.
5. **Sustainer** - he upholds/sustains the universe; cf. Col. 1:17.
6. **Redeemer, Great High Priest** - He removed our sins (the tense of the verb, aorist, points to the completed action of Jesus' work); cf. Col. 1:14, 20.
7. **Sovereign King** as He now *sits* at the Father's right hand<sup>13</sup> (sitting was symbolic of His finished work and also referred to His divine Kingship – see 1:13; 4:16; 8:1).

---

<sup>12</sup> William Gouge, *Commentary*, Vol. 1, 8, 12-13, 16-17 explains how the doctrine of the Trinity is seen herein.

<sup>13</sup> See Calvin, *Commentary*, 39, regarding this “similitude applied to God, though he is not confined to any place, and has not a right side nor left. The session then of Christ means nothing else but the kingdom given to him by the Father ... Hence to sit at the right hand of the Father is no other thing than to govern in the place of the Father”. Cf. 48, “it is a metaphor which signifies that he is the Father's vice-regent ...”

Please read Psa. 110 for background here and elsewhere in Hebrews.  
 What does "*sovereign*" mean?  
 In brief, that He is in control of everything!  
 As King, He rules over His kingdom; cf. Col. 1:13f.

**8. Messiah** – this is likely His "*more excellent name*"<sup>14</sup>; that is, He is the eternal "*Son*" (verses 2 and 5), who "became" (vs. 4, NIV) our Messiah at His birth.

### **QUESTIONS – Chapter 1**

1. What is a prophet? What did/does a prophet do?
2. Are the words of past or present extra-Biblical prophets equal in authority to those of the Jewish prophets of the Old Testament?  
  
 How do we decide?  
 (Hint: verses 5 - 13 are almost entirely direct quotations from the OT)
3. Is there revelation from God which is "better" than what came from through the OT prophets?  
  
 If so, in what sense? (1Pet. 1:10-12 will help answer this question.)
4. Did the Old Testament predict the coming of a Great Prophet ("The Prophet") who would be superior to all other prophets?  
  
 Let's look up and discuss Deut. 18:17-22.  
 Do John 1:21; 3:31-34 and Acts 3:22 help us here?
5. Did Jesus and the NT writers present Jesus as this Great Prophet?  
 See John 8:23-32 (remember that a prophet speaks for God).
6. Is the Bible "the white man's book" as some say, or is it God's truth for ALL people?  
 See Gen. 12:1-4; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 10:34-35; Rev. 5:9 and 7:9)  
  
 Read Acts 8:27-39; from which country was one of the earliest converts to Christianity?  
 What FACT does this demonstrate?
7. What would happen if we only studied the OT and neglected the NT?
8. How many of the 8 truths above about Jesus are true of any mere prophet?
9. How is Jesus much greater than all other prophets in all of history? That is, how is He *unique* (this means that no one else is like Him)?
10. Was/is Jesus only the greatest Prophet ever, or is He much more than that?  
 (i.e. Many say that He was a great Teacher, but how was He much more?)  
 How then should we personally respond to this revelation by and about Jesus Christ?

<sup>14</sup> W. Gouge. *Comm* 1:27-28, "the name here spoken of contains a reality in it...It is not simply any of his titles, but that true relation which is betwixt the Father and him...namely, to be the Son of God." See also 1:29-30.

## INTRODUCTION

A study of the Person and work of Jesus Christ is called "Christology." Most seminaries have an entire semester course on this subject alone! So, if we went into great detail now we would have to postpone our study of Hebrews! However, let's just briefly consider this area of doctrine.

Firstly, when we speak of the Person of Jesus Christ, we are talking about *who He is*. We emphasize that He is both fully God and yet at the same time fully man. We speak of these as the two natures of Christ - one divine, the other human - while also stressing the fact the He is One Person, not two. Summary: Jesus has two natures, but is one Person.

Secondly, when we speak of the Work of Jesus Christ we are concerned about *what He did and even what He does now*, which is, of course, directly related to who He is. Thus His Person and His work cannot really be separated. Here we particularly have in mind that which He did to bring about the salvation of all who believe in Him as their Lord and Saviour. This includes the righteous life He lived, His suffering and death on the cross as the substitute for our sins, and His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God the Father (recall Heb. 1:3).

The Person and Work of Christ fit together in this way. Since all men are sinful, Jesus had to be more than a man. In fact, He had to be fully God in order to live a perfect life and become the perfect substitute for our sins. He also had to be fully God in order to rise again from the dead, having power over sin and death. *He is our God!*

Yet, He also had to be fully man in order to qualify as our human substitute sacrifice and take upon Himself the penalty of our sins. This is very strongly emphasized in Hebrews 2:10-18 and 5:5-10 as we shall see. In this respect, *He is also our elder Brother!*

We will discuss all of this in much greater detail as we progress through the book of Hebrews! The first two chapters of Colossians also teach us much about Christology, as you will have noticed from the many cross-references on a previous page.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

325AD – this year marked the meeting of the first “ecumenical” or worldwide church council, with approximately 250-300 bishops gathering at Nicaea (in present day Turkey).

“The great question which occupied the mind of the Church for some three hundred years was whether Christ, the Son, was as truly and fully God as the Father. Arius and Athanasius, presbyters in Alexandria, were the two champions in the great struggle about this question ... According to Arius, Christ is the first and highest of all created beings. He does not exist from eternity, and is not of the same substance or essence as the Father.

On the other hand, Athanasius taught that Christ is very God ...

What was at stake was nothing less than man’s salvation. Christ’s work and His *person* are inseparably connected ... The value of Christ’s work depends entirely upon what kind of person He is. Man’s condition is so utterly hopeless that he cannot save himself.

Only God can save him. If Christ is not God, He cannot be our Savior.”<sup>15</sup>

The result was that Arianism (Arius’s teachings) was condemned as heresy, and the council proceeded to draft the first written creed of the Church, summarizing the biblical views which

<sup>15</sup> B. K. Kuiper. *The Church in History*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964). 30-31.

Athanasius had faithfully articulated, which became known as the Nicene Creed.

381AD – the Nicene Creed was expanded at the First Council of Constantinople to the form used in many churches to this today, as follows:

*We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

*“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father ; from thence he cometh again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end .*

*“And in the Holy Ghost, who is Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic church, we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”<sup>16</sup>*

#### **BEWARE OF SOME CULTS AND “LIBERAL” CHURCHES!**

Unfortunately, Arianism did not die during these church councils, but still exists, especially in the teachings of the Jehovah Witnesses and the Mormons (so-called, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints), and sadly even in some “liberal” churches which comprise Biblical theology.

---

<sup>16</sup> Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910), section 129.

## **II. THE SECOND MAJOR CONTRAST:**

### **THE DIVINE SON OF GOD IS SUPERIOR TO THE HOLY ANGELS (1:4-2:18)**

This passage shows Jesus is superior to good angels (vs. 4), both in His dignity and His power (that is, in who He is and in what He does)!

**Background:** Jews strongly emphasized the agency of angels in the giving/revealing of the Law (for ex., see Deut. 33:2, Psa. 68:17, Gal. 3:19, Acts 7:38, 53).

Thus, the Son's superiority to the angels was very important in order to show these Jewish Christians tempted to revert back to Judaism that the New Covenant mediated through Jesus is superior to the Law mediated by angels.<sup>17</sup>

*\*Structure: please observe that 1:5-13 consists almost entirely of 7 OT quotations, which are framed (marked off) by two parallel rhetorical questions in 1:5 and 13.*<sup>18</sup>

These show that the author viewed the OT as God's true revelation, yet he wanted his audience to recognize that the OT itself pointed them forward to the "better" new revelation of the gospel "in His Son" (1:2) as recorded in the New Testament.

Thus, these OT passages serve to *confirm* the amazing truths just set forth in 1:1-4.

#### **A. JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO ANGELS AS "THE SON" OF GOD (1:5-7)**

<sup>5</sup> *For to which of the angels did He ever say, [note the parallel question in 1:13]  
     "Son of Me You are, [A – Son; the first term in Greek]  
     I today have begotten You"? [B – I, the Father]*

*And again,*

*"I will be to Him a Father [B' – I, the Father]  
     and He will be to Me a Son."? [A' – Son; the last term in Greek]*

<sup>6</sup> *And when He again brings the First-born into the world, He says,*

*"And let all the angels of God worship Him."*

<sup>7</sup> *And of the angels He says,*

*"Who makes His angels winds, (spirits, 1:14)  
     and His ministers (servants, 1:14) a flame of fire." (author's translation)*

That is, He is superior to all the holy angels because of His *unique* Sonship!<sup>19</sup>

#### **1. vs. 5 - He is designated as the only Messianic Son of God!**

He quotes *Psalms* 2:7 (which speaks of the coming Messiah), which begins this strong very contrast between Jesus "the Son" and the holy angels in 1:5-14, proving to them that Jesus is indeed "much better" (1:4)!

The rhetorical question expects the answer "NO", and has a parallel in 1:13 which marks an inclusion, and thus serves to frame this series of OT references.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Calvin, 40, is helpful. The Jews "obscured the glory of God by extolling the angels too much. It was therefore necessary to reduce them to their own rank, that they might not overshadow the brightness of Christ."

<sup>18</sup> Ellingworth, 129.

<sup>19</sup> Gouge, William. *Commentary*, Vol. 1, 30-36 has an excellent exposition of the Apostle's use of Psalms, especially in respect to His Sonship.

<sup>20</sup> Lane, 2, supports this observation.



That is, NO angel was ever called by this glorious title, "Son."

God the Father called Jesus His beloved "Son" in two places in the NT:

- a. at His baptism (Matt. 3:16-17)
- b. at His transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-5).

He also quotes *2Sam. 7:14* which is God's covenant promise to David.

This verse speaks first of Solomon, but as a *type* (a picture) it points to Jesus as the greatest "Son of David" still to come.

Compare 2 Sam. 7:16 with the angel Gabriel's prophetic words to the virgin Mary in Luke 1:27, 32, 33!

2. vs. 6 - All the angels are to worship Him!

This literally means "to fall on their knees before" Him!

He quotes *Deut. 32:43* which shows that the Son is also divine (God) thus clearly demonstrating His superiority to the angels who worship Him.

The term "first-born" means first-begotten, first in rank, pre-eminent (please see *Psa. 89:27* and especially *Col. 1:15-18* where the term is used twice). The first born also received the largest inheritance; recall 1:2 – "heir".

*Beware:* many cults, like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons (the so-called 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints'), grossly misuse this term to overemphasize Jesus' humanity in an attempt to deny Jesus' deity, but it actually speaks of His unique deity (that He is God in the flesh, God incarnate)!

3. vs. 7 - Who then are these angels? see also 1:14 for a clearer description.

Angels are both messengers from God and ministers or servants of God. He quotes *Psa. 104:4* - the imagery of wind and fire may stress the angel's non-eternal, changeable character. They could fall, and many did, becoming demons.

Relationship to Jesus Christ: their character is in stark contrast to the eternal, unchangeable nature of the eternal "Son" presented next in verses 8-13.

**B. JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO ANGELS AS THE DIVINE KING/LORD (1:8-14)**

<sup>8</sup> *But of the Son [1:5] He says,*

*"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, (eternal) [A]  
And the righteous scepter is the Scepter of His kingdom. [B]  
"You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; [B']  
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You [A']  
with the oil of gladness above Your companions."*

<sup>10</sup> *And,*

*"You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,  
and the heavens are the works of Your hands; [2:7]*

<sup>11</sup> *They will perish, but You remain; [A]  
and they all will become old as a garment, [B]  
<sup>12</sup> and as a mantle You will roll them up; [C]  
as a garment they will also be changed. [B']  
But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end." [A']*

- <sup>13</sup> But to which of the angels has He ever said, [recalls 1:5]  
 "Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet"?<sup>21</sup>  
<sup>14</sup> Are they not all ministering spirits, [1:7]  
 sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?<sup>22</sup>

Well then, who is this "Son" that is even to be worshipped by all the angels?  
 Recall verses 1:2-3 and our last lesson about Jesus' Person and His work.

This passage proceeds to prove those prior claims about Jesus from the OT!

1. vs. 8, 9 - The *Son* is both God and the anointed King!

Here he quotes *Psa. 45:6-7* (another Messianic Psalm) where the Father:

- a. designated Him "the Son" as "God". In the OT context the earthly king on David's throne was God's representative, a type of the perfect King to come!
- b. promised Him an eternal throne/kingdom; recall 2Sam. 7:16,  
 "And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." Compare this with Luke 1:32-33!
- c. anointed Him with the "oil of gladness" as sovereign King (and priest).  
 In Isaiah 61:1-3 this is associated with the Messiah; Luke 4:18, 19.  
 "Christ" is not Jesus' surname, but in fact means "*the anointed One*"!

2. vs. 10-12 - The *Son* is Lord and Creator, eternal and unchangeable!

He quotes *Psa. 102:25-27* where the Father designated the Son as the "Lord" Who (be sure to observe the very strong contrast between the Creator and the creation):

- a. created the earth and the heavens (vs. 10); this recalls 1:2
- b. is eternal, unlike His temporary creation (vs. 11-12)
- c. is unchangeable, again unlike the changeable creation (vs. 12).

3. vs. 13 - The *Son* is the sovereign King!

He quotes *Psa. 110:1* where king David, in the Spirit, called Jesus "*Lord*" (cf. Matt. 22:42-45 where this OT passage is also quoted in the NT).

*"The introduction to the quotation of Ps. 110:1 both sets it apart from vv. 6–12, and forms an inclusion with v. 5a, binding the catena together ... Psa. 110:1 is the OT text most widely used in the NT."*<sup>23</sup>

Contrast: God never invited any angel to sit at His right hand as King – recall that this exalted royal position at God's "right hand" was mentioned in verse 3.

4. vs. 14 - Not only are angels inferior to the Son, but they are even inferior to Christians in the sense that angels are commissioned to serve (literally, to minister to) "*all who will inherit salvation*."

<sup>21</sup> Calvin, 49, "But the promise, that Christ shall never be thrust from his seat, takes away from us every fear."

<sup>22</sup> Calvin, 50, on the role of angels, "From this passage the faithful receive no small consolation; for they hear that celestial hosts are assigned to them as ministers, in order to secure their salvation."

<sup>23</sup> Ellingworth, 129.

Contrast: note the plural, ministering spirits, in contrast to only One Lord/King!

They are *servants* of God and God's people!

They are NOT mediators!

This fact should radically change our view of the spirit world!

Please take a few moments to discuss the implications of this truth.

Application: this great truth should free us from all fear.

Flow: the final word in the original in 1:4-14 is the Greek term for "*salvation*" which serves as a transition, alerting us to the theme of the first exhortation which follows in 2:1-4, "so great a *salvation*"!<sup>24</sup>

### SUPPLEMENT ON ANGELOLOGY

A study of what the Bible teaches about the nature and work of angels, both good and evil, is called "angelology".<sup>25</sup>

Under this broader category is also the topic called "demonology", that is, a study of what the Bible teaches about demons, whom the Bible describes as fallen angels who choose to rebel with Satan (the supreme fallen angel) against God.

Angels played a very significant role in the both Testaments, and they still do today.

To do your own further study in the future, you could look up all the places in Scripture where angels appeared to people, and observe what they did and said.

In the **OT** angels appeared to many people:

Hagar (Gen. 16:7-14); Abraham (Gen. 18:2-15); Lot (Gen. 19:1-22); Jacob (Gen. 28:12); Moses (Ex. 3:2); Balaam (Num.22:31-35); Joshua (Josh.5:13-15); the nations of Israel (Judges 2:1-4) Gideon (Judg.6:11-24); Manoah (Judges 13:6-21); David (2Sam. 24:16-17); Elijah (1Kings 19:5-7); Daniel (Dan. 6:22); and Zechariah (Zech. 2:3).

**\*Note:** this list does not include all the references in the OT to "the angel of the Lord", as this phrase refers (in our view) not to a mere created angel, but to the pre-incarnate Christ, that is, Jesus in the OT before He was born of the virgin Mary.

Angels were created by God, but "the angel of the Lord" is God the Son, "by whom all things were created ..." (Col. 1:16).

In the **NT**, angels also appeared to:

Zechariah (Luke 1:11-20); Mary (Luke 1:26-38); Joseph (Matt. 1:20-25); shepherds (Luke 2:9-15); women at Jesus' tomb (Matt. 28:1-7); Mary Magdalene (John 20:12-13); the apostles (Acts 1:10-11); Peter (Acts 5:19-20); Philip (Acts 8:26); Cornelius (Acts 10:3-32); Paul (Acts 27:23-24); and John (Rev.1:1).

Herod was "struck" by an angel and died as a result (Acts 12:23).

<sup>24</sup> Lane, 23, supports this observation.

<sup>25</sup> Gouge, William. *Commentary*, Vol. 1, 45-56, has a concise compendium of angelology in Sections 79-101.

**C. WARNING #1: DON'T DRIFT AWAY FROM THIS NEW REVELATION (2:1-4). This is a call for specific application of the truths taught in chapter 1!**

**Note:** this is the first of 5 very severe warnings in Hebrews (recall the chart).<sup>26</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, [2:3] lest we drift away from it. [note the return to 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun, as 1:2]*

<sup>2</sup> *For if **the word** spoken through angels [1:1] proved unalterable (firm, 2:3), and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense,*

<sup>3</sup> *how shall we escape if we neglect so great a **salvation**? [theme, last word in 1:14!] After it was at the first spoken through (by) the Lord, [1:2a]*

*it was confirmed (established) to us [2:1] by those who heard (Him), [2:1]*

<sup>4</sup> *God [the Father] also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders [note 3 parallel phrases describing God's witness] and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. [Trinitarian passage!]*

1. vs. 1 - The phrase "*we must*" literally means 'it is necessary' or 'it is binding upon us'. Note the application: this is the first reference to them since the "us" in 1:2a. The idea might be restated in this way, 'be very careful not to drift away from this exalted new way which God has spoken to us.'

*"Drift away"* presents a word picture of a ship as it slowly 'drifts by' or slowly passes by something; thus, it is not a sudden departure, but a subtle error.

2. vs. 2, 3 - Note the carefully paralleled phrases which establish a very strong comparison and contrast between the angels and Jesus as mediators of revelation:

vs. 2 - "spoken through angels" refers to the old revelation, particularly the Law, which they (the Hebrews) had always accepted/believed (this recalls 1:1).

vs. 3 - "spoken through the Lord" refers to this new revelation (recalls 1:2), which they have "heard" (2:1), from which they must never "drift away"!<sup>27</sup>

Now, follow the argument from the lesser to the greater in this contrast:

if the Old covenant, mediated by mere angels, fixed a firm penalty for disobedience,

then if we neglect this greater revelation, established by the Son who is the Lord, will we escape its even greater punishment (cf. Rev. 14:11)?

The above question is rhetorical, that is, it expects the answer "NO"!<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Calvin, 51, sums up this first warning, "The import of the whole is this, that the higher the dignity of Christ is than that of angels, the more reverence is due to the Gospel than to the Law."

<sup>27</sup> The distinction between Law and Gospel is in a compacted argument here and must be understood in light of all Scripture. This issue of Law and Gospel is well explained in a treatise called *Vindiciae Legis* (free online) by Anthony Burgess, a Westminster Divine who helped write ch.19 of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

<sup>28</sup> Calvin, 53, "In a word, in proportion to the greatness of Christ will be the severity of God's vengeance on all the despisers of his Gospel."

For further studies, look up parallel passages in the Gospels regarding Hell and punishment. Did you know that Jesus warned more about Hell than all of the prophets and apostles combined?

3. vs. 4 - Signs, wonders, miracles and gifts accompanied the apostolic preaching of the new revelation. Why?<sup>29</sup>

Because they gave testimony to the truth of the NT by pointing beyond the apostles to God Himself as the ultimate source of this final revelation!

Note well: *These signs were to draw attention to God's Word, not to His servants!*

Lesson: the Bible was not made up by men, but revealed to men by God.

Conclusion: Therefore, it is His authoritative Word for all people, regardless of their earthly nationality, standing in society, age, gender, etc.

#### D. JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO ANGELS AS THE INCARNATE RULER (2:5-18)

1. HIS WORK: victory over the power of death in order to reign (2:5-9).

<sup>5</sup> *For He did not subject to angels the world to come<sup>30</sup>, concerning which we are speaking.*

<sup>6</sup> *But one has testified somewhere, saying,*

*"What is man, that You remember him?*

*Or the son of man, that You are concerned about him?*

<sup>7</sup> *"You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; [A]*

*You have crowned him with glory and honor, [B]*

*And have appointed him over the works of Thy hands; [C]*

<sup>8</sup> *You have put all things in subjection under his feet."*

*For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. [C']*

*But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.*

<sup>9</sup> *But we do see Him*

*who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, [A']*

*namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death*

*crowned with glory and honor, [B']*

*so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.<sup>31</sup> [purpose = climax]*

- a. **The problem:**

Since the Son has become temporarily lower than the angels through His incarnation and death, how then can He also be superior to the angels?

- b. **The argument:**

He uses Psalm 8:4-6 to show the dignity of man which God intended for the first Adam (Gen. 1-2), but he rebelled and has been subjected to suffering ever since (Gen. 3:14-24), and thus does not have this dominion over the earth, but was instead conquered by the power of death.

<sup>29</sup> Calvin, 55, answers this well, "For almost all the miracles done in all ages were performed as we find for this end, that they might be the seals of God's word."

<sup>30</sup> Calvin, 58, "... the world to come is not that which we hope for after the resurrection, but that which began at the beginning of Christ's kingdom, but it will no doubt have its full accomplishment in our final redemption."

<sup>31</sup> Do not assume this means all without exception. The Greek word here hardly ever means that, but rather all without distinction. Gouge, *Commentary*, 1:133-134 is helpful.

c. **The answer:**

Jesus' humiliation was only temporary – 2:9; also Phil. 2:6-8; Isa. 53; Jn. 17. He had to become man in order to lift fallen humanity to the original dignity that God gave mankind at the creation. Jesus had to become the perfect last or second Adam (1Cor. 15:45) to do this, and has received all glory and honour!

2. **THE EFFECTS OF HIS WORK:** (2:10-18)

Summary: death and Satan's power were destroyed by Jesus, the Perfect Man!

- <sup>10</sup> *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, [2:8]  
and through [by] whom are all things,  
in bringing many sons to glory, [2:7, 9]  
to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. [2:18]*
- <sup>11</sup> *For both **He** who sanctifies and those who are sanctified  
are all from one Father;  
for which reason **He** is not ashamed to call them brethren,<sup>12</sup> saying,  
"I will proclaim Thy name to **My brethren**,  
In the midst of the congregation I will sing Thy praise."*
- <sup>13</sup> *And again,  
"I will put **My** trust in Him."  
And again,  
"Behold, I and the children whom God has given **Me**."*
- <sup>14</sup> *Since then the children share in flesh and blood,  
**He Himself** likewise also partook (to share in) of the same,  
so that [purpose/result clause] through death  
**He might render powerless** him who had the power of death, that is, the devil;<sup>32</sup>*
- <sup>15</sup> *and might deliver those who through fear of death  
were subject to slavery all their lives.<sup>33</sup>*
- <sup>16</sup> *For assuredly **He** does not give help to angels, [note parallel with 2:5]<sup>34</sup>  
but **He** gives help to the descendants of Abraham.*
- <sup>17</sup> *Therefore, **He** had to be made like **His brethren** in all things,  
that **He might** become a merciful [4:15-16] [A]<sup>35</sup>  
and faithful [3:2, 6] **High Priest** [3:1] in things pertaining to God,<sup>36</sup> [5:1] [B]  
to make propitiation [atonement] for the sins of the people. [B']*
- <sup>18</sup> *For since **He Himself** was tempted in that which **He** has suffered, [2:10] [A]  
**He** is able to come to the aid [help, 2:16] of those who are tempted. [4:15]*

a. Many sons are led to glory! (2:10)

The Creator and Owner of the universe directs His Son along a path of suffering in order to restore "many sons" from the effects of the Fall (Gen. 3).

Note the repetition: since He has been "crowned with glory" (2:9), He therefore can also bring/lead us "to glory" (2:10).

<sup>32</sup> Gouge. *Commentary*, 1:166-171, covers the destroying of the devil at length. This should not be interpreted to mean utter annihilation of the devil, for the devil still works among us until the culmination of this age.

<sup>33</sup> Note that this is a fine compact example of the doctrine of total depravity. See Gouge. *Commentary*, 1:171-173.

<sup>34</sup> Lane, 2. 2:5 and 2:16 form an inclusion, before the transitional verses 2:17-18.

<sup>35</sup> Calvin, 75, Chiastic structure as suggested by editor in footnote 1.

<sup>36</sup> Calvin, 76, "By the words, *in things pertaining to God*, he means such things as are necessary to reconcile men to God;"

Thus, Jesus is the “author/leader/pioneer” of our deliverance, who opened the way to the Father (John 14:6). Illustration: He is thus like the commander of an army who blazes the trail ahead of His troops who follow Him.

Compare the close relationship between earthly suffering and eternal glory in Phil. 1:29 and Romans 8:17-18.

**Issue:** what does he mean by "to perfect" since Jesus was truly sinless? He is not referring to moral perfection, but to earthly qualifications for entrance into the high priesthood as a man (see 5:8-9); so He can fully identify with mankind in order to represent us before the Father; 2:18.

- b. He had to become just like us in order to sanctify us! (2:11-14a)

Flow: “For” indicates that these verses serve to *explain* the end of 2:10.

vs. 11 - the priest and people must be of one.<sup>37</sup>

That is, the Son had to become fully human in order to represent other men before God. He is the head of a new redeemed humanity.

So, we see that He was not ashamed to identify with us as His "brothers". Thus, all believers, regardless of gender, are "brothers" of Jesus in this sense.

As the God-man, He is the ONLY mediator between God and man!  
There are NO other mediators between us and God; 1Tim. 2:5.

vs. 12 - he now quotes Psa. 22:22 where Jesus praises God for deliverance in the midst of His brethren (the assembled saints).<sup>38</sup>

vs. 13 - what is the context of Isa. 8:17?

Historical background: the prophet Isaiah was in the midst of rejection by Israel, but by trusting God<sup>39</sup>, he and his children were a continuing witness to the unbelieving Jews, especially by the meaning of their names. Isaiah means "Jehovah is salvation"; similarly, Jesus means "Saviour."

vs. 14a - this is a concise summary statement of verses 10-13.  
The Son had to become a man in order to qualify for the priesthood (5:1-10).<sup>40</sup>

- c. vs. 14b-18 - **3 powerful results of Jesus' work as our High Priest!**

(1) vs. 14b - Jesus nullified the power of the devil (1Jn. 3:8; Col. 2:15)  
by entering Satan's fortress of death, disarming him, chaining him,  
and robbing him of his captives; Mt. 12:29; 1Cor. 15:54-57.  
The spiritual WAR was really won right then on the cross!

---

<sup>37</sup> Calvin, 64, "... that is, that the author of holiness and we who are made partakers of it, are all of one nature"

<sup>38</sup> Gouge. *Commentary*, 1:149-151, lays forth the Apostle's use of Psalm 22 in helpful detail.

<sup>39</sup> Calvin, 68, "It is surely not in vain or for nothing that we trust in God; for were we destitute of his grace, we should be miserable and lost. The trust then which we put in God is an evidence of our helplessness."

<sup>40</sup> Calvin, 71, "The passage deserves especial notice, for it not only confirms the reality of the human nature of Christ, but also shows the benefit which thence flows to us."

- (2) vs. 15 - the sufferings and death of Jesus save the prisoners of fear!  
Fear of death is very real in every culture, and enslaves many.

Application: Is your flock plagued by this fear?

This is a great passage to preach/teach regarding Christ's victory over sin, death<sup>41</sup> and the devil; and how He conquers all FEAR for us!

vs. 16 - angels are inferior to man in the sense that the Son identified with man. He did not become an angel, but a man.

- (3) vs. 17, 18 - these transitional key verses teach us about His complete identification with man in order to become our sympathetic and obedient High Priest.

“*Therefore*” serves to mark a forthcoming statement, which serves to introduce the theme for the next 5 chapters!<sup>42</sup>

\*There are **2 aspects of His high priesthood**:

- (a) it is propitiatory toward God!

This means that the penalty was paid such that God's holy wrath against sin was fully satisfied by the offering of Jesus (see 1Jn. 2:2).

This aspect of His work is described as Him being “a **faithful** High Priest in things pertaining to God.”

Structure: this theme will be expanded first in 3:1-4:14, in parallel to Moses' faithfulness and in sharp contrast to Israel's unfaithfulness.

- (b) it is merciful toward us!

Note its comfort in the midst of suffering and temptation.

He both helps/aids us and He gives us grace to persevere. This parallels and thus reinforces the end of 2:16 – He gives helps to His children.

Jesus is a “**merciful** High Priest”.

Structure: this theme will be expanded secondly in 4:15-7:28.

Note: the structure again takes the form of a “*chiasm*” where the main themes are presented very concisely, and then treated very extensively, but in reverse order, that is, the A, B, B', A' parallel pattern.<sup>43</sup>

[A] “*merciful*” High Priest – dealt with secondly in 4:15-7:28, [A']

[B] “*faithful*” High Priest – dealt with first in 3:1-4:14 [B'].

---

<sup>41</sup> Calvin, 73, “*Death* here does not only mean the separation of the soul from the body, but also the punishment which is inflicted on us by an angry God, so that it includes eternal ruin.”

<sup>42</sup> Ellingworth, 143. “Vv. 17–18 are structurally transitional, but very important in content, because they explicitly introduce for the first time the theme of Christ's high priesthood.”

<sup>43</sup> Lane, 54, following Vanhoye, although they see what we call [A'] as only 4:15-5:10, but we see 6:20ff picking up exactly where 5:10 leaves off after the digression to the rebuke and exhortation in 5:11-6:20.



## QUESTIONS – Chapter 2

1. Who are the angels? Are they departed ancestors? Nature spirits? Divinities?
2. What are some of their functions (that is, what do they do)? (recall 1:7, 14)
3. What does 1:4-14 tell us about Jesus Christ?  
Is anyone or anything else like Him?  
Is He truly God, or merely a great prophet or a great spirit?
4. How would you explain the close relationship between the OT and the NT?

Point of clarification: the writer of Hebrews is not saying that there is anything *wrong* with the Old Testament. It's simply incomplete, and awaits completeness which is intimately bound up with the coming of the Messiah.

In fact, he uses the OT greatly to prove his points; but he wants his readers to see that Jesus is superior; and therefore, so is the revelation that He gives us!

5. Does this warning in 2:1-4 not to "*drift away*" apply to us today? If so, how?
6. Could we possibly have any wrong or insufficient ideas about God from our cultural background that might cause us to "*drift away*" from this new revelation?  
If so, please explain. (Note: *all* cultures have both good and bad aspects.)
7. Many come from churches which strongly emphasize the Old Testament.  
Is it possible to put so much emphasis on the OT that one could miss the fact that it actually points us forward to the fulfilment of its prophecies in the NT?
8. What was the main purpose of miracles in Hebrews 2:4?
9. What does this passage teach us about the very important topic of death?  
Who "**had** the power of death?" (vs. 14)  
Who "rendered him powerless?"  
Why do you think so many people live their entire lives with a great fear of death?  
Is it possible to overcome our great fear of death? (vs. 15)  
If so, how?
10. If Jesus is indeed our "merciful and faithful high priest" (vs. 17), then can anyone else, living or dead, represent us before God and offer a perfect sacrifice for our sins?  
(Just begin to consider this. There will be much more on this in later lessons.)  
Why or why not?

## SUPPLEMENT ON "BIBLIOLOGY"

"Bibliology" refers to the Doctrine of Scripture. This area of systematic theology is concerned with what we believe about the nature of the Bible. Is the Bible the Word of God, of men, or both? Does the Bible contain any errors? Is it the only word that we have from God, or are there other sacred writings or "scriptures"? Here are some crucial terms with which we should be familiar, followed by a short definition and some key Scripture references.

**INSPIRATION** - refers to the process by which God spoke HIS words to and through the human authors in such a way that guarded them from error as they wrote. Please look at two key passages on this truth: 2Tim. 3:16-17 and 2Pet. 1:20-21.

**INERRANCY** - means "without error." When we say the Bible is inerrant we mean that every word of it is true. This is specifically applied to the "original manuscripts" the Biblical authors wrote. There were errors made in a few places in some of copies that scribes have made through the centuries, but we have so many manuscripts that we can confidently determine what the originals said.

**INFALLABILITY** - means that everything the Bible teaches is true, whether it is speaking about doctrine, geography, science, history, etc. See John 17:17.

**AUTHORITY** - Did you know that the OT alone uses phrases like, "Thus says the Lord", "The Lord says/said/spoke", etc. around 4,000 times? God, as our Creator, has the right to tell us what is true and how He wants us to live! We belong to Him twice over, once by creation and once by redemption. He is LORD!

**CLARITY** - means that the Scripture is "clear" enough for us to be able to understand what God is revealing, and thus to be saved and live a life which honours Him. It does NOT mean that everything in Scripture is easy to understand or that we don't need to diligently study the Bible.

**ILLUMINATION** - here we are speaking of the present work of the Holy Spirit helping us to *understand* the Word of God; 1Cor. 2:9-14. We are not "inspired" as the *writers* of Scripture were; we are "illumined" by the Spirit as *readers*.

**REVELATION** - we have already discussed this term at the beginning of our study of Hebrews. But now we want to observe that theologians speak of basically two types of revelation:

General revelation: this refers to God's revelation in creation (Rom. 1:18-20) and in man's conscience (Rom. 2:14-16). This type is common ("general") to all people.

Special revelation: this refers to the written words of God to man, the Scriptures.

A very important distinction to make here is that general revelation is sufficient to make one guilty before God (see Rom. 1:20), but it is not able or sufficient to save (Rom. 10:13-15). People need to respond in faith to God's special revelation in the Bible, particularly to the truth of the Gospel, in order to be saved. We will discuss this often as we go through the book of Hebrews, especially as we consider the significance of the OT sacrificial system and how it points forward to Jesus Christ!

**QUESTION**: Does sinful mankind *need* an inspired, inerrant, authoritative, written communication (special revelation) from a holy God? Why or why not?

## CHAPTER THREE: Hebrews 3:1-19

### III. THE THIRD MAJOR CONTRAST: (note: the comparison with angels is over) THE SON IS SUPERIOR TO MOSES (3:1-19)

#### A. THE SON'S SUPERIORITY TO MOSES BECAUSE OF HIS FAITHFUL HEADSHIP OVER THE NEW COVENANT "HOUSE" (3:1-6)

- <sup>1</sup> Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly [4:14] calling,<sup>44</sup>  
consider<sup>45</sup> Jesus, [4:14] the Apostle and High Priest [4:14] of our confession. [4:14]
- <sup>2</sup> He was **faithful** to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.
- <sup>3</sup> For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses,  
by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.
- <sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone,  
but the builder of all things is God.
- <sup>5</sup> Now Moses was **faithful** in all His house as a servant,  
for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later;<sup>46</sup>
- <sup>6</sup> but Christ was **faithful** as a Son  
over His house  
whose house we are, [cf. 1Tim.3:15 where this metaphor is clearly used of the church]  
if we hold fast our confidence and the boast<sup>47</sup> of our hope firm until the end.

In 2:1-3 he said that the message of the Son/Lord is greater than the message of the angels given at Mount Sinai.

This naturally raises a question about Moses' status, who is the one most closely associated with the giving of the Law. Christ came as the greater Moses!

#### 1. TWO POINTS OF SIMILARITY BETWEEN MOSES AND JESUS (3:1-2)

- a. vs. 1 - "consider" (NASB) or "fix your thoughts" (NIV) means to set your mind or attention continuously on Jesus as the only two-way Mediator between God and man.  
In 4:14 and 10:23 he will call them to "hold fast" to this "confession".

OFFICE	MOSES: the type (the Old Covenant)	JESUS: the Anti-type (the New Covenant)
as "Apostle"	he was sent by the Father to give His Law to Israel	He was sent by the Father to reveal Him to all nations
as "High Priest"	he interceded with God for Israel as their representative	He represents people to the Father from all nations

- b. vs. 2 - both "Apostles" were faithful to God in their responsibilities.  
"House" (used 6 times here) refers to their *sphere* of work/calling.

Moses' "house" was limited to ethnic Israel, involving the Exodus from Egypt.

<sup>44</sup> The "calling" of the saints is called the "effectual calling" of the Spirit to distinguish it from a general calling, defined as an earthly calling going out to all who hear the gospel. Gouge. *Commentary*, 1:199-205.

<sup>45</sup> Calvin, 77, "the word *consider*, is important, for it intimates that singular attention is required ...And to encourage them the more to pursue this study, he reminds them of their *calling*;"

<sup>46</sup> Calvin, 81, "the end and completion of the Law is that perfection of wisdom contained in the Gospel. This exposition seems to comport with the future tense of the participle."

<sup>47</sup> In English "boasting" usually has connotations not existent in Greek, where the sense is a super-abundant rejoicing. See the exposition of Christian "rejoicing in hope" by Gouge. *Commentary*, 1:228-231.

Jesus' "house" is universal because His work involves the true exodus from sin and death for all believers from **all** the nations! See Rev. 5:9 and 7:9.

## 2. POINTS OF CONTRAST BETWEEN MOSES AND JESUS (3:3-6)

- a. vs. 3 - gives us the reason why we must 'set our minds/eyes' on Jesus: because His glory far outweighs that of Moses, just as a contractor who builds a house has greater honour than the house itself.  
Note: the terms "glory" and "honour" certainly recall Heb. 2:7 and 9.
- b. vs. 4 – "for" (conjunction) introduces the explanation of the house metaphor: He is the builder/contractor of "all things" (1:2, 8, 10-12), that is, of the entire universe! This is the basis of the Great Commission to go into all the world in Matt. 28:18-20!
- c. vs. 5a - Moses' status (as servant) and significance (faithful) is now examined. In Numbers 12, Jehovah speaks in Moses' defence that he is superior to the prophets because he received God's Word directly.

Num. 12:7 says "*My servant Moses ... is faithful in all My house.*"

- d. vs. 5b-6a:
  - 1. yet, Moses was still classified as "**a servant**" (this unique Greek word emphasizes an honourable and dignified office) who was accountable to God as a subordinate not born in the family.  
But, Jesus is "**a Son!**", the One who inherits everything! [recall 1:2] <sup>48</sup>
  - 2. Jesus is not just "*in*" the house like Moses, but He is "*over*" it as LORD!  
In fact, it is His house because He made/built it! (vs. 5b)
  - 3. Moses himself testified of things which pointed forward to a greater revelation yet to come - vs. 6a.

The revelation spoken "in the Son" (1:1-2) is the fulfilment of that!  
This shows the unity and harmony of the Old and New Testaments.

- e. vs. 6b - conclusion: we are part of His house 'if our confidence is strong enough to boldly maintain our public hope in Jesus' future revelation of man's lost glory and honour.'  
Recall the pre-context of the quotation and application of Psa. 8 in 2:6-9.

That is, if we persevere to the end, as vs.14 states, we are His house.  
Compare James 2:14-26 on the relationship between true faith and good works; compare this with Matt. 3:8 and 7:15-23.

OT background: see 1Chr. 17:11-14, 1Sam. 2:35 and Zech. 6:12-13.  
Jesus, the Son of David, will build an everlasting house (i.e. people) for God.

---

<sup>48</sup> Calvin, 81, "but Christ, though he put on the form of a servant, is yet Master and Lord, to whom all ought to be subject; for as we found in chap. i.2, he is constituted heir of all things."

## B. AN ADMONITION TO THE “HOUSE” AGAINST UNFAITHFULNESS (3:7-19)<sup>49</sup>

### 1. THE OT TEXT, Psa. 95:7b-11, WHICH HE WILL THEN EXPLAIN (3:7-11)

- <sup>7</sup> *Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,*  
    *"Today if you hear His voice,*  
    <sup>8</sup> *do not harden your hearts [3:12, 13, 15]*  
        *as when they provoked Me, [3:15-16]*  
        *as in the day of trial*  
            *in the wilderness, [gives the historical context]*  
    <sup>9</sup> *where your fathers tried Me by testing Me,*  
        *and saw My works for forty years.*  
    <sup>10</sup> *"Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, [3:17]*  
        *'They always go astray in their heart;*  
        *and they did not know My ways';*  
    <sup>11</sup> *As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' [3:18-19]*

Verses 7-11 serve introduce a long section of admonition (note the repetition of the word “heart”) containing both encouragement and strong exhortation.

To stress the great danger of turning back, he quotes **Psalm 95:7b-11** to point out the parallels (similarities) between the audience’s present situation and that of those in the wilderness with Moses.

Recall that the latter died in the desert and did NOT enter the Promised Land (**Num. 14:23, 29**).

Lesson: if we fail to follow Jesus, we also will NOT enter into the reality of what God has promised to His true people, that is, His true eternal rest!

Principle: mere profession is not possession!

**NOTE: In 3:12-4:13 he now applies Psalm 95 to these Hebrew “brethren” (and to us too!), first in the form of a stern admonition in 3:12-19, which is followed by a milder exhortation/application in 4:1-13.**

### 2. THE SECOND OF FIVE MAJOR WARNINGS IN HEBREWS (3:12-19)

- <sup>12</sup> *\*See to it, brethren, [\*serves to mark an inclusion – see note on 3:19]*  
    *lest there should be in any one of you an evil, \*unbelieving heart, [3:19]*  
    *in falling away from the living God.<sup>50</sup>*  
    <sup>13</sup> *But encourage one another day after day,*  
        *as long as it is still called "Today," [3:7, 15]*  
        *lest any one of you [3:12] be hardened<sup>51</sup> [3:8] by the deceitfulness of sin.*  
    <sup>14</sup> *For we have become partakers of Christ,*  
        *if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end; [3:6b]*  
    <sup>15</sup> *while it is said,*  
        *"Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts,*  
        *as when they provoked Me." [3:7-8]*

<sup>49</sup> See Calvin, 83-92

<sup>50</sup> We should not assume that one who has been bought by Christ's blood and became a true child of God can finally fall away from Him. The antecedent here is one who is professing to believe, yet within him actually exists an “unbelieving heart.” For more on this with objections answered, see Gouge. *Comm.*, 1:268-271.

<sup>51</sup> A good discussion on the hardening of man's heart may be found in Gouge. *Commentary*, 1:238-243.

(Note the shift to a series of rhetorical questions climaxing in a conclusion.)

- <sup>16</sup> For [explains] *who provoked Him* [3:15] *when they had heard?* [2:1, 3]  
Indeed, did not all *those who* came out of Egypt led by Moses? [3:2b-5]  
<sup>17</sup> And with whom was He angry for forty years? [3:10]  
Was it not with *those who* sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?  
<sup>18</sup> And to whom did He swear that they should not *enter His rest*, [3:11]  
but to *those who* were *disobedient*?  
<sup>19</sup> And so we *\*see* that they were not able to *enter* because of *\*unbelief*. [3:12]

- a. vs. 12 - begins a strong admonition that we carefully examine our hearts:

Unbelief characterizes an evil "*heart*" (that is, the core of one's being),

Unbelief is turning away from God, rebelling against Him and His Word;  
the worship of the golden calf in Ex. 32 is a prime of rebellion, even though Israel had just seen God do many mighty things for them!

**Lesson:** the point is that 'if you abandon faith in the Son, then you are rebelling against God just like those under Moses in the dessert.'

- b. vs. 13 - this verse brings a strong sense of urgency to the warning;  
we are to encourage one another every day to persevere in our shared faith.

"*Today*" - that is, 'attend to this danger daily because the sin of unbelief can sneak up on you and harden you though you are unaware of it.' [recall 2:1]  
Sin is personified as if it's someone who is always trying to deceive us.

- c. vs. 14 – at this point he calls his readers to a steadfast continuance.

An issue is what the phrase "*partakers with Christ*" (NASB) or "*to share in Christ*" (NIV) actually means:

Some say it only means to be companions or partners with Christ.  
Thus, it could be a reference to one's *profession* of faith in Christ.

Others say it refers to participation with Him in His promised kingdom,  
which is not dependent on a mere profession of faith, but on the *reality* of  
that profession which will be demonstrated by a life which continues to  
follow Christ. This is similar to Heb. 12:28.

Again, this is the very message of James 2! True faith will show itself  
in good works; no good works means there is no genuine faith.

- d. vs. 15 - he returns to Psalm 95 and calls our attention to the urgency again.  
The time will come when the opportunity for believing will be past,  
so he pleads with them to believe *now* while the invitation is still open.

If this is the correct interpretation, he seems to be addressing *some* unbelievers  
in their midst, whom he addresses as "*any one of you*" in 3:12-13 (in contrast  
to "we" and "our" in 3:14), and is comparing *them* with those in the  
wilderness who did not enter the Promised Land because of unbelief.

Surely the author would have been concerned that there may be *some* professing believers among them who had not yet experienced God's salvation, even though they had joined the local congregation.

- e. vs. 16-18 continues with a series of 'rhetorical questions' (that is, questions where the answer is obvious) which are used to drive home the main lesson that we can learn from Israel's 40 years in the wilderness.

The focus is on both the penalty and nature of their sin:

(1) the penalty of their sin - they did not enter; that is, they never experienced the realisation/fulfilment of God's promises.  
Why? because of ...

(2) ... the nature of their sin - *unbelief*, which was the source of their *disobedience*, and eventually led to their *death*.

Israel had experienced God's gracious dealings, yet rebelled against Him in the wilderness. Why were they disobedient? See verse 19 for the root cause.

The same may be said of some today in the church who merely profess Christ, but don't really believe and live as true followers of God.

Contrast: as unbelief leads to disobedience, faith leads to obedience.

- f. vs. 19 - this final verse also marks the sobering conclusion of chapter 3.

Although they were outwardly members of the covenant community and experienced many of God's blessings, they did not enter the Promised Land (the "rest" in the historical context of Psa. 95) because they did not take God at His Word, which is *unbelief* - this is the last and thus emphatic word in chapter 3, both in Greek and in most English translations.

Structure: both terms \**"see"* and \**"unbelief"* are found in 3:12 and repeated in 3:19. These terms serve to frame this as a paragraph, forming an *inclusion*. The intentionality of these as markers is supported by the fact that these are the only two uses of this Greek term for unbelief in all of Hebrews.<sup>52</sup>

Flow: he now begins to shift from the historical context of the generation of Israel in the wilderness under Moses to the 'present' situation of these Hebrews Christians (and by application to us today!) by saying, in effect:

'watch out lest any of you also fail to enter God's eternal rest (the "rest" in this context) for the very same reason - *unbelief*.'

[In the next lesson we will discuss the use of the term "*rest*" in Scripture.]

---

<sup>52</sup> See Lane, 83, for support and further details.

#### IV. THE FOURTH MAJOR CONTRAST: THE SON IS SUPERIOR TO JOSHUA (4:1-13), AND THUS THE SON'S "REST" IS SUPERIOR TO JOSHUA'S

##### A. DON'T YOU ALSO FAIL TO ENTER GOD'S ETERNAL REST! (4:1-5)

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains [4:6, 9] of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.

<sup>2</sup> For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also<sup>53</sup>; [4:6] but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by **faith** in those who heard.<sup>54</sup> [3:16]

<sup>3</sup> For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest," [3:11] although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

<sup>4</sup> For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh day, "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; [Gen. 2:2]

<sup>5</sup> and again in this passage, "They shall not enter My rest." [Psa. 95:11]

1. vs. 1 - "Therefore" marks a transition to the application of the warning in 3:12-19 to the current situation of his audience. Thus, 4:1-13 should be seen as applying the argument from 3:12-19 to them personally.<sup>55</sup>

"Remains" is repeated in 4:6, 9 – the invitation still open! It is still "Today"! Note that the author is still commenting on the end of **Psalm 95:11**, which he quotes 2 more times for emphasis (4:3, 5).

Parallel: just as their Jewish ancestors in the desert failed to enter the promised land of Canaan because of unbelief, he is concerned that *some* of them are in similar danger of failing to enter God's eternal rest.

"Fear" (NASB) or "*be careful*" (NIV) refers to an appropriate anxiety which comes from knowing that God keeps His word and will indeed punish unbelief by denying "His rest" to all those without faith in Him.

2. vs. 2 - "For" introduces an explanation: he draws another parallel between those in the time of Moses and them - both groups had "good news" preached to them, as follows:

past: deliverance from bondage to Egypt *and* entering the land [the *type*];  
present: freedom from bondage to sin *and* entering His eternal rest

<sup>53</sup> This phrase "just as they also" proves that salvation by grace through faith has always been how men are saved. This directly refutes the old dispensationalists; see Gouge, *Commentary*, 1:296, Sec. 17.

<sup>54</sup> Calvin, 94, "But we must here observe the connection between the word and faith. It is such that faith is not to be separated from the word, and that the word separated from faith can confer no good; not indeed that the efficacy or power of the word depends on us;"

<sup>55</sup> Ellingworth, 237. "4:1 marks a watershed between two phases in the exposition of the quotation from Ps. 95. In the first phase (3:12-19) the quotation was viewed in the light of Nu. 14; attention was concentrated on the past historical situation; and the predominant note was one of warning. In the second phase (4:1-11), the psalm is related to Gn. 2:2; attention is concentrated on the application of scripture to the readers' situation; and the note of promise, present from v. 1 onwards, comes to predominate over that of warning."



[the *antitype* – that is, the ultimate reality of the new heavens and earth!].  
The lesson is that hearing the "*good news*" must be united with faith in order to profit the listener (see Romans 10:17).

3. vs. 3 - The form of the Greek word for "*enter*" suggests a process (linear action); "*believed*" refers to the point of genuine conversion in the past; so this may mean, 'we who have *believed* are already in the process of *entering* that eternal rest'.

God's eternal rest has been made available to those who have faith ever since He had rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day after His work of creation, Gen.2:2.

4. vs. 4 - "*For*" explains the last part of vs. 3; (as in Heb. 2:6, he stresses the Divine authorship and authority of the OT – it is God Himself Who says this!).

The application of God's rest from creation is the OT weekly Sabbath rest after 6 days of work. The Sabbath was the *last* day of the week, not the first.

After Jesus' resurrection on the day after the Sabbath (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:12), the NT believers worshipped on the *first* day of the week, that is, Sunday (cf. Acts 20:7; 1Cor. 16:1-2). Rev.1:10 thus calls it "*the Lord's day*."

Seventh-day Adventists, who insist that corporate worship services be held on Saturday (the seventh day) fail to recognize this transition in the NT church.

5. vs. 5 - he ties this to Canaan's conquest and Psalm 95.

\*This is now the third time he has referred to God's oath in Psalm 95; recall 3:11 and 4:3. Why do you think he keeps on stressing this?

Note the 2 major points of emphasis:

- (a) God's judgment, according to His oath, kept them from entering;
- (b) it is a rest which comes from and belongs first to God, which He makes available to all who follow Him in faith.

## **B. IT IS STILL "TODAY", SO MAKE EVERY EFFORT (BE DILIGENT) TO ENTER HIS REST NOW! (4:6-11)**

<sup>6</sup> Since therefore it **remains** [4:1, 9] for some to enter it,  
and those who formerly had good news preached to them [4:2]  
failed to enter because of disobedience, [3:18-19; 4:11 - possible inclusion]

<sup>7</sup> He again fixes a certain day, "**Today**,"  
saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before,  
"**Today** if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest,<sup>56</sup>  
He would not have spoken of another day after that.

<sup>9</sup> There **remains** therefore a Sabbath rest<sup>57</sup> for the people of God.

<sup>10</sup> For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works,  
as God did from His. [4:3-4]

<sup>56</sup> Calvin, 97, on this rest – "he denies this to be the final rest to which the faithful aspire ... for it is certain that they looked higher than to that land ... it was an image and a symbol of the spiritual inheritance."

<sup>57</sup> Calvin, 98, translates this single Greek word as "sabbathizing" and understands it as a present "spiritual rest."

<sup>11</sup> *Let us [4:1 – probable inclusion] therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience. [4:6]*

1. vs. 6 - since it is God's rest and not man's, it still exists in the gospel of Jesus Christ and therefore is available "today"; that is, right now! This parallels 4:1. The former invitation extended to ones who:
  - (a) did not believe God's promise,
  - (b) wanted to return to Egypt,
  - (c) did not trust God to conquer the giants in Canaan; Num. 14.

Again, unbelief is manifested in disobedience, as in 3:18-19.

2. vs. 7 - God is setting a limit on His offer of rest - "Today", yet it was not just a one-time offer, as proven by the fact that David said it over 400 years after the time of Moses and Joshua!  
Lesson: Every day is a new "today"! The invitation stays open until Jesus returns!

Application: God is still speaking in the preaching of this good news, offering His rest through His Word, even "a long time later" (NIV), so preach it *now* while there is still the opportunity for response to the "good news" of the true gospel.

3. vs. 8 – even those who entered Canaan under Joshua did not experience God's *true* rest to which it pointed forward. Otherwise, He would not still be offering it much later through David by saying "Today".

Thus, the promised land of Canaan was not the true rest, but only a "type" or a picture of the eternal rest in heaven, the holy city (the new Jerusalem, Rev. 21-22) or "country" for all who believe; see Heb. 11:13-16.

4. vs. 9 - "therefore" (NASB) or "then" (NIV) introduces a conclusion: beyond the time of Israel's conquest of Canaan, a Sabbath rest has been left for all the people of God to enter, whether Jew or Gentile.

It is unlikely that this refers to Sunday as the day of rest and worship in the NT - see Acts 20:7 and 1Cor. 16:2.

Remember that this is also a type (a picture which points forward) of the believer's rest that we have as Christians *now*, which in turn also points forward to the full and complete eternal rest we will experience in heaven (the "not yet"). He links God's offer of rest with His own rest on the 7<sup>th</sup> day (quoting Gen. 2:2); this has the idea of ceasing, and ...

5. vs. 10 - ... to enter His rest is to cease from our works just as God did from His.

Flow: "*The brief statement of v. 9 is expanded with reference to both Ps. 95:11 and Gn. 2:2.*" <sup>58</sup>

Eph. 2:8, 9 - how do we enter His rest? By grace through faith (believing the "good news", v. 6) in Jesus Christ; we don't earn His rest by doing good works. Note that "has entered" is past tense – we have already entered the believers rest! Jesus, the Son, promised "rest" to those who would come to Him in faith, Matt. 10:28; 11:28, 29. He wasn't offering an easy life, as some say!

---

<sup>58</sup> Ellingworth, 255.

6. vs. 11 - entrance into God's full and final eternal rest is still future,  
*when* Jesus' work is fully consummated (Heb. 2:8-9),  
*when* the kingdom of God will be fully established at Jesus' second coming.

But, we *begin* to enter God's rest in this life by faith; the believer's rest in this life is a foretaste of our future, eternal, and perfect rest in heaven.

**C. THE AUTHORITY OF THIS INVITATION TO ENTER HIS REST:  
HIS POWERFUL WORD (4:12) AND HIS PERVASIVE JUDGEMENT (4:13)**

<sup>12</sup> *For the word of God is living and active  
and sharper than any two-edged sword,  
and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow,  
and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.* [3:12]

<sup>13</sup> *And <sup>59</sup> there is no creature hidden from His sight,  
but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.*<sup>60</sup>

1. vs. 12 – in the context, this means that God's warning in Psalm 95 is still in force now, today! The invitation to respond to His Word still “remains” open!  
His Word is quick/alive and divinely active, producing effective results.  
His power is in the preached Word, summarized in the gospel – see Rom. 1:16.

This emphasis is not on separation by dividing, but on “the extreme power of penetration of the word of God to the very core of man’s being” (Reinecker, 2:330 quoting Hughes).

Lesson: again, we must remember that the power is in the Word, not in us!

Application: where is our confidence? In God and His Word, or in ourselves?

Cf. Isaiah 55:10-11 - "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,  
and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout,  
and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;  
so shall **My Word** be **which goes forth from My mouth**;  
it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire,  
and without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it."

2. vs. 13 - "*Him*" (the author makes no distinction between God and His word).  
He attributes this dynamic living quality of God's word in Psa. 95 to God Himself!

Note the powerful all-encompassing authority of God's word to sit in judgment over every creature.

Every person has a future appointment, whether ready or not, to stand before God because His judgment seat is inescapable!

---

<sup>59</sup> Calvin, 105, “The conjunction here is casual, and may be rendered *for*; for in order to confirm this truth, that whatever is hid in man is discerned and judged by God’s word, he draws an argument from the nature of God himself... as it is God’s office to search the heart, so he performs this examination by his word.”

<sup>60</sup> This is a divine corrective against those that think that because our sins are forgiven in Christ that God does not see our sin. He still sees our sin indeed, for “all things are open and laid bare,” however, he now deals with us as our Father and we his sons, rather than as rebellious enemies, which we once were without Christ. For more exposition to this effect, see Gouge, *Commentary*, 1:330-332, especially Sec. 78.

### **QUESTIONS – Chapter 3**

1. Write a definition of "unbelief":
2. If a person is looking to ancestors or other spirits for help, guidance, etc., instead of looking to God, is that actually “unbelief” in God?  
  
Why or why not?
3. Leaders, is it possible that there are some unbelievers in your congregations?  
  
What are some ways that this unbelief might be expressed in their lives?
4. If you think a church member is an unbeliever, what should you do?
5. How then should we respond to this second major warning in the book of Hebrews?
6. The idea of "rest" is a very broad concept throughout the Scriptures.  
From the comments above, try to identify 5 biblical uses of "rest" which God or man enters. Hints for each of the 5 are provided in parenthesis!
  - a. (in Genesis) -
  - b. (a weekly rest pattern) -
  - c. (in the time of Moses and Joshua) -
  - d. (Jesus promises this rest *now* to all who come to Him) -
  - e. (believers are still looking forward to this final rest) -
7. Please take a moment to discuss the relationships between these five aspects of “rest”:  
  
Does one point to another? Is there a progression? If so, explain.
8. In chapters 3 and 4 the author often draws the attention of his audience back to their Jewish ancestors in the time of Moses and Joshua.  
  
Why do you think he does this?
9. The Israelites with Moses saw God do many miracles - the 10 plagues, the parting of the sea, drowning the Egyptians, providing manna 6 days a week, seeing the pillar cloud by day and the fire at night - and yet they still did not believe and thus did not enter God's rest (then, the land).  
  
Do you think it is possible for a person to experience or even perform miracles today, and yet still be an unbeliever? Explain.
10. Are miracles alone enough to prove that a movement is from God?  
  
Explain and defend your answers.

**V. THE FIFTH MAJOR CONTRAST: THE SON IS SUPERIOR TO THE OT HIGH PRIEST AND THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD (4:14-7:28)**

This is the longest section/unit of the (mostly) teaching portion (1:1-10:18) of the book! All of the previous sections appear to be building up to this very extensive examination of Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest and our Great Sacrifice!

Shift: the rebuking tone of 3:7-4:13 is temporarily over, but it will resume in 5:11-6:8.

**A. 2 EXHORTATIONS SINCE HE IS OUR "GREAT HIGH PRIEST" (4:14-16)**

<sup>14</sup> *Since then [an inference]<sup>61</sup> we have a great \*High Priest [first use since 3:1] who has passed through the \*heavens, [first use since 3:1; 7:26] \*Jesus [first use since 3:1; 2:9] the Son of God, let us hold fast our \*confession.<sup>62</sup> [\*NB: all 4 terms repeated from 3:1 = inclusion]*

<sup>15</sup> *For we do not have a High Priest [3:1] who cannot **sympathize** [2:17-18] with our weaknesses, [extended in 5:2] but One who has been **tempted** [2:18] in all things [2:17] as we are, yet without sin.*

<sup>16</sup> *Let us therefore draw near with confidence [3:6] to the throne of grace,<sup>63</sup> that we may receive **mercy** [2:17] and may find grace to **help** [2:18] in time of need.*

In these 3 transitional verses, he challenges them with 2 exhortations marked off by repetition of the glorious title “High Priest” and the exhortation marked by “let us”.

\*Structure: the first exhortation in 4:14 repeats 4 terms from 3:1 which serve both to frame and summarize 3:1-4:14 regarding our very **faithful** (2:17) High Priest! The second exhortation in 4:15-16 clearly shifts to introduce the topic of Jesus as our **merciful** High Priest, as evidenced by a return to many related terms from 2:17-18.<sup>64</sup>

1. vs. 14 - The first exhortation is to “hold fast/firmly” [3:6] to the faith they profess. Why? Because of the superiority of Jesus Christ as especially seen in His unique ministry as our faithful (3:1-4:14) Great High Priest!

He is “*Great*” because He is the only Priest who is also a Prophet and a King (recall chapter 1), certainly never true of any other high priest!

We thus speak of the 3 “offices” which Jesus fulfilled: Prophet, Priest and King.

“*Great*” means that He is no ordinary high priest, but the very Son of God who is now exalted and seated at the Father's right hand (recall 1:3) in glory.

The phrase, “*through the heavens*” is a foreshadow of 9:11-12, and 24. He did not enter a temporary earthly tabernacle or temple merely built by men, like all previous priests under the old covenant.

Rather, He entered God's heavenly sanctuary, and He is still there (the perfect tense of the Greek verb indicates this)! Cf. 7:25; 9:24.

<sup>61</sup> Calvin, 106.

<sup>62</sup> Calvin, 107, sees this “as a metonymy for faith”, but as in 3:1 it may refer to the context of chapters. 1-2.

<sup>63</sup> Calvin, 111, “The import of the whole is, that we are to call upon God without fear ...” in contrast to ATR.

<sup>64</sup> See Lane, 111, for an extensive explanation.

vs. 15 - here he gives them yet another reason to "*hold firmly*" to the faith; because He became one with us and thus sympathizes (this means to share the experience of) with our human weaknesses, and with the power of the temptations we all face (again, this very clearly recalls the transitional verses in 2:17-18).

Here we see Jesus' full humanity reinforced (recall 2:5-18 and the supplement on Christology). But, He never sinned, unlike all the other high priests who served.

**Lesson:** since He has experienced every type of temptation, He knows exactly what we feel and He fully understands our weaknesses and trials/sufferings.

**Summary:** HE IS OUR SYMPATHETIC AND SINLESS HIGH PRIEST!

2. vs. 16 - the second exhortation in this paragraph: because He is so merciful, we can "draw near" to (NASB) or "approach" (NIV) God's throne of grace!

This same word is used of the priestly approach to God's Presence in the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, abbreviated LXX.

That is, we can approach Him in prayer with complete "*confidence*" (also 3:6) in His grace and in His ability to "*help*" us (recalling and expanding 2:16 and 18). The opposite of such confidence is "*fear*" (recall 2:14-18) of judgement.

As we come to the Father through the Son, we don't receive the just punishment for our sin that we deserve (this we call "*mercy*"), but we do receive God's grace which we don't deserve, all because of the sacrifice which the Son offered for us - His own righteous life!

**Lesson:** This Priest-King's eternal throne is characterized by grace and **mercy**! What a contrast to the tone of God's thorough judgement in 4:12-13!

## **B. HE IS A BETTER PRIEST: SUPERIOR TO THE LEVITICAL HIGH PRIEST (5:1-10)**

Note that he now begins to develop a very strong argument for the superiority of Jesus' priestly work over that of the entire Aaronic priesthood descended from Levi (thus they are called "Levitical priests"). This chiasmic unit has 2 parts: <sup>65</sup>

### **1. FIVE REQUIREMENTS OF A LEVITICAL HIGH PRIEST (5:1-4) – The Type**

<sup>1</sup> For every high priest [5:10] taken from among men is \*appointed [7:28 twice] [A]  
on behalf of men in things pertaining to God,  
in order [purpose] to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins;

<sup>2</sup> he can deal gently<sup>66</sup> with the ignorant and misguided,  
since he himself also is beset with weakness; [4:15; 7:28]

<sup>3</sup> and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, [5:1] [B]  
as for the people, so also for himself.

<sup>4</sup> And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by [C]  
God, even as Aaron was. [note how this parallels 5:5-6 regarding Christ!]

- a. Solidarity with humanity, vs.1 (recall Jesus' humanity in 2:10-18 and 4:15).

<sup>65</sup> Ellingworth, 271. "The generally chiasmic structure of 5:1–10 is widely recognized ..." cf. Lane, 111-112.

<sup>66</sup> Calvin, 114-5, says this term "means one capable of sympathy." Cf. 4:15 and the theme of 4:15-7:28.

- b. He must represent men to God, vs.1 (recall 1:3 and 2:17).  
Flow: it is interesting to note that 5:1 is repeated almost identically in 8:3.
- c. Humility: He must deal gently with the "*ignorant and wandering*"; with one definite article for both nouns, this phrase seems to refer to one class of sinners who erred through ignorance, vs. 2a (note: no provision was made under the Law for those who sinned deliberately, as in 6:4-6; Num. 15:27-31).
- d. He must offer sacrifices for sins, *both* for the people and for himself!  
Why for himself?  
Because he is 'encircled by the same chains of weakness', 5:2b; 4:15.  
This was a moral obligation required daily by the necessity of their sinful condition, not voluntarily, vs. 3; see also 7:27.
- e. He must be appointed by God, not himself, to this honour (self-initiative does not qualify a person to become a high priest), vs. 4.  
OT background story: Korah's rebellion in Num. 16 was over this issue!

## 2. JESUS CHRIST HAS MET ALL 5 OF THESE QUALIFICATIONS!

(5:5-10) – The Antitype! [Note that Christ's fulfilment is given in reverse order.]

<sup>5</sup> So also **Christ** did not glorify Himself so as to become a **High Priest**, [C']  
but He who said to Him,

"You are My Son, Today I have begotten You";

<sup>6</sup> just as He says also in another passage,

"You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." [ch.7]

<sup>7</sup> In the days of His flesh, He offered up [5:3] both prayers and supplications [B']  
with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death,  
and He was heard because of His piety.

<sup>8</sup> Although He was a **Son**, [5:5]

He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. [2:18; 4:15]

<sup>9</sup> And having been made perfect,<sup>67</sup> [7:28]

He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,

<sup>10</sup> being designated by God as a **High Priest** according to the order of Melchizedek. [A']

- a. vs. 5 - Jesus' placement in His office came not from Himself, but from the Father who spoke the words recorded in Psalms 2:7.

In 1:5 he quoted this verse to show the Son's superiority over angels.

"*Begotten*" refers not to human birth, but to the Father placing Jesus in His Messianic Sonship; eternally He is the Son of God, but He *became* the Messiah in history to meet these earthly qualifications.

There is a similar idea in Colossians 1 where Jesus is called "the first-born of all creation" (vs. 15) and "the first-born from the dead." (vs. 18).

- b. vs. 6 - he also quotes the Father's words about the Son in Psalm 110:4 to introduce the Melchizedekian priesthood as the Messianic one, in contrast to the Aaronic order or the Levitical priesthood.

<sup>67</sup> Calvin, 124, "Here is the ultimate end ... why it was necessary for Christ to suffer; it was that he might thus become initiated into his priesthood ... a solemn kind of consecration."

This will be fully developed later in chapter 7, which will serve to prove Jesus' divine appointment as our Great High Priest.

- c. vs. 7 – provides an example of the humanity and "weakness" of the Son which qualifies Him as a compassionate priest who is able to offer up effective prayers to God; see vs. 2-3.

This refers to His Gethsemane experience in Luke 22:44; the emphasis is on His humanity and thus His oneness with us in our weakness.

- d. vs. 8 – “*Although*” marks a paradox: since He set aside His independent use of His divine attributes (NOT His divinity!), He learned experientially as a man to perfectly obey the Father’s will, especially when He suffered.

A similar idea is found in Lk. 22:52, “*And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*”; see also Phil. 2:7.

This is not a denial of His full divinity, but rather proof or evidence of His true humanity. He became fully human without giving up His deity. He is *both* 100% God *and* 100% man! (not half God and half man)

- e. vs. 9 - “*being made perfect*” describes His obedience in vs. 8.  
OT background: after being consecrated to the priesthood by suffering as a Man, He became the cause of everlasting deliverance, not for all, but only for “all those who obey Him” (unlike Israel in the wilderness).

Obeys is sometimes a synonym for believe - see John 3:36, 1Pet. 1:22, and Rom. 10:16. This is not salvation by works, but sincere belief in Him.

- f. vs. 10 – God Himself, as recorded in Psa. 110:4, designated the Son as an eternal High Priest. This looks back to vs. 6 which also quoted Psa. 110:4, and serves as a **summary** - His priesthood is patterned after Melchizedek's order, not after the order of Aaron according to the Law.

Verses 6, 9, and 10 all emphasize the eternity of His priestly work.

### C. WARNING AGAINST DEGENERATION OR APOSTASY (5:11-6:8)<sup>68</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become sluggish [this term is only used here and in 6:12 in the entire NT].

<sup>12</sup> For though by this time you ought to be teachers,  
you have need again for someone to teach you  
the elementary principles of the oracles of God, [5:13; 6:1] and  
you have come to need milk<sup>69</sup> and not solid food.

<sup>13</sup> For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to  
the word of righteousness, [5:12] for he is a babe.

<sup>14</sup> But solid food is for the mature, [6:1b]  
who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

<sup>68</sup> For an extensive, exegetical analysis of this challenging passage, see Ellingworth, 297-328.

<sup>69</sup> Calvin, 128, “Milk then means an elementary doctrine suitable to the ignorant.” Passage: Calvin, 125-141.



- <sup>1</sup> *Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ,  
let us press on to maturity, [exhortation; note pronoun shift from “you” to “us/we”]  
not laying again a foundation  
of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,*
- <sup>2</sup> *of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands,  
and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*
- <sup>3</sup> *And this we shall do, if God permits.<sup>70</sup>*
- <sup>4</sup> *For in the case of  
those who have once been enlightened [note shift to “those who”, “them/they”]  
and have tasted of the heavenly gift  
and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,*
- <sup>5</sup> *and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,*
- <sup>6</sup> *and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance,  
since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.<sup>71</sup>*
- <sup>7</sup> *For [explains vs. 4-6] ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it  
and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled,<sup>72</sup>  
receives a blessing from God;*
- <sup>8</sup> *but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed,  
and it ends up being burned.*

**\*Note:** this is the third, and longest, of the 5 major warnings in Hebrews.

1. vs. 11-12: he begins this warning by speaking of their spiritual immaturity:
  - a. They were not yet ready to understand everything necessary about the priestly order of Melchizedek (vs. 10) because they had become sluggish/slow (NIV) in their listening/learning (NIV). This term is only found here and in 6:12.

Structure: therefore, he issued this very strong warning (5:11-6:8) followed by equally strong words of encouragement (6:9-20), before returning to the lengthy subject of Melchizedek as recorded in all of chapter 7.

Notice that 5:11-6:20a is thus actually a parenthesis in his discussion about Melchizedek. Read 5:10 again and then observe that 6:20b picks up exactly where he left off in 5:10!

Application: diligent listening is important/essential for grasping deep spiritual truths.

Discussion: Church leaders must disciple members to root them firmly in God's word, not continually evangelise them weekly as if they are lost!

- b. They have professed belief long enough to be teachers, yet still need to be taught the basic foundational elements (the ABC's we might say) of God's revelation (self-disclosure).

<sup>70</sup> Calvin, 135, "... progress in our course is the special gift of God."

<sup>71</sup> See Calvin, 135-44 on 6:4-10.

<sup>72</sup> Calvin, 140, "... so they who receive the seed of the Gospel into their hearts and bring forth genuine shoots, will always make progress until they produce ripe fruit."

Problem: they have not grown spiritually; they should be chewing meat by now, but still need milk (1Cor.3:1), that is, lessons designed for beginners.

2. vs. 13: expands on the vivid/clear imagery of physical development in vs. 12.

Why can't they digest meat? Because of their failure to practice the "word of righteousness", the gospel message, which results in justification.

The phrase "*not acquainted with*" (NIV) in the Greek has the idea of being unskilled, lacking experience, infant-like, untested, and ignorant.

3. vs. 14: this verse gives the opposite side: meat is for the mature!

From the Greek word for "*training*" we get the English word "gymnasium." Unlike athletes who practice diligently, they have not been wrestling with spiritual truths, thus they have not develop their spiritual muscles. Physical muscles that are not used weaken; this is called atrophy. The readers have spiritual atrophy.

Application: are we and our people regularly eating the meat of the Word?

4. vs. 6:1a: challenge: go beyond the elementary understanding of the difference between Judaism and Christian Messianic teaching, to a deeper understanding of the implications of your confession of faith in Jesus as Messiah.

"*Laying aside the foundation*" is another image - a foundation is laid to build a structure on, so he is exhorting them to get on with building the Christian church on the solid foundation that God provided in the OT.

This superiority of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant is, as we have seen, is the very theme of this book!

This is why we said at the start of our study that the book of Hebrews is one of the most important books of the Bible to be studied and taught/preached in the modern African context.

5. vs. 1b-2: here he identifies 6 basic truths (ABC's) of these OT Messianic teachings as foundations upon which they were to build their faith:

- a. "repentance from dead works" means that works can't save you,
- b. "faith" - trusting in God's provision of the Messiah for eternal life as presented in this letter (most of the audience have done so),
- c. baptism/washings – this pictures cleansing by the blood of Christ,
- d. the laying on of hands – perhaps a "rite" welcoming one into the church,
- e. the resurrection from the dead,
- f. and, the final judgment.

Note: a faithful Jew who understood his OT would have believed in all these!

6. vs. 3: says they will advance past these by the grace and power of God!

This actually expresses his good will toward them and his hope that for most of them their profession of faith is indeed genuine, as in 6:9ff.

7. vs. 4a: "*For*" (NASB) signals why his confidence in their growth is only a hope at this point rather than a certainty.
8. vs. 4b-5: he now shares why he has this uncertainty for *some* of them using  
4 PHRASES TO DESCRIBE THOSE WHOM HE IS SPEAKING ABOUT:
- a. "*were once enlightened*" means that at some point they had at least understood Jesus to be the true Messiah.
  - b. "*have tasted of the heavenly gift*" means that in some way they have experienced the sending of the Holy Spirit; however, a taste can be a real, but fleeting experience. OT background: manna in the wilderness, and in the Ark.
  - c. "*made partakers of the Holy Spirit*"; as in 3:1 and 14, this may refer to companionship, not necessarily union; thus it means those who have been in the company or presence of God, as was true of Israel in the wilderness. It does not have to refer to those who have been indwelt by the HS.
  - d. "*tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come*" means they experienced in some temporary way the reality of the goodness of the gospel and the power of God's kingdom.

\*Remember the context of this book with special attention given to Psa. 95. Could not all 4 of these phrases also be said of the Israelites under Moses in the wilderness? (It is essential to read **1Cor. 10:1-6** before proceeding!)

Yes!

- they were *enlightened* of the things of God by Moses and the Law
- they *tasted* God's blessing and provision every day when they ate manna
- they saw God do great miracles for them, even saving them from Egypt
- they were near God's Presence continually (cloud by day; fire by night);
- and yet, most of them did not believe (recall 3:19)!

Thus, they did not enter His rest, even though they experienced all this!

Today, could not all 4 of these be experienced by one who professed faith in Christ and was accepted into the church as a member of the covenant community?

He/she might hear the word preached, perhaps see God do mighty things, be near the very presence of God, etc. Yet, a person can experience all this without personally trusting in Jesus Christ. Going to church doesn't make one a Christian!

This was the context in which Psalm 95 was given, which he has been quoting and explaining, and this context must determine how we understand and properly interpret these phrases of warning to the Hebrews.

He is saying, in effect:

**DON'T BE LIKE YOUR ANCESTORS IN MOSES' DAY!**

9. vs. 6: one who has had these experiences and then abandons his profession has made an irrevocable decision (he can't be restored to repentance) because by his renunciation/denial of the Son he has 'recrucified' Jesus for himself and exposed Him to public disgrace.

Recall the context: the Israelites' initial verbal "profession" was not mixed with faith and thus was not genuine, therefore they did not enter His rest.

*"The meaning of vv. 4–6 may be summarized as follows: (1) apostasy is a real danger which threatens the community addressed. (2) There is no way back from apostasy to a renewal of the initial act of repentance associated with baptism and forgiveness. (3) he does not state that the community or any of its members have in fact already abandoned their faith. (4) his ultimate purpose, next expressed in vv. 9–12, is to encourage his readers to persevere."*<sup>73</sup>

10. vs. 7-8: illustration: the reality of one's profession is proven by its fruits.

"Good ground" refers to those whose profession endures and produces fruit; compare with Matt. 7:16-20.

"Worthless" has the idea of 'rejected after careful examination.'

For some NT parallels to this passage, study

Jas. 2:14-26 - "faith without works is dead"; be ready to discuss this),

Gal. 5:22-23 - the 9 "fruit" (note the singular) of the Spirit,

Matt. 13:18-23 - the parable of the sower/soils.

Application: we should examine ourselves before we preach to others!

Lesson: not all who initially receive the message actually have the genuine roots of true faith; those without faith will eventually turn back when difficulties come, while those with true faith will endure trials and persecution and bear fruit!

#### **D. THE REAL SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF *MOST* OF THEM: NOT APOSTATE, BUT SHOWING FRUITS OF SALVATION! (6:9-12)**

<sup>9</sup> *But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, [note pronoun shift] and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.*

<sup>10</sup> *For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. [past and present fruit!]*

<sup>11</sup> *And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence [opposite of "sluggish"] so as to realize the full assurance [certainty] of hope [6:18-19] until the end,*

<sup>12</sup> *that you may not be sluggish, [this term is used only here and 5:11 in the NT!] but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. [6:13ff]*

\*Be sure to notice the abrupt **shift** from severe warning to sincere encouragement.

1. vs. 9 - however, he believes their lives show evidence of true faith.

Thus he anticipates that they will produce the fruits of salvation.

However, he is very concerned about *some* who may apostatize (that is, return to Judaism), although he sees the *majority* as immature, yet true believers.

---

<sup>73</sup> Ellingworth, 325.

These "*better things that accompany salvation*" strongly suggest that the things they are compared to in vs. 4-5 might *not* accompany salvation!

2. vs. 10 - "*For*" (NASB; no idea why NIV omits this word as it's in the Greek) explains vs. 9; the basis for his confidence is grounded in 2 realities - one God-ward and one man-ward:
  - a. the nature of God: He is righteous, just and keeps His promises!
  - b. the genuine fruit of faith in their lives: loving, giving, ministering to others both past and present. Faith with works is alive! (see this theme in James 2)
3. vs. 11 - yet, they need to display this same confidence in regard to the Christian's hope that Jesus Christ will return at the end of the age and reign victoriously; this is also a mark of maturity.
4. vs. 12 - the purpose of this warning: don't be dull/sluggish (only used here and 5:11 forming an "*inclusion*" – a unit starting and finishing with the same term), but rather imitate the patriarchs who lived by faith in the midst of long-suffering without a reward in this life, inheriting the promises only by faith and patience.

Flow: "*inherit the promises*" - this final phrase in 6:9-12 of the inclusion (5:11-6:12) also serves to introduce the main topic of the next paragraph (6:13-20).

#### **E. THE CERTAINTY OF BOTH GOD'S PROMISE AND OATH TO THOSE WHO HOPE (6:13-20)**

- <sup>13</sup> *For when God made the promise to Abraham, [6:12]  
since He could swear by no one greater, [contra men, 6:16]  
He swore by Himself,*
- <sup>14</sup> *saying,  
"I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you." [Gen. 22:16]*
- <sup>15</sup> *And thus, having patiently [6:12] waited, he obtained the promise. [6:12]*
- <sup>16</sup> *For men swear<sup>74</sup> by one greater than themselves,<sup>75</sup>  
and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute.*
- <sup>17</sup> *In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise  
the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath,*
- <sup>18</sup> *in order that [purpose] by two unchangeable things, [promise and oath]  
in which it is impossible for God to lie,  
we may have strong encouragement,  
we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope<sup>76</sup> set before us. [6:20]*
- <sup>19</sup> *This hope we have as an anchor of the soul,  
a hope both sure (safe) and steadfast (firm)  
and one which enters within the veil, [God's presence; cf. 10:19-25]*
- <sup>20</sup> *where Jesus has entered as a forerunner (leader) for us,  
having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. [5:10]*

<sup>74</sup> The Scripture here teaches that it is lawful for men to swear oaths. An entire chapter was devoted to oaths and vows in the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 22. See Gouge, *Commentary*, 2:60-66.

<sup>75</sup> Calvin, 148, "It is an argument from the lesser to the greater ... If God's name, pronounced by man's tongue, possesses so much superiority, how much more weight ought it to have, when God Himself swears by His own name?"

<sup>76</sup> Calvin, 153, "... the hope here means the promise apprehended by faith."

### 1. God's unchangeable promise, 6:13-15

vs. 13 - the basis of our confidence in the fulfilment of His promises is that He binds Himself to His word by His eternal Person.

vs. 14 - he quotes Gen. 22:16-17, God's promise to bless and multiply the seed of Abraham through Isaac.

vs. 15 - God kept His promise *given* to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-4 through Isaac, who was miraculously conceived (Abraham was 100; Sarah was 90) by increasing and blessing Israel; see Rom. 4:18-21.

This covenant with Abraham was literally "cut" (*made*) in Gen. 15:

Who passed through the cut animals?

Who did not pass through?

What is the significance of this?

What kind of covenant is this?

### 2. God's unchangeable oath, 6:16-17

vs. 16 - the purpose of an oath, where men swear by God, is to convince others that they are truthful and will abide by the promise - it legally establishes and confirms agreement.

vs. 17 - implication: God accommodates Himself to this custom of an oath to guarantee to us the certainty of His irrevocable (unchanging, unbreakable) purpose expressed in the promise.

### 3. Application, 6:18-20

vs. 18 – “strong encouragement” and “hope” flow from 2 unchangeable realities:

- a. the certainty of the covenant promise (Gen. 12, 15, 22, etc.) is rooted in both the truthfulness and faithfulness of the one who makes it!
- b. He has given an oath based on His character to strengthen the assurance of the heirs; it is a “*hope*” because it is *not yet* fully realized.  
Observe this in the 5 uses of the term “*hope*” in Rom. 8:24-25.

vs. 19 - our hope in Christ as our Great High Priest is our source of stability in an unstable world, because our hope partakes of the eternal realities by entering inside the heavenly veil (a reference to the Son's priesthood) of the true Holy of Holies in heaven, of which the earthly one was merely a shadow. [recall 4:14-16]

vs. 20 - this again refers to the true, heavenly Holy of Holies where Jesus entered as our Great High Priest ahead of us, as our “Forerunner”.

There will be more about this in Hebrews 9.

On this basis we can run behind Him, as our Leader, into God's very presence!

His work is effective forever, unlike the Day of Atonement, which had to be repeated every single year!

See the note below regarding the transitional nature of 6:20, which recalls 5:10.

## **FURTHER COMMENT ABOUT THE STRUCTURE OF HEBREWS 4:14 - 7:28**

It is quite clear that Heb. 6:20 is a transition from his stern warning and its explanation with encouragement begun in 5:11, back to the issue of Jesus' superiority to the Levitical high priest(s) as begun in 4:14, but abruptly discontinued after 5:10 with the rebuke.

Read 5:10 again and compare that to the language in 6:20.

Did you notice how 6:20b picks up exactly where 5:10 left off?

Thus, 5:11 - 6:20a is actually a very important parenthesis in his fifth major contrast in 4:14 - 7:28. Due to their sluggishness/dullness, he felt compelled to issue such a strong warning before he proceeded any further in the development of his argument for Jesus' superiority over the entire Levitical sacrificial system.

Now he is finally ready to return to his discussion of Jesus being a "Priest according to the order of Melchizedek"!

What does this mean? The next lesson will help us answer this!

#### **QUESTIONS – Chapter 4**

1. 4:16 exhorts us to "*draw near*" to God. How does this differ radically from the view of the "Supreme Being" in African Traditional Religion(s)?
2. This passage is teaching us that all Christians can go *directly* to God the Father through God the Son. Do you think that some Christians view the pastor as a *mediator* between them and God, or at least view the pastor as much closer to God than anyone else?  
Why or why not?
3. Based on this passage, what should we as leaders be teaching people about prayer?
4. In many views of the spirit world there are many mediators between God and man. According to Scripture, how many true mediators are there between God and man?  
Also see 1Tim. 2:5
5. How does the book of Hebrews develop and prove that Jesus is the only true mediator between God and men?
6. As leaders, the OT priests had to offer sacrifices for their own sins before they represented the sinful people before a holy God.  
  
What application(s) might this have for leaders today, even though we are not priests?  
  
For example, how should this effect the prayer life of a leader?
7. As we consider his exhortation for the Hebrews to get past the "milk" stage of the Christian life, how should this affect the way in which we lead our churches?
8. Why do you think some churches continue to preach evangelistic sermons weekly, addressing the lost, rather than obeying the exhortation in Eph. 4:11-12 to "prepare/equip God's people for works of service"?  
  
In other words, shouldn't pastors be discipling their people to help them grow in the faith, instead of continuing to evangelise them?  
  
Please discuss this important issue!
9. Some people think this passage teaches that a true Christian can lose their salvation. What do you think now that we have examined the context?  
(Let's now look at some other passages and discuss this.)



\*This passage raises a very big issue: can a *true* Christian lose his/her salvation?

A study of the doctrine of salvation is called "*soteriology*"; this theological term comes from the Greek word in the NT which means "to save".

We must apply a basic principle of interpretation to this highly debated portion of Scripture: we should always interpret difficult passages in the light of closely related but clearer passages! Restated, we must let Scripture interpret Scripture.

Those who believe that a true Christian is eternally secure in Christ use the theological phrase, '*perseverance of the saints*'. This means that a person who has been truly regenerated by the Spirit will persevere in his faith, by God's grace, until the end.

The other side of our perseverance is God's *preservation* – His grace keeps us always. See Phil. 1:6 and 1Pet. 1:3-5 (below).

Let's consider some less-debated passages which more clearly support this doctrine.

Read John 10:12-14, 27-29

Here Jesus is referred to as the Good Shepherd who constantly protects His sheep.

The opposite of a good shepherd is called a "hired hand," and one description of such a person is that he allows his sheep to be snatched away.

Is this ever true of Jesus? Never, by His own testimony! Let's take Him at His word.

In vs. 27-29 of that same chapter we learn that:

- (1) He gives "eternal", not temporary, life to His people; in John 5:24 we read that we already have this "eternal" life!
- (2) we **will** "never" perish; it is not conditional as if it said we **may** never perish
- (3) Jesus said "no one will snatch them out of My hand"; if anyone or anything could, he or it would be stronger than Jesus and it would put Him in the category of a "hireling" in contrast to His own description of Himself as the Good Shepherd.

Read Rom. 8:29-30 (also see Eph. 1:3-14)

All 5 of the blessings for believers that we see here are inseparably linked. In fact, "glorified" is even in the past tense, even though the readers had not experienced it yet. Why? Because it is as certain as the first 4 (foreknown, predestined, called, justified) which have already taken place in redemptive history.

Rom. 8:35-39 which follows is in fact a doxology of our eternal security in Jesus Christ, full of praise for the fact that NOTHING can ever separate us from the love of Christ (note the repetition of this phrase for additional emphasis)!

Read 1Pet. 1:3-5

1. Note the characteristics of our inheritance (salvation) through this emphatic series of 3 verbal adjective's:
  - a. imperishable - incorruptible, not liable to decay
  - b. undefiled - means "unstained by evil"

- c. unfading - "used of flowers and suggest a supernatural beauty which time does not impair" (Rienecker, 2:398).
2. Now he further guarantees this to them by a 'play on words' - 'this (inheritance) is being **guarded** (kept) in heaven for us who are now being **guarded** (kept) by the power of God' (my paraphrase).

Why would anyone want to deny the clear encouraging emphasis of this great text? Rather, let us give praise to God that He is keeping/guarding us and our salvation!

This truth is in agreement/harmony with many other teachings in Scripture, such as:

1. Regeneration: this means to be made alive by God as in Eph. 2:5.  
Is there any biblical evidence that a Christian can later be "UNregenerated"?
2. Conversion: once a person has been born again, can the new nature ever die?  
That is, can one be "UNborn again?"
3. Unconditional election: see Eph. 1:4 regarding the statement that "God chose us in Christ from before the foundation of the world"! Also see Rom. 9:11ff.
4. Particular redemption: which is also called "definite atonement".  
See John 6:35-40 where Jesus specifically says that **every** sheep that the Father gives to Him will be raised up on the last day; not even one of His true sheep will be lost! It is certain here! If that is not security in Christ, we don't know what is!

This truth is in harmony with biblical teaching on the relationship between faith and works - spiritual fruit is the evidence of true, saving faith.

Read Matt. 3:8; 7:16-23.

This is the exact point of Heb. 6:7-8 in our passage under consideration!

It is also the very lesson of the heart of the book of James, 2:14-26, where his repeated theme is "faith without works is dead". His point is that true faith always produces good works. Otherwise, it is not true faith!

See also:

Phil. 1:6 - He *promises* that He will perfect the work He began in us!

Heb. 7:25; John 17 - Jesus prays that we will be preserved.

1Jn. 2:19 - those who left the church showed they were not really of the church; their works demonstrated that their profession of faith was not really genuine.

**F. THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK (7:1-28)**

Structure: chapter 7 is composed of 2 paragraphs, both inclusions with a key OT text: 7:1-10 – an *inclusion* around “*Melchizedek met Abraham*”, explaining Gen. 14:17-20, 7:11-28 - an *inclusion* framed by “*perfection*” and “*Law*”, explaining Psa. 110:4, as quoted in 5:6, 10 and 6:20, but not yet explained due to the interlude of 5:11-6:20.

1. THE PERPETUAL PRIEST-KING WHO “MET ABRAHAM” (7:1-10)

Note also a *chiasm*: A = the meeting, B = the blessed, C = the tithe/tenth.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For this *Melchizedek* [7:10], *king of Salem*, *priest of the Most High God*, who *met Abraham* [7:1] as he was returning from the slaughter of the *kings* and *blessed* him, [A]

<sup>2</sup> to whom also Abraham apportioned *a tenth* part of all the spoils, [B]  
was first of all, by the translation of his name, *king of righteousness*, and then also *king of Salem*, which is *king of peace*. [C]

<sup>3</sup> Without father, without mother, without genealogy, [see 7:5-6, 13-14] having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like [a type] the Son of God, he abides a *priest* perpetually.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Now observe how great this man was to whom *Abraham*, the patriarch, gave *a tenth* of the choicest spoils. [C’]

<sup>5</sup> And those indeed of the sons of *Levi* who receive the priest’s office have commandment in the Law to collect *a tenth* from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from *Abraham*.

<sup>6</sup> But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected *a tenth* from *Abraham*, and *blessed* the one who had the promises. [B’]

<sup>7</sup> But without any dispute the lesser is *blessed*<sup>79</sup> by the greater.

<sup>8</sup> And in this case mortal men receive *tithes*, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.

<sup>9</sup> And, so to speak, through *Abraham* even *Levi*, who received *tithes*, paid *tithes*

<sup>10</sup> for he was still in the loins of his father when *Melchizedek met him*. [7:1] [A’]

- a. vs. 1 - Background: some inter-testamental Jewish literature contains false teaching about Melchizedek, which the author may be combating.

He identifies Melchizedek not as the Messiah or as Michael the archangel as some Jews believed back then, but as the historical *priest-king* of Salem, who met Abraham after his victory, as recorded in Gen. 14:18-20.

- b. vs. 2 and 3 make the following three points about Melchizedek:

- Abraham paid a tithe (a 10<sup>th</sup>) of all his spoils to this man Melchizedek
- Melchizedek’s name literally means ‘king of righteousness’
- He was the ‘king of Salem’ (Hebrew for ‘peace’), thus the king of peace.

Significance: Jesus’ priesthood is patterned after the older order of Melchizedek, not after the Levitical order of Aaron under the Law.

<sup>77</sup> Ellingworth, 350, following Lane (WBC 1:160), who in turn followed Albert Vanhoye.

<sup>78</sup> See Calvin, 157-9 for a helpful discussion of this difficult verse; see 162-3 regarding the parallel in verse 8.

<sup>79</sup> Calvin, 161, this blessing “was a symbol of greater authority.”

- c. vs. 3 - Melchizedek is only mentioned in Gen. 14, Psa. 110:4, and Hebrews.

Since his father and mother were unknown, he would have been disqualified from being a Levitical priest anyway (being unable to prove his genealogy) had he lived at that time.

Parallel: he is a *type* of Christ (not a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ as some Jews say) whose priesthood is eternal by divine decree, versus the temporary Levitical priesthood requiring proper genealogy.

- d. vs. 4 - his greatness is shown by the fact that the great father of Israel and the spiritual father of all believers paid tithes to him; thus he is even greater than their greatest ancestor, Abraham!
- e. vs. 5 - under the Law the priests were to receive the tithe for support as the seed of Abraham and Levi.

Related issue: does the Levitical system provide a biblical basis for pastors being financially supported by their congregations today?

What did Paul say about this issue - see 1Tim. 5:17-18 (quoting Deut. 25:4)?

- f. vs. 6, 7 - Melchizedek was *not* a member of the Aaronic order, thus he possessed another kind of priestly order and authority which preceded the Aaronic order by several centuries! That is, before Moses and the Law.

Abraham, from whom the Levitical order is descended, paid a tenth to Melchizedek who possessed the power/authority to bless him.

**Lesson**: Melchizedek was superior to their great Patriarch (father)!

- g. vs. 8 – the contrast of the OT witness:

Levitical priests: the OT contains their genealogy - they died and ceased to be priests, thus they continually needed to be replaced.

Melchizedek: he is still 'living' (in the literary sense that his death is not recorded); there is no record of a successor to him, thus he did not lose his office by death as Levitical priests do.

Meaning: as a type of Christ, what is true about Melchizedek in this literary sense is true of the Son in an absolute sense.

- h. vs. 9, 10 - since Levi was the great grandson of Abraham, it may be said by implication that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek, which illustrates the superiority of the Melchizedek order over the Levitical order.

## 2. SHIFT FROM MELCHIZEDEK (TYPE) TO “ANOTHER PRIEST” (7:11-28)

- a. THE INFERIORITY AND END OF THE ORDER OF AARON (7:11-14)

<sup>11</sup> Now if **perfection** [7:19, 28] was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the **Law**), [7:19, 28 - inclusions] what further need was there for another priest to arise

- according to the order of Melchizedek,*  
*and not be designated according to the order of Aaron?*
- <sup>12</sup> *For [explains] when the priesthood is changed, (transferred)  
of necessity there takes place a change of law also.*
- <sup>13</sup> *For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe,  
from which no one has officiated at the altar.*
- <sup>14</sup> *For it is evident [7:15] that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe  
with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.*

vs. 11 – this verse begins a long sustained contrast between the Levitical priesthood and the priestly accomplishments of Jesus Christ - the former/first one was imperfect and needed to be “changed” to accomplish its goal.

The Law and the Levitical priesthood are intimately linked - neither could usher in the future age of perfection because of man's sin.

vs. 12 - since they were so linked, a change of priesthood necessitates a change/transfer of legal systems - which is introduced later in 8:6f as the New Covenant!

vs. 13 - under the Mosaic Covenant the priest had to come from the tribe of Levi, and even from the line of Aaron within that tribe.

However, under the New Covenant, Christ came from the tribe of Judah, the tribe of kings, not from the priestly tribe of Levi.

Therefore, if He is a Priest, then He must be a priest under a different system, because no member of the house of Judah could officiate at the OT altar.

Note: Jesus did NOT come as a Levitical priest!

Jesus did NOT offer up Himself in the physical Temple.

vs. 14 - the genealogies in Matthew and Luke trace Jesus' line to Judah and show that He is a descendant of David, and thus He is qualified to be the Messiah-King, yet He was not qualified to be a Levitical priest.

#### b. THE SUPERIOR “BASIS” OF THE NEW PRIESTHOOD: LIFE! (7:15-19)

- <sup>15</sup> *And this is clearer [7:14] still,  
if another priest [7:11] arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek,*
- <sup>16</sup> *who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement,  
but according to the power of an **indestructible life**. [7:25]*
- <sup>17</sup> *For it is witnessed of Him,  
“You art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”*
- <sup>18</sup> *For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment  
because of its weakness and uselessness<sup>80</sup>*
- <sup>19</sup> *(for the Law made nothing perfect), [7:11, 28]  
and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, [6:18-19]  
through which we draw near to God. [4:16; 7:25]*

<sup>80</sup> Calvin, 171, “For as all types had a reference to Christ, so from him they derived all their virtue and effect; of themselves they availed nothing or effected nothing; but their whole efficacy depended on Christ alone.”

vs. 15 - therefore, He is "*another priest*" [see 7:11] of a different order/type!

This chapter shows how He could be **both** a King and a Priest, a fact which was not possible under the Mosaic law (one could be either a priest or a king, not both) but was nevertheless true of Melchizedek, who lived long before Moses and the Law!

vs. 16 - contrast: the Levitical priests gained office by physical descent, but Christ was elevated to office because of the power of a life which could not be destroyed - a very strong emphasis on the permanent and efficient work of this Priest!

vs. 17 - Psa. 110:4 is quoted again, as in 5:6, as proof for the *eternal* life of this New Priest as Messiah of Melchizedek's order (the last reference to Mel.).

vs. 18 - note the contrast: the utter ineffectiveness of the Law versus the hope offered by the New Covenant - see vs. 22.  
See also Rom.8:3.

The previous commandment is *cancelled/annulled* (i.e.: the Levitical system).

Discussion: why was it set aside?

vs. 19 - gives the reason: because the Law made nothing perfect.

Note several contrasts:

- it could not remedy the consequences of the Fall or cleanse sin and guilt, or conquer death
- it could only provoke, reveal and condemn sin! (cf. Rom.7)
- "*Introduced*" (NIV, ESV), has the idea of replacement with something better by which we can continually draw near to God (recall 4:16).

c. SUPERIOR BECAUSE OF GOD'S OATH (7:20-22)<sup>81</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *And inasmuch* [7:22] *as it was not* *without an oath* [7:21, 28 - inclusion]

<sup>21</sup> *(for they indeed became priests* *without an oath*,  
*but He* *with an oath* *through the One who said to Him,*  
*"The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind,*  
*'You art a priest forever'* "); [7:17, but here without mention of Mel.]

<sup>22</sup> *so much the more also* **Jesus** *has become the guarantee*<sup>82</sup> *of a better covenant.*<sup>83</sup> [which will soon be expanded in 8:6b-13; 9:15-23; and 10:16-18]

vs. 20, 21 - this new priesthood was established and confirmed by divine oath, which is confirmed in the Psalter (the book of Psalms) - Psa. 110:4.

---

<sup>81</sup> Ellingworth, 383, "Christ's high priesthood is superior because it is guaranteed by God's oath, a word which is itself an event. Grammatically, vv.20-22 form one sentence ..."

<sup>82</sup> Or "surety," so KJV.; if Christ is a guarantee for His people, then surely, His people will be kept pure in Christ—never to fall away. Thus, all for whom Christ died will be saved, none will be lost. See Gouge, *Commentary*, 2:138-139; Ellingworth, 388-9.

<sup>83</sup> See Ellingworth's insightful discussion and table (chart) on the term "*covenant*" in Hebrews, 385-8.

Implication: as was said of the Abrahamic covenant in Heb. 6:13-20, God Himself has stressed its importance by establishing the order of Melchizedek with an oath, which He did *not* do when He established the order of Levi (that is, the Levitical order) later, in the giving of the Law.

vs. 22 - he now identifies Jesus as this undying, oath-establishing Priest.

The Old Covenant had a mediator, but no “*guarantee*”.  
However, Jesus Himself *is* the “*guarantee*” of the fulfilment of the New Covenant, which He Himself mediates!

He Himself is our security (surety, guarantee) so that the "better covenant" will certainly be fulfilled. God Himself will make sure!

This is the first occurrence of the term "*covenant*"<sup>84</sup> in Hebrews - it prepares us for what soon follows in chapter 8 regarding the New Covenant.

d. SUPERIOR BECAUSE IT IS PERMANENT/PERPETUAL (7:23-25)

- <sup>23</sup> *And the former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing,*  
<sup>24</sup> *but **He**, [the new Priest] on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently. [7:16-17]*  
<sup>25</sup> *Hence, also, **He** is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, [7:19] since **He** always lives to make intercession<sup>85</sup> for them.*

vs. 23 - Jesus as our continual/eternal undying Priest is superior to all the temporary Levitical priests under the old covenant, who in fact all *died*.

vs. 24 - therefore, since He still lives His priesthood is:

- a permanent one (7:16)
- an unchangeable one
- a non-transferrable one; that is, it won't be passed on to another.

vs. 25 - since He lives, He functions as our sole Priest forever and can therefore save us *completely/eternally*.

His main purpose is to represent us before God, continually asking Him to act graciously on our behalf (as in 4:16).

Note the necessity of our faith – deliverance/salvation is for those who 'keep on coming' (persevere) to God through Christ (6:19-20).

e. SUPERIOR BECAUSE OF THE CHARACTER OF JESUS (7:26-28)

This paragraph serves as a **summary** of the truths taught in chapter 7.

---

<sup>84</sup> On the distinction between a covenant and a testament see Gouge, *Commentary*, 2:139-140, 180-197.

<sup>85</sup> Gouge, *Commentary*, 2:146 Sec.106; Christ's intercession is the basis not only for the fact that all chosen by the Father to be given to Christ will be saved, but also to confirm us in our perseverance throughout this life.

*“The exposition of Ps. 110:4 (a and b) is gathered up into a summary which fuses the major themes of Christ’s priesthood (5:6–7:28) and Sonship (1:1–5:5), and introduces the theme of his sacrifice, which will predominate from 8:1 to 10:18.”<sup>86</sup>*

- <sup>26</sup> For it was fitting that we should have such a High Priest, [7:28]  
*holy, innocent, undefiled (pure),  
separated from sinners  
and exalted above the heavens;* [4:14]
- <sup>27</sup> who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, [A]  
*first for His own sins,* [B]  
*and then for the sins of the people,* [5:3] [B]  
*because this He did once<sup>87</sup> for all when He offered up Himself.* [A]
- <sup>28</sup> For the Law [marks minor inclusion with 7:11, along with “perfect”]  
*\*appoints men as high priests who are weak,* [4:15; 5:2]  
*but the word of the oath, which came after the Law,*  
*\*appoints a Son, made perfect [7:11 - inclusion] forever.*  
[\*this double use of “appoints” marks the end of a major inclusion with 5:1]

vs. 26 - unlike the Levitical high priests, He is holy, innocent, exalted, and ministers in God's presence; thus He is a superior High Priest.  
What is our "need"? Salvation/cleansing from sin.

vs. 27 - unlike the Levitical high priests, He does not need to atone for Himself since He is a sinless High Priest!

The power of an indestructible life renders His sacrificial death far more effective as HE only had to offer Himself once.

Note: the Roman Catholic "mass" misses this crucial point, and thus denies the efficaciousness of His completed work on the cross.

Please DISCUSS this in class [in brief, theologically, the “mass” is believed to be a re-crucifixion of Jesus each time it is celebrated].

vs. 28 - contrast: the Law established many temporary priests with sinful weaknesses, but the divine oath established the only Son (1:2) as a sinless perfect eternal Priest - the only Priest according to the order of Melchizedek!

The key role of 7:28 regarding structure: the repetition of “Law” and “perfect” from 7:11 frames this *paragraph*, 7:11-28.

On the larger *section*, the emphatic repetition of “appoints” recalls 5:1 and frames this major section through 7:28 on Jesus as our merciful High Priest.

Summary: our only (High) Priest is a perfect Man who is also God’s own Son, who thus has the most intimate relationship with God possible, and the only One who can bring us into relationship with the Father (Jn. 14:6)!

<sup>86</sup> Ellingworth, 392.

<sup>87</sup> This combats against the error of the Catholic Mass, see Gouge, *Commentary*, 2:151-52, Sec. 115.



## VI. A BETTER MINISTRY (8:1-10:18) [more precisely, 8:2-10:18; see below]

The structure of 8:1-10:18 is an extensive *chiasm*, contrasting the old/earthly ministry (the Type, A, B, C) with Christ's new/heavenly one (the fulfilment, A', B', C').<sup>88</sup>

8:1-2 - A Summary of chapters 1-7 *and* an introductory transition to His "ministry".

[A] 8:3-6 –	The Old Earthly High Priest
[B] 8:7-13 –	The Old Covenant
[C] 9:1-10 –	The Old Earthly Tabernacle
[C'] 9:11-14 –	The New Heavenly Tabernacle
[B'] 9:15-22 –	The New Covenant
[A'] 9:23-28 –	The New Heavenly High Priest

10:1-18 - A Summary: the "shadow" (10:1-4) versus the fulfilment (10:5-18)!

<sup>1</sup> Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, [7:26-28] who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty [1:3]

*in the heavens*, [summary of chapters 1-7; parallel to 4:14-16]  
<sup>2</sup> a minister [8:6] *in the sanctuary*, [literally, of the holy things]  
*and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.* [9:11-14]

<sup>3</sup> For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; [parallels 5:1] hence it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer. [repeated!]

<sup>4</sup> Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, [from 7:11-14] since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law;

<sup>5</sup> who serve [at a sanctuary that is (NIV)] a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern [type] which was shown you on the mountain."

<sup>6</sup> But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, [8:2 - minor inclusion?] by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, [7:22; 9:15-22] which has been enacted on better promises.

<sup>7</sup> For [explains "better"] if that first covenant [8:13 - inclusion] had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For finding fault with them, He says,  
"Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;

<sup>9</sup> Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in My covenant, and I did not care for them, says the Lord.

<sup>10</sup> "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord:

*I will put My laws into their minds,  
and I will write them upon their hearts.*<sup>90</sup>  
*and I will be their God,*

<sup>88</sup> Paul Ellingworth, 397. "Lane reproduces Vanhoye's analysis of this section (Vanhoye 1959a; Vanhoye 139–161), which may be presented in a modified form as follows:" I have further modified their work.

<sup>89</sup> Calvin, 186, "He confirms what he had said of the excellency of the covenant which God made with us through Christ; and he confirms it on this ground, because the covenant of the Law was neither valid or permanent ... To prove this, he adduces the testimony of Jeremiah."

<sup>90</sup> Calvin, 189, "In short, we only then obediently embrace what God commands, when by his Spirit he changes and corrects the natural depravity of our hearts; otherwise he finds nothing in us but corrupt affections ..."

- and they shall be My people.*<sup>91</sup>
- <sup>11</sup> *"And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen,  
and everyone his brother,  
saying, 'Know the LORD,'  
For all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them."*<sup>92</sup>
- <sup>12</sup> *"For I will be merciful to their iniquities,  
and I will remember their sins no more."*
- <sup>13</sup> *When He said, "A new covenant,"  
He has made the first [8:7; 9:1-5] obsolete.  
But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.*

vs. 1 – SUMMARY: the "main point" of his argument is now clearly stated:  
Psa. 110:4 has been fulfilled as Jesus has risen and now sits (recall 1:3; Eph. 1:20)  
in the exalted position at God's right hand, having completed His atoning work!

Therefore, He does not stand or bow as all sinful priests must do.  
Therefore, this verse *looks back* and *summarizes* the entire book so far –  
HE IS A BETTER HIGH PRIEST AND THUS A BETTER MEDIATOR!!!

vs. 2 – SHIFT: this verse *looks forward* and introduces the next major section of  
Hebrews; because He is a better Mediator, He has a better *ministry* (8:2-10:18)!

He is not ministering in an earthly tabernacle, but in God's heavenly sanctuary,  
the true genuine, Holy of Holies, the "antitype", where He is dealing with spiritual  
realities.

This stands in utter contrast to the earthly symbols/copies/shadows/types.

Definitions: please recall that the "type" is the shadow or copy; the "antitype" is  
what it points to, that is, the "better" reality or the fulfilment of the type.

We may note several contrasts between the type and its fulfilment:

- earthly      versus      heavenly
- temporal    versus      eternal
- human        versus      divine
- physical     versus      spiritual.

This verse marks *a major transition* from the focus on the Person of Jesus  
Christ to a focus on His work (see the bottom line of our **chart**).

## **A. THE MINISTRY OF THE OLD HIGH PRIESTS WAS ONLY A TYPE (8:3-6)**

### **1. vs. 3 – NEW TOPIC: HIS OFFERING!**

Note that this verse repeats 5:1, but with significant changes to show a shift to a  
new topic: the parallel phrases "*taken from among men*" and "*on behalf of men in  
things pertaining to God*" which stressed Jesus' merciful solidarity with us are not  
repeated, whereas "*it is necessary for this High Priest to have something to offer*"  
is added, repeating and climaxing with "*to offer*".

<sup>91</sup> Calvin, 190, "It is the fruit of the covenant, that God chooses us for his people, and assures us that he will be the guardian of our salvation."

<sup>92</sup> Calvin, 191, "for it is the work of the Spirit of God to illuminate our minds, so that we may know what the will of God is, and also to bend our hearts to obedience."

Thus, the shift is from His appointment as Priest to what He was “*appointed to offer*”, that is, Himself (9:11-14)! This is His “ministry” in the true tabernacle!

Having shown the *personal* superiority of the Son as a Priest over the Levitical priests, he now shows the superiority of His priestly **ministry** over their ministry.

This sustained contrast will continue from 8:3 to 10:18 (see the top of the chart).

2. vs. 4 - the Law, which regulated the earthly priesthood, would have excluded Jesus from its priesthood because He was of the kingly tribe of Judah (7:5-6).

However, His high priestly work was not performed in the earthly temple in Jerusalem, but in the true heavenly sanctuary [8:2; 9:11-14], although He was prepared for this service on earth (2:9-18; 5:7-9).

3. vs. 5 - the ministry of the Levitical priests is only an earthly copy or shadow which God showed to Moses. It was carefully patterned (sketched, drafted) after the heavenly realities; see Ex. 25:40.
4. vs. 6 - [recall the "better hope", 7:19, and the "*better covenant*", 7:22]  
Now we see that this "*better* (priestly) *ministry*" is also enacted/ordained/legislated/established on "*better promises*."

Implication: a superior messenger with a superior priesthood means a superior covenant, which is called the New Covenant.

Now he will argue that the provisions and promises of the New Covenant are superior because of the goals which they are designed to accomplish.

## **B. THE PROMISE OF A BETTER (NEW) COVENANT (8:7-13)**

1. vs. 7 – THE TWO COVENANTS  
The fact that God has set up a second covenant indicates that the first one was lacking something which only the second can provide!
2. vs. 8-12: he quotes the well-known prophecy of the New Covenant from Jer. 31:31-34<sup>93</sup> which shows that:
  - (a) Jeremiah understood the temporary nature of the Old Covenant;
  - (b) God always intended to supersede (to surpass, to go beyond) the Old.
3. vs. 8 - the phrase, "*But God found fault with the people*" (NIV), is the OT context in which the New Covenant was promised.

God actually *pronounced judgment* on Israel for their failure to keep the law, then He graciously *announced the hope* of a future, new, eternal, covenant!

Thus, the Old Covenant was insufficient to deal with sin; "*effect*" (NASB) or "*make*" (NIV, KJV) means to “*establish*” (ESV) the New Covenant.

---

<sup>93</sup> Ellingworth, 414, “This is the only OT passage which explicitly refers to a new covenant, though the thought is similar to Is. 54:13, quoted in Jn. 6:45.”

4. vs. 9 - here we have a contrast regarding the nature of the two covenants:

The Lord created a New Covenant because of Israel's failure to keep the Old, for which they suffered its consequences; but, the NC does not operate according to this standard of their rebellion because it is a covenant of a different type!

5. vs. 10-12: now God outlines the *new* terms or provisions of the New Covenant: Its laws will be internalised in the "*minds*" and "*hearts*" of the New Covenant people, unlike the old external laws on stone (vs. 10).

- The result is that the true "*Israel*" will become what God always wanted, His true people (vs. 10; Ex. 6:7; Rom. 2:25-29; Gal. 3:29).
- The need for mediation between God and men by other men under the Old is thus permanently eliminated in the New because all will have first-hand experience of knowing the Lord personally through Jesus Christ (vs. 11). This biblical truth was re-discovered in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation and called "*The priesthood of all believers*" in "protest" to the false, continuing, earthly priesthood claimed by the Roman Catholic Church.
- Most importantly, the New Covenant provides for the forgiveness of sin (vs. 12). God promises to show mercy and "forget" our falling short of His glory ("forget" is not memory loss, but involves His act of true forgiveness).

This does NOT mean there was no forgiveness in the Old, but that provision for forgiveness was not built into the law; rather it grew out of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12-15) which was pre-law (before the Mosaic law).

The Old only foreshadowed the complete forgiveness revealed in the New (this is discussed at length in Hebrews chapters 9 and 10).

6. vs. 13 - his concluding remarks on Jer. 31 serve to summarize chapter 8, showing further the superiority of the New Covenant, and also serve as a transition to launch us into the remainder of this section, 9:1-10:18.

The writer speaks of the Old Covenant as "*obsolete*". What does this term mean? (Hint: the term is often used in reference to old coins no longer in use.)

"*Disappear*" means to vanish away, and suggests utter destruction and abolition (Rienecker, 2:346).<sup>94</sup>

As in Heb. 7:11, 18 and 8:7, the coming of the New Covenant and the Son of God as the Great High Priest calls for the cancellation of the Old Covenant - the two can NOT coexist. That is, they can't overlap or be in effect at the same time.

Remember that this was written just prior to destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, when the centre of the Old system was physically destroyed.

However, it had already been spiritually abolished by our Great High Priest in 30AD!

---

<sup>94</sup> However, this Scripture must be read in light of what the Holy Spirit writes everywhere else in Scripture. Theologians often distinguish the laws within the covenant between the moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws. The moral law is unchanging and unable to be abolished and therefore continues into every economy or administration of the covenants. The judicial law was for the theocratic nation of Israel, though has timeless principles and applications. The ceremonial law is what becomes utterly obsolete, vanishing away, and becomes destroyed; it is this aspect of the old covenant law to which Hebrews refers. Christ said that He had not come to abolish one jot or tittle of the Law; so these distinctions are helpful and necessary.

### QUESTIONS – Chapter 5

1. List as many contrasts as you can between the order of Aaron (the Levitical priesthood) and the order of Melchizedek.
2. What was “wrong” with the order of Aaron?  
That is, what were its limitations?
3. Why did Jesus come “*according to the order of Melchizedek*”, and NOT according to the order of Aaron?
4. What phrase in 8:1 is so thematic in the entire book?  
  
Why is it so critical that our “sheep” grasp this truth?
5. Who has a more privileged position, every true Christian, or the OT High Priests?  
  
Why? (We'll discuss this more when we do chapter 9.)
6. Why does the Roman Catholic Church ordain its leaders as "priests", while Protestant churches ordain leaders as "pastors" and/or "elders"?
7. The Protestant Reformers taught "*the priesthood of all believers*" in opposition to the earthly priesthood within the Roman Catholic Church.  
What do you think this phrase means?
8. If it is true that *all* true Christians are "priests" (in a different sense, see 1 Pet. 2:9), how should this effect the relationship between a “pastor” and the congregation?
9. Do you think Catholics really understand the full significance of Jesus coming as the **only** Priest according to the order of Melchizedek to establish the New Covenant?  
  
As a result of studying Heb. 1-8, how would you share the gospel with them?
10. Discuss the impact of Jesus’s words on the cross – “It is finished.” What was finished?

**C. THE OLD EARTHLY SANCTUARY WAS ONLY A “SYMBOL” (9:1-10)**

- <sup>1</sup> Now even the first covenant [8:13] had *\*regulations of divine worship* [v.10, 6] [A]  
and *the earthly sanctuary. (tabernacle)* [B]
- <sup>2</sup> For there was a tabernacle [v.3b] *prepared, the outer one,* [B']  
in which were the lampstand and the table and the sacred bread;  
this *is called the holy place.* [v.3b]
- <sup>3</sup> And behind the *second* [v.7] veil,  
*there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies,*
- <sup>4</sup> having a golden altar of incense, and  
the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold,  
in which was a golden jar holding the manna,  
and Aaron's rod which budded,  
and the tables of the covenant.
- <sup>5</sup> And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat;  
but of *these things* [v.6] we cannot now speak in detail. [denotes shift]
- <sup>6</sup> Now when *these things* have been thus *prepared,* [v.2]  
the priests are continually (daily) entering *the outer tabernacle,* [v.2]  
performing the *divine worship,* [v.1] [A']
- <sup>7</sup> but into the *second* [v.3-5] only the high priest enters, once a year,  
not without taking blood, which he offers *for himself*  
and *for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.*
- <sup>8</sup> The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet  
been disclosed, while *the outer tabernacle* is still standing,
- <sup>9</sup> which is a *symbol* (literally, parable; NIV - illustration) for the present *time.*  
Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the  
*worshiper perfect in conscience,* [the problem]
- <sup>10</sup> since they relate only to food and drink and various washings,  
*\*regulations* [v.1 - inclusion] for the body imposed until a *time* of reformation.

vs. 1 – The introduction to two related topics: [A] regulations of divine worship, and [B] the earthly sanctuary. These are treated in reverse order in 9:2-5 and 6-10.<sup>95</sup>

“*Had*” - note that he speaks of the Mosaic code in the *past* tense. It is over!

Having cited Ex. 25:40 in 8:5, he describes the “*copies*” and how the high priest offered a sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, under the first/Mosaic covenant.

vs. 2-5 – he first describes the earthly sanctuary or tabernacle [B'].

vs. 2 - mentions the furniture in the outer (first) sanctuary or the holy place:

- the lampstand
- the table
- the “sacred bread” (NASB); cf. Ex. 25, 37, 40.

<sup>95</sup> So Ellingworth, 419.

vs. 3-4: describes the contents of the inner sanctuary or the Holy of Holies:

- entrances: both were veiled
- the altar of incense was before the entrance in the Holy Place, however, its smoke penetrated into the Holy of Holies
- the ark of the covenant was overlaid with gold inside and out, containing 3 items inside prior to the destruction of Solomon's temple:
  - (1) a golden urn/jar of manna - a reminder of God's provision in the wilderness
  - (2) Aaron's rod - a reminder of God's power
  - (3) the tables of the law (the Ten Commandments) - a reminder of God's holiness.

vs. 5 - "*of the glory*" (NIV) denotes the special function of the angelic Cherubim, which was to guard the "Shekinah glory" (a special term for God's presence).

Two copies of these special angels were fashioned on the lid of the ark, which was called "the mercy seat" (literally, the seat of propitiation).

Once a year on the Day of Atonement the high priest entered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat, which *ceremonially* covered the sins of the nation until the next Day of Atonement. (Leviticus 16)

The mercy seat is the place of propitiation, and thus points forward to the cross; see Rom. 3:25.

What does propitiation mean? NIV uses "atoning sacrifice".

vs. 6-10: SHIFT – he now explains the "*regulations of the divine worship*" as demanded by the righteousness of God.

These ordinances were for the body (external), not for the inner conscience which waited for *a time of reformation* or "*new order*" (NIV), 9:10.

vs. 6 - "*these things*" refers to the inferior copies of the true heavenly realities which are employed in New Covenant service.

Background: the Levitical priests performed their service daily and only in the outer sanctuary.

vs. 7 - but, entrance to the Holy of Holies which symbolized God's presence was limited to the high priest only once a year., Ex. 30:10; Lev. 16:34.

Even he could enter only after carefully observing the sacrificial rites and ceremonies in Lev. 16, shedding blood both for himself and for the people's sins of ignorance - Lev. 4:1f; 5:17ff.

Note: this is the first mention of sacrificial "*blood*" in Hebrews; however, it soon becomes a central theme in the remainder of chapter 9: see 9:12 [mentioned twice], 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 [twice again], 25.

vs. 8 - the ceremonies on the Day of Atonement were intended by the Spirit to indicate that entrance into God's presence in heaven had not been and was not yet revealed as long as the Levitical rites were being practiced, because in these patterns access into the symbolized presence of God was severely restricted.

vs. 9 - they have parabolic/figurative significance to those under the NC.  
The rites alone by the high priest under the Old Covenant had no power to cleanse the conscience of the high priest or those he represented.

"*Being offered*" (NIV) is present tense, implying that these sacrifices were still occurring, which supports the view that Hebrews was written *before* the destruction of Jerusalem (and thus the temple) in A.D. 70.

vs. 10 - they could not cleanse sin because they were limited to physical, external, temporary practices - in contrast to the inner conscience in verse 9.

SHIFT: "*A time of reformation*" refers to the divinely appointed time of Messianic fulfilment under the New Covenant - the realities to which the shadows merely point, dealt with next in 9:11-28!

### C'. THE ONE NEW SACRIFICE IN THE TRUE TABERNACLE (9:11-14)<sup>96</sup>

<sup>11</sup> But when *Christ* appeared [9:28] as a high priest of the good things to come, [10:1]  
through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, [9:12] [A – positive]

not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; [B – negative]

<sup>12</sup> and not through the blood of goats and calves, [B' – negative]  
but through His own blood, [A' – positive]<sup>97</sup>

He entered the holy place once for all, [9:11b]

having obtained eternal [9:14] redemption. [9:15] [climax after the chiasm!]

<sup>13</sup> For [explain] if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer [A - old]  
sprinkling<sup>98</sup> those who have been defiled,

sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, [B - old cleansing]

<sup>14</sup> how much more<sup>99</sup> will the blood of *Christ*, [9:11] [A' - His blood]

who through the eternal [9:12] Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God,

cleanse your conscience from dead works [B' - new cleansing]

to serve the living God? [note the contrast and this climax]

vs. 11 - since "*Christ*"<sup>100</sup> (the first term in 9:11ff in the Greek!) is the Great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek in the genuine sanctuary (9:24), He has inaugurated (started) the "*good things*" promised in the coming New Covenant.

<sup>96</sup> Calvin, 200, "He now sets before us the reality of the things under the Law, that it may turn our eyes from them to itself; for he who believes that the things then shadowed forth under the Law have been really found in Christ, will no longer cleave to the shadows, but will embrace the substance and the genuine reality."

<sup>97</sup> See Ellingworth, 451, for the Greek phrases.

<sup>98</sup> Sprinkling of blood in the OT typifies the spiritual cleansing we have as a sign and seal in the sacrament of baptism. For this reason Gouge, *Commentary*, 2:246-47 argues that sprinkling is a Biblical and lawful mode of baptism. Also see his use of Scriptures to show why some evangelicals baptize infants, pp262-63, Sec. 100.

<sup>99</sup> Calvin, 204, "The argument is from the signs to the thing signified; for the effect by a long time preceded the reality of the signs." This helps explain how OT believers were saved by faith in Christ, as is clear in 9:15.

<sup>100</sup> Ellingworth, 445, "Vanhoye considers the first word of this section, Χριστός, [Christ] as the centre or fulcrum of the entire epistle from the point of view of its structure; in any case, it is central to the message."



This shows the superiority of the true, heavenly sanctuary over the earthly man-made tabernacle (8:2; Acts 7:44-49). Note the triple negative used at the end of vs. 11 and the start of vs. 12 to strongly emphasize the radical difference!

Structure: “*Christ appeared*” is repeated in 9:28, framing yet another *inclusion*.

vs. 12 - note two contrasts here:

- (1) He did not (the third negative) offer animal blood, but His own!
- (2) He did not offer it yearly, but only ONCE for all time!  
Thus, His once-offered blood purchased and secured everlasting redemption/release from the curse of sin; see Rom. 3:24, 25.

vs. 13-14 – carries the contrast further to the extent of cleansing that each provided.

The old sacrifices were not useless, see Lev. 16:14-16 and Num. 19:2, 17-19; they did provide an external ritual/ceremonial cleansing for the body (vs. 13); but their power was restricted and small in contrast to the one sacrifice of Christ which cleanses the whole person forever (vs. 14)!

vs. 14 - note the superior effects/results/consequences of the Son’s sacrifice:

- (1) since His blood is superior, so His sacrifice is powerful to fully cleanse us.
- (2) Christ did not offer animals, but He offered HIMSELF as the one and only perfect, unblemished, sinless (4:15) sacrifice.
- (3) He did so voluntarily, which shows His great love for His sheep; Jn. 10.  
Thus, He is able to cleanse the believer’s conscience from its reliance on one’s own efforts to obtain merit before God (recall 6:1).

## **B’. THE NEW BLOOD INAUGURATING THE NEW COVENANT (9:15-22)**

<sup>15</sup> *And for this reason [9:11-14] He is the mediator of a new covenant, [7:22; 8:6] in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption [9:12] of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, [9:16-18, 20] those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. [9:12]*

<sup>16</sup> *For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.*

<sup>17</sup> *For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.*

<sup>18</sup> *Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood. [9:22b] [A]*

<sup>19</sup> *For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, [9:22a] [B]*

*he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled<sup>101</sup> [9:21] both the book itself and all the people, [C]*

<sup>20</sup> *saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." [Ex.24:8 = center]*

---

<sup>101</sup> Calvin, 210, "... were *sprinkled*; by which rite the people were then taught, that God could not be sought or looked to for salvation, nor rightly worshiped, except faith in every case looked to an intervening blood."

- <sup>21</sup> *And in the same way he sprinkled [9:19] both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.* [C']
- <sup>22</sup> *And according to the Law, [9:19] one may almost<sup>102</sup> say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood [9:18] there is no forgiveness. [also the climax of the cov. in 8:12 and 10:18!] [climax]* [B'] [A']

vs. 15: a superior sacrifice was required to establish a superior covenant.

His effective death makes Him the sole mediator/guarantee (8:6; 12:24) of the New Covenant. There's no *better* surety than the blood of Jesus Christ!

His blood can redeem those who sinned under the Mosaic era, enabling them to receive the eternal inheritance promised to Abraham (which was, in a prophetic and theological sense, the beginning of the New Covenant!

That is why Paul in Gal. 3:29 calls *all* believers the true children of ABRAHAM! See also Romans 4. All believers from all nations are the true people of God!

Structure/flow: “*The internal logic of the argument indicates that vv. 16–22 should be regarded as a parenthetical explanation of v.15, which in turn is the climax of vv. 11–14.*”<sup>103</sup>

vs. 16-17: “covenant”<sup>104</sup> has a double meaning of a contract between two parties and one’s last will and testament. Heirs of the promise don’t receive the inheritance until the one making the promise dies.

So, the legal validity or guarantee of the covenant is dependent upon the death of the will-maker. The promise is not carried out while he lives.

Repeated terms: “*death/dead*” is in 9:15, 16, and 17; while its synonym “*blood*” occurs 5 times in 9:18, 19, 20, 21, and 22.

Structure: these verses, 18-22 are chiasmic; note that the OT reference is carefully placed as a hinge at the center, with the climactic statement at the very end (cf. 10:18).

vs. 18-19: the necessity of sacrificial blood/death in ratifying/inaugurating a covenant is illustrated by the procedures used when God established the Mosaic covenant with Israel - a hyssop plant was tied with scarlet wool to a cedar stick to sprinkle animal blood diluted with water.

vs. 20: he now quotes from Ex. 24:8 forming further proof of his argument from the Old Testament - blood must be shed whenever God establishes a covenant.

See Matt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:20; 1Cor. 11:25 where he links the establishment of the first covenant with the New Covenant by combining Ex. 24:8 with the words spoken by Jesus when He was about to inaugurate the New Covenant with His own blood.

<sup>102</sup> Calvin, 213, footnote 1, clarifies this particle, “Metals were purified by fire, and clothes by being washed in water, (Num. 31:22-24) but these were purifications not accompanied with remission of sins.”

<sup>103</sup> William Lane. *Hebrews*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 47a, b. (Dallas: Word, 1991), 234.

<sup>104</sup> The KJV translates the Greek “*diatheke*” “testament” throughout this chapter. Hebrews is using the similarity in Greek between covenant and testament to make his point; but they are distinguishable.

vs. 21: the consecration (means to set apart for a special purpose) of the tabernacle and its sacred vessels emphasized the place of sacrificial blood in observing the Old Covenant.

vs. 22: next he adds 2 more pieces of evidence to substantiate his point:

(1) a blood sacrifice was commanded in almost all cases in ritual cleansing of ceremonially defiled persons or objects.

There were only 3 exceptions: Lev. 5:11; Num. 16:46; 31:50.

(2) there was no atonement/remission without sacrificial blood - Lev. 17:11.

### A'. THE NEW, PERFECT, HEAVENLY HIGH PRIEST! (9:23-28)

In terms of the flow of the argument, this section serves as a summary of 9:11-22.

<sup>23</sup> *Therefore [9:18-22] it was necessary for the copies [9:24] of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things<sup>105</sup> themselves with better sacrifices<sup>106</sup> than these.*  
<sup>24</sup> *For **Christ** [9:28] did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven [9:23] itself, now to appear [9:28] in the presence of God for us;*  
<sup>25</sup> *nor was it that **He** should offer Himself often, [9:26] as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood not his own.*  
<sup>26</sup> *Otherwise, **He** would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once [note contrast!] at the consummation of the ages **He** has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of **Himself**. [climax!]*  
<sup>27</sup> *And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,*  
<sup>28</sup> *so **Christ** [9:11, 24] also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many,<sup>107</sup> shall appear [9:11, 24] a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await **Him**.*

**Flow of thought:** "From v. 23b on, the author follows a typical development (3:1-6) in which positive statements about the old order (vv. 18-22) are followed first by comparisons or contrasts which show the superiority of the new (v. 23), and then by negative statements about the old (10:4)."<sup>108</sup>

vs. 23: since Moses only *copied* the heavenly realities as revealed to him on Sinai, it was appropriate for animals to be offered on those earthly altars for the ceremonial cleansing of physical things, but spiritual realities require a better sacrifice to cleanse them.

vs. 24: Christ entered the true Holy of Holies containing heavenly realities in God's very presence "*for us*".

Note two very sharp contrasts:

<sup>105</sup> Calvin, 214, it refers to the kingdom of Christ, "for it is spiritual and possesses a full revelation of the truth."

<sup>106</sup> Calvin, 215, "... for it was only one; but he uses the plural number for the sake of the antithesis or contrast."

<sup>107</sup> This is proof that Christ died only for His people; the elect of the Father, see Gouge, *Commentary*, 2:286-288 to see his proofs of this important doctrine that Christ secured the salvation of His sheep (cf. Jn 6, 10, 17).

<sup>108</sup> Ellingworth, 475.

- the Son versus mere animals; His effective blood versus theirs'
- the heavenly in God's presence versus mere earthly *copies*.

vs. 25: contrast: the Levitical high priest offered the same animal blood every year; but, the Son entered only “*ONCE*”, offering His own blood which is far superior because only it accomplished the task of taking away sin!

vs. 26: “*ONCE for all*” shows the eternal value of His sacrifice alone to put away sin (which is the very purpose of a sacrifice).

vs. 27: just as men die once and face judgment, Christ died *ONCE* and proceeded to judgment, but He is the Judge - Jn. 5:22.

In contrast, other religions can offer a false hope/security of a powerful life after death without facing the judgment of God.

vs. 28: His death was substitutionary “to bear (take up and carry away) the sins of many (all who will believe).”

Thus, believers need not fear judgment, but instead wait for Christ to reappear, (recall “*Christ appeared*” in 9:11, His first coming – forming an inclusion from His first to His second coming) not as a Sacrifice again, but in order to bring us our eternal inheritance secured by His death on our behalf.

Summary: a Better Priest

offered a Better Sacrifice  
in a Better Sanctuary  
to establish a Better Covenant  
which is based on Better Promises  
in order to deliver us from judgment  
by bearing the penalty of our sin once for all!

### Hebrews 10:1-18

#### SUMMARY: THE OLD FAILED BUT THE NEW IS PERFECT (10:1-18)

##### 1. THE FAILURE OF THE OLD SACRIFICES UNDER “THE LAW”: THEY WERE REPETITIVE AND TEMPORARY (10: 1-4)

- <sup>1</sup> *For the Law*, [i.e., the ceremonial aspect of the Law; see quote/footnote 107]  
since it has only a shadow of the good things to come [9:11]  
and not the very form of things,  
can never by the same sacrifices year by year, [10:3]  
*which they offer continually*,  
make perfect [i.e., save; 10:14] those who draw near. [4:16]
- <sup>2</sup> *Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be* offered, [10:1]  
*because the worshipers, having once been cleansed*, [9:13-14, 23]  
*would no longer have had consciousness of sins?* [9:13-14; 10:4]
- <sup>3</sup> *But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins* year by year. [10:1]
- <sup>4</sup> *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*<sup>109</sup>

<sup>109</sup> Calvin, 224, “The Jews, indeed, had in this a symbol and a pledge of the real cleansing; but it was with reference to another, even as the blood of the calf represented the blood of Christ.”

vs. 1a: the New Covenant is the reality, that is, “the very form of things,” “the good things to come,” which the Law only outlined (as a "shadow" does).

*“The Law, as usual in this passage (7:5), is understood in its cultic aspect. The cultus, however, is not an end in itself: it is related to the purpose, unfulfilled under the old covenant, of salvation (9:28), understood as perfecting (10:1), purification (10:2), or forgiveness of sins (10:18).”<sup>110</sup>*

vs. 1b-2: the failure of Old Covenant sacrifices to reach their goal is proven by:

- their repetition; note "year by year" in both verses 1 and 3,
- their continual consciousness of guilt drove them to offer more sacrifices.

vs. 3: contrast: the Old Covenant Day of Atonement provoked the remembrance of sins committed, whereas the New Covenant celebration of the Lord's Supper is a remembrance of the forgiveness of our sins!

vs. 4: the old sacrifices failed and were repeated because they had no power to remove guilt, but only reminded them of it, just as the sacrificial lambs in the old era pointed beyond themselves, forward to The Lamb of God to come. See also Gal. 3:24.

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE ONE NEW WILLING OFFERING, HIS BODY: IT WAS COMPLETE AND ONCE FOR ALL TIME (10:5-10)

<sup>5</sup> *Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says,  
"Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired,  
but a body [10:10] You have prepared for Me;*

<sup>6</sup> *In whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have taken no pleasure.*

<sup>7</sup> *"Then I said, 'Behold, I have come (In the roll of the book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God.'" [Psa. 40:6-8]*

<sup>8</sup> *After saying above,  
"Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin  
You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them"  
(which are offered according to the Law), [10:1]*

<sup>9</sup> *then He said,  
"Behold, I have come to do Your will."*

*He takes away the first in order to establish the second. [8:13]*

<sup>10</sup> *By this will we have been sanctified [10:14] through the offering [10:12, 14, 18]  
of the body [10:5 – inclusion?] of Jesus Christ once for all. [10:12, 14]*

Note that verses 5-9 quote Psa. 40:6-8 as the very words of Jesus Christ!<sup>111</sup>

vs. 5-6: issue: why the difference between the Hebrew, LXX and vs. 5c?

Possible solution: it may refer to the custom in Ex. 21:6 and Deut. 15:17.

A freed slave could continue to serve his master voluntarily by having his ears pierced; the Greek LXX is an interpretive paraphrase of the Hebrew, and in Koine Greek “body” is often used as a synonym for slave.

---

<sup>110</sup> Ellingworth, 490.

<sup>111</sup> Calvin, 227, “... he [David] cast his eyes on the kingdom of Christ. And thus the Apostle is a witness, that Christ is justly introduced as the speaker in this Psalm.”

vs. 7: Jesus perfectly displayed this voluntary service in Psa. 40, Ex. 21 and Deut. 15 by giving His life as an atonement for sin.

"*Roll*" (NASB) or "*scroll*" (NIV) refers to the Law as the will of God.

The Old: God's lack of pleasure in the ceremonial sacrifices.

vs. 10: "*and by that will*" (NIV). What "will"? The will of God in vss. 7 and 9.

This is a climax! “*The exposition in vv. 8–9 leads to the conclusion of the argument in v. 10, which forms one of the high points of the whole epistle.*”<sup>112</sup>

3. NOW HE SUMMARIZES HIS ARGUMENT FOR THE SUPERIORITY OF THE SON'S SACRIFICE, WITH MANY CONTRASTS (10:11-18)

*the same sacrifices, [plural, contrast with 10:12]  
which can never take away sins;*<sup>113</sup> [10:17-18]

<sup>13</sup> *waiting from that time onward*  
*until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. [1:13]*

<sup>14</sup> For by one offering He has perfected [10:1] for all time [10:12] those who are sanctified. [recalls climax in 10:10]

<sup>15</sup> *And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,*

<sup>16</sup> "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, and upon their mind I will write them," [8:10, quoting again from Jer. 31]

He then says,  
<sup>17</sup> "And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." [8:12]

<sup>113</sup> Calvin, 230, “the conclusion then is, that the ancient priesthood, which is inconsistent with this, has ceased; for all the saints find a full consecration in the one offering of Christ.”

Climax [10:18]

<sup>18</sup> Now where there is forgiveness<sup>114</sup> [9:22] of these things,  
there is no longer any offering [10:10, 12, 14] for sin.

vs. 11-12: here we see a series of critically important contrasts:

- they stand, but He sits (recalls 1:3 and 8:1; reoccurs in 12:2)
- they offered sacrifices daily, but He offered Himself once
- their sacrifice couldn't remove sin, but His actually did!
- theirs were earthly, but His was made in the heavenly sanctuary.

vs. 13: he alludes to Psa. 110:1 again (cf. 1 :13)

He sits in heaven until the end when He will deal with His enemies (this statement recalls 1:13); this truth refers to Jesus' Kingship.  
Remember that Jesus is a Priest-King, as was Melchizedek (ch. 7).

vs. 14: Summary: He sits because “it is finished”; thus, there is no need of another sacrifice, as under the old administration (10:11).

Why? Because His offering perfects forever “*the ones who are being sanctified*”, which was impossible under the Old Covenant - 7:19; 9:9; 10:1.

vs. 15-17: here he returns to Jer. 31 to conclude his argument, which is dependent on the actual literary sequence of Jer. 31:33-34.

(1) Jeremiah's words were the words of the HS (inspiration!);

(2) It is significant that the words quoted in vs. 16 (Jer. 31:33) were written *before* those in vs. 17 (Jer. 31:34).

**Point**: the Holy Spirit confirmed both the internalisation of the law and the forgiveness of sins.

vs. 18: Conclusion: if sins have been forgiven, then there is no need for more sacrifices/offerings. In fact, they would be blasphemous because they would imply that the one, perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ was not good enough!

Thus, temple sacrifices are unnecessary and will soon end (8:13; 10:9).

In fact, they did end in 70AD when Jerusalem was destroyed; though they should have ended in 30AD when Christ died on the cross as the only Perfect High Priest and Sacrifice!

This marks the close of the doctrinal section: ‘you are forgiven, therefore now follow the “new and living way” and “draw near to Him” (10:19ff)!

---

<sup>114</sup> Ellingworth, 512, “The main point of Je. 31:33f. is the promise of the forgiveness which Christ's sacrifice has obtained, thus making any further sacrifice superfluous.”

### **QUESTIONS – Chapter 6**

1. How does the mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant point forward (as a “type”) to the cross of Jesus Christ (the “antitype”)? (see Rom. 3:25)
2. Contrast the earthly Holy of Holies with the heavenly one.  
  
How effective was/is each one in dealing with our sin and guilt?
3. Who are the Cherubim?  
  
What is their special function?
4. Is it absolutely necessary for blood to be shed in order for sin(s) to be forgiven?  
  
Can any blood that is offered cleanse us from sin? (see 10:4)
5. Can anyone be saved apart from the blood of Jesus Christ (say, for example, a sincere Muslim)? Why or why not?
6. Should we continue to offer sacrifices today?  
  
Why or why not? (defend your answer from Hebrews)
7. How many times or how often must this blood be shed? Why?
8. How does the Biblical teaching in Hebrews about blood sacrifices go against the teachings of African Traditional Religion(s) and some African Independent/Initiated Churches regarding sacrifices?
9. List as many contrasts as you can between the OC and the NC:  
(hint: be sure to include the important word, “once” in your answer!)
10. What is the significance of Christ sitting down at the Father's right hand?  
(Hint: see NIV Study Bible note on 1:3.)  
  
Did the OT priests ever sit down in the temple?  
Were there any chairs there?  
Why or why not?



## Lesson Seven (part A): Hebrews 10:19-39

THIS POINT MARKS A MAJOR TRANSITION IN THE BOOK,  
FROM *PRIMARILY* INSTRUCTION TO *PRIMARILY* APPLICATION

The very extensive application section (10:19 - 13:19) answers the crucial question:

"If Jesus really is our superior Great High Priest and perfect sacrifice for sin, then what difference should that make in the way we live?"

### VII. PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE SUPERIORITY OF THE SON AND THE NEW COVENANT (10:19-13:19)

#### A. EXHORTATION/INVITATION (10:19-39)

##### 1. BENEFITS OR PRIVILEGES OF JESUS BEING OUR PRIEST (10:19-25)<sup>115</sup>

- <sup>19</sup> *Since* [parallels 10:21] *therefore, brethren,*  
                    *we have* [parallels 10:21] *confidence* [4:16; 10:35 – inclusion]  
                    *to enter the holy place* [4:1-11; 9:11-14, 24]  
                    *by the blood of Jesus*, [4:14; 9:11-10:18]  
<sup>20</sup>                    *by a new and living way*  
                    *which He inaugurated for us through the veil*, [6:19] *that is, His flesh*,  
<sup>21</sup> *and since we have a Great Priest* [2:17-3:1; 4:14-16; 7:11-8:1; 9:11-14]  
                    *over the house of God*, [3:1-6]  
<sup>22</sup> *let us draw near* [4:16]  
                    *with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith*, [10:38-11:40]  
                    *having our hearts sprinkled* [9:18-22] *clean from an evil conscience* [9:14]  
                    *and our bodies washed*                    *with pure water*. [9:13] [cf. Ezek. 36:25]  
<sup>23</sup> *Let us hold fast the confession* [4:14] *of our hope* [6:18-19] *without wavering*,  
                    *for [reason; basis] He who promised is faithful*; [3:1-4:14; 6:13-20]<sup>116</sup>  
<sup>24</sup> *and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds*,  
<sup>25</sup> *not forsaking our own assembling together,*                    *as is the habit of some,*  
                    *but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.*

- a. vs. 19-21: summarize the basis on which the following entreaties are given:  
      “*since ...*”

- (1) ... we have constant access inside the veil in heaven by the blood of Jesus,  
      no longer being separate from the presence of God,  
      (recall 4:16) and since...
- (2) ... our High Priest is not one who serves in God’s house, but in fact rules  
      over it ... (recall 3:1-6)

<sup>115</sup> Calvin, 234, is relevant for countering syncretism, “the sum of what he has said is, that all the ceremonies by which an access under the Law was open to the sanctuary, have their real fulfillment in Christ, so that to him who has Christ, the use of them is superfluous and useless.”

<sup>116</sup> Calvin, 238, “our faith rests on this foundation, that God is true, that is, true to his promise, which his word contains; for that we may believe, the voice or word of God must precede.”

b. vs. 22-25: ...“let us” ...

- (1) ... keep on coming near to God in prayer, making the most of our constant access; since our cleansing is both ceremonial and actual we can be confident that He will welcome and hear us; 4:16.
- (2) ... keep on possessing the confession of our unwavering hope because God is trustworthy. He has shown by oath that Jesus Christ is our eternal Melchizedekian Priest-King!
- (3) ... sharply confront one another with our responsibility to be constantly aware of our need to stimulate (incite, provoke) one another to loving behavior and good works.

In order to do so the local church must meet together for on a regular basis.

**Summary:** let us pray, persevere, and provoke (in a positive sense, stimulate)!

Hear John Calvin’s pastoral heart when commenting on 10:25:

“Having said, “Nor forsaking the assembling together,” he adds, *But exhorting one another*’; by which he intimates that all the godly ought by all means possible to exert themselves in the work of gathering together the Church on every side; for we are called by the Lord on this condition, that everyone should afterwards strive to lead others to the truth, to restore the wandering to the right way, to extend a helping hand to the fallen, to win over those who are without.”<sup>117</sup>

2. A SEVERE WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY ... (10:26-35)

a. ... IN LIGHT OF A VERY CERTAIN FUTURE JUDGMENT (vs. 26-31)<sup>118</sup>

- <sup>26</sup> *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, [10:18]*
- <sup>27</sup> *but a certain \*terrifying expectation of \*judgment, [10:30-31 - double inclusio] and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.*
- <sup>28</sup> *Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses [note parallel contrast in vs.29] dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.*
- <sup>29</sup> *How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant [9:15-22] by which he was sanctified, [10:10,14] and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*
- <sup>30</sup> *For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." [Dt. 32:35a] And again, "The Lord will \*judge [10:27] His people." [Dt. 32:36a; cf. 12:25-29]*
- <sup>31</sup> *It is a \*terrifying [10:27] thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

The basic idea of this warning is the same as the one in 6:4-6 - a deliberate rejection/renunciation of Christ leaves no other path for salvation, and thus leads only to judgment. There is only one way, John 14:6!

---

<sup>117</sup> Calvin, 241 (italics his).

<sup>118</sup> See Calvin, 243-252 and Ellingworth, 530-544 for helpful insights on this warning passage.

vs. 26: recall who the audience is - professing Hebrew Christians, some of whom are in real danger of apostasy.

If they turn aside from Christ after experiencing the full knowledge or recognition of the superiority of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant, then they have no sacrifice for sin left, since Christ's sacrifice is the only one which can truly remove our sin; cf. Num. 15:30-31.

vs. 27: only a “*terrifying... judgment*” (used twice framing a double *inclusion* with vs. 31) awaits those who deliberately reject Christ's sacrifice, a fiery zeal which consumes all who ‘oppose’ Him.

vs. 28: as in the previous warning a contrast is drawn between “*judgment*” under the Old Covenant and the New - those who rejected the Law found no mercy when their sin was verified by 2 or 3 witnesses - see Deut. 17:2-6 where the context is idolatry.

vs. 29: this is a logical argument from the lesser to the greater (as in 2:1-4): Moses was only a servant, but Jesus is the Son! (cf. same terms in 3:1-6)

So, those who ‘*treat with contempt*’ the Son and count His blood as defiled, unclean or profane will receive greater punishment for such apostasy.

That is, it is much worse than mistreating Moses, whom all Hebrews held in very high esteem.

“*Sanctified*” may here have the sense of the apostate being visibly initiated into the New Covenant by water baptism.

vs. 30: this verse is the answer to vs. 29.

Note that the context of Deut. 32:35-36 is a warning to Israel about the vengeance of God for disobeying His Law by turning aside to worship idols.

vs. 31: speaks again of a “*terrifying*” judgment; recall vs. 27.

This describes the only fate that awaits those who turn aside from the New Covenant blessings in God's Son.

b. ... IN LIGHT OF THEIR PAST COURAGE AND ENDURANCE  
(vs. 32-35)

<sup>32</sup> *But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened,*

*you endured a great conflict of sufferings,*

<sup>33</sup> *partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations,*

*and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.*

<sup>34</sup> *For you showed sympathy [2:17; 4:15] to the prisoners,*

*and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property,*

*knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. [11:13-16, 39-40; 12:28]*

<sup>35</sup> *Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, [4:16; 10:19 - inclusion] which has a great reward. [11:13-16, 23-26, 39-40; 12:28]*

vs. 32-33: note the shift back to a command/imperative - here is a call to reflect back to when they endured well a time of intense suffering as a challenge not to waste that by turning back, but to persevere to the end.

*“The remembrance of past warfare, if it had been carried on faithfully and diligently under the banner of Christ, is at length useful to us, not as a pretext for sloth, as though we had already served our time, but to render us more active finishing the remaining part of our course. For Christ has not enlisted us on this condition, that we should after a few years ask for a discharge like soldiers who have served their time, but that we should pursue our warfare even to the end.”<sup>119</sup>*

vs.34: he recalls 2 facts about them:

(1) ACTION - how they responded to that persecution: they showed sympathy to prisoners, and joyfully accepted the loss of property.

(2) BASIS: the knowledge which helped them respond in that way: knowing they have a better and lasting possession in heaven.

vs. 35: CONCLUSION: Christ’s sacrifice has provided them with great confidence (10:19 - inclusion) which leads not to judgment, but to “a great reward” – another way to express the eternal “rest” as in ch. 4.

“It hence appears that confidence in the foundation of a godly and holy life. By mentioning *reward*, he diminishes nothing from the promise of salvation; for the faithful know that their labour is not vain in the Lord in such a way that they still rest on God’s mercy alone.”<sup>120</sup>

### 3. \*ENDURE IN \*FAITH IN LIGHT OF THE GREAT REWARD (10:36-39)

Major structural markers introduce the 2 key terms, *\*endurance* and *\*faith*, which will be expanded as themes in in 11:1-12:17, again in reserve order:

[A] = “*endurance*” (v. 36-37) will be expanded second in 12:1-17, that is [A’]<sup>121</sup>  
[B] = “*faith*” (10:38-39), which will be expanded first in 11:1-40, that is [B’].

<sup>36</sup> *For you have need of \*endurance, [12:1f] [A - expanded in 12:1-17 = A’]  
so that when you have done the will of God,  
you may receive what was promised.*

<sup>37</sup> *For yet in a very little while,  
He who is coming will come, and will not delay. [cf. 10:25 “the day”]*

<sup>38</sup> *But My righteous one shall live by \*faith; [B > 11:1-40 = B’] [a - faith]  
and if he shrinks back, [b - opposite]*

*My soul has no pleasure in him. [anticipates 11:6]*

<sup>39</sup> *But we are not of those who shrink back [b’ - opposite]  
[to destruction, (result)]  
but of those who have \*faith [v.38 = mini-inclusion] [a’ - faith]  
[to the preserving of the soul. (result)]*

<sup>119</sup> A helpful example of pastoral insight from J. Calvin’s commentary, p. 252.

<sup>120</sup> Calvin, 255, shows “how reward is not incompatible with the gratuitous imputation of righteousness.”

<sup>121</sup> Ellingworth, 544, “There are also close links between this section (vv. 36-39) and the beginning of chap. 12”

vs. 36: their first “*need*” identified here is for “*endurance*”, in order to bear with and persevere (vs. 39) through the “sufferings”, “reproaches” and “tribulations” (vs. 32-33) surrounding them until they are over, and thus receive the fulfilment of the “promise”;  
Cf. the very parallel passage 2Cor. 4:16-18.

vs. 37: “*For yet in a very little while ...*”

Part of the quote is from Isa. 26:20, which has a very parallel context (historical background) of suffering and waiting for God’s promise.

The rest of the quote is from Hab. 2:3-4 (from the LXX) - the righteous man accepts the will of God, even when it includes suffering, as he faithfully waits for God to fulfill His promise.

This is faith, which thus anticipates chapter 11!

vs. 38-39: their second need is for “*faith*”, which shows itself in perseverance!

Minor structural markers: these 2 verses clearly form another “*chiasm*”, marked by the lower case letters to show that this is a minor/short chiasm.

This structure highlights and emphasizes key words or phrases (in this case, 2 opposites – genuine “*faith*” versus “*shrinking back*”) which he raises and then repeats in reverse order, forming the chiasm.

This serves to introduce and prepare the reader for chapter 11 on *faith*!<sup>122</sup>

If one apostatises (draws himself back or “*shrinks back*”), then God will be displeased and such a person will not enter His rest (ch. 4).

“*Destruction*” or eternal damnation is the “*reward*” of the one who turns away from faith in Jesus Christ, the very opposite of *perseverance*.

However, such “*shrinking back*” is not characteristic of true saving faith, which he believes the majority of them possess – “*we are not of those ...*”.

He clearly states that those who have true faith *will persevere* to salvation!

“*Then the apostle announced this truth, that all who are counted just before God do not live otherwise than by faith.*”<sup>123</sup>

This is very parallel with Heb. 6:9 – it is critical to observe that in both cases his severe warning (6:4-6 and here) is followed by an equally sincere expression of his “confidence” in (most of) them.

By God’s grace they will *endure* by *faith*!

---

<sup>122</sup> Ellingworth, 558, “The theme of faith has been clearly announced in 10:38f.”

<sup>123</sup> Calvin, 258.

**VII. PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE SUPERIORITY OF THE SON AND THE NEW COVENANT (10:19-13:19) - continued**

**B. ENCOURAGEMENT BY GREAT EXAMPLES OF FAITH (11:1-40) - [B']**

The author is showing that these OT believers were justified by an **active** faith which was grounded in the revelation of the character and promises of God!

**1. APPROACH GOD BY FAITH (11:1-7)**

**a. THE NATURE OF BIBLICAL FAITH (11:1-3)**

<sup>1</sup> Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,  
the conviction of things not seen. [11:3, 7; cf. Rom. 8:24-25]

<sup>2</sup> For by it the men of old gained approval.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

vs. 1-3: give us a partial biblical definition of faith:

- the assurance of the “*hoped for*” and “*not seen*”  
cf. 2Cor. 5:7 – “for we walk by faith, not by sight”
- the means of divine “*approval*” (vs. 2)
- the key to understanding the “*visible*” (vs. 3) world; the verification of unseen realities; see 1Pet. 1:8.

Contrast this last point with the widespread teaching on “marco evolution”, which the younger generation is receiving in our public schools and museums. [“Marco evolution” refers to the alleged transition from one species/kind to another; everyone accepts “micro” evolution, modifications within a species.]

Example: every museum we saw in Zimbabwe had a huge display showing all who visit the supposed evolution of man from ancient apes, in utter denial of being created by God and in His image (Gen. 1-2)

During one visit, we saw large groups of school children being taken through this museum by their so-called teachers.

How might this deception destroy the faith of these little ones?

Application: they needed to look with the eyes of faith beyond their present hard circumstances to the glory of their future inheritance.

vs. 2: these received God’s commendation for their faith.

<sup>124</sup> Calvin, 262-3, “He handles this subject to the end of the chapter—that the fathers obtained salvation and were accepted by God in no other way than by faith.”

b. THREE MEN WHO PLEASED GOD BY THEIR FAITH (11:4-7):

- <sup>4</sup> *By faith* Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain,<sup>125</sup>  
through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous,  
God testifying about his gifts,  
and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.
- <sup>5</sup> *By faith* Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death;  
and he was not found because God took him up;  
for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up  
he was pleasing to God. [11:6]
- <sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please Him,  
for he who comes to God must believe that He is,  
and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
- <sup>7</sup> *By faith* Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, [11:1]  
in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household,  
by which he condemned the world,  
and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

1. Abel's better sacrifice in faith, vs. 4; righteousness comes by faith.
2. Enoch's translation because of his faith, vs. 5.
3. Noah likely had never seen rain, as most believe that the earth was a misty 'rain forest' before the global flood changed the entire landscape. Without faith we can't please God because faith involves believing two key things - see the 2 parallel clauses in vs. 6.

Lesson: faith obeys in spite of a lack of outward evidence;  
vs. 1, 7 – note that the phrase in vs. 1, "things not seen", is repeated in vs. 7, "things not yet seen."

Structure: this inclusion likely marks off verses 1-7 as a unit, along with it beginning with "Now faith" and ending with "according to faith", although most see either vs. 1-2 or vs. 1-3 as introductory to the rest of chapter 11, all of which is often affectionately called "The Hall of Faith".

2. INHERITORS OF A PROMISE BY FAITH (11: 8-22)

a. ABRAHAM, THE KEY EXAMPLE OF FAITH (11: 8-12 and 17-19)

- <sup>8</sup> *By faith* Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, [11:15]  
not knowing where he was going.
- <sup>9</sup> *By faith* he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land,  
dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise;
- <sup>10</sup> for [reason] he was looking for the city which has foundations, [11:13-16]  
whose architect and builder is God. [3:3-4; 11:16]
- <sup>11</sup> *By faith* even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised;
- <sup>12</sup> therefore, also, there was born of one man,  
and him as good as dead at that,

<sup>125</sup> Calvin, 266, "The object in this chapter is to show, that however excellent were the works of the saints, it was from faith they derived their value, their worthiness, and all their excellencies;"

*as many descendants as the stars of heaven in number,  
and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

[Note: vs. 17-19 resume from vs. 8-12; vs. 13-16 will be discussed below]

<sup>17</sup> *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac;  
and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten  
son; [typology, v. 19]*

<sup>18</sup> *it was he to whom it was said,*

*"In Isaac your descendants shall be called." [the promise in Gen. 21:12]*

<sup>19</sup> *He considered [11:11] that God is able to raise men even from the dead; [12]  
from which he also received him back as a type. (11:8-12, 17-19)*

He moved out in faith in spite of not knowing where he was going, vs. 8.

He patiently waited for God to fulfill His promise to design and make an eternal "city" wherein he would dwell with God forever, vs. 9-10.

*"Where was the inheritance which he had expected? ... for to be a sojourner seemed contrary to what had been promised. That Abraham then courageously sustained this trial was an instance of great fortitude; but it proceeded from faith alone."<sup>126</sup>*

Sarah conceived although it was considered humanly impossible, vs. 11-12.

The testing of his faith by God showed his confidence in God's power to fulfill what He had promised, vs. 17-19.

*"... there is no faith without God's word, for his faithfulness we cannot be convinced until he has spoken ... there is a mutual relation between God's word and our faith. True faith then is that which hears God speaking and rests on his promise."<sup>127</sup>*

b. AN EMPHATIC COMMENTARY ON FORWARD-LOOKING FAITH IN THE MIDST OF THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM (11:13-16)<sup>128</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *All these died in faith, without receiving the promises,  
but having seen them  
and having welcomed them from a distance,  
and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.*

<sup>14</sup> *For those who say such things make it clear that  
they are seeking a country of their own.*

<sup>15</sup> *And indeed if they had been thinking of that country [11:16a]  
from which they went out, [like Abraham, 11:8]  
they would have had opportunity to return.*

<sup>16</sup> *But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one.  
Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God;  
for He has prepared a city for them. [11:10]*

All these people of faith nonetheless died as pilgrims, without receiving the promise while living on this earth. However, their eyes of faith were focused forward on the true heavenly eternal country/city as the ultimate fulfillment.

<sup>126</sup> Calvin, 279, emphasizing that he did NOT receive the promise immediately, but persevered in/by faith.

<sup>127</sup> Calvin, 282, which I quote to encourage all teachers and preachers to preach the Word, not themselves!

<sup>128</sup> Ellingworth, 592, "The central position of these verses is designed to give them prominence"



Please note that they did not consider Jerusalem or Palestine to be the true “promised land”; it was only a “type”. Sadly, some Christians today do not recognize this and still await God to set up another physical temple in Israel. That is, they fail to see the “type” and how it pointed beyond itself to the “antitype”, the New Jerusalem, the New Heavens and Earth (Rev. 21-22).

c. ISAAC, JACOB AND JOSEPH (vs. 20-22)

<sup>20</sup> *By faith Isaac blessed* [v.21] *Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.*

<sup>21</sup> *By faith Jacob, as he was dying, [parallels 11:22a, followed by 2 actions]*  
*blessed each of the sons of Joseph, [1]*  
*and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff. [2]*

<sup>22</sup> *By faith Joseph, when he was dying,*  
*made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, [1]*  
*and gave orders concerning his bones.<sup>129</sup> [2]*

Faith enabled Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph to both live by faith and to die in faith, even though they had not yet received the promise (vs. 13).

The repetition of both Isaac and Jacob *blessing* (vs. 20 and 21) their descendants, as they died, shows that they possessed a forward-looking *faith*, not expecting all of God’s promises to be fulfilled in their lifetime. Rather, by faith they looked ahead for a better “city”, a heavenly one (vs. 16).

Joseph’s actions likewise show that he also possessed a forward-looking faith.

3. COURAGEOUS ENDURANCE BY FAITH (vs. 23-40)

a. MOSES (vs. 23-28) – note the *chiasm*, followed by a key emphasis of faith, drawing the audience back to key elements in the introduction in 11:1-7.

<sup>23</sup> *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child;*  
*and they were not afraid of the king's edict. [11:27 parallel] [A]*

<sup>24</sup> *By faith Moses, when he had grown up,*  
*refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; [B]*

<sup>25</sup> *choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, [C]*  
*than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin;*

<sup>26</sup> *considering the reproach (like that) of Christ greater riches [13:13] [C]*  
*than the treasures of Egypt;<sup>130</sup>*  
*for [reason] he was looking to [11:27c] the reward.*

<sup>27</sup> *By faith he left [left behind, forsook<sup>131</sup>] Egypt, [B]*  
*not fearing the wrath of the king; [11:23] [A]*

*for [result] he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen. [emphasis; 11:1, 3, 7]*  
<sup>28</sup> *By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood,*  
*so that he who destroyed the first-born might not touch them.*

<sup>129</sup> Calvin, 291, this has nothing to do with ancestor worship or ATR, “but his only object was to sharpen the desire of his own nation that they might more earnestly aspire after redemption; he wished to strengthen their faith, so that they might confidently hope that they would be at length delivered.”

<sup>130</sup> Calvin, 294, “... we ought to shun as deadly poison whatever cannot be enjoyed without offending God.”

<sup>131</sup> BibleWorks7 (2006 edition), the literal meaning, paralleling “refused” in 11:24b as shown by the chiasm.

His forward-looking faith was clearly demonstrated in the fact that he voluntarily exchanged the fleeting pleasures of the treasures of Egypt for the reproach of Christ, because he fixed his eyes of faith upon the future reward, thus “seeing” his unseen God (note the “play on words” – seeing the unseen).

*“We hence learn that the true character of faith is to set God always before our eyes; secondly, that faith beholds higher and more hidden things in God than what our senses can perceive; and thirdly, that a few of God alone is sufficient to strengthen our weakness, so that we may become firmer rocks to withstand all the assaults of Satan.”<sup>132</sup>*

b. ISRAEL AND RAHAB AT JERICHO (vs. 29-31)

<sup>29</sup> *By faith they passed through the Red Sea  
as though they were passing through dry land;  
and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.*

<sup>30</sup> *By faith the walls of Jericho fell down,  
after they had been encircled for seven days.*

<sup>31</sup> *By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient,  
after she had welcomed the spies in peace.*

Israel demonstrated faith by trusting in God’s power to defeat her enemies as she walked between the high walls of water held back on both sides.

**Lesson:** the battle is the Lords! (1Sam. 17:47; 2Chr. 20:15).

This same lesson was taught to Israel at Jericho.

Rahab is a wonderful example of faith by a person outside of Israel, a Gentile.

c. MANY OTHER GREAT EXAMPLES OF FAITH (vs. 32-40)

<sup>32</sup> *And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak,  
Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, [1:1]*

<sup>33</sup> *who by faith conquered kingdoms,  
performed acts of righteousness,  
obtained promises, [see note on 11:39]  
shut the mouths of lions,  
<sup>34</sup> quenched the power of fire,  
escaped the edge of the sword,  
from weakness were made strong,<sup>133</sup>  
became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.*

<sup>35</sup> *Women received back their dead by resurrection; [A]  
and others were tortured, not accepting their release, [B]  
in order that they might obtain a better resurrection; [A]*

<sup>36</sup> *and others experienced mockings and scourgings, [B]  
yes, also chains and imprisonment.*

<sup>37</sup> *They were stoned,  
they were sawn in two,  
they were tempted,  
they were put to death with the sword;  
they went about in sheepskins,  
in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated*

<sup>132</sup> Calvin, 298.

<sup>133</sup> Calvin, 304-5 “... the Lord ... brought help to their weakness, so as to endue them with full strength ... The sum of the whole is that the fortitude of the saints, which has shone forth in all ages, was the work of faith; for our weakness is such that we are not capable of overcoming evils, except faith sustains us.”

<sup>38</sup> *(men of whom the world was not worthy),  
wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.*  
<sup>39</sup> *And all these, having gained approval [vs. 2] through their faith,  
did not receive what was promised, [11:13, 33]<sup>134</sup>*  
<sup>40</sup> *because God had provided something better for us,  
so that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*

A catalogue of both named and unnamed heroes and their faith expressed in endurance is found in vs. 32-40, beginning with four of the Judges.

Their great deeds as wonderful examples of clearly demonstrated faith are noted in vs. 33-34, even though they were all “weak” (2:17-18; 4:15; 5:2)!

Their great sufferings as those unfit for a pagan society (but actually the world was unfit for them) are noted in vs. 35-38.

Note: is there a passage in all of Scripture that more clearly contradicts the often-preached “**health and wealth** (false) **gospel**” than this one?  
 There is certainly no so-called “**prosperity gospel**” seen here, but rather quite the opposite!

In fact, throughout both biblical (consider the majority of the prophets and apostles) and church history, it has often been the case that those with the strongest and most sincere faith often suffered the most at the hands of those who hate God.

As in the earlier parallel paragraph in this great chapter, 11:13-16, they all died without receiving the earthly promise, yet looking for the “*better*” promise that has now come to them and to us in Christ and the New Covenant, vs. 39-40!

Consider how Paul described his plight and that of his fellow ministers of the gospel in 2 Cor. 4:7-12; does this sound like the prosperity message?

<sup>7</sup> *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing  
greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves;*  
<sup>8</sup> *we are **afflicted** in every way, but not crushed; **perplexed**, but not  
despairing;*  
<sup>9</sup> ***persecuted**, but not forsaken; **struck down**, but not destroyed;*  
<sup>10</sup> *always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus,  
that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.*  
<sup>11</sup> *For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’  
sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*  
<sup>12</sup> *So death works in us, but life in you.”*

Consider the “promise” he gave to young pastor Timothy in 1Tim. 3:12:  
*“And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”*

---

<sup>134</sup> Ellingworth, 559. “How then is the tension between the “promises” in vv. 13, 33, and 39 to be resolved? The simplest explanation, and one supported in each case by the context, is that v. 33 refers to the fulfilment of promises (such as occupation of the promised land) within the OT period, while vv. 13 and 39 refer to the nonfulfilment of God’s wider purposes under the old dispensation. Even now, as 10:36 has just reminded the readers and 11:39–12:2 will confirm, the fulfilment of those purposes is still a matter of confident hope, dependent on faithfulness to the end.”

A final plea: pastors and leaders, as we engage in ministry, we must reject the **lie** of the enemy that tells us that if we really have faith, then all will be easy and well!

On the contrary, we must accept both the exhortations and examples in Scripture that tell us that the Christian life, and especially the lives of those who take a firm stand for Jesus Christ in a world that hates and rejects Him, will at times be very difficult.

These passages call us to forward-looking faith that is able to endure the trials of this fallen, cursed world (Gen.3), knowing that we will soon reside in the perfect heavenly city/country which God has prepared for all who love and serve Him!

We close this section with a very realistic and pastoral note of encouragement,  
*“Thus in all the saints, something reprehensible is ever to be found; yet faith, though halting and imperfect, is still approved by God. There is therefore no reason why the faults we labour under should break us down, or dishearten us, provided we by faith go on in the race of our calling.”*<sup>135</sup>

### **QUESTIONS – Chapter 7**

1. Describe the major transition in the book marked by Heb. 10:19.
2. Why does someone have to be "in Christ" in order to draw near to God in prayer?
3. How is the strong warning in chapter 6 similar to the strong warning in chapter 10?
4. If you have the resources to do some research, consider the false teachings of "Liberation Theology" and the "Prosperity Cult/Gospel", and compare their teachings with what we have seen in 10:32-39. Summarize your findings.
5. Write out a sermon outline or teaching lesson on Heb. 10:19-25.
6. Define/describe true faith:
7. Faith must always have an object.  
Must our faith always be in Jesus Christ alone? If so, why?
8. Are there practices in our lives that might indicate that our faith is in someone or something other than Jesus Christ?
9. Is chapter 11 encouraging these Hebrew Christians to venerate their ancestors?  
  
Contrast a biblical view of ancestors with a typical ATR view in your cultural context.
10. Identify your favourite example of faith in ch. 11 and explain how and why this person's example encourages you in your walk with the Lord and in your leadership in His church.

---

<sup>135</sup> Calvin, 303.

**C. ENCOURAGEMENT BY GREAT EXAMPLES OF ENDURANCE (12:1-17) – [A'] – that is, an expansion of the need for “*endurance*” introduced in 10:36-37.**

The Christian’s faithful perseverance in the midst of trouble (12:1-17)

Note the mention of the character quality of endurance in vs. 1, 2, 3, and 7, which again recalls 10:36 and shows that this was their present need, and ours!

**vs. 1: ENDURE BY CONSIDERING THE IMPERFECT FAITHFUL**

<sup>1</sup> *Therefore, since **we**<sup>136</sup> have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us,  
let us also lay aside every encumbrance, (weight; KJV, ESV, NLT)  
 and the sin which so easily entangles us,  
 and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

He now *applies* chapter 11 to them personally; note the pronoun shift to *us*.

In view of this multitude of Old Testament saints watching us compete, let us follow their great example of true faith and finish our race which started when we confessed Jesus as Messiah, and let us put off the sin of unbelief and all other hindrances to our progress, so that we can run the Christian race with endurance (athletic metaphor). Compare 1Cor. 9:24-27.

**vs. 2-3: ENDURE BY CONSIDERING THE PERFECT MESSIAH**

<sup>2</sup> *fixing our eyes on **Jesus** [emphatic position] the author and perfector of faith,  
 who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame,  
 and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [1:3; 4:16; 8:1; 10:12]*  
<sup>3</sup> *For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself,  
 so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.<sup>137</sup>*

Even though the examples of faith already given have been wonderful, the perfect and ultimate is Jesus Christ Himself!

The critical phrase “*sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*” recalls 1:3; 8:1 and 10:12; this fourth usage shows its importance of Jesus’ present presence as reigning King!

They, and we, are called to run with our eyes fixated upon Jesus Christ as the perfect example of who endured much suffering and even death to finish His walk of faith while on this earth.

These verses also remind us of 11:24-27 regarding Moses.

*Endurance* comes as we concentrate (vs. 2) and meditate (vs. 3) upon Jesus; recall 11:27.

<sup>136</sup> Ellingworth, 637, “12:1–2 reintroduce the two essential participants who have been largely absent since ch. 10, namely “we” (emphatic, v. 1) and “Jesus” (emphatic by position at the end of v. 2a).” [bold = emphatic]

<sup>137</sup> Calvin, 313, “For this one thought alone ought to be sufficient to conquer all temptations, that is, when we know we are companions or associates of the Son of God, and that he ... willingly came down to our condition, in order that he might animate us by his own example; yea, it is thus that we gather courage ...”

vs. 4-11: ENDURE BY CONSIDERING THE LOVING FATHER

- <sup>4</sup> *You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood  
in your striving against sin;*
- <sup>5</sup> *and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,  
"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,  
nor faint when you are reproved by Him;*
- <sup>6</sup> *For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,  
and He scourges every son whom He receives." [Prov. 3:11-12]*
- <sup>7</sup> *It is for discipline that you endure; [A]  
God deals with you as with sons; [B]  
for what son is there [B]  
whom his father does not discipline? [A]*
- <sup>8</sup> *But if you are without discipline, [A]  
of which all have become partakers,  
then you are illegitimate children and not sons. [B]*
- <sup>9</sup> *Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them;  
shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?*
- <sup>10</sup> *For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them,  
but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.*
- <sup>11</sup> *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful;  
yet to those who have been trained by it,  
afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.<sup>138</sup>*

Central message: accept God's instructive discipline/chastening as His child!

Paraphrase: 'you haven't suffered unto death (vs. 4), but you have forgotten that God's discipline expresses of His fatherly love for all His true children.'

"Scourge" (KJV, NKJ, NASB) literally means to beat with a whip (vs. 5-10), thus denoting the seriousness of the discipline repeatedly mentioned here.

Note that verse 5 is addressed to "you", speaking to the Hebrews of Proverbs!  
Lesson: the Old Testament was for them, and for us too! See also 1Cor. 10:6.

An illegitimate child does not receive his father's interest, nor does he receive/enjoy a portion of the father's inheritance (vs. 8).

Remember the principle that discipline produces righteousness for those who have been exercised by it (vs. 11; this is a good verse to memorize);  
so, ready yourself for the healing effects of discipline (vs. 12-13).

vs. 12-14: ENDURE BY RUNNING THE RACE TO THE FINISH LINE

- <sup>12</sup> *Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak  
and the knees that are feeble,*
- <sup>13</sup> *and make straight paths for your feet,  
so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Pursue peace with all men,  
and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.*

---

<sup>138</sup> Calvin, 320, "by the *fruit of righteousness* he means the fear of the Lord and a godly and holy life, of which the cross is the teacher. He calls it *peaceable* because in adversities we are alarmed and disquieted, being tempted by impatience ..."

The “*limb out of joint*” may continue the athletic idea of ‘turning aside in a race’. Likewise “*straight paths*” could refer to the ‘running lane’. And “*pursue sanctification/holiness*”, which in Hebrews is drawing near to God with a clean conscience; recall 10:22.

vs. 15-17: ENDURE BY ‘LAYING ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT AND SIN’ (12:1)

- <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; [4:16]  
that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble,  
and by it many be defiled;  
<sup>16</sup> that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau,  
who sold his own birthright for a single meal.  
<sup>17</sup> For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing,  
he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, [an example of 6:4-6]  
though he sought for it with tears.

These verses sound a very solemn warning against rejecting God’s grace, which is the opposite of enduring in faith, and serve as a negative example.

We might paraphrase these verses as follows: ‘watch out for the great problem of bitterness and the tragedy of making an irreversible decision, like Esau.’

Application: be aware of the very destructive influence of bitterness.

Perhaps we can relate this passage to our supplement on ancestors. In chapter 11 these believers were encouraged to look back on many spiritual ancestors who serve as good examples. Here, on the other hand, they are told to look back at a bad example, and are sternly warned *not* to become like him.

#### D. FINAL ADMONITION BASED ON THE CONTENTS OF THE TWO COVENANTS (12:18-29)

- <sup>18</sup> For you have not come to a mountain that may be touched  
and to a blazing \*fire, [12:29- note the *inclusion* marking this as a section]  
and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,  
<sup>19</sup> and to the blast of a trumpet  
and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that  
no further word should be spoken to them. [12:24]  
<sup>20</sup> For [explains] they could not bear the command,  
“If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned.” [Ex. 19:12-13]  
<sup>21</sup> And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said,  
“I am full of fear and trembling.” [Deut. 9:19]  
<sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion [contrast, shift to a heavenly mountain]  
and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,<sup>139</sup> [11:10, 13-16]  
and to myriads of angels, [1:4-2:16]  
<sup>23</sup> to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven,  
and to God, the Judge of all, [10:26-31]  
and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, [10:14]

<sup>139</sup> Calvin, 333, “he expressly calls it heavenly that the Jews might not cleave to that which was earthly, and which had flourished under the Law; for when they sought perversely to continue under the slavish yoke of the Law, mount Zion was turned into mount Sinai, as Paul teaches us (Gal.4). Then by the heavenly Jerusalem he understood that which was to be built throughout the whole world.”

<sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, [7:22; 8:6; 9:15-22]  
and to the sprinkled blood, [9:18-22]  
which speaks better than the blood of Abel. [11:4; 12:25]

*“Chapter 12 contains, in vv. 18–29, the rhetorical climax of the epistle; it also contains the author’s last major teaching, and his final general appeal to the readers to avoid apostasy.”*<sup>140</sup>

Contrast: “You have not come to ...” (vs. 18-21; the type, the Law, the Old)  
“But you have come to ...” (vs. 22-24; the fulfilment, the New Covenant)!

Meaning: you are no longer under Moses and the Old Covenant of Mt. Sinai,  
but you are now under Jesus and the New Covenant of Mt. Zion!

Christians enjoy the rights of “*first-born*” (vs. 23) sons because of their union with Christ, The First-born - recall 1:6 and Col. 1:15, 18, whose blood is “*better*” because it truly atones for sin as He is the perfect Mediator of a “*better*” covenant.

<sup>25</sup> *See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. [12:24; cf. 1:1-2; 2:1-4]  
For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth,  
much less shall we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.*  
<sup>26</sup> *And His voice shook the earth then,  
but now He has promised, saying,  
“Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.” [Hag. 2:6]*  
<sup>27</sup> *And this expression, “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things  
which can be shaken, as of created things,  
in order that [purpose] those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*  
<sup>28</sup> *Therefore, since we receive a **kingdom** which cannot be shaken,  
let us show gratitude,  
by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;<sup>141</sup>  
<sup>29</sup> for our God is a consuming \*fire. [marks the end of an inclusion with 12:18]*

vs. 25-29 – Judgment for refusing the New is even greater than under the Old.

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> and final major warning in Hebrews and has many similarities to the previous 4 warnings in 2:1-4 (parallel), 3:12-19, 6:4-6 and 10:26-39.

A refusal to observe and adhere to the New Covenant brings a final divine judgment, like a consuming fire (12:29), but faith brings deliverance, gratitude, service, reverence and awe!

## Hebrews 13:1-25

### E. FINAL PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR SERVICE UNDER THE NEW COVENANT (13:1-19)

#### 1. REGARDING INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS (13:1-6)

<sup>1</sup> Let love of the brethren continue [literally: remain, stay, persist].<sup>142</sup>

<sup>140</sup> Ellingworth, 637.

<sup>141</sup> Calvin, 338, “there is yet no service approved by him except it be united with humility and due reverence.”

<sup>142</sup> BibleWorks7



- <sup>2</sup> *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,  
for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them,  
and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Let marriage be held in honor among all,  
and let the marriage bed be undefiled;  
for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. [12:29]*
- <sup>5</sup> *Let your character be free from the love of money,  
being content with what you have;  
for He Himself has said,  
"I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you," [Deut. 31:6, 8]*
- <sup>6</sup> *so that we confidently say,  
"The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.  
What shall man do to me?" <sup>143</sup> [Psa. 118:6]*

Brotherly duties include the following:

- a. showing brotherly love, vs. 1

They need to be reminded to continue loving one another in the midst of their present trials which could distract them from this high calling. See Rom. 12:10a and 13:8, 10 - love fulfils the law

- b. showing hospitality, vs. 2-3

The sense of vs. 2 is "*do not go on being unmindful of hospitality*", especially remembering the prisoner (the preposition implies that the fellow Christians they are bound with are in prison) and those treated in an evil manner (recalls many of the faithful, see 11:37).

- c. pursuing purity/morality, vs. 4

A fornicator is an immoral person and this prohibits all sex outside of marriage, whether heterosexual or homosexual; whereas adultery refers to sexual unfaithfulness to one's spouse.

- d. showing contentment, vs. 5; here he quotes from Deut. 31:6, 8.

Because God will never leave us without support in times of trouble/distress, we can be content in the midst of any circumstances. Again, this would draw their minds back to the heroes of faith in ch. 11.

The result: confidence that God will help in every time of need, vs. 6. This is biblical faith!

## 2. REGARDING RELIGIOUS DUTIES (vs. 7-19)

- <sup>7</sup> *Remember those who led you, [13:17] who spoke the word of God to you;  
and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.*
- <sup>8</sup> ***Jesus Christ** is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. [1:2b-13]*

<sup>143</sup> Calvin, 343-4, "He infers from this promise what is found in Psalm 118, that we have the power to overcome fear when we feel assured of God's help" "It is certain that the source of covetousness is mistrust ... When therefore he is seeking to cure us of the disease of covetousness, he wisely calls our attention to God's promises, in which he testifies that he will ever be present with us ... there is no cause to fear."

- <sup>9</sup> Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings;  
for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods,  
through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited.
- <sup>10</sup> We have an altar,  
from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.
- <sup>11</sup> For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place  
by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned outside the camp.
- <sup>12</sup> Therefore **Jesus** also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood,  
suffered outside the gate.
- <sup>13</sup> Hence, let **us** go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.
- <sup>14</sup> For here we do not have a lasting city,  
but we are seeking the city which is to come. [11:10, 13-16]
- <sup>15</sup> Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God,  
that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.
- <sup>16</sup> And do not neglect doing good and sharing;  
for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
- <sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders, and submit to them; [13:17]  
for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account.  
Let them do this with joy and not with grief,  
for this would be unprofitable for you.
- <sup>18</sup> Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience,  
desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.
- <sup>19</sup> And I urge you all the more to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

- a. Remember former leaders and imitate their example of faith, vs. 7.
- b. Remember the changeless, eternal Christ, vs. 8; this recalls Heb. 12:2.

*“The only way by which we can persevere in the right faith is to hold to the foundation, and not in the smallest degree to depart from it; for he who holds not to Christ knows nothing but vanity ... for in Christ are included all the treasures of celestial wisdom.”<sup>144</sup>*

*““And forever” is new information in the immediate context; it is emphasized by its position, and implicitly draws the readers’ attention to the great theme of Christ’s everlasting high priesthood ... ”<sup>145</sup>*

- c. Be careful to not be carried/lead away from Christ by false teaching, vs. 9.  
Compare Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 2:1-12; 2Pet. 2; Jude.

*“... all who are ignorant of Christ are exposed to all the delusions of Satan ... for he who takes not a straight course to Christ goes after strange doctrines. ... the Church of God will always have to contend with strange doctrines ... there is no other means of guarding against them but by being fortified with the pure knowledge of Christ.”<sup>146</sup>*

- d. Be strengthened/stabilized by God's grace, not by your old external Jewish rituals (vs. 9-11) which have been fulfilled in Christ. Cf. Col. 2:16-25.

Verse 9-10 teaches that those who still eat the physical sacrifices of the old system have no right to partake of the sacrifice of Christ.

<sup>144</sup> Calvin, 345.

<sup>145</sup> Ellingworth, 704.

<sup>146</sup> Calvin, 346.

This is a reference to the Lord's Supper which celebrates His sacrifice.

Application: it's so easy to trust in rituals instead of trusting in God.

Observation: some churches today practice cleansing rituals.

What does this say about their view of Jesus' work on the cross?

R. Brown says the imagery here recalls the sin offering made on the Day of Atonement, which was not eaten but burned "*outside the camp*" (Lev. 4:21; 16:27) (1982:257), clearly pointing forward to Christ.

- e. We must identify with the Messiah who suffered "*outside the gate*" and bear His reproach/insults, seeking the 'coming continuing city' (11:13-16); as opposed to going back to the old ways of Judaism based in the earthly temporary city of Jerusalem, vs. 12-14.

In his excellent book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, Pastor John Piper states that 13:12-14:

*"... is above all a missionary text. Outside the camp means outside the borders of safety and comfort. Outside the camp are the 'other sheep' that are not of this fold. Outside the camp are the unreached nations. Outside the camp are the places and the people who will be costly to reach and will require no small sacrifice. But to this we are called: 'Let us go and bear the reproach he endured.' It is our vocation."* (2003:80)

This echoes Jesus' call almost 40 years earlier for all His disciples to deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow Him (Luke 9:23).

His life/ministry and death on the cross was the perfect model of this call which the author challenges these Hebrew Christians to embrace.

- f. Offer *spiritual* sacrifices of two types to the Father through Christ:  
vertical: praise and thanksgiving to God,  
horizontal: doing good and sharing with others,  
both of which are pleasing to God, 12:15-16. See also Rom. 12:1-2.

"We hence see that it is the highest worship of God, justly preferred to all other exercises, when we acknowledge God's goodness by thanksgiving; yea, this is the ceremony of sacrificing which God commends to us now."<sup>147</sup>

- g. Obey and submit to present leaders; groaning leaders are profitless, vs. 17.  
What does this verse teach us about the biblical responsibilities of church leadership?

## VII. BENEDICTION (CLOSING) AND SALUTATION (13:20-25)

- <sup>20</sup> *Now the God of peace,*  
*who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep*  
*through the blood of the eternal covenant, even **Jesus our Lord**,*
- <sup>21</sup> *equip you in every good thing to do His will, [compare v. 21 to Phil. 2:12-13]*  
*working [literally, doing]<sup>148</sup> in us that which is pleasing in His sight,*  
*through **Jesus Christ**, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

---

<sup>147</sup> Calvin, 350.

<sup>148</sup> BibleWorks7.

- <sup>22</sup> *But I urge you, brethren, bear with this word of exhortation, [i.e. Hebrews!] for I have written to you briefly.*
- <sup>23</sup> *Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you.*
- <sup>24</sup> *Greet all of your leaders [13:7, 17] and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.*
- <sup>25</sup> *Grace be with you all.*

A. vs. 20-21: we might paraphrase the idea here as:

‘May God, through “the resurrection Son” and His eternally valid covenant, equip you to do His will (purpose) for His eternal glorification (final result).’

"Equip" includes supplying anything lacking, and mending anything broken.

Pastors should especially note the use of this word "*equip*" in Eph. 4:11-12. Here it is clearly stated that the job of pastors is to *equip* God's people for works of service/ministry.

They are NOT responsible to do all the ministry themselves, but to equip the congregation to do ministry!

The Greek word for "*equip*" has both an athletic aspect referring to training, preparation, being properly conditioned for something; and a medical aspect meaning to set a broken bone back in its proper place, so that it can mend/heal and thus function properly again, according to God's design.

This is the focus of pastoral work. To train people and help them serve God according to the gifts and abilities that He has given each member. Every member of the church has one or more spiritual gifts, and God wants these gifts to be developed and used; see Eph. 4:16 and 1Cor. 12.

This term is also used in 2Tim. 3:17. In Greek it literally reads "*equipped may be the man of God, for every good work adequate*". This word order, which is awkward in English, places the emphasis on the first and last words – that is, the purpose of *equipping* is to help believers to become *adequate* to serve God.

B. vs. 22-25: part of this closing paragraph might read this way:

*“Bear with this word of exhortation; and if Timothy, who has been released from prison, comes soon, I will see you; greetings to you and your leaders from me and the Italians; God’s grace on you all!”*

This reading suggests that the epistle was written in and sent *from* Rome back to Jewish Christians living in and around Jerusalem.

### **QUESTIONS – Chapter 8**

1. What is our natural response when troubles, like sickness, come to us?
2. What does the Bible encourage us to do when we have difficulties?
3. On what *basis* does he encourage us to do this?
4. These Jewish Christians needed to realize that they were no longer under the law because of their new union with Christ. Please explain.
5. Is there any religious system that we are still "under" which we need Jesus to free us from?
6. How would you use Heb. 12 and the end of chapter 11 to answer a false teacher or "prophet" who tells someone in your church that God always wants them to be happy, healthy, and have no problems in this life (i.e. the prosperity "gospel")?
7. We have seen that the book has 2 major parts: the first being teaching in 1:1-10:18 and the second being application from 10:19 to 13:25.

What is the main thing that the book teaches us?

What is the most important thing that we should do about it?

8. What responsibilities do pastors have toward the members of their local church?
9. Which pastoral responsibilities are being properly done in your church?
10. Which pastoral duties are weaknesses that need to be addressed and strengthened?

How would you recommend making these changes?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bible Translations referred to and used in this study:

KJV—King James Version, also called the Authorized Version

NASB – New American Standard Bible

NIV – New International Version

Marshall, Alfred. *The Interlinear NASB-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.

### Reference Works

Dods, Marcus. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. In “The Expositor’s Greek Testament”. Nicoll, Robertson, ed. Vol. 4, p. 221-381. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983. [160 pp]  
A classic 5-volume verse-by-verse reference tool on Greek terms and phrases.

Donaldson, L.R. *From Hebrews to Revelation: a Theological Introduction*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001. [27 pp on Hebrews]  
This is a very insightful theological overview of the General Epistles and Revelation.

Kuiper, B. K. *The Church in History*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964.

Miller, Neva. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Analytical and Exegetical Handbook*. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1988. [469 pp]  
This rare SIL handbook has very helpful notes on the Greek text; includes a translation.

Rienecker, Fritz. trans. and revised by Cleon Rogers. *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980. [pages 317-374 in Vol. 2 on Hebrews]  
This work gives grammatical information, defines and comments on most Greek terms.

Rutherford, Samuel. *The Covenant of Life Opened, or A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace*. Edinburg: A.A., 1655.  
Rutherford was a Scottish Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly and was most respected among the Divines. This work is an excellent compendium of Covenant Theology to aid the student in understanding the Covenant as opened in Hebrews. Available free online: <http://archive.org/details/covenli00ruth>.

Witsius, Herman. *Economy of the Covenants between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*. Volume 1. Translated by William Crookshank. London: T.T. & Son, 1837.  
An excellent large summary of the Covenants and every other doctrine of Christianity in relation to it. Both volumes are available online for free. Volume 1 on : [http://archive.org/details/MN41373ucmf\\_5](http://archive.org/details/MN41373ucmf_5)

---

\_\_\_\_\_. *Economy of the Covenants between God and Man: Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*. Volume 2. Translated by William Crookshank. Edinburg: John Turnbull, 1803. Volume 2 is available on Google Books here:  
[books.google.com/booksid=FJ8PAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/booksid=FJ8PAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Commentaries [an “\*” symbols indicates the most highly recommended]

Arthur, J. Philip. *No Turning Back: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. London: Grace Publications Trust, 2003. [235 pp]

A non-technical, easy to understand exposition for the beginning student.

Asumang, Annang. *Unlocking the Book of Hebrews: A Spatial Analysis of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Eugene: WIPF & STOCK, 2008. [190 pp]

A fresh reading of Hebrews in light of “the language of spaces in its expositions and the language of movement in its exhortations ...” (back cover). His understanding of many parallels between Hebrews and the book of Numbers is both fascinating and compelling.

\*Attridge, Harold W. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989. [410 pp]

A highly respected exegetical analysis in the Hermenia series which is also very helpful regarding the book’s rhetorical structure. He also has a special emphasis on primary Greco-Roman material. Though based on Greek text, all Greek terms are translated.

Barclay, William. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. Louisville; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1955) [238 pp]

Part of the author’s popular 17 volume Daily Bible Study series; helpful, though dated. .

Brown, John. *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1862. [728 pp]

This massive theological exposition was written by a Puritan pastor and professor who was considered one of the greatest Scottish expositors of the entire nineteenth century.

Brown, Raymond. *The Message of Hebrews*. Leicester: IVP, 1984. [272 pp]

The Bible Speaks Today series are readable, affordable, expositional, evangelical commentaries, and the entire set is available on CD-ROM.

[Note: there is also a non-evangelical, Catholic scholar named Raymond E. Brown.]

Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. NICNT. Rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990.

A classic commentary in the Reformed evangelical tradition; the 1990 edition is little changed from the 1964 edition, thus one might buy the older version second hand.

This a great verse-by-verse exegesis with all Greek terms transliterated and explained, but it is not helpful regarding the overall structure, which is prominent in most newer commentaries. [392 pp]

Buchanan, George. *To the Hebrews*. Anchor Bible 36. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972.

Not recommended; he sees the letter as a homiletic midrash (a commentary) by early Christian Zionism on Psa. 110. Thankfully it was replaced by Koester (see below).

Burgess, Anthony, *Vindiciae Legis or A Vindication of the Morall Law and the Covenants*. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011.

This treatise may be the best source for understanding the Biblical distinction between Law and Gospel. It covers the Covenant of Works, considering it as both Law and Covenant and continues an exposition of the Moral law into the NT through mainly Romans and Galatians, although it references and interacts with the Epistle to the Hebrews throughout. You may find this free online as .pdf here:

<http://www.westminsterassembly.org/wp-content/uploads/Burgess-Vindiceae-text-complete.pdf>

Calvin, John. *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*. Trans. John Owen. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999 reprint (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1551) [Vol. 22, pp. v-xxx, 31-431]  
Calvin's theological understanding of Hebrews should be consulted, and thankfully this classic work is available for *free* on the internet (see website below and in footnotes).

\*Cockerill, Gareth L. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. (NICNT). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.  
An excellent current publication with special attention given to the structural and rhetorical features of the book; replaces F.F. Bruce (see below) in the series. [722 pp]

Delitzsch, Franz. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. 2 vols. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1871.  
This technical work by a German scholar, who is well known for his co-authorship of a classic 10-volume commentary set on the Old Testament, is also *free* on the internet.

deSilva, David. *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000. [527 pp]  
He believes the epistle was written to wavering *Gentile* Christians, and seeks to interpret Hebrews in light of his fresh assessment of the situation of the original audience.  
A key contribution is his practical application sections entitled, "Bridging the Horizons."  
While thought-provoking, the serious student will want to first consult the more respected commentaries such as Attridge, Ellingworth, G. Guthrie, Koester, Lane and O'Brien.

\*Ellingworth, Paul. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: a Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993. [736 pp]  
Being in The New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC) series, this is a very useful advanced analysis of Greek words and phrases, linguistic details, and its relationship to the OT and early Christian writings, but is nonetheless accessible for those who don't know the original language as he also transliterates all Greek terms.

Ellingworth, Paul and Nida, Eugene. *A Translator's Handbook on the Letter to the Hebrews*. London: UBS, 1983. [345 pp]  
The United Bible Society Handbooks series offer technical insights on Greek terms, paragraph structure, and translation choices.

Fairbairn, P. *The Typology of Scripture*. 2 vols. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975 Reprint).

Fudge, Edward W. *Hebrews: Ancient Encouragement for Believers Today*. Abilene: Leafwood Publications, 2009. [254 pp]  
A readable, non-technical, devotional and practical exposition for pastors/preachers.  
While helpful as a verse-by-verse analysis, it is very weak on the overall structure.

Gooding, David. *An Unshakeable Kingdom: The Letter of Hebrews for Today*. Leicester: IVP, 1989. [255 pp]  
Described as a "series of general introductory studies" (preface and back cover) rather than a formal commentary, focusing on major themes and their pastoral relevance.

Gouge, William. *A Commentary on the Whole Epistle of the Hebrews*. Volume 1. London: James Nisbet and Co, 1866. [408 pp]

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Commentary on the Whole Epistle of the Hebrews*. Volume 2. London: James Nisbet and Co, 1866. [388 pp]



---

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Commentary on the Whole Epistle of the Hebrews*. Volume 3. London: James Nisbet and Co, 1866. [404 pp]

The massive three-volume commentary by the puritan Gouge is often overlooked due to the popularity of his contemporary Dr. John Owen who wrote an elaborate seven volume commentary on the Epistle of Hebrews. You can find these three volumes free online at <http://www.digitalpuritan.net/williamgouge.html> [accessed: January 2013] and are also available at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org) and [www.openlibrary.org](http://www.openlibrary.org)<sup>149</sup>

Guthrie, Donald. *The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*. Leicester: IVP, 1983. [281 pp]

The Tyndale New Testament Commentary series (TNTC) is a basic, readable, reliable, affordable and non-technical commentary set for both students and pastors.

\*Guthrie, George. *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text Linguistic Analysis*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998. [150 pp]

This reprint of his Ph.D. dissertation published by Brill in 1994 (Leiden; New York: Koln) is considered the standard work on the “rhetorico-discourse analysis” of Hebrews. Nearly every scholarly article and commentary since then interacts with Guthrie’s work.

\*Guthrie, George. *The NIV Application Commentary: Hebrews*. Terry Muck, ed. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998. [452 pp]

Although the NIVAC series is written to help pastors with exposition, this volume also includes Guthrie’s outstanding exegesis for serious students of Hebrews.

Hagner, D. A. *Encounter the Book of Hebrews: an Exposition*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. [195 pp]

Part of the Encountering Biblical Studies (EBS) series which is excellent and accessible for the beginning student, with special attention to the background and context of Hebrews, and its practical contributions to the Christian life, in a very appealing design with lots of sidebars with charts, study questions, key terms and “further reading”.

Hewitt, Thomas. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*. London: The Tyndale Press, 1960. [217 pp] Old TNTC replaced by Donald Guthrie’s work.

\*Hughes, Phillip E. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977. [594 pp]

This classic expository and theological commentary is an excellent companion for pastors/preachers to the many good exegetical commentaries, and is still highly valued for its insights on the history of the interpretation and the numerous quotations from the Church Fathers.

Hurst, L.D. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: its Background and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Jamieson, Robert, D.D.; Fausset, A. R.; Brown, David. “Commentary on Hebrews”. *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*. 1871.

Available free at <http://www.studylight.org/com/jfb/view.cgi?bk=57&ch=1>

---

<sup>149</sup> Volume 1 contains Hebrews 1-5 and is available here:

[http://openlibrary.org/books/OL23289699M/A\\_commentary\\_on\\_the\\_whole\\_Epistle\\_to\\_the\\_Hebrews](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL23289699M/A_commentary_on_the_whole_Epistle_to_the_Hebrews);

Volume 2 contains Hebrews 6-10 and is available here:

[http://openlibrary.org/books/OL23289699M/A\\_commentary\\_on\\_the\\_whole\\_Epistle\\_to\\_the\\_Hebrews](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL23289699M/A_commentary_on_the_whole_Epistle_to_the_Hebrews);

Volume 3 contains Hebrews 11-13 and is available here:

[http://openlibrary.org/books/OL23289699M/A\\_commentary\\_on\\_the\\_whole\\_Epistle\\_to\\_the\\_Hebrews](http://openlibrary.org/books/OL23289699M/A_commentary_on_the_whole_Epistle_to_the_Hebrews).

Jones, Hywel R. *Let's Study Hebrews*. Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002. [169 pp]  
Part of the "Let's Study" series which seeks to combine explanation and application, including a Group Study Guide with questions for individual and/or group Bible study.

Kistemaker, Simon J. *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984.  
This expository (as per the title) volume in the New Testament Commentary (NTC) series begun by William Hendricksen is very clear and helpful for preachers.  
In addition to helpful sections on "Doctrinal" and "Practical Considerations", he also placed a concise explanation of "Greek Words, Phrases and Constructions" at the end of each section of text for those familiar with Greek. [438 p]

\*Koester, Craig R. *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 36. New York: Doubleday, 2001. [584 pp]  
Koester should be classed with Ellingworth and Lane (1991) as a modern, indispensable, thorough, exegetical commentary for the advanced student which also appreciates and deals with the major issues regarding the rhetorical structure/argument of Hebrews.  
A unique contribution is seeing the main theme as the purposes of God for his people.  
*The first 131 pages provide an extensive introduction*, of which nearly half is devoted to the history of the interpretation of this epistle from the early church to the present.

Lane, William L. *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1985.  
This brief, basic, popular level work for laymen is very appropriate for beginning study.  
However, the serious student should consult his advanced 2-volume work (next entry).

\*Lane, William L. *Hebrews*. (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 47a, b). Dallas: Word, 1991.  
This massive two-volume exegetical commentary on the Greek text is respected as one of the best modern works on Hebrews. *In addition to a thorough and excellent introduction of 110 pp.*, it also has extensive bibliographical information on each section, and includes sections on theological application. Like most modern works, he sees Hebrews as a sermon sent to wavering Jewish Christians in Rome. [732 pp]

Lang, G. H. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: a Practical Treatise for Plain and Serious Readers*. London: Paternoster, 1951. [296 pp]  
Dated, but may still be appreciated for its expositional and practical insights.

Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961. [500 pp on Hebrews]  
A helpful, though dated, critical commentary by a respected Lutheran scholar.

Lindars, Barnabas. *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. (NTT series)

MacArthur, John. *Hebrews*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1983. [455 pp]  
While one should be cautioned regarding MacArthur's dispensational views, his exegetical commentaries are valuable tools and good models for all preachers.  
On the other hand, it is weak on the overall outline/structure and flow of thought.

Meyer, F. B. *The Way into the Holiest: Expositions of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. London: Morgan and Scott, n.d. [234 pp]  
Part of an extensive series of classic devotional/expositional commentaries.

Moffat, James. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. ICC. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924. [323 pp]

This key contribution to the scholarly International Critical Commentary series is still referred to today in many modern works, demonstrated its lasting exegetical value for those with a knowledge of Greek.

Morgan, G. Campbell. *God's Last Word to Man: Studies in Hebrews*. London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1948.

Murray, Andrew. *The Holiest of All: An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd, 1894 (Whitaker House 1997 reprint). [552 pp]  
This is a devotional classic, but rather look to the key recommended works\* for exegesis.

Newell, William R. *Hebrews Verse by Verse*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1947.

\*O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. (PNTC). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010.  
O'Brien is considered to be one of the best New Testament scholars alive today. Being similar to Lane (above), it is a masterful exegesis of the Greek text combined with sound theological exposition and reflection, great insight on rhetorical interpretation (following G. Guthrie, above), and includes extensive Bibliographical references. (541 pp).

Owen, John. *Hebrews*. Wheaton and Nottingham: Crossway, 1998.  
This one-volume modern abridgement of Owen's classic seven-volume tome' published in London in 1840 is part of The Crossway Classic series ed. by Alister McGrath & J. I. Packer. Owen is an infamous Puritan who lived from 1616-1683.

Peterson, David. "Hebrews" in the New Bible Commentary: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Edition.  
Carson, DA; France, RT; Motyer, JA; Wenham, GJ; eds. Downers Grove: IVP, 1994.

\*Pfitzner, Victor. *Hebrews*. Nashville: Abington Press, 1997. [218 pp]  
This excellent compact yet critical commentary written for theological students and pastors uses modern methods of rhetorical-linguistic analysis (following G. Guthrie above) and organizes his work according to its literary units. His unique contribution is a proposal that the author's *theology of corporate worship* gives the entire book coherence.

Snook, Stewart. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. Nairobi: Evangel, 1986. [235 pp]  
This TEE "programmed instruction" workbook is very helpful in terms of the question and answer format, and its goal to specifically apply Hebrews to the African context.

Vanhoye, Albert. *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1989. Translated from French by J. Swetnam. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute. [subsidia biblica – 12]  
First published in 1963 in French, Lane calls it "a landmark monograph" (1993:lxixvii) which proposed five major literary devices as criteria to identify Hebrew's intricate literary structure. Lane reviews Vanhoye's insights in each of his sections. [110 pp]

Vos, Geerhardus. *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Phillipsburg: P&R, 1956.  
A compact yet rich study of key theological themes in Hebrews. [124 pp]

Westcott, Brooke Foss. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: the Greek Text with Notes and Essays*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952. [580 pp]  
The technical notes of the dynamic duo of Westcott and Hort on the Greek NT, though dated are still considered a valuable classic for those with a basic knowledge of Greek.

Williamson, R. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. London: Epworth, 1965.  
An interpretation assuming a major influence of Greek philosophy upon the author.

Wilson, Geoffrey B. *Hebrews a Digest of Reformed Comment*. London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970. [190 pp]

A concise and sound verse-by-verse treatment of Hebrews by a Reformed Baptist pastor.

Witherington, Ben. *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.

It is “socio” in that he seeks to interpret each text in light of the historical situation of the original audience, and “rhetorical” in that he seeks to identify rhetorical strategies used by the author to address each situational issue. [382 pp on Hebrews]

Wuest, Kenneth S. *Hebrews in the Greek New Testament for the English Reader*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947. [267 pp]

Helpful and accessible (as title suggests) exegetical commentary based on the Greek text.

### Website Resources

[www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com) – has many Bible versions, commentaries and other resources.

[www.Biblestudytools.com](http://www.Biblestudytools.com) – free access to several Bible versions, Bible commentaries, Bible encyclopedias and Bible dictionaries.

[www.books.google.com](http://www.books.google.com) – has some free books, including some commentaries on Hebrews. Go to Advanced Book Search and tick “Full view only” – this helps focus the search on books that are “public domain”, that is, ones you can read and download for free.

[www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org) – Christian Classics Ethereal Library

Free access to many commentaries, including Matthew Henry and John Calvin’s commentaries, both of which provide very helpful notes on Hebrews.

[www.deeperstudy.com](http://www.deeperstudy.com) – Index of Online Bible Commentaries.

[www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org) – John Piper’s website; free sermons, articles and books!

Search for an article by looking under “Browse By,” click on “Topic index” and scroll down to find the subject you would like to study. You can also search by author.

[www.e-sword.net](http://www.e-sword.net) – one can download this excellent free Bible program with many useful features, including many versions of the Bible, several Bible commentaries, etc.

[www.FreeBibleSoftware.org](http://www.FreeBibleSoftware.org) – free, but they charge to ship a CD

[www.monergism.com](http://www.monergism.com) – go to New Testament and search “Hebrews” to find free sermons, articles, and books.

[www.thirdmill.org](http://www.thirdmill.org) – this site includes many free courses written by Dr. Richard Pratt, books, articles, audio and video files; including classic commentaries such as those by John Calvin and the trio of Jamison, Faucett and Brown.

## **BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR**

Jeff came to trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour in 1978 at the beginning of his senior year at West Liberty University through the campus ministry of the Navigators. He married Patricia (Patty) in 1983, and they went to seminary at Columbia International University (South Carolina, US) in 1984, where Jeff earned a Master of Divinity (New Testament concentration) and Patty a Graduate Certificate in Biblical Studies.

In 1988 they moved to Virginia Beach where Jeff did his one-year internship at New Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA) to be in ordained in the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), and then served as assistant pastor until 1991. Later that year they were accepted as missionary candidates with both Mission to the World (MTW is the mission board of the PCA) and Africa Evangelical Fellowship (now part of SIM). In 1993 they moved to Zimbabwe under a cooperative agreement between MTW and AEF to train national church leadership at Rusitu Bible College.

After a medical leave in 1996 due to two ruptured discs in Jeff's low back, they had to leave rural Zimbabwe and then moved to Cape Town, South Africa, to teach at The Bible Institute of South Africa from 1997 – 2008. During much of this time Jeff also taught evening Bible studies for pastors and church leaders in Guguletu, a massive township in Cape Town with three-fourths of a million people. Finally, in 2008, Jeff partnered with Xhosa Pastor Walter Ncgwatywa, whom he had trained for several years, to start Guguletu Bible College, with Pastor Walter as the Principal, a capacity in which he continues to this day. During this time Jeff also earned a Master of Theology in missiology at the University of Stellenbosch (South Africa) seminary.

In 2010, medical concerns lead the Bordens to return to the US for a furlough, and in 2011 Jeff became the (English) Africa Coordinator for MINTS International Seminary.

The Bordens have been blessed with three children: Daniel (born 1985), Matthew (1990), and Lydia (1998), and live outside of Harrisonburg, VA.

## **TEACHER'S MANUAL: QUESTIONS AND BRIEF ANSWERS**

NOTE: these brief answers are simply meant to be a guide and help you to get started on the right track. I don't want to do all the work for you and your students! For the assignments and exam, please encourage and require more extensive answers as you reflect on these questions, first as a group, and also individually.

### **Chapter 1**

1. What is a prophet? What did/does a prophet do?  
*One who foretells, or forth tells future events by the power of God.*
2. Are the words of past or present extra-Biblical prophets equal in authority to those of the Jewish prophets of the Old Testament?  
*No, in Heb 1:1-2 God says He spoke in a "once-for-all action" in the past which doesn't continue, with the final present revelation made "in His Son"*

How do we decide?

(Hint: verses 5 - 13 are almost entirely direct quotations from the OT)

*The Scriptures speak of Christ as more excellent than all of Creation, and the Prophets as pointing to Him.*

3. Is there revelation from God which is "better" than what came through the OT prophets?  
*Yes, in the climatic revelation of the Son of God (Heb 1:1-4).*  
If so, in what sense? (1Pet. 1:10-12 will help answer this question.)  
*Part of this passage reads, "...the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries...", reveals that the prophets pointed to the ultimate, perfect revelation.*
4. Did the Old Testament predict the coming of a Great Prophet ("The Prophet") who would be superior to all other prophets?  
Let's look up and discuss Deut. 18:17-22.  
*"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." It goes on to say that any "prophet" who speaks a word that does not come to pass is not a prophet. He had to be 100% accurate. Only the OT Prophets and Jesus were completely accurate and only Jesus was perfect in word and deed.*

Do John 1:21; 3:31-34 and Acts 3:22 help us here?

*John 1:21 speaks of John the Baptist as "that" prophet. John 3:31-34 are the words of John the Baptist pointing to Jesus as "... He that cometh from above is above all". Acts 3:22 is the Apostle Peter saying that Moses spoke of Jesus as the Prophet.*

5. Did Jesus and the NT writers present Jesus as this Great Prophet?  
See John 8:23-32 (remember that a prophet speaks for God).  
*Not only did John say Jesus was The Prophet, but that God was His Father as well, "...as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things (vs. 28).*
6. Is the Bible "the white man's book" as some say, or is it God's truth for ALL people?  
See Gen. 12:1-4; Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 10:34-35; Rev. 5:9 and 7:9)  
*In God's call of Abram, He said that "...in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Jesus said in Matthew 28 that all power had been given to Him, so go and*

*make disciples! Rev. 5 speaks of some from “...of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation...” worshipping before God in heaven. The Bible is His word from all of His people from all earthly nations!*

Read Acts 8:27-39; from which country was one of the earliest converts to Christianity? What FACT does this demonstrate?

*One of the first converts was the Ethiopian Eunuch - an African, illustrating God's heart for the nations, in the case, that nations of Africa!*

7. What would happen if we only studied the OT and neglected the NT?

*John 5:39 says, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me.” The New Testament speaks of about the final revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and His completing the redemption of men.*

8. How many of the 8 truths above about Jesus are true of any mere prophet?

*None of them. They are unique to Jesus, the Son of God.*

9. How is Jesus much greater than all other prophets in all of history?

That is, how is He *unique* (this means that no one else is like Him)?

*As a Prophet, He was perfect in all He spoke.*

*As a Person, He was sinless in all that He did.*

10. Was/is Jesus only the greatest Prophet ever, or is He much more than that?

(i.e. Many say that He was a great Teacher, but was He much more?)

*Jesus is not simply just a Prophet, even a sinless prophet, but the very Son of God incarnate, as is emphasized in the first two chapters of Colossians and Heb. 1.*

How then should we personally respond to this revelation by and about Jesus Christ?

*(give your own answer)*

## **Chapter 2**

1. Who are the angels? Are they departed ancestors? Nature spirits? Divinities?

*Spirits created by God for His glory. Many rebelled and became demons.*

*You're the experts on Africa – give your own answers for the rest!*

2. What are some of their functions (that is, what do they do)? (recall 1:7, 14)

*Angels are “ministering spirit” who are sent to serve believers.*

3. What does 1:4-14 tell us about Jesus Christ?

Is anyone or anything else like Him?

Is He truly God, or merely a great prophet or a great spirit?

*Primarily that He is the only King of Kings and Lord of Lords!*

4. How would you explain the close relationship between the OT and the NT?

See the notes.

Point of clarification: the writer of Hebrews is not saying that there is anything *wrong* with the Old Testament. It's simply incomplete, and awaits completeness which is intimately bound up with the coming of the Messiah.

*In fact, he uses the OT greatly to prove his points; but he wants his readers to see that Jesus is superior; and therefore, so is the revelation that He gives us!*

5. Does this warning in 2:1-4 not to "*drift away*" apply to us today? If so, how?  
*Yes, even though we are converted, we still have a sinful nature and tend to drift.*
6. Could we possibly have any wrong or insufficient ideas about God from our cultural background that might cause us to "*drift away*" from this new revelation?  
If so, please explain. (Note: *all* cultures have both good and bad aspects.)  
*Yes, we can bring to the Christian life faulty views of God from our pre-Christian culture and life.*
7. Many come from churches which strongly emphasize the Old Testament.  
Is it possible to put so much emphasis on the OT that one could miss the fact that it actually points us forward to the fulfilment of its prophecies in the NT?  
*Look to see if the student has interacted with any relevant situations in their own context.*
8. What was the main purpose of miracles in Hebrews 2:4?  
*They were meant to validate that the apostles were true messengers of God.*
9. What does this passage teach us about the very important topic of death?  
Who "**had** the power of death?" (vs. 14) *Satan "had" it.*  
Who "rendered him powerless?" *Christ took it away!*  
Why do you think so many people live their entire lives with a great fear of death?  
Is it possible to overcome our great fear of death? (vs. 15) If so, how?  
*Give your own answers.*
10. If Jesus is indeed our "merciful and faithful high priest" (vs. 17), then can anyone else, living or dead, represent us before God and offer a perfect sacrifice for our sins?  
(Just begin to consider this. There will be much more on this in later lessons.)  
Why or why not?  
*No, there is only One true Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ!*

### **Chapter 3**

1. Write a definition of "unbelief":  
*Refusing to accept and submit to the revelation of God in the Bible.*
2. If a person is looking to ancestors or other spirits for help, guidance, etc., instead of looking to God, is that actually "unbelief" in God? *Yes!*  
  
*Why or why not? Because he/she is not believing that Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man.*
3. Leaders, is it possible that there are some unbelievers in your congregations? *Yes.*  
What are some ways that this unbelief might be expressed in their lives?  
*Please give your own answers based on your observations in ministry.*
4. If you think a church member is an unbeliever, what should you do?  
*Share the gospel with them and challenge them to believe!*
5. How then should we respond to this second major warning in the book of Hebrews?  
*By paying close attention to the revelation of God in the New Testament.*



6. The idea of "rest" is a very broad concept throughout the Scriptures.  
From the comments above, try to identify 5 biblical uses of "rest" which God or man enters. Hints for each of the 5 are provided in parenthesis!
  - a. (in Genesis) – *the Creation rest*
  - b. (a weekly rest pattern) – *the Sabbath rest*
  - c. (in the time of Moses and Joshua) – *the Canaan rest, the promised land*
  - d. (Jesus promises this rest *now* to all who come to Him) – *the Christian rest*
  - e. (believers are still looking forward to this final rest) – *the Eternal rest in heaven*
  
7. Please take a moment to discuss the relationships between these five aspects of "rest":  
Does one point to another? Is there a progression? If so, explain.  
*What we are looking for here is an understanding of typology and development, that God's Creation rest set the pattern for the Sabbath rest, deliverance from Egypt into the Canaan rest pictures our deliverance from sin, bondage and Satan into the Christian rest; here they should mention the "now and not yet" tension, that we enjoy the rest Christ offered now, but there is much more to come, that is, the final eternal rest in the New Jerusalem, the new city Abraham looked for, called the New Heavens and Earth in Revelation.*
  
8. In chapters 3 and 4 the author often draws the attention of his audience back to their Jewish ancestors in the time of Moses and Joshua.  
Why do you think he does this?  
*The author is comparing and contrasting his audience with the people of Israel in the wilderness under Moses. Even though they passed through the sea under Moses (1Cor. 10:1-6) and saw God do mighty things, most of them did not enter God's rest because of unbelief. Thus, he is challenging them not to shrink back to Judaism, but to move forward in their new faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have true rest (salvation).*
  
9. The Israelites with Moses saw God do many miracles - the 10 plagues, the parting of the sea, drowning the Egyptians, providing manna 6 days a week, seeing the pillar cloud by day and the fire at night - and yet they still did not believe and thus did not enter God's rest (then, the land).  
Do you think it is possible for a person to experience or even perform miracles today, and yet still be an unbeliever? Explain.  
*As above, it is very helpful to read 1Cor. 10:1-6 and to consider the many blessings and mighty works of God that they experienced, and yet most of them did not believe, and thus did not enter God's rest. A parallel thought today is that going to church doesn't make one a Christian. One can hear God's word preached, sing songs, see God do great things, be with God's people, and still not personally trust Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.*
  
10. Are miracles alone enough to prove that a movement is from God?  
Explain and defend your answers.  
*No, in the context of the Exodus, the magicians of Egypt did great miracles through the powers of darkness. Satan can use miracles to deceive people and lead them astray. Thus, we must be careful to listen to what is being taught about Jesus Christ. Is the Gospel being clearly presented? Is the Word of God being honored? Or is all the attention being drawn to the so-called miracle-worker?*

## Chapter 4

1. 4:16 exhorts us to "draw near" to God. How does this differ radically from the view of the "Supreme Being" in African Traditional Religion(s)?  
*In ATR the "Supreme Being" is always distant/remote, and thus cannot be approached directly but the "worshipper" must go through a hierarchy of mediators. But here we are told that we can come directly to God the Father, through God the Son as our perfect Mediator, Great High Priest, and Offering. Our God is approachable, and we come near to Him, and He to us!*
2. This passage is teaching us that all Christians can go *directly* to God the Father through God the Son. Do you think that some Christians view the pastor as a *mediator* between them and God, or at least view the pastor as much closer to God than anyone else? Why or why not?  
*Yes, many Christians will ask the pastor to pray for them, but they don't ask fellow believers to pray for them. Why? Because they think the pastor is closer to God! But every true believer is close to God through the Lord Jesus Christ!*
3. Based on this passage, what should we as leaders be teaching people about prayer?  
*That every Christian has the wonderful privilege to "draw near" to the throne of God, to enter into His very Presence, through Jesus as our Great High Priest and Perfect Offering.*
4. In the many views of the spirit world there are many mediators between God and man. According to Scripture, how many true mediators are there between God and man?  
*Only One! See 1Tim. 2:5*
5. How does the book of Hebrews develop and prove that Jesus is the only true mediator between God and men?  
*Here look for an extensive answer drawing upon chapters one and two. Chapter one proves that Jesus is fully God, and chapter two proves that He became fully man. In order to be our perfect Mediator between us and God, that is to faithfully represent both parties/groups, He had to both be fully God Himself and also become fully human.*
6. As leaders, the OT priests had to offer sacrifices for their own sins before they represented the sinful people before a holy God.  
What application(s) might this have for leaders today, even though we are not priests?  
For example, how should this effect the prayer life of a leader?  
*Confession of one's own sin should be an integral part of every leaders' prayer life. One temptation in ministry is pride, and confession of sin will help promote humility.*
7. As we consider his exhortation for the Hebrews to get past the "milk" stage of the Christian life, how should this effect the way in which we lead our churches?  
*We should not just emphasis evangelism, but also discipleship. Some pastors constantly preach as if everyone who attends the church is lost! But those who are saved need to be built up and strengthened in the faith.*
8. Why do you think some churches continue to preach evangelistic sermons weekly, addressing the lost, rather than obeying the exhortation in Eph. 4:11-12 to "prepare/equip God's people for works of service"?  
*If we want our members to grow and to be "equipped for service/ministry" then we have to feed them the "meat" of the Word of God.*

In other words, shouldn't pastors be discipling their people to help them grow in the faith, instead of continuing to evangelise them? Discuss!

*Yes, please discuss specific applications when you have opportunity.*

9. Some people think this passage teaches that a true Christian can lose their salvation. What do you think now that we have examined the context?

*(Let's now look at some other passages and discuss this.)*

*The notes include an extensive discussion on this. We want to see what the students think now that they have looked at the issue both in Hebrews and in other passages which are more clear about the eternal security of the true believer.*

## **Chapter 5**

1. List as many contrasts as you can between the order of Aaron (the Levitical priesthood) and the order of Melchizedek.

*The students should mention many such as temporary versus eternal, all the Levitical priests died and their priesthood ceased but Jesus is a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, many sinful priests versus one perfect Great High Priest, many offerings versus one offering for all time, earthly versus heavenly in the true Holy of Holies, they stood but He sat down at the Father's right hand, they came from Judah and were only priests but He came through David as a King-Priest, etc.*

2. What was "wrong" with the order of Aaron?

That is, what were its limitations?

*"It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin." (10:4). OT sacrifices could only "cover" sin, but only the blood of the Perfect Lamb of God can and does "cleanse" us of sin.*

*The fact that the OT sacrifices were repeated year after year attests to their ineffectiveness, but Jesus only had to offer Himself "once for all".*

*Only Jesus could cry out, "It is finished!"*

3. Why did Jesus come "according to the order of Melchizedek", and NOT according to the order of Aaron?

*This is explained in the answer to question 1 above. What we are looking for here is the understanding that the Levitical priests ministered in the earthy tabernacle, but Jesus came according to a different order which ministers in the true, heavenly one! Also, the fact that He came as, and still is, the only King-Priest.*

4. What phrase in 8:1 is so thematic in the entire book?

Why is it so critical that our "sheep" grasp this truth?

*Heb. 8:1 is so crucial because the author summarizes and clearly states what his "main point" has been thus far, that "we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the majesty (the Father) in the heavens."*

*Furthermore, this also serves as a transition as 8:2 introduces what will be discussed in 8:3-10:18, that we also have "a minister in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man."*

5. Who has a more privileged position, every true Christian, or the OT High Priests?

Why? (We'll discuss this more when we do chapter 9.)

*This is truly amazing to grasp. The OT high priests were the most privileged people in Israel as only they were allowed to enter the Holy of Holies one day each year. However, every true believer is allowed to enter the presence of God at all times!*

6. Why does the Roman Catholic Church ordain its leaders as "priests", while Protestant churches ordain leaders as "pastors" and/or "elders"?  
*Because they do not understand that the earthy priesthood of mere men was abolished when Jesus came as the perfect Priest. Protestants understand this and thus do not call their leaders priests.*
7. The Protestant Reformers taught "*the priesthood of all believers*" in opposition to the earthly priesthood within the Roman Catholic Church.  
 What do you think this phrase means?  
*Even though there is no office of priest today, since Jesus Christ is our great High Priest every believer can "approach/enter" the presence of God through Him, and in that general sense all of us are priests. The point is that we do not need a human mediator, for Jesus is the only Mediator between God and man.*
8. If it is true that *all* true Christians are "priests" (in a different sense, see 1 Pet. 2:9), how should this effect the relationship between a "pastor" and the congregation?  
*We must not encourage our flock to think that we are closer to God than they are, and that they need to come to God through us. We are not mediators. Many people actually think this, as if pastors are a Christian version of a "witchdoctor", a gate of entrance to the hierarchical spirit world as in some animistic worldviews.*
9. Do you think Catholics really understand the full significance of Jesus coming as the **only** Priest according to the order of Melchizedek to establish the New Covenant?  
*Not at all. They still have other priests and mediators, and still pray to Mary and their so-called "saints". This is nothing short of idolatry.*  
*As a result of studying Heb. 1-8, how would you share the gospel with them?*  
*There is much freedom here, but ensure that they use Hebrews in their explanation.*
10. Discuss the impact of Jesus's words on the cross – "It is finished." What was?  
*Jesus' sacrificial payment for the penalty of sin has been paid in full, such that nothing else needs to be added to His work. In fact, to try to add something else, like water baptism or other works, is actually to reject the complete work of Jesus.*

## Chapter 6

1. How does the mercy seat on top of the Ark of the Covenant point forward (as a "type") to the cross of Jesus Christ (the "antitype"? (see Rom. 3:25)  
*The mercy seat was the lid of the Ark, and was called the "place of propitiation" because it was where the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled to symbolize cleansing of sin and satisfied the righteous wrath of God, which looks forward to Jesus' blood.*
2. Contrast the earthly Holy of Holies with the heavenly one.  
 How effective was/is each one in dealing with our sin and guilt?  
*As above, the fact that the earthly sacrifices had to be repeated in the earthly temple is a clear testimony to the fact that none of them ever cleansed sin! Hebrews says several times that they could not and did not cleanse the worshipper's conscious. On the other hand, Jesus' one perfect sacrifice of Himself was totally effective in removing the sin, and thus the guilt, of all who would for all time put their faith/trust in Him alone.*
3. Who are the Cherubim?  
 They were/are a special category of angels.  
 What is their special function?  
*They were tasked with guarding the way to the very presence of God.*

4. Is it absolutely necessary for blood to be shed in order for sin(s) to be forgiven?  
Can any blood that is offered cleanse us from sin? (see 10:4)  
*Yes, the point of Heb. 5 – 10 is that we can ONLY be saved by the shed blood of Jesus, the perfect Sacrifice, offered by the perfect High Priest, Himself!*  
*To shed other sacrificial blood today is implying that the blood of Jesus is not sufficient and effective.*
5. Can anyone be saved apart from the blood of Jesus Christ (say, for example, a sincere Muslim)? Why or why not?  
*To suggest the possibility of salvation through any other means is to deny this truth of the Gospel that the blood of Jesus is the only way by which we can be forgiven and cleansed. To allow for salvation through any other means denies the true Gospel, and falls under the curse of Galatians 1 (if anyone preaches to you another gospel, let them be accursed', which is even repeated for emphasis!)*
6. Should we continue to offer sacrifices today?  
Why or why not? (defend your answer from Hebrews)  
*Hebrews is abundantly clear that the OT sacrifices were a "type" and pointed forward to Jesus as the fulfilment (the antitype). The students could use various references from Hebrews 7-10 to demonstrate this and defend their answers from the text.*  
*Heb. 1:3 says that after He made purification for sins He sat down at the Father's right hand. Recall that sitting down means that His sacrificial work was finished, as He said on the cross, "It is finished". To offer sacrifices today or to trust in any other means of salvation is to deny Jesus' "once for all" perfect, sufficient and complete offering!*
7. How many times or how often must this blood be shed? Why?  
*The students should not the repetition, and thus emphasis, on "once" and "once for all" in Heb. 9-10, in contrast to the repeated OT offerings.*
8. How does the Biblical teaching in Hebrews about blood sacrifices go against the teachings of African Traditional Religion(s) and some African Independent/Initiated Churches regarding sacrifices?  
*In both South Africa and Zimbabwe at least, many so-called African Indigenous churches continued the ATR practice of offering cleansing rituals today.*  
*As above, this syncretism clearly denies the sufficiency of Jesus' "once for all" offering.*
9. List as many contrasts as you can between the OC and the NC:  
(Hint: be sure to include the important word, "once" in your answer!)  
*Please look for several key contrasts here, like earthy versus heavenly, temporal versus eternal, many sacrifices versus One, repeated versus "once", a physical temple versus a spiritual one, the shadow/copy/type versus the reality/fulfilment/antitype, etc.*
10. What is the significance of Christ sitting down at the Father's right hand?  
(Hint: see NIV Study Bible note on 1:3.)  
*As above, that His work was completed; "It is finished"!*

Did the OT priests ever sit down in the temple? Were there any chairs there?

Why or why not?

*No; there were no chairs there because their work was never finished! The fact that those sacrifices had to be repeated "year after year" shows that they were not effective in "cleansing" the worshipper, but only provided a "covering" for sin.*

## Chapter 7

1. Describe the major transition in the book marked by Heb. 10:19.  
*This verse marks a major shift in the book from exposition, which ends in 10:18, to the LONGEST section of exhortation and application, although it must be noted that exhortation has been scattered throughout the exposition, beginning in 2:1-4 for example.*
2. Why does someone have to be "in Christ" in order to draw near to God in prayer?  
[Impute literally means to 'charge to one's account'; we speak of imputation.]  
*Since God is holy and perfect, those who approach Him must be cleansed of sin. Our sin was imputed to Jesus, and His righteousness was imputed to us. Only on this basis may we approach a holy God. In Jn. 14:6 Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."*
3. How is the strong warning in chapter 6 similar to the strong warning in chapter 10?  
*"There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" in 10:26 parallels, and thus recalls and helps explain the very difficult phrase in 6:6, "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance". That is, if one rejects the one and only perfect sacrifice/offering of Jesus Christ, no other way to be cleansed exists!*  
*The warning of fiery judgement in 10:27 likewise recalls 6:8, "... it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned."*  
*"... trampled underfoot the Son of God" in 10:29 is parallel to "... since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God" in 6:6.*
4. If you have the resources to do some research, consider the false teachings of "Liberation Theology" and the "Prosperity Cult/Gospel", and compare their teachings with what we have seen in 10:32-39. Summarize your findings.  
*This will vary depending on resources available, but the students should note that he commends (not condemns) these believers who "endured a great conflict of suffering (10:32), were "made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations" (10:33), and had their property taken away (10:34). This is quite the opposite of the many promises made to believers by false teachers who preach a false gospel of health and wealth!*
5. Write out a sermon outline or teaching lesson on Heb. 10:19-25.  
*There needs to be much freedom here, but please check to assure that the students is seeking to follow the text. They should certainly at least not the connection of 10:19 with what has preceded it "Since therefore ..." and should build upon the series of 3 "let us" exhortations in 10:22, 23 and 24, and apply those to their present audience/situation.*
6. Define/describe true faith:  
*Faith in Hebrews is not a one-time act when we first believe in Jesus, but an on-going looking to Jesus as the Author and Perfecter of our faith.*  
*One could of course use the definition in Heb. 11:1 here, but the whole chapter should be kept in mind, as well as 12:1-2 – "fixing our eyes on Jesus ..."*
7. Faith must always have an object.  
Must our faith always be in Jesus Christ alone? If so, why?  
*The students could draw upon virtually anywhere in Hebrews where the author clearly shows the uniqueness of Jesus Christ – the He alone is our God, King, Great High Priest, perfect Sacrifice/Offering and thus Saviour.*

8. Are there practices in our lives that might indicate that our faith is in someone or something other than Jesus Christ?

*This answer will be personal to each student and situation.*

9. Is chapter 11 encouraging these Hebrew Christians to venerate their ancestors?

*Not at all, but it is certainly encouraging them to remember and imitate the positive examples of faithfulness in the lives of their true spiritual ancestors who lived by faith.*

Contrast a biblical view of ancestors with a typical ATR view in your cultural context.

*Again, this answer will vary depending upon their “context” or situation.*

10. Identify your favourite example of faith in ch. 11 and explain how and why this person’s example encourages you in your walk with the Lord and in your leadership in His church.

*The answer to this question will also obviously be very personal.*

## **Chapter 8**

1. What is our natural response when troubles, like sickness, come to us?

*Personal answer, but some are tempted to go back to their old ways of life, like the Jews. Modern application: some may be tempted to visit a medium (i.e. a “witchdoctor”).*

2. What does the Bible encourage us to do when we have difficulties?

*Heb. 4:16 – to draw near to the throne of grace to find mercy to help in time of need!*

3. On what basis does he encourage us to do this?

*Only on the basis that Jesus is our merciful and faithful High Priest (2:17-18; 4:14-16).*

4. These Jewish Christians needed to realize that they were no longer under the law because of their new union with Christ. Please explain.

*The Levitical system was part of the law and the old covenant under Moses. With the coming of Christ as the perfect and final sacrifice and eternal Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, the OT Levitical ceremonial law was abolished (8:13).*

5. Is there any religious system that we are still "under" which we need Jesus to free us from?

*Some members of our churches may still be practicing African Traditional Religions, or some other part of their background (Islam, etc.).*

6. How would you use Heb. 12 and the end of chapter 11 to answer a false teacher or “prophet” who tells someone in your church that God always wants them to be happy, healthy, and have no problems in this life (i.e. the prosperity “gospel”)?

*After giving so many examples of people of faith with whom God was pleased, the author goes on to list what happened to some of them – “and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated ...” (11:36-37).*

*Contrast these experiences of people of faith with the false teachings that say if you live by faith all will be well, and you will be healthy, happy and prosperous. These were not prosperous but “destitute”. The Bible never promises the Christian a life without problems. Quite to the contrary, Heb. 12 goes on to promise that the true child of God will be “disciplined” by Him in love (12:5-7). In fact, the one who is not disciplined is not a true child, but “illegitimate”. (12:8)*

*These passages in Hebrews teach the opposite of many so-called “prosperity” teachings.*

7. We have seen that the book has 2 major parts: the first being teaching in 1:1-10:18 and the second being application from 10:19 to 13:25.  
What is the main thing that the book teaches us?  
*That the Lord Jesus Christ is both our perfect Great High Priest and the final, perfect sacrifice/offering for our sin.*  
What is the most important thing that we should do about it?  
*Draw near to the throne of God, which we can do only through Jesus Christ.*
8. What responsibilities do pastors have toward the members of their local church?  
*What we are looking for here is an answer regarding the responsibility to disciple, train, "equip the saints" (Eph. 4:12), rather than doing evangelism from the pulpit each week.*
9. Which pastoral responsibilities are being properly done in your church?  
*Personal.*
10. Which pastoral duties are weaknesses that need to be addressed and strengthened?  
How would you recommend making these changes?  
*Personal.*