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A COMMENTARY ON HEBREWS

CHAPTER 1.

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^a Is. 61. 1.
^b Acts 4. 27.

^c Num. 12. 6.
^d Ps. 102. 25.

^e Dent. 4. 20.
^f Gal. 4. 4.

^g John 1. 17.
^h ch. 2. 2.

ⁱ Ps. 2. 8.
^j Mat. 21. 2.

^k Is. 34. 4.
^l 2 Pt. 1. 4.

J.C. and Betty Choate

Hebrews

A
Commentary
and
Study Guide
on the
Supremacy of Christ

J. C. & Betty Choate

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Dedication

To our parents,
Jesse and Hollis Choate
and
Clyde and Theola Burton

who gave us life and love,
and then were willing to let us go,
enabling us to live as lights in other lands.

Introduction

Hebrews is one of the great books of the New Testament and one of the deeper books of the Scriptures. It has its simplicity in some respects, but in other ways there is a lot of meat in its pages. There is certainly room for spiritual growth as one makes his way through it.

The theme of Hebrews is the superiority of Jesus and His way over all else. One cannot read and study its chapters, especially if one is familiar with the rest of the Bible, without coming to this conclusion.

My wife and I became particularly interested in this book in 1978 when we made a detailed study of it in preparation for my teaching a class at Four Seas College of Bible and Missions in Singapore. We followed this up with the writing of this material in commentary form.

It is our sincere prayer as you read and study this guide, along with the book of Hebrews itself, that you will find it to be helpful, informative, and inspirational. We, personally, have been tremendously blessed to be able to work together on its production.

We would hope that, if you are not a Christian, you might be persuaded through this study to become one. We would also pray that, if you are a Christian, this might be the means of helping you to become stronger in the Lord.

J.C. Choate
Winona, Mississippi, USA
October 2003

Background to Hebrews

The Author — As with all the men used to pen Scripture, the author of Hebrews wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (1 Timothy 3:16,17). Though the experiences and vocabulary of the individuals were used in the language chosen to impart the truths, the choice of words and the message were of God.

The book of Hebrews is unique because, unlike many of the other New Testament books, the author of this letter is not named. There has been a great deal of speculation and controversy over who might have written Hebrews. Some argue that Paul wrote it, though he himself seemed to make a disclaimer. He affirmed in Galatians 1:12, “*But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is **not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.***” In contrast, the writer of Hebrews admitted that his knowledge concerning salvation “...was confirmed to us *by those who heard Him* [the Lord]” (Hebrews 2:3). This statement would exclude not only Paul but the other apostles as well. The author — whoever he was — had been taught the Gospel by others and had not actually seen the Lord himself.

Another indicator that Paul was not the author is the absence of the form he followed in all of the books known to be written by him: he always began a letter, and often ended, by identifying himself as the writer, and also identifying various ones who were with him. The author of Hebrews markedly omits any such form.

Some have thought that perhaps Barnabas or Apollos wrote the book. Because of Apollos’ eloquence in the (Old Testament) Scriptures (Acts 18:24), he would be a likely choice, if opinion mattered. In the end, though, we will have to agree with Origen of the third century when he concluded that only God knows who wrote Hebrews. Regardless of the name of the author, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit in all that he said.

Time of Writing — It has been thought that Hebrews was written between 65 and 70 A.D. Obviously no exact date can be set, but because of various statements made in the text itself, these dates have been suggested.

Place of Writing — No specific information is available as to the

address of the writer at the time the epistle was penned, though the greeting he gave from “those in Italy” (Hebrews 13:24) would indicate that he was there.

To Whom Written — It is generally accepted by Bible scholars that it was written to Christians of Jewish background, perhaps even to Hebrew Christians in Palestine, but its message is certainly applicable to all believers.

Purpose of Writing — The author’s main purpose was to contrast the old law and the new law, showing the stark differences between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Christ. He deals with the problem of Jewish Christians being tempted to return to the old law, so Christ is set forth as being superior to Moses and the prophets in every way.

Genuineness — Both internal and external evidences have been more than sufficient down through the ages to establish the book of Hebrews as one that belongs in the canon of the New Testament. It is fully accepted by Bible scholars everywhere as being inspired by God.

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Hebrews

A
Commentary
and
Study Guide
on the
Supremacy of Christ

Chapter 1

Text

1. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
2. Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds;
3. Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
4. Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.
5. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?
6. And again, when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He said, And let all the angels of God worship Him.
7. And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.
8. But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom.
9. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.
10. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands:
11. They shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;
12. And as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.
13. But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make thine enemies Thy footstool?
14. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

Theme:

The Supremacy of Christ Over Angels.

1. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,”

Contrary to the idea of many that throughout the Old Testament period God was in regular continual spoken communication with His people, it was at “sundry times” (intervals when there was a new or further message to be related, or when the people were in special need of instruction) that God spoke in divers manners (various ways) unto the fathers by the prophets, those who were inspired by the Holy Spirit. As in 1 Samuel 3:1, or during the years of the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 2:23-25; Exodus 3:13-16, evidently the name of God had even been lost or forgotten by the Hebrews during this time), there were often long periods of silence when the people were expected to walk as we do, by faith in previous revelations. “Divers manners” has reference to the dreams (Genesis 37:5-11), visions (Daniel 7:2), spoken instruction (Genesis 7:1-17), written revelation (Jeremiah 30:2), signs (Genesis 6:36-40), that were used as God’s tools for communication.

2. “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds;”

... in this last period of history, not designating *the length of time*. There is a great contrast between the prophets as spokesmen, and Christ. It was easy to be deceived by a false prophet (Jeremiah 14:14), even though the person deceived might be sincere in his desire to please God. False prophets did arise and lead people astray. And, even with the true prophet, his message was only partial, for a particular time and a particular people. On the other hand, the authority of His Son was confirmed beyond doubt, and His message recorded and preserved for all people of all time, as God’s final message; there would be no other revelation at a later time by a later spokesman. In the beginning, *as the Word, as God, with God*, the Word was *equal with* God and it was by Him that all things were made (Colossians 1:16); as the

Word, equal in the Godhead, He was in position to *give* the inheritance; now as the Son, He has, because of His obedience, been *appointed heir* of all things.

3. *“Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”*

“The brightness of His glory,” “the express (very) image of His person (substance)” — the real nature of God, the divine essence of God revealed to man by its existence in this One who was begotten as His Son. It was through the instrument of the Word that all things were made, and even now it is through the *Word of His power* (the Son’s) that all things are upheld or continue to exist. He sat down on the right hand of God, showing His position and authority as God’s spokesman, a position He attained as a result of making atonement for the sins of man.

4. *“Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”*

Initially, it seems that man was created to be superior to angels, because angels are actually God’s ministers or servants for man (Hebrews 1:14) while man, in his perfect state, was to have had authority over all of God’s creation (Genesis 1:28). Sin changed this and caused man to be made lower than the angels, in need of salvation and help, in contrast to the angels who live in the presence of God (as man did in the garden) and who have not sinned.

The Word, in emptying Himself (Philippians 2:6-8) and taking the form and body of man, also in this physical sense became lower than the angels. But in completing His work of purging and purification, and being appointed heir of all things, Christ was made better than angels, who are yet ministers doing service for those who shall be heirs of salvation.

5. *“For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to*

Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?"

One religious group teaches that Christ is merely a created being, not actual Deity, having never been a part of the Godhead. They use this verse to substantiate this false doctrine, but in so doing they forget such passages as John 1:1, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was ... God.*"

This verse is not a record of the beginning of the existence of the Word, the eternal person of the Godhead, but is God's declaration of the begetting of the physical form, the body He prepared for the Word who had subjected Himself to Sonship. This verse speaks clearly of the event that is recorded fully in Matthew 1:18-25. It also states by its very declaration that the relationship of the Father to the Son, the obedient subjugation to the Father's will, began for the Word at the same time that He *became* the Son of man. Neither relationship had existed before or from eternity.

6. "And again, when He bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him."

These same denominational people say that Colossians 1:15 says that "first-born of every creature or all creation" means that Christ was God's first work of creation. But "firstborn" has reference to His pre-eminence as a Son, rather than to the time of His "creation" as the Son. This verse is obviously descriptive of the birth of Christ into the world (Luke 2) long after the beginning of creation; also, angels (created beings) were already there, and were instructed to worship Him. Yet, even at this time the description "*first begotten*" is used of Him, showing that God is declaring Christ as His "firstborn Son", through whose sonship and brotherhood many sons will be brought into the Family.

Since only Deity is allowed to be worshiped (Matthew 4:10; Deuteronomy 6:13), and since God Himself instructed the angels to worship the Son, we have God's own testimony that the Word, even in the physical form of the Son, subjected to the human flesh, was still Deity and worthy of being worshiped.

7. "And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits,

and His ministers a flame of fire.”

By way of contrast, God identifies the angelic beings, not as Deity, but as spirits, as beings who sometimes appeared as a flame of fire. Since angels are heavenly beings, it is not possible for us to understand fully the description here made of them but the basic contrast between the Godhead of Christ and the created beings, called angels, is abundantly clear.

8. *“But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom.”*

Again, this verse testifies to the fact that the Son is yet Deity, because God addresses the Son as *“O God”*. Reference is made to the kingdom of Christ, the church, over which He reigns (1 Corinthians 15:25; Daniel 7:13,14; Revelation 3:21). The nature of His rule is described as righteous, or upright, and pure.

9. *“Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.”*

As an inherent fact of Deity, the Son loved righteousness and hated iniquity, evil. Included in this statement is the declaration that even in the physical body, subject to temptations and weakness, Christ continued to love righteousness and to hate evil.

“God, even thy God,” — this wording shows that God is speaking to the Word after He became flesh, after He was *“made like unto His brethren”* (Hebrews 2:17), because prior to that time He was not designated as separate from the Godhead and subject to God (*“thy God”* indicates subjection). But because of His faithfulness, God has elevated Him above His fellows. *“His fellows”* must have reference to humankind, because He did not take on the nature of any other beings (Hebrews 2:16).

10. *“And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands:”*

“And, Thou, Lord” is a further testimony by God of the pre-eminence of Christ, because it was He who, as the Word, spoke

the foundation of the earth into existence in the beginning, and formed the heavens with His hands (John 1:3,10).

11. *“They shall perish, but Thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;”*

The contrast is made between the physical world and its perishableness and the eternal nature of the Son.

12. *“And as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and Thy years shall not fail.”*

It was the Word, now become the Son, who had made the world; it will be He who shall *“fold them up as a garment”* (Psalm 102:26) when the elements shall be dissolved and the earth will melt with fervent heat (2 Peter 3); but the Son partakes of the substance (nature) of God and is eternal.

13. *“But to which of the angels said He at any time: Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool?”*

Again, we see a further declaration of the relationship between the Father and the Son. The Son is *“heir of all things, sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on High,”* the King with the scepter of authority over the world; but He is Himself subject to God, and only to God, as it is through God that His enemies will be made His footstool (1 Corinthians 15:28). No angel or other created being has ever been so elevated.

14. *“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”*

Today, people often wonder about angels and their work. This verse sheds much light on the subject. Angels are identified as spirits (therefore, in that form they would be invisible to the eye of man even though they might completely surround him); they are *“ministering spirits”*: workers; they are (present tense, being done today) sent forth (obviously, even during this Christian age, God still sends out angels to do particular work). *“Sent forth”* for what purpose? *“To minister”* (to do service) for the sake of whom? *“Them who shall be heirs of salvation”* —

the Christian, the obedient (Matthew 7:21). Therefore, even though we do not see them and are not aware of their presence or work, angels are at work in our world for us today. What a comforting reassurance, affirmed in the form of a question!

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss various ways in which God has communicated with people through the ages.
2. Are we living in “the last days”? Does this mean that Jesus is sure to return in the next few days or weeks, or does it simply mean *the last dispensation of time*?
3. Who was the One through whom all things were created? Who is appointed to be heir of all that God possesses?
4. According to Romans 8:16,17, who shares in this inheritance as “*joint heirs with Christ*”?
5. Discuss the ways in which Christ is said to be “*in the image of God*”.
6. What does it mean, “*Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee*”? Is this teaching that *the Word* is actually not Deity, that He had a beginning?
7. What contrast is made between the status of angels and that of the Son?
8. “*God, even Thy God*” seems to be saying that God is pre-eminent over Christ. When did *the Word* empty Himself and become obedient to God, even to the death on the cross (Philippians 2:5-11)?
9. Are verses 8, 10, 11, 12 teaching that the Son is eternal? In the same text, when the “*sceptre of thy kingdom (church)*” is mentioned, is this saying that there is no end to His kingdom?
10. What is the work of angels? Are they still doing this work? Would their interaction in our lives be “heavenly visitations” or “miracles”, or would they be working invisibly and/or without our awareness?

Chapter 2

Text

1. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.
2. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;
3. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;
4. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?
5. For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.
6. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?
7. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownest him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands:
8. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.
9. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.
10. For it became Him, for whom are all things; and by whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.
11. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.
12. Saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.
13. And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.
14. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15. And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.

17. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

18. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Theme:
Provision for Man's Salvation
through Brotherhood with Christ.

1. “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.”

Considering the supremacy of Christ over the angels, we should pay strict attention to the things we have been taught through Him (chapter 1, verse 2). Without diligent attention, any teaching, no matter how important, will slip away into forgetfulness.

2. “For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;”

Why should we give heed? Because in the past, even the words spoken through angels have been true, and obedience or disobedience received the proper reward.

3. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him;”

So, since our Spokesman from God is so much greater than the angels, there can be no escape for us if we neglect the salvation He provides. Testimony of Christ, of His teachings, His works, His death, and His resurrection was made by followers whose conviction was so complete it led them to lay down their lives for Him.

The second part of this verse is a strong indication that neither Paul nor any of the other apostles wrote the book of Hebrews, because the statement that it was spoken at first by the Lord, and “*was confirmed unto us by them that heard him,*” indicates that the writer had not been taught personally by Christ. To have been with Him during His ministry was prerequisite to apostleship; Paul declared in Galatians 1:11-24 that the Gospel he preached had been given to him by the revelation of Jesus Christ, not by any man.

4. “*God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will?*”

God testified to the veracity of the message of the apostles (“them”) by working signs, wonders, miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost through them (see Acts 5:12-14). All of this was according to the will or design of God.

5. “*For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.*”

The angels have never been put in authority over anything. They are ministers, servants. Power over the coming world does not belong to them.

6. “*But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?*”

This verse is a reference to Psalm 8:4-6. It shows the true state of man because of his sinfulness, and declares God’s active concern for him, even in his unworthiness.

7. “*Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownest him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands:*”

Man, certainly (and possibly Jesus as He became the son of man), is the subject of this reference to the Psalm, “*Being made ‘a little lower than the angels’*”. The word translated ‘angels’ in this verse is *elohim* in the original Hebrew of Psalm 8. This is the plural form of the word for divinity. The proper reading of the verse

may be: “Thou madest him [man] a little lower than deity or divine substance...” Man was originally created to be master over all of the earth and its creatures (Genesis 1:28). He was told to fill the earth and subdue it, and to have dominion over all living things.

8. “*Thou has put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.*”

If we continue with the thought that man is the subject of this Psalm, we see that even though God’s purpose was to give man authority over all things, that purpose has not yet reached fruition. Because of sin, man is subjected to the limitations of a deteriorating body which must undergo death. Through his fall he has lost his rightful dominion over the earth and the living creatures.

If this Psalm is having reference to the emptying of the Word and His taking on human flesh, we understand that God has put all things under the authority of Christ. However, the assumption of that authority is not yet complete, because **the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death** (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). When Christ returns to claim His people, death will be no more (1 Corinthians 15:50-57). It would seem that these verses promise that at some future point, man will again be given dominion, perhaps as he becomes joint-heir with Christ and reigns with Him in eternity (Romans 8:17; Revelation 3:21).

9. “*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*”

By emptying Himself (Philippians 2:6-8) and taking the form of man, Christ also was “made” a little lower than the angels or “made a little lower than deity (in exercising His rights and powers; not meaning that He ceased to be deity in substance),” in order to partake of the brotherhood of man. Because of His obedience to God in the suffering of death, He was crowned with glory and honour (Hebrews 5:8,9; Philippians 2:8); by God’s grace (unmerited or

unearned favour) toward man, Christ was allowed to experience death on behalf of, or for the sake of, every man.

10. “For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

“For it became Him” (it was characteristic of the nature, a plan worthy of His nature) for whom and by whom all things exist, that this salvation be conceived; that the author of the salvation for the many sons who would come to God, would be made perfect through suffering. How was Christ, the Son of God, “imperfect” or “incomplete”? There was no imperfection within Himself, but in His role as a Saviour He had not done the work necessary for qualifying as the Saviour until He had suffered the penalty for the sins of the sons He came to save. Until He died for every man, He had not paid the price for our salvation, and therefore He could not be the Saviour. Thus, through His suffering, He was completed or perfected in His role as Saviour.

11. “For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are of all one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren,”

The Word subjected Himself to God, becoming the Son of God at the same time that He became the son of man (Hebrews 1:5,6), learning an obedience that had never been required of Him in His position of equality in the Godhead as the Word (Hebrews 5:8; John 1:1-3). In taking the body of man, becoming man, He as the sanctifier became one with man who was being sanctified, calling them “brethren”. This was a new relationship. Man had lost his right to be “sons of God”, but through the Word’s sonship and also through the brotherhood He assumed with man, the bond between man and God was renewed. We are brethren to Christ, who is the Son of God, and therefore we are also sons of God.

We should consider carefully all that is implied in this brotherhood of Christ with men. Think of the lowliest, most despicable person you have ever known. Would you proudly go before your earthly father with your arm around this person, and pro-

claim him as your brother? We were the enemies of God, yet because of His great love for us, Christ has reconciled us to God. But He does not present us to our Father in our filth. He washed us Himself and gave us of His clean beautiful garments to wear, so that He presents us to His Father as His brother, partaking of His own cleanness and beauty.

12. *“Saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.”*

Quotation from Psalm 22:22. A prophetic messianic statement showing the brotherhood of Christ with man, a public declaration of the relationship, proclaiming a unity with man in praising and worshipping God in the assembly of the church.

13. *“And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.”*

Psalm 18:2, a messianic prophecy stating the fact that the Word, as the son of man and brother of man, would live as man, *“putting His trust in God.”* This was a dependency unknown to Him before He took the form of man (Colossians 1:16,17).

This reference to Isaiah 8:17,18 is a messianic prophecy, perhaps even a dual prophecy, concerning the struggle between the faithful and the unfaithful. Among the children of Israel, there were those who remained faithful to God and were restored to the promised land, as *“the children of God”*. The messianic fulfillment pictures Christ and *“the children which God hath given me”*, indicating the obedient who answered the call to come out of the world and into the Family of God. The wording also shows their oneness with Christ by identifying them as *“the children”* given to Him.

14. *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;”*

Again, we see the bond Christ voluntarily assumed with man,

subjecting Himself to the limitations, the weaknesses, and the mortality of the physical body and human nature in order to be absolutely one with man. But though He was tempted in all things as all men are tempted, He did not submit to the temptation and He did not sin. Thus He was able, through conquering death as perfect man, to destroy Satan's power of death that previously held man captive.

15. *“And deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”*

Because Christ conquered death, He holds out the promise of deliverance to His brethren, who were subject to the fear of death all their lives. One of the amazing things about Christians during the persecution of the early church was the fact that multitudes of them went to their deaths actually singing hymns and praises to God, absolutely without fear of death, because they trusted in their resurrected Lord.

16. *“For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.”*

Both human beings and angelic beings were created by God; some of the angels fell (Jude 6) and man fell (Genesis 3:22). But it was the nature of man that the Lord took, not the nature of angels; it was to man that He gave help, providing a way for restoration to God. It was not to angels that He provided this help, presumably because they were spirit beings in the actual presence of God at the time of their rebellion and, since they knew God as a spirit Person and yet turned from Him, there would have been no further revelation that could have been made through which they could be drawn back to God.

In the same way, when a Christian fully knows the truth, has experienced the care and protection of God, has grown in the faith to maturity, and yet has fallen away from all of this (Hebrews 6:4-6) it is impossible for another person to come to him and to move him to repentance, because he has already

known the fullness of Christianity and has left it — there is no greater revelation or knowledge to use to draw him back.

He took on Him “*the seed of Abraham*” obviously has reference to Abraham as the father of the faithful (it is in this sense that he is discussed in Galatians 3 and Romans 4) and not as the father of the physical Israelite nation.

17. “Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

As the “*seed of Abraham*”, as man, it was necessary that Christ be like man in every facet of human nature, so that when He became the high priest He would be able to mediate with mercy and compassion, a true and reliable representative of man as Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). Much of Hebrews is devoted to a discussion of the role of Christ as our High Priest, and it is in this verse that the subject is first introduced. One of the requirements of a “high priest” was that he be chosen from among the people whom he served, being of their race, so that he would be fully sympathetic and understanding of their plight. In the same way, Christ qualified Himself as our High Priest (not that He could not have known all of this as God, but perhaps the greater necessity was for our own confidence, that because we know that He lived and died as man, we have greater boldness in approaching God through Him), to make atonement for the sins of the people.

God’s nature does not change. His justice requires due punishment for sin. But when Christ took as His own the sins of man (2 Corinthians 5:21) and in Himself received the punishment for the sins of man, the sins were as though they had never existed on the record of the obedient, the “brethren”. Therefore God, in accordance with His nature, receives as His own these sons who have been perfected through the blood of the Son, the High Priest.

18. “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted.”

It is easy for men to assume that the divinity of Christ was so dominant that He easily passed through His years in the flesh, being far removed from all that is commonly endured by man, simply because He was God. But this was not so. He emptied Himself in becoming man (Philippians 2:7) and lived as man in a man's world. He experienced hurt, disappointment, anger, insult, persecution, weariness, poverty. He *suffered* in the temptations with which He was confronted, but because He endured the temptations and resisted them, He is able to feel with us and to offer help to us as we are daily confronted with temptations.

Discussion Questions:

1. The question is raised, "How shall we escape if we neglect our salvation?" With what seriousness are we urged to consider the things we have learned from Scripture?
2. At the time of creation, what was the authority given to man?
3. Verse 9 says that Jesus, too, was made lower than the angels. When did this happen? Was this part of His "*emptying*" of Himself when He took the form of man?
4. According to verse 11, how is "*He that sanctifieth*" and "*they who are sanctified*" described? What word is used to describe this relationship?
5. Psalm 22:22 is a prophetic messianic statement showing what?
6. What are two reasons given in verse 14 for Christ taking the form of humans?
7. Through His own physical death, Christ was able to deliver His brethren from what?
8. Verse 16 says that Christ provided no help for the angels who sinned. Why not?
9. To which people does the term "*the seed of Abraham*" refer?
10. What was assured for man through Christ being "*made like unto His brethren*"? Did Christ actually suffer, and was He actually subject to temptation while He was in the flesh?

Chapter 3

Text

1. “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;
2. Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.
3. For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.
4. For every house is builded by some man; but He that built all things is God.
5. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;
6. But Christ as a son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.
7. Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice,
8. Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness;
9. When your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years.
10. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways.
11. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into My rest.
12. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.
13. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.
14. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;
15. While it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.
16. For some, when they had heard, did provoke; howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.
17. But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?
18. And to whom swore He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?
19. So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Theme:
**The Supremacy
of Christ over Moses.**

1. “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;”

Therefore, because He has made Himself one with man, as His brother, because He has been tempted as man and is able to help those who are tempted, let us (we who are holy or sanctified as His brethren, we who have heard and answered the spiritual, heavenly call to salvation) consider, or study closely, Jesus Christ who is the high priest of Christianity.

2. “Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.”

Christ was obedient in all things to the One who had appointed Him to this work. When the Word emptied Himself and became flesh, He accepted the role of obedient Son to God, the Heavenly Father of man. Hebrews 7:28 says that Christ was appointed as the Son, consecrated *forevermore*. Both Christ and Moses were faithful to God in their obedience; Christ was faithful as a *Son* over the house, Moses as a *servant* within the house.

3. “For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.”

The writer begins the contrast between Christ and Moses. Though both had been faithful to their charge by God, there was a great difference between the roles given to them, as great a difference as lies between the builder of a house and the house itself.

4. “For every house is builded by some man: but He that built all things is God.”

The declaration is made that, just as in the physical world every house had to have a builder, in the spiritual realm also

everything must have a builder, and that builder is God, through Christ.

5. *“And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;”*

God’s people have always constituted the spiritual house of God (Ephesians 2:19-22). Each soul is a living stone (1 Peter 2:5), building up that house. Moses, as a redeemed, forgiven servant within the house, was faithful in doing the work God gave him to do. This work included the testimony or prophecy concerning the coming of Christ and His law (Deuteronomy 18:15,18,19).

6. *“But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”*

Christ was not a servant within the house, but a Son in complete authority over the house (Philippians 2:9-11). We, His brethren, who have been sanctified (set apart from the world), are this spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). In refutation of the false doctrine that a person who has been truly saved from his past sins can never be lost, the writer states that we are this spiritual house **if** we hold “tightly within our grasp” our confidence in Christ (and our salvation in Him) and our happiness in the hope we hold, firm ... for how long? *“Unto the end”* (Revelation 2:10). Faithfulness that does not carry us through the gates of death means unfaithfulness, and those who were *“once enlightened”* and have fallen away can expect only condemnation (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-29).

7. *“Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear His voice,”*

So, because faithfulness is absolutely necessary, the Holy Ghost, who inspired the writing of God’s word, warned: Today — now — is the time to hear and obey, not some uncertain later time that may never come.

8. *“Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:”*

Many will not even listen to the word of God in order to make a knowledgeable decision concerning what to do about it; but the plea is made to those who do hear what He has to say, that they be careful not to harden their hearts to the message. The example is given of the Israelites' hardness of hearts and unbelief whenever any trial of their faith came upon them in the wilderness. Their continual waywardness provoked God and left Him no choice but to deal harshly with them, according to the measure of their unfaithfulness.

9. *"When your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years."*

The Israelite fathers saw God's marvels in the wilderness for forty years. They tempted Him to destroy them over and over in their unfaithfulness, even though He "*proved*" to them His unlimited power in caring for their needs during those forty years.

10. *"Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known My ways."*

A perfect, sinless heart is not required in order for a person to be "*a man after God's own heart*". David sinned many times, but this description was made of him because of his attitude toward God. The Jews who came out of Egypt had attitudes so unlike God that it was as though they had no knowledge of His ways. Their hearts, so different from His, caused great grief to Him. We should remember today that God loves us as He loved them, and that when we think and act and speak from ungodly attitudes, we bring grief to the Father in heaven. Surely we would not want to use His love in such a hurtful way. Surely we love Him enough that we want our lives to bring Him joy.

11. *"So I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest."*

Today, when people are not living according to the doctrines of the New Testament, the statement is often made, "But you

know God is too merciful to condemn a soul to hell just because he was not baptized, or was not a member of the church, etc., etc.” This example from the Old Testament is recorded in Hebrews as a warning that God has wrath that is justly aroused by disobedience, and that the punishments He promises *He will perform*, just as He punished the Israelites with death in the wilderness.

12. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

Unfaithfulness, i.e., departing from God, is the result of unbelief in the heart of the Christian. To God, unbelief is not merely “indifference” or “neglect”, but one who is unbelieving, unfaithful, is said to have an *evil heart*.

13. “But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

To avoid unfaithfulness, Christians are told to encourage one another daily. This means that if we see a brother becoming slack and unfaithful, we are to go to him “today” to try to show him the error in his life. It is disastrous to wait until the practice of indifference and sin has so hardened his heart that he can no longer be reached.

14. “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;”

2 Peter 1:4; John 17:22-24; Revelation 3:21 and Romans 8:17 show that the Christian who is faithful partakes of Christ in His glory, in His Sonship, of His nature, of His inheritance — **if** he is faithful throughout his life. What riches are ours in Christ if we continue with Him! What terrible loss if, after becoming Christians with the right of inheritance, we fall away and lose everything!

15. “While it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.”

Whatever of good or evil was in our lives yesterday is past, and we are neither saved nor lost by the “yesterdays”. “Today” is the

vital time. We can continue the righteousness of our yesterdays today, or we may correct the evil of our yesterdays today. Tomorrow is not yet ours and we cannot depend on that time to set our lives in order before God. It is “today” that we must examine our hearts and submit them to Him, not following the example of the Israelites when they provoked God’s anger by their disobedience.

16. *“For some, when they had heard, did provoke; howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.”*

God told the Israelites how to please Him, but even though they knew the right path, they disobeyed and provoked God’s wrath. Today His word is available for all men to know His will, but many have indifferent or disobedient attitudes, and they also provoke God to anger. Of the Israelites who came out of Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb were obedient and were allowed to enter the promised land (Numbers 14:2,4,11,29). Similarly, just such a small part of the world’s total population is truly obedient to God today.

17. *“But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?”*

Again we see in this verse, cited as our example, the chain reaction: men sinned, their sin grieved God, their bodies fell in the wilderness in punishment. We are blind and foolish if we ignore such grim warnings and deceive ourselves into thinking that God’s great love and mercy will constrain Him to tolerate almost anything. This has not been true of His past behaviour.

18. *“And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?”*

The rest promised to the Israelites was entering into the Promised Land. Those who were unbelieving and disobedient were denied that rest.

19. *“So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”*

The unbelief of the Israelites took many forms: fear, idolatry, moral decadence, murmuring, even the offering of their children in burnt sacrifices to Molech. All sins have their roots in unbe-

lief, because if we really believe God we will know that He will do all that He promises, even to the punishing in eternal torment of those whose unbelief causes them to fall away from Him.

Discussion Questions:

1. We who are children of God are asked to consider whom?
2. How was Moses faithful to God?
3. Why was Christ counted worthy of more glory than Moses, since both were obedient to God?
4. Moses was faithful as a _____ *within* the house of God.
5. Christ was faithful as a _____ *over* His house. Reading 1 Timothy 3:15, what is another word for His “house”?
6. What does the Holy Spirit, through His inspiration of the word of God, urge us to do about our hearts?
7. What had the Israelites done for forty years while they wandered in the wilderness?
8. Why was God grieved with that generation of people? Was He grieved with all of them, according to verses 16 and 17?
9. Who was excluded from entering into God’s rest?
10. All sins have their roots in what?

Chapter 4

Text

1. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.
2. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.
3. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest; although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.
4. For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.
5. And in this place again, if they shall enter into my rest.
6. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief;
7. Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.
8. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day.
9. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.
10. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.
11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.
12. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edge sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.
13. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.
14. Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.
15. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Theme:

The Rest Promised to Christians.

1. *“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”*

Fear can be used to mean “to be afraid” or to show “reverential fear”. Both meanings would fit this admonition to Christians who are warned that even though the promise has been made of the coming rest, it is possible to fall short of reaching it. This verse says clearly that the doctrine “once saved, always saved” is far from God’s truth.

2. *“For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”*

The gospel (God’s message of salvation) was preached to the Israelites, but the words were not mixed with faith in the hearers’ hearts, so they were not helped. The Gospel has also been preached to us. Will we receive it with faith, and live by it?

3. *“For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest; although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”*

There is a rest which God enjoys. When the work of creation ended on the sixth day, He entered into the “rest”. All that is involved in this rest is not fully revealed. Some people believe that God is just sitting in heaven today, doing literally nothing but waiting for the end of time to come. We know that this is not what is meant by “rest” because Jesus Himself said, “*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*” (John 5:17). Regardless of the meaning of the word, God is enjoying a certain rest, and He has promised that those who truly believe will share in that rest. At the same time He has sworn that the unbelieving will not enter into His rest.

4. *“For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.”*

This verse is a reference to Genesis 2:2 when God had ceased from His work of creation.

5. *“And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest.”*

This reference shows not only that God rested, but that there would be some who would share in His rest.

6. *“Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:”*

These previous verses have shown that some people would certainly share in God’s rest. The Jews might have mistakenly thought that the rest which was promised was their inheritance of the “Promised Land”, but this was not the ultimate rest God had in mind when the promise was made, as the following verses show.

7. *“Again He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”*

Psalms 95:7-11 is the passage quoted in Hebrews 3:7-11, 3:15; and 4:7. It is a quotation from David who lived long after Israel had entered the Promised Land, and it states several important things:

a. Not yesterday or tomorrow, but today is the day for accepting the salvation God offers.

b. It is possible to harden our hearts against God, and to grieve Him with our disobedience.

c. Wrong attitudes alienate the heart from a knowledge of God’s ways.

d. God swears to the unbelievers who have justly incurred His wrath that they will not be allowed to enter into His rest.

8. *“For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day.”*

The name “Jesus” was a commonly used name among the Jews; another form of the same name was Joshua. It is the man called Joshua in Exodus who is meant here, not Jesus Christ. Joshua took the place of Moses as leader of the Israelites when they entered the land of promise. The Hebrew writer reasons that if the rest into which the Israelites entered at that time was the ultimate rest God had promised, David at a much later date would not have spoken of another rest.

9. *“There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”*

The conclusion is reached that a rest remains yet for God’s people.

10. *“For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.”*

Perhaps this verse gives some indication of what is meant by “rest”. God rested when He ceased the work of creation. We will rest also when we cease from our “own works”, perhaps the work described in Philippians 2:12, “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” This is the work of this life for the believer and it is, logically, the work from which he will rest when he enters into God’s rest.

11. *“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”*

The further exhortation is made for the believer to work, not indifferently or haphazardly, but with diligence, putting his whole energy into the work. Again believers are reminded of the danger of falling because of unbelief, as the Israelites fell.

12. *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*

The message we have been given by God is not a dead, outdated letter, but is “quick” — living, and “powerful” — active. This living, active word of God is compared to an extremely sharp

sword that is capable of dividing between the soul of man and the spirit, i.e., between the eternal element of man's makeup and the spirit of life that activates the mortal body; between joints and the marrow of the bones; between the thoughts and the intents of the heart (thoughts: voluntary or involuntary considerations passing through the mind; intent: thoughts with purpose behind them, the mind's commitment to make the thoughts reality.)

13. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Because we deal with God and with His living word, we need to remember always that nothing can be hidden from Him. Everything is open and exposed to His eyes, and it is with His unerringly righteous and just judgment that man must expect to deal.

14. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."

These last three verses draw their weight from all of the previous verses, and they serve as a conclusion for the chapter. Based on all that has already been said, "*seeing then that we have a great high priest,*" Christians will surely want to hold to their profession of faith in Christ. This One in whom we believe is the Son of God, and He has passed into the heavens, entering into God's rest, preparatory for the entrance of all the faithful into that rest.

15. "For we have not a high priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

This verse is a further statement on the thought introduced in 2:18, showing that Christ is not an unfeeling, inactive high priest who is detached from all of the trials and frustrations of living in this world. He, Himself, endured temptations during His earthly life, in all points, just as we face them. He qualified Himself to be our Saviour by not only suffering the temptations but also by the fact that He did not succumb to any of them. Therefore, He is able

to feel with us in our temptations and in our weaknesses and inabilities, and because He did not fall He is able to sympathize with and strengthen those who are tempted. For those who desire it, a way of escape from every temptation is provided (1 Corinthians 10:13).

16. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Christ is not a stranger to us. The revelation concerning Him says that He is our brother, that He is touched by our problems and temptations, that He has endured the same trials we face. Therefore, because we can identify so closely with Him, we can come with boldness and confidence before God, knowing that our Brother is there to intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25), to help us find the mercy and the help we need.

Discussion Questions:

1. In contrast to the denominational doctrine of “once saved, always saved”, what warning is given to Christians?
2. The message preached to the Israelites was called what? Why did it not profit them? We are profited by hearing the Gospel if we do what?
3. What has God promised the unbelieving about entering into His rest? What has He promised the believing?
4. Which day is the day of salvation?
5. Was the entry of the Israelite nation into the Promised Land the lasting and true rest God had in mind for His people?
6. According to verse 11, what two things are necessary in our behavior toward God if we are to enter into the promised rest?
7. How is the word of God described?
8. Discuss the difference between the *thoughts* and *intents* of the heart.
9. Who is our High Priest? Where is He? What statement is made in verse 15 to assure us that He can feel with us in our human infirmities?
10. On this basis, what are we told to do in verse 16? What can we expect when we go to God for help?

Chapter 5

Text

1. “For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.
2. Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that He Himself also is compassed with infirmity.
3. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.
4. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.
5. So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.
6. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
7. Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared;
8. Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered;
9. And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him;
10. Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchisedec.
11. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.
12. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.
13. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.
14. But strong meat belongeth to them that are full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Theme:
The Priesthood of Christ.

1. ***“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:”***

Ordinarily, a priest is chosen from among men as a representative of his fellow men, and he is properly appointed to offer gifts to God as well as sacrifices for the sins of the people he serves.

2. ***“Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.”***

A priest, who is a man and knows intimately the frailties of men, is able to deal empathically with the two types of people under his ministry: (1) he can deal gently and with compassion with those who are ignorant of all the points of God’s will; (2) he can work compassionately, also, with those who have succumbed to their weaknesses and are “*out of the way*” or erring.

3. ***“And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.”***

Because of the needs of the people to be forgiven for the sins they have committed, the priest offers sacrifices, not only for them, but for his own sins, also.

4. ***“And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.”***

No man appoints himself as high priest. God appointed the priests and the order of their successors, as in the case of Aaron (Exodus 28:1).

5. ***“So also Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten Thee.”***

In a parallel, Christ did not make Himself high priest in the new priesthood, but He was appointed by God when God pro-

claimed, *“Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.”* This statement of begetting says again that Christ was not the Son from eternity, but that there was a point in time when He was begotten as the Son of God and as the Son of man (1:5,6).

6. *“As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”*

Psalm 110 foretells the coming of the Christ’s kingdom, and verse 4 of that psalm is the place from which this quotation was taken. In this statement, the promise of a new priesthood (after Melchisedec instead of Aaron) and a new priest (Christ who was not of the Levitical line) was made, with the assurance that this order would be established forever. (See Chapter 7 for further discussion of Melchisedec.)

7. *“Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared;”*

What a powerful verse, so filled with the picture of the agony of Christ! Obviously, this is a description of the prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane just before Christ committed Himself to the endurance of the shame of the cross and the unutterable horror of separation from God as He took on Himself, as His own, the sins of all mankind. The penalty for sin is death, and Christ prayed with strong crying and tears to be delivered from such punishment if it could be possible. Early Christians, during the persecution of the first century, went to their deaths singing and praying to God. Were they more courageous than the Saviour they followed? No. I am convinced that it was not the physical pain and death of the cross that Christ dreaded; rather, it was the spiritual agony and the separation from God that He would experience for the first time when he shouldered man’s sin, which caused Him to cry out for some other way. But even in the face of such an ordeal, His attitude toward God was one of deep respect and reverence.

8. *“Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered;”*

As the Word, there had been no “subjection”, no “obedience” to learn; but when Christ took the form of man and subjected Himself to the will of God, He learned by experience the attitude of obedience to another’s will, as we are to learn subjection.

9. *“And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him;”*

As in Hebrews 2:10, we see here another reference to the perfection Christ achieved when He qualified Himself as Saviour by dying in man’s stead. Thus, He became the One through whom eternal salvation is gained, as believers obey the Gospel.

10. *“Called of God a high priest after the order of Melchisedec.”*

A re-stating of verse 6.

11. *“Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.”*

This verse is the introduction to the author’s further writing about the two priesthoods in the following chapters. He shows the difficulty of explaining the many things he wanted to say on the subject because he knew that the readers had dulled their hearing, spiritually.

12. *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.”*

How did he know? He knew that the time had long passed when they should have been handling God’s word with maturity in teaching others — yet they had not grown spiritually and were actually in need of having someone to come and teach them again the basic truths of the Gospel. They needed milk, not the strong meat of God’s word. How often, today, do people take the life-giving Book and, by mishandling it and wrongly reading and ignoring its teaching, they make it an instrument of death to themselves (2 Corinthians 2:16).

13. *“For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.”*

The young inexperienced Christian does not know God's word well enough to use it with skill in his own life or in teaching others. The Hebrew Christians had become like babies, because they had not studied and grown.

14. *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”*

Mature people can eat and digest meat. Mature Christians can handle the more difficult things of the word of God. Because they have exercised their senses well, it is a simple thing to distinguish good from evil.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the purpose of high priests who are chosen from among men?
2. Why is the high priest able to feel compassion for the ignorant and those who have problems?
3. Who offers sacrifices for the sins of the high priest?
4. Can a priest appoint himself? Who appointed Christ?
5. Simultaneously with the Word's appointment as High Priest over the family of God was what statement concerning His Sonship with God?
6. How long will Christ be High Priest after the order of Melchisedec?
7. Describe the scene of Christ praying for some other way to save mankind. Was it physical pain and death that troubled Him?
8. Even as a Son, what did Christ learn? What does this tell us about His likeness with humans (in a learning process) compared with the omniscience of Deity?
9. How was Christ *“made perfect”*? Does this mean that He was not perfect, that He had committed sins?
10. What was the great problem with the Hebrew Christians to whom this letter is directed?

Chapter 6

Text

1. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,
2. Of the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.
3. And this will we do, if God permit.
4. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,
5. And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,
6. If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.
7. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:
8. But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.
9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.
10. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister.
11. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.
12. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.
13. For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself,
14. Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16. For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

17. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

18. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

19. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

20. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Theme:

Steadfastness Urged in Christians Because of God's Steadfastness.

1. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,”

In the previous chapter, the contrast was made between those who still needed the milk of the word and those who had exercised themselves in the development of Christianity and were able to partake of the meat of the word. Therefore, the writer urges the Hebrews to go on, past the doctrines of first principles, and to reach toward the perfection of manhood in Christ. In the latter part of the verse he lists some of the foundation principles: repentance from dead works and the learning of faith toward God. These lessons should be learned before a person obeys the gospel and during the early period of the Christian's life; they are not lessons in which the mature Christian should need continual study and reminders.

2. *“Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”*

The writer continues the list of “first principles”:

● **The teachings concerning baptisms:**

- a. The baptism of John which ended with the death of John (Acts 19:1-5),
- b. Christ’s baptism of suffering (Mark 10:38),
- c. The baptism of fire which will be the punishment of the wicked (Matthew 3:11),
- d. The baptism of the Holy Spirit which God administered in two cases: the apostles on the day of Pentecost, representing the Jewish people (Acts 2:4); Cornelius and his household, representing the Gentiles (Acts 10:44).
- e. The baptism of the Great Commission which was the only one in force by the time Hebrews was written (Ephesians 4:4,5).

● **Concerning the giving of miraculous gifts** by the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 6:6; 8:17) during the infancy of the church, before the scriptures had been completed.

● **The teaching concerning the resurrection of the dead**, when Christ will summon from the graves both the good and the evil, to face judgment and to inherit life or death, according to their obedience to Him.

● **The teachings concerning the judgment that is coming.** All of these are doctrines of first principles that should be learned early in one’s Christian life, as a foundation for further development.

3. *“And this will we do, if God permit.”*

3. He affirms the desire to move forward spiritually.

4. *“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,”*

Now the writer shows the state of those who have left the truth. He describes his subjects as *“those who were once enlightened”*

— they had a full understanding of the truth; and *“have tasted of the heavenly gift”* — possibly this heavenly gift is the realization of salvation, of having lived with consciences at peace with God because they knew their sins were forgiven; they *“were made partakers of the Holy Ghost”* — this Person of the Godhead dwells within each Christian (Acts 5:32) to strengthen him (Ephesians 3:16; Romans 8:9-11,26,27) and to sustain him spiritually. Those who teach the impossibility of apostasy — that no one who was actually saved can ever be lost — are ignoring this clear description of saved people who were being warned that they were in danger of being lost because of their lack of growth in Christ.

5. *“And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,”*

“...and have tasted the good word of God” — the Christian who has grown to maturity has learned the word of God and, in the process, has discovered the marvel of seeing the mind of God revealed in all its wisdom and love and compassion and purity; *“and the powers of the world to come”* — in the world to come the power of God will not be in opposition to the power of Satan, but will be absolute after complete victory over evil. Satan and his host will be confined to hell for eternity. But even in this world, the Christian who walks by faith has been able to see God’s power over-ruling and working in his life (Romans 8:28), so that he knows a taste already of the powers of the world to come.

6. *“If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.”*

If Christians who have known this degree of maturity in Christ fall away, then (verse 4) it is impossible for a person to go to them and to exhort them so that they will repent. Why? Because they have already known the fullness of life in Christ. They have a knowledge of all the scriptures that should have kept them faithful, yet they have left that relationship. Which words or promises would one use to prick such consciences, deadened by sin?

The only hope for such a person would be, not for someone else to renew him to repentance, but that possibly his own knowledge of God and his own experience in Christianity might eventually arouse a desire to return to that love he once knew. But their state of rebellion borders on hopelessness and that is why the writer reminds the weak Hebrews of the danger threatening them if they don't begin to grow up in Christ; it would certainly be possible for them, too, to fall away. In their weakness they have, in essence, cast their voice with those who cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him", turning away from their confession of Christ as their Saviour, and shaming Him before all men.

A Christian has made a verbal public proclamation and also has spoken through his life, saying that Christ is the Son of God and is worthy of being followed. When such a person turns away from that profession of faith, he is saying, "I tried Christ as my Saviour and found that He is not worthy of my love and allegiance."

7. *"For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:"*

The illustration is made in this verse of the earth drinking in the rain from God and, in turn, bringing forth the fruit for those who work the soil. The lesson is that those souls who receive the blessings of God and bear fruit are pleasing to Him and will be blessed for their fruitfulness.

8. *"But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."*

But briars and thorns, which consume strength from the soil, are to be cursed and will eventually be burned. The Christian who falls away produces spiritual "briars and thorns" — hindrances to himself and to faithful Christians. He will eventually be cast into hell.

9. *"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."*

The writer assures the Hebrews that he has confidence that they will not fall, and he believes that their lives will be the kind that can be blessed with salvation, even though he does speak the dire warnings to them.

10. *“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”*

He remembers, and says that God is also aware of the work of love that they had done and continued to do in His name, in their ministry and service to Christians who needed their help either physically or spiritually.

11. *“And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:”*

He encourages each Christian to show this same dedication and earnestness in his service, with full confidence to the end of life, in his hope of eternal life with God.

12. *“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”*

They were urged not to be lazy, but to follow the example of others before them who, because of their faith and steadfastness, their patience in endurance, had inherited the promises of God.

13. *“For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself,”*

In Romans 4:13 and Galatians 3:8 God promised Abraham that through his descendants the whole world would be blessed. For assurance regarding that promise, God swore by Himself that it would be fulfilled. When a person swears by something, it is usually the thing he regards or reveres most highly. Since God is the greatest Being in existence, there was nothing greater by which He could swear than Himself.

14. *“Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.”*

God promised to bless Abraham and to multiply his seed as the sand of the sea shore (Genesis 22:16,17).

15. *“And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”*

Abraham did not receive the promise immediately. It was many years before his son was born, so it was only after patiently waiting, trusting that God would keep His word, that the promise was finally fulfilled.

16. *“For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.”*

When an oath or confirmation is needed, men swear by something greater than themselves, and this assurance is sufficient to end all doubt of the promise being kept.

17. *“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath:”*

God’s promise is actually sufficient to bind Himself to whatever He has said he would do, but for further assurance to those who are promised salvation as heirs of the covenant He made with Abraham, God not only gave His word but He confirmed it by swearing by Himself that He spoke the truth.

The *“heirs of the promise”* are the souls in God’s family who have been blessed with salvation in Christ. Though Isaac was the initial fulfillment of promise to Abraham, his spiritual heirs are those who accept God by faith (as Abraham did) and who become His children through Christ, the true *“seed”* (Galatians 3:29).

18. *“That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:”*

Thus, the believer has two unchangeable assurances: (a) God’s promise and (b) the oath. In both of these things it was impossible for God to lie, so we who have turned to God for hope of eternal life have strong encouragement to continue faithful to Him.

19. *“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;”*

This hope that we have is therefore a guaranteed and irrevocable thing. It serves as an anchor binding the soul firmly to God, sparing it from being blown about with every doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). Our anchor “*enters into that within the veil,*” i.e., it binds us to God Himself (the veil is an allusion to the veil in the temple before the Holy of Holies, where God’s presence dwelled).

20. “*Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.*”

Our forerunner, Christ, has already entered into God’s presence for us. This is the same Jesus who has been made a continuing High Priest for us after the order of the priesthood of Melchisedec.

Discussion Questions:

1. What were mature Christians urged to do in verse 1?
2. Discuss the five “baptisms” mentioned in the Scriptures?
3. The writer lists four types of teachings that are categorized as foundational. Discuss these.
4. Describe the Christian, in verses 4 and 5, who was fully taught but who was in danger of falling away from the truth.
5. What does the writer say is impossible for another to do for such a fallen Christian?
6. Discuss some of the works of love which the recipients of the Hebrew letter had done.
7. Verses 13 through 17 talk of God swearing an oath to two people or groups of people, concerning promises. Who were these people and what were the promises?
8. What are the two immutable things that assure us of the faithfulness of God’s promise?
9. What does this hope do for our souls?
10. Who has entered into God’s presence before us, to prepare the way for us?

Chapter 7

Text

1. “For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;
2. To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;
3. Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.
4. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.
5. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:
6. But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.
7. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.
8. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth;
9. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.
10. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.
11. If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?
12. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.
13. For He of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.
14. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.
15. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

16. Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.
17. For He testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
18. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof,
19. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.
20. And inasmuch as not without an oath He was made priest;
21. (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec):
22. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.
23. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death;
24. But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.
25. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.
26. For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;
27. Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for His own sins, and then for the peoples; for this He did once, when He offered up Himself.
28. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.”

Theme:

The Superiority of Christ's Priesthood over the Priesthood of Aaron.

1. “For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings; and blessed him;”

The reference is made to Melchisedec (Genesis 14:18) who was both king of Salem (ancient Jeru-Salem) and priest of God. In this he typified Christ, who is also both priest and king. When Abraham was returning from a battle, Melchisedec met him on the way and blessed him.

2. *“To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;”*

Abraham, recognizing Melchisedec’s priesthood, paid a tithe of the spoils of the battle to him. The name Melchisedec means “righteousness” and the title “King of Salem” means “King of peace”, both of which are also used to describe Christ, the Prince of Peace and the Son of righteousness (Malachi 4:2).

3. *“Without father, without mother, without decent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.”*

To the Hebrews, knowledge of genealogy and of one’s belonging to the Hebrew nation were of great importance. In contrast to this, nothing is known or recorded of Melchisedec’s ancestry, or of his birth or death, so that in the mind’s eye he had “*no beginning and no end but remains a priest continually.*” In this way he is made “*like unto the Son of God.*” We know of Jesus’ earthly mother, of His Jewish genealogy and of His physical birth and death. But the Son of God had no beginning of days, and no end; He has no genealogy and He arose not of a line of Jewish kings or priests, but stood alone as the beginning and continuing king and priest in His dynasty.

4. *“Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.”*

To the Hebrew people there was no greater man than Abraham, the father of their nation. But even Abraham acknowledged Melchisedec’s greatness over his own by giving him tithes of his spoils; yet Melchisedec in all his greatness was only a shadow of true Priest and King, Christ Jesus.

5. “And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:”

Abraham’s descendants, divided into the twelve tribes of Israel, recognized the Levitical tribe as the one appointed to priesthood among them. The Levites collected tithes of their brethren, as though the Levites were honoured above the other tribes, when in reality all of the Israelites were born of the loins of Abraham and were therefore equal.

6. “But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham and blessed him that had the promises.”

Melchisedec was not of the Israelites, or of the tribe of Levi, yet he not only received tithes from Abraham but he also pronounced a blessing on Abraham, the man who was so great in God’s sight that he was called “*the Friend of God*” (James 2:23). Abraham was singled out to receive the promises of God and to become the one through whose lineage the Saviour was born.

7. “And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.”

The truth that was inferred in verse 4 is now stated plainly: Melchisedec, who gave the blessing, was greater than Abraham, who received it.

8. “And here men that die receive tithes: but there he receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.”

Under the Levitical priesthood the priests were constantly changing because they were only men, subject to death. The contrast is again made between their changing priesthood and Melchisedec’s, in which he was the only priest, abiding continually (verse 3), because there is no record of his death or of his successor in the priesthood. Again, this is a figure of the Priesthood of Christ, which has only one continuing priest forever.

9. “And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.”

Levi, the father of the tribe of priests, who received tithes of his brethren, paid tithes through Abraham to Melchisedec.

10. *“For he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him.”*

Levi was yet to be born when Abraham paid tribute to Melchisedec.

11. *“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?”*

The writer begins now with his reason for contrasting the priesthood of Melchisedec with the priesthood of Levi. The Israelites received the law of Moses in conjunction with the Levitical priesthood. Some of the Hebrew Christians wanted to cling to that law and priesthood. To combat this error, the question is raised, Why was a priest (Christ) raised after the order of Melchisedec, and not after Aaron or the Levitical priesthood, if perfection came by the Levitical priesthood? The answer is obvious: perfection could not be attained by that priesthood, and so a new one after the order of Melchisedec was raised up.

12. *“For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.”*

The second point of the writer’s discussion is stated in this verse: (1) the priesthood has been changed; (2) this necessitates a change also in the law which authorizes the priesthood.

13. *“For He of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.”*

According to the law of Moses, only men of the tribe of Levi could be priests. Christ, who is the new high priest, was not of this tribe and could not, therefore, lawfully serve as priest if the law of Moses continued in force.

14. *“For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.”*

Christ was born of the tribe of Judah, David's family line. The law of Moses did not allow for any of the tribe of Judah to serve as priests.

15. *“And it is yet far more evident; for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,”*

So, he says, this is a very evident truth: a new priest has arisen after the likeness of Melchisedec, who preceded the Levitical priesthood both in time and in greatness (verses 7,9,10).

16. *“Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.”*

This new Priest was not made by a carnal law, such as that given by Moses, through which dying men served as priests; but he was made Priest because of the power of eternal life which He held within Himself (John 5:26; 10:17).

17. *“For He testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”*

God testified (Psalm 110:4) that Christ would be a continuing priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec.

18. *“For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.*

The “carnal commandment” was disannulled or removed because it held inherent weakness and was therefore unprofitable in accomplishing God's ultimate purpose of saving men.

19. *“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”*

The law that Moses gave pointed out what man should do and what he could not do. Thus, sin was made evident *as sin* by the Mosaic law (Romans 7:7). But though offering was made under that law for sin, the blood of animals could not actually remove the guilt (Hebrews 10:4). All of their sacrifices would have been worth nothing to them if Christ had not died, thus covering the obedient Israelites with His cleansing blood. Therefore, though the law of Moses could not remove sin, the blood shed by Christ

did accomplish that, and through Him we are able to enter into God's presence, cleansed from the sin that had separated us from Him (Isaiah 59:1,2).

20. *"And inasmuch as not without an oath He was made priest:"*

The priesthood of Christ is irrevocable, because it was confirmed by the very oath of God.

21. *"For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:"*

The priests of Levi were born to their priesthood and were not made priests by oaths, but God confirmed Christ's priesthood and will not change it, in His promise, "*Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.*"

22. *"By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."*

No oath confirmed the Levitical priests; the oath of God confirmed Christ's priesthood, and His testament or covenant or law is just that much greater than theirs. Another point to be noted here: Jesus is the surety of this *new covenant*. We have received this law, the New Testament. It stands or falls on the genuineness of Christ. If He is truly the Son of God, as He claimed, then He is our guarantor that every word of this new will shall stand. If He can be proved false, the New Testament falls with Him. Truly, He is our surety, or guarantee, as we follow the law He has given.

23. *"And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:"*

Under the Levitical priesthood there were many priests because of death.

24. *"But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood."*

Christ is the eternal Word, the Son of God, so He continues forever and there will never be another priest to replace Him.

25. *"Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that*

come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

New priests had to learn the work and the people before they could be of much help, but because Christ continues to be the priest forever He is always there, ready to save and knowing best how to help those who come to God by Him (and it is only through Him that we have access to God).

God, standing alone, and man, standing alone, are forever separated by the wall of sin. But Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man, is able, because of His sinlessness, to stand in the presence of God; and when men are washed by His blood (Hebrews 9:14) they, too, can stand with Him, through Him, by Him, in the presence of God without sin being imputed to them or counted against their record. In other words, Christ’s blood removes every stain of sin from His brothers — the obedient children of God (Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3,4; Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 10:19; 1 Peter 1:18,19) — so that they, with Him, again have the right to enter into God’s presence as faithful children. That Christ “*ever liveth*” shows a *continuing state*; Christ continues to live in order to speak for His brothers.

26. “For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;”

This is the High Priest whom we have: One who is holy, without guile, unstained by sin, separate from sinners. While in the world Jesus associated with sinners, but He did not partake of their sins; now, as the exalted Son at the right hand of God, His mercy is extended to sinners, but He is separate from sinners in this way: those sinners who truly come to Him do so in obedience, believing in His Sonship, and washing themselves in baptism in His blood. Thus, in the process of coming to Him they are cleansed of their sins and are no longer counted as sinners. A man who remains in his sin cannot be with Christ in association with Him.

Christ is also made higher than the heavens, i.e., He has all authority in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18); only God Himself is not placed under subjection to the Son (1 Corinthians 15:27).

27. *“Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the peoples’s, for this He did once, when He offered up Himself.”*

Under the law of Moses it was necessary for sacrifices to be made repeatedly, first for the priests and then for the people. Christ had no sins for which to make sacrifice; and the sacrifice of Himself was so great that it needed to be made only once to atone for all sin for all time, for those who are obedient.

28. *“For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law maketh the Son, who is consecrated for ever more.”*

The high priests who were appointed under the law were still only men, with the weaknesses and sins of men; but the oath of God which was since the law (Psalm 110:4) was a promise made after the law of Moses had been given. This shows that even though that law was in force at that time, it was not to continue forever. “... maketh or appointeth” — “eth”: continually making or confirming the Son, who is consecrated (set apart for this work) or perfected (made wholly fitted for His work) forever.

Note, too, that though the Word did not have the relationship of Son with Father before He was born as the Son of God, Son of man (Hebrews 1:5) and before He learned obedience (Hebrews 5:8), yet that relationship is here described as one that will *remain* forever. If we are children of God through our brotherhood with Christ, and if we are to continue to be children of God for eternity, it must of necessity be through Christ’s continuing to fill the role of Son of God and brother of man for that same eternity (Romans 8:17). **What price was my salvation!**

Discussion Questions:

1. Why was the priesthood of Melchisedec superior to that of Aaron (the Levitical Priesthood)?
2. Review the points about Abraham offering tithes to Melchisedec, and discuss the significance of this.
3. To the Hebrew Christians who wanted to go back to the Law of Moses, how did this argument establish the superiority of the Priesthood of Christ over the Levitical Priesthood, and of His law over the law of Moses?
4. When the priesthood changes, what else is changed, of necessity?
5. Did the law of Moses point out sin? Were sacrifices made for sin under that law? Were animal sacrifices sufficient to cleanse sin?
6. How are we able to draw nigh to God?
7. Describe the holiness of the High Priest who is over us.
8. How does the blood of Christ cleanse us, as the blood of animals could not do?
9. Christ is consecrated as our High Priest for how long?
10. Discuss the cost of our salvation to God and the Word, (Christ).

Chapter 8

Text

1. “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;
2. A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.
3. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.
4. For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law;
5. Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle; for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.
6. But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.
7. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.
8. For finding fault with them, He saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;
9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
10. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people;
11. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest.
12. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.
13. In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”

Theme:

The Levitical Priesthood Abolished by the Coming of the Priesthood of Christ.

1. ***“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;”***

The writer summarizes his major points: Christ, who is our high priest, is seated at the right hand of God in heaven (Mark 16:19; Ephesians 1:20).

2. ***“A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”***

He is pictured as the one who ministers the heavenly sanctuary, the true tabernacle. We are not to suppose that there is literally a tabernacle or physical building for a sanctuary in heaven, but the likeness is suggested in order to help the readers understand by earth's ideas, at least to a shadowy degree, the heavenly scene of worship. This heavenly place of worship was made entirely by God, in contrast to the physical sanctuary made by men, in which the earthly priests served. Christ, as our high priest, mediates between God and Christians, offering to God our sacrifice of worship and devotion.

3. ***“For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices. Wherefore it is of necessity that this man have something also to offer.”***

The work of a high priest is to offer sacrifices; therefore Christ, too, had to have something to offer as atonement for sins. What He brought into the Holy of Holies was His own blood, shed outside the gate, even as the sin offering was burned outside the camp after the blood had been brought to the altar (Hebrews 9:13-15; 13:11,12; Leviticus 16).

4. ***“For if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that these are priests that offer gifts according to the law:”***

As stated previously, Christ did not qualify to be a priest according to the law of Moses, but the Levitical priests offered the sacrifices under that law.

5. ***“Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle; for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.”***

Those priests served simply as a copy of the heavenly priest, i.e., Christ Jesus, just as the tabernacle built by Moses was only a copy of the pattern God had shown him in Mount Sinai (Exodus 25:40).

6. ***“But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.”***

The superiority of the New Way is established over the Old: (1) Christ’s ministry is more excellent than Moses’, (2) because He mediates a better covenant, (3) in that the new covenant is founded upon better promises, i.e., salvation from sin, and eternal life with God.

7. ***“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.”***

The question is raised, since God was the writer of the old covenant, too, how could it be called “faulty”? Can any imperfect thing come from God? The fact that the first covenant was faulty does not reflect in any way on its author, when we understand what its faults were.

(1) God never intended the law of Moses to supply the real need of mankind, which was to be met in the sacrifice of Christ. The law was given after the descendants of Abraham proved their inability to remain faithful to God; it was to fill the interim period until the promise made to Abraham could be fulfilled in the coming of Christ. Galatians 3:19 says that it was added (to the promise made to Abraham) *because of transgression*, to be a schoolmaster to

bring the people to Christ;

(2) That covenant was faulty because the priesthood was faulty, in that it was made up of sinful, dying mortals (7:23-25);

(3) It was faulty because the sacrifices had to be repeated continually (10:11-14);

(4) It was faulty because animal sacrifices could not take away sin (10:4). These priests and sacrifices were a shadow of the real atonement and intercession that were later to be made possible in Christ, but when Moses' law was given, "*the fullness of time*" (Galatians 4:4) for Christ's birth had not come. So the shadows of the real were given under the first covenant, with the understanding that at the proper time the new and better covenant would be given.

8. *"For finding fault with them, He saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:"*

If the people could have obeyed all of the laws given to Moses, that law would have been sufficient, because **its one inadequacy lay in its inability to atone for sin**. But because the people sinned and God found fault with *them*, the promise was made that the day would come when God would make a new covenant with His people (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

9. *"Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord."*

People who want to insist that the law of Moses is still binding on men today overlook such clear passages as verse 9. The covenant that is being done away is described as the one made with the fathers (here, again, people need to note that *only Jews* were under that covenant; it was never given to Gentile people and no Gentiles, therefore, can scripturally claim to be under its authority today). When? At the time that God led them out of Egypt. There

can be no doubt that the law of Moses is the only one which can possibly fit this description. The reason the covenant was being done away was because the people broke it and, as a result, God's protection and care for them had to be withdrawn.

10. *"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:"*

The new covenant would differ from the old in that it would not be *a system of laws* but *a way of life*, remolding the heart and attitude so that the people living under it would truly be people "*after God's own heart*".

11. *"And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest."*

Does this verse teach that, with the coming of the new covenant, the whole world would know of it and there would be no need to evangelize? If so, does not this verse contradict Christ's command to "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel ...*" (Mark 16:16)? No, in order to understand this statement, one must understand the "membership" in the two covenants. With the first covenant, people were born *physically* into the family of Israel, and they were Israelites whether they knew the law of God, or obeyed it, or even believed in God. But with the new covenant, one is born *spiritually* into God's family — the church — after he has been taught of God and has *made the decision* to submit his will to God's. Therefore, the "they" of verse 11 refers back to the antecedent noun of verse 10, "people, God's people." And among God's family there is no need to teach each other, saying, "*Know the Lord,*" because all of them had to know Him before they could become a part of the family.

12. *"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."*

Because of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, for those who are walking in the light (1 John 1:7), their sins are not marked against their record (Romans 4:7,8) and they stand before God, pure.

13. “*In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*”

This verse is another one that clearly sounds the death knell for following the old covenant, or the law of Moses. We can also see God’s patience with a situation in these words. Judaism had existed as the law of God for 1,500 years, and the Israelites were deeply entrenched in following that system. God knew that it could not be replaced overnight by the new way, in the minds of the people, so He allowed a period of toleration when the practice of the law of Christ and of the law of Moses was permitted side by side. The actual *ending* of the old law and the beginning of the new took place at Christ’s death (Colossians 2:14) but, *in practice*, both continued until the destruction of the temple and the end of the Jewish system of worship in 70 A.D. Thus we can see why the words “*decayeth*” and “*waxeth old*” and “*ready to vanish away*” are used in this verse, because this was written during the period of transition.

We can see a glimpse of the practice of toleration also in Acts 21:17-26, when the apostles encouraged Paul to follow the traditional system of purification in order — hopefully — not to arouse the hatred of the Jews in Jerusalem. The years between the beginning of the church and the destruction of the temple must have been difficult for the Christians in Palestine, and especially in Jerusalem, because they had the touchy task of convincing people that the old had been superseded by the new — yet they had to be careful not to show disrespect for the old covenant because it had been given by God and was still held as the binding law of God by most of the people.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does the writer sum up his discussion concerning our High Priest?
2. Christ is High Priest where and in what kind of tabernacle? Who made this tabernacle?
3. All priests were ordained to offer gifts to God. What is the gift Christ offered?
4. How did the Law of Moses serve as an example and shadow of the real spiritual tabernacle and sacrifice?
5. What words are used to describe the ministry, covenant, and promises under the Law of Christ?
6. How was the Law of Moses inadequate?
7. Was it with the Law or the sinful people that God found fault?
8. Discuss the contrast between the Law God had made with the fathers at Sinai, and the Law of Christ.
9. Where would the new Law live?
10. When the Holy Spirit spoke of the “new” covenant (the Law of Christ) what did this indicate about the first covenant? Does it remain in force today?

Chapter 9

Text

1. “Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.
2. For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.
3. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all;
4. Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;
5. And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.
6. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.
7. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the peoples:
8. The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:
9. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;
10. Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.
11. But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;
12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.
13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh;
14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purged your conscience from

dead works to serve the living God?

15. And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

16. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

17. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

18. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

19. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people.

20. Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

21. Moreover he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

22. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

23. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

24. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

25. Nor yet that He should offer Himself, often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26. For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

27. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;

28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Theme:
**The Superiority of
the Blood and Covenant of Christ
over the Law of Moses.**

1. *“Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and worldly sanctuary.”*

The writer begins a review and comparison of the first covenant with the second. He states that there was worship under the first covenant, and that there was a place set aside for worship, i.e., the sanctuary.

2. *“For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.”*

The description is of the tent house of worship, the tabernacle, built by Moses at God’s direction. Inside the Holy Place (the sanctuary) were the candlestick and the table with the loaves of shewbread which were changed once each week (Exodus 25:8,23,30,31; 26:1,35; Leviticus 24:5,6).

3. *“And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all;”*

Between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was a veil (Exodus 26:31,33; 40:3,21). This veil was torn from the top down at the death of Christ. The tearing into two signified Christ’s entry into the Holy of Holies, with His blood being brought to God in atonement for the sins of men (Mark 15:38; Hebrews 9:24-26).

4. *“Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;”*

The ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:10-16) was overlaid with pure gold, and contained a golden pot of manna (Exodus 16:33,34), Aaron’s rod (Numbers 17:5,10) and the tables on

which the law had been written (Deuteronomy 10:2,5).

5. *And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.*

No mention is made of the ark after the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon, so no detailed description is given concerning the design of the cherubim that had once overshadowed it.

6. *“Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.”*

According to the order of worship specified by God, the priests were allowed to enter the Holy Place each day and perform the various rituals in worship to God.

7. *“But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people:”*

Only the high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, on one day a year, and even he could not enter without an offering of blood (Exodus 30:10; Leviticus 16:2,11,12,15).

Before entering, the priest bathed and dressed himself in special linen clothes; he offered a bullock as a sin offering for himself and then entered the Holy of Holies with the blood, sprinkling it over the mercy seat. After this he offered a goat for the sins of the people and sprinkled the mercy seat with its blood. This was followed by the ceremony of the “scapegoat” which symbolically took the sins of the people far away into the wilderness. After this offering, he sacrificed a burnt offering for himself and another for the sins of the people, then he burned the sin offering completely, outside the camp.

Four important points to be noted concerning this special day of atonement are these: (1) The Holy of Holies could be entered only one day each year. (2) Only the high priest could enter; neither the other priests nor the people had access to that area. (3) Even the high priest could not enter into God’s presence without blood. (4) The sacrifices were made for the high priest’s sins as

well as for the people's sins.

8. *“The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:”*

The word of God was given through the Holy Ghost. He signified or testified of this truth: that as long as the first tabernacle, or the covenant which it symbolized, was still standing, the way into the Holy of Holies was not clearly visible to all; i.e., the minds of the people were clouded so that all they could see and accept was the old priestly system and sacrifice — they could not see the sacrifice of Christ which opened the Holy of Holies to all of God's children.

9. *“Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;”*

The tabernacle was a figure suggesting the spiritual temple and worship which would be possible through Christ. In the tabernacle, gifts and offerings were made, though these sacrifices in themselves had no power to cleanse consciences or to make the worshippers perfect before God.

10. *“Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.”*

The various ceremonies and rituals were imposed on people *until* (showing a time limitation, when this system would end) the time of reformation, or a new order of worship.

11. *“But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;”*

In contrast to those priests and those ceremonies, Christ has become the high priest of good things to come; He entered into the presence of God, into a *“greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands.”* Daniel 7:13,14 shows His triumphant entry

into the heavens.

12. “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

Even as the earthly high priests did not enter the holiest of all without blood, Christ also brought a sacrifice of blood — His own — to offer (not for His own sins, for He had none) for the eternal redemption of all who will submit to being washed by His blood (Romans 6:3,4; Revelation 1:5).

13. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:”

As a figure, the blood of animal sacrifices sanctified the worshippers.

14. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

By contrast, how much more are we assured of eternal cleansing by the blood of Christ Himself, who through the Spirit made of Himself a sinless offering before God, and is therefore able to cleanse our consciences of their dead works so that we may faithfully serve God who lives?

15. “And for this cause He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

This verse states: (1) Christ is the mediator (the one making reconciliation between man and God) of the *new testament* (showing that the *old* is no longer binding: two laws cannot be in force at the same time); (2) How is He the mediator, and by what means does He do what He does? By means of His own death; the sacrifice of Himself; (3) Why did He die? Not only for those who would live under the New Covenant, but also for those who had lived and died in faith, performing the rites and ceremonies under the old law; (4)

He died so that those who had heard and answered God's call to obedience and salvation under that *first covenant* might also receive the eternal inheritance for which they had hoped.

16. "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator."

A testament is a will. The fact is stated that no will goes into effect *until* the death of the person who made the will.

17. "For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth"

No will is executed until the writer is dead. As long as the testator is alive he can do whatever he pleases to do with his possessions; he can make demands or promises or gifts as he chooses. But when he is dead, the will — as he wrote it — becomes the governing power over all that was his. Galatians 3:15 adds that, even with a man's will, once he is dead, no man changes it or adds to it. **How much more should man fear to try to change, or add to, the will sealed with the blood of Christ!**

18. "Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood"

Neither covenant was sealed or dedicated without blood.

19. "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people,"

After Moses read the law to the people, he took blood and sprinkled both the book and the people.

20. "Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you."

The words Moses spoke were: *This is the blood of the testament God hath enjoined upon you* (Exodus 24:8).

21. "Moreover he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry;"

He also sprinkled the place of worship and the various vessels

used in worship.

22. *“And almost all things are, by the law, purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.”*

According to the law, almost everything has to be cleansed by blood; and there is no forgiveness without purging (Lev. 17:11).

23. *“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these”*

The earthly tabernacle and vessels were a figure of the heavenly. The figures were dedicated with animal blood; but a better sacrifice was necessary for the heavenly things.

24. *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”*

Christ has not entered as a high priest, behind the veil and in the Holy of Holies in the *earthly* tabernacle. He has entered for us into the heavenly sanctuary, into the actual presence of God.

25. *“Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;”*

It was not necessary for Christ to offer Himself yearly as a sacrifice, as the earthly priests made offerings. His offering was once and for all.

26. *“For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”*

If that had been necessary, He would have died yearly since the beginning. But His offering is so far superior to that of the earthly priests that it was necessary for it to be made only once in order to absolutely remove the sins of the people who are cleansed by it.

27. *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”*

Contrary to many religions, the scriptures declare that each man will die only once; after that, he must face the judgment.

28. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Therefore, Christ died only once, bearing in His body the sins of men (2 Corinthians 5:21). His sacrifice was great enough to atone for all men. Not all will accept the salvation He provides, but for those “*that look for Him*” He will one day return without sin. When He left the earth to make His offering of His own blood in atonement for the sins of mankind, His work and purpose were the dealing with sin and the purification from it; but when He comes back it will not be to deal with sin, but to bring the eternal inheritance of salvation. He will come to save those who have lived faithful lives of obedience. He will also come to bring judgment on the ungodly and sinners, but this verse deals with the righteous only.

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe the tabernacle and the furnishings in it.
2. What was in the Holy of Holies?
3. What happened to the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the temple when Christ died?
4. How often did the High Priest go into the Holy of Holies? What preparation did he make? What did he take with him, and what did he do with it?
5. Describe the parallel in Christ’s going into the heavenly “Holy of Holies” with the sacrifice for us.
6. Christ became the Mediator of what? Is He also the Mediator for those who lived and died under the first covenant?
7. Before a will or testament is binding, what must happen to the one who made the will?
8. What is necessary if sins are to be purged? Was the blood of animals adequate for the cleansing?
9. What is appointed for all men? What comes after that?
10. Why was Christ offered? How many times was it necessary for Him to sacrifice Himself? When He returns, will it be to die again for man, or will it be to complete our salvation by taking His brethren home to be with God?

Chapter 10

Text

1. "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.
2. For then would they not have ceased to be offered because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.
3. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.
4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.
5. Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me:
6. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure.
7. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God.
8. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;
9. Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.
10. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
11. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;
12. But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God;
13. From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.
14. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.
15. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that He had said before,
16. This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;
17. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

18. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.
19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,
20. By a new living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, His flesh;
21. And having a high priest over the house of God;
22. Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.
23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised;
24. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works;
25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.
26. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.
27. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.
28. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:
29. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?
30. For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people.
31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.
32. But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;
33. Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.
34. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a

better and an enduring substance.

35. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

36. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

37. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry.

38. Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

Theme:
***The Superiority of
the Sacrifice of Christ over
the Sacrifices under the Law of Moses.***

1. “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.”

As the shadow is not substance, so the law of Moses compared to the law of Christ was not able to bring perfection to its followers.

2. “For then would they not have ceased to be offered because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.”

If perfection, or cleansing so that sin was not imputed (Romans 4:8), had been gained under the law, the need for yearly sacrifices would have ceased. Those who had worshiped faithfully would have ceased to have had guilty consciences.

3. “But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.”

The year's sins were "compiled" and remembrance was made of them as they were committed; therefore the yearly Day of Atonement was necessary.

4. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

Because Christ was "*the lamb slain from the foundation of the earth*" (Revelation 13:8), in the mind of God Jesus' blood was already shed, so God accepted the obedience of people in the form of sacrifices of animals for the period of time when that law was in force. But without the death of Christ, no animal sacrifice could have had any cleansing effect on sin. It is impossible for a beast to actually substitute for the just death of man in payment for his sins.

5. "Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me:"

When Christ came, it was with the realization that God did not want more animal sacrifices and offerings, but *a human body had been prepared* for the Word, so that He might become the perfect atonement for man (John 1:1-3,14).

6. "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure."

Even though the ceremonies and sacrifices of the Old Covenant had to be observed "*until the day of reformation*" (9:10), if a person was to be faithful, still those things alone were not sufficient to take away sin and to restore God's pleasure in man.

7. "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God."

The Word said, "*Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God.*" These two statements suggest the contrast between the sacrifices of the Old Covenant in which God had no pleasure, and the New Covenant made by Christ, which He declares to be the very will (or desire) of God (John 4:34).

8. *“Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;”*

The writer explains that the reference to sacrifices and burnt offerings is to the old law, and that God had no satisfaction from all of that.

9. *“Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God, He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.”*

But Christ declared that He came to do God’s will, in which He would have had great pleasure. The Hebrews writer says that by the very contrast the point is being made that the first covenant was removed so that the new one could come into force.

10. *“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*

It is by God’s will — this new covenant — that we are cleansed through the giving of the body (the one prepared for Him) of Jesus Christ, offered once for the sins of all men.

11. *“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often times the same sacrifice, which can never take away sins:”*

Earthly priests continually ministered, offering useless sacrifices for sins.

12. *“But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;”*

It was necessary for Christ — as man, the brother of man — to offer His body in sacrifice only once, and after that He sat down at the right hand of God to speak for His brethren (Hebrews 1:3; 1 Timothy 2:5). No further blood sacrifice of any kind was required.

13. *“From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.”*

The promise is made in 1 Corinthians 15:25-27 that Christ must reign at the right hand of God until all enemies are put

under His feet — and the last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

14. *“For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”*

Under the old law, new offerings had to be made annually for sin; but Christ, through the offering of His body, has removed forever all sins from the records of those who are sanctified, or set apart from the world, and are in His kingdom (Colossians 1:13). Christians are continually cleansed as they walk in the light (1 John 1:7).

15. *“Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before,”*

The Holy Ghost also corroborates this promise because He was the one who inspired the writing of the prophecy.

16. *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;”*

The verse is a re-statement of Jeremiah 31:33,34, the promise that the people who would live under the new covenant would serve God from the heart, having knowledge of His word for the shaping of their attitudes and desires.

17. *“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”*

Because it is required that real Christians be “likeminded” with Christ, then they are constantly cleansed in His blood (1 John 1:7), and their sins are not marked against them or remembered (2 Corinthians 5:19; Romans 4:8).

18. *“Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.”*

Remission of sin means that the sins have been removed. Where this is the case, and no sin is left to stain the record, then naturally no further offering needs to be made for sin.

19. *“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,”*

Thus, because we stand unstained in the blood of Christ, we can with boldness enter into the Holy of Holies by that blood. Without that offering serving as our unspoiled garment, we would be barred from God's presence because of our sins.

20. *"By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;"*

Hebrews 9:8 said that as long as the old covenant and tabernacle were intact, the opening into the Holiest was not clearly seen; but in Christ, Who is the new and living way, the uncertainty and obscurity are removed and we can walk the way He has consecrated for us, passing through the veil (His body) to enter into the actual presence of Almighty God. Christ opened the entrance into the Holy of Holies.

21. *"And having a high priest over the house of God;"*

We have, in a continuing sense, a great high priest (there need be only one, now and forever, under the new way) who ministers in authority over the family of God (Philippians 2:9,10; Ephesians 3:14,15).

22. *"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."*

Because of this new access to God, made possible through Christ, we are encouraged to commune with the Father out of a true heart and confident faith, because our hearts have been "sprinkled" (symbolic of the sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat) from an evil conscience; i.e., our consciences are cleansed and have become good toward God, because we know we have obeyed His will, and our bodies have been washed with pure water (also recalling the physical purification of the priest before entering the Holy of Holies). The time this purification takes place for the Christian is when he is buried in baptism into the death of Christ (Romans 6:3,4; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; 1 Peter 3:21).

23. “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised;”

After the Christian has been cleansed, he is admonished to hold tightly to his new conviction and life, not doubting or wavering back and forth. The reminder is made that God is the One who has promised salvation, and He keeps His promises.

24. “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:”

Christians are taught to have a concern for each other, encouraging the doing of good works and the growth of love.

25. “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

The admonition is also made that Christians are not to neglect gathering together for worship. Some did this, even in the first century. Stronger Christians were to encourage the weaker ones, increasing their encouragement as they saw the day of worship drawing nearer.

26. “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,”

Contrary to the attitude of many (that forsaking worship is a small thing) the writer of Hebrews, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, calls it *a sin* — a wilful or deliberate sin — and he uses this “small thing” as the basis for the stern warnings in the following verses. When a person knows the truth, and then wilfully chooses to disregard it by failing to worship, he has turned away from the only sacrifice that was ever made, or could be made, or will ever be made, for his sins. **Christ is God’s all;** if He is not enough to keep us faithful, there is nothing greater that can be given, and we are hopelessly lost.

27. “But a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

The only thing left to a person who chooses wilful sin is mer-

ciless judgment and the *just reward* (the fierceness of fire in hell) of fiery wrath from God (Hebrews 12:29) which shall consume His enemies — and remember, among His enemies are those who sin wilfully in forsaking worship. No “small thing”.

28. “*He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:*”

A comparison is made between the old law and the new: under Moses, those who had no respect for that law were put to death, mercilessly, under the testimony of two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:2-6).

29. “*Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?*”

Since the writer has worked to prove the superiority of Christ and His law over Moses and his law, the conclusion is rightly reached that people who disregard Christ’s law deserve a worse punishment than physical death, because

(1) they have trampled the Son of God under their feet. Romans 8:9-11 shows that the Spirit of Christ dwells in the Christian. Christ would have His brethren to worship, and He would exert all of His influence to strengthen them toward obedience. If they sin wilfully, it means that they have had to war against the Spirit of Christ in them and overcome Him spiritually;

(2) the blood of Christ was shed to seal the covenant between God and man, and yet those who wilfully sin value it as something unclean and despised, even though it was by this very blood that the Christian was once purified;

(3) they have treated the Holy Spirit of grace with contempt, as though He is an inferior being, and as though the Christian who is sinning wilfully thinks himself to have more authority than the Spirit God gave him at his baptism (Acts 5:32).

What terrible things such a Christian has had to do to the Godhead, just in order to choose to miss worship, or to commit any other sin wilfully! How can anyone who wears that Name do such a thing lightly?

30. *“For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people.”*

The warning is made that God had said that He will wreak vengeance on those who sin wilfully (Deuteronomy 32:35,36; Romans 12:19). Some people teach that when a person has been saved, he cannot be lost, but the plain statement, *“The Lord shall judge His people”* proves that both judgment and condemnation can come *even on the children*, if they are wilfully disobedient and do not repent.

31. *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

When the time for judgment comes, the time for mercy and forgiveness will be past. Every unforgiven sin that a man takes to the judgment will be exposed by God and will fall under His sure condemnation, from which there will be no escape. *“Fearful”* is the word used in Revelation to describe the terror of standing before God, condemned.

32. *“But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;”*

The Hebrew Christians are encouraged to remember their earlier days in Christ when, soon after they had learned the truth, they had endured extreme persecution. For application today, Satan mercilessly assaults the new Christian with obstacles, temptations, and every other type of discouragement in his arsenal of weapons, when the babe in Christ is least able to defend himself. All of us should be aware of the certainty of these attacks and should prepare for them, personally, and also come to the aid of the young Christian who is not yet well equipped to protect himself against the wiles of the Devil.

33. *“Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.”*

Becoming entertainment for the pagans, many Christians were condemned to the arenas in the first century as they were crucified or burned at the stake, or eaten by wild animals; others who did not suffer actual martyrdom shared their possessions with those in prisons and helped them spiritually and physically, thus partaking with them in their afflictions.

34. *“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”*

Even the writer had been in prison and had been helped compassionately by the Christians. He reminded them that they gave of their earthly possessions because they knew that in heaven they had greater and better things laid up for their inheritance.

35. *“Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.”*

The encouragement is again made that they not throw away all that is in store for them as a reward for the boldness they had in Christ.

36. *“For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.”*

A Christian must not only *do* the will of God, he must have the patience to *continue doing* it until he receives the inheritance promised him. Often, endurance to the end is the challenge.

37. *“For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”*

We do not know at what time Christ will come (Matthew 24:36-51) but one day He will delay no longer and then those who have followed Him faithfully will be accepted by Him.

38. *“Now the just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”*

The godly, the righteous, will walk through life by their faith. But for those who begin and then draw back from Christ, God will have no pleasure in them. This passage clearly refutes the false doctrine that once a person is saved he cannot be lost.

39. *“But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”*

The writer uses “we”, coupling himself with the Hebrew Christians, to encourage them. He says that neither he nor they are the type of Christians who leave Christ and fall to destruction (perdition), but that they are the type to believe in Him so deeply that their faithfulness will result in the saving of their souls.

Discussion Questions:

1. Because the Law of Moses was a “shadow” of the Law of Christ which was to come, could it make its followers perfect or whole before God?
2. Who came into the world to make atonement for the sins of man? What had been prepared for Him?
3. In fulfillment of prophecy, what did Christ say He had come to do?
4. After making the sacrifice of Himself for sin, once and for all, what did He do? Where is He now?
5. By His sacrifice, He has done, what, forever for those who are sanctified (set apart, by their obedience to God)? Does this mean that Christians cannot sin? According to 1 John 1:7, how are sinful people continually cleansed so that they can appear as “perfect” before God?
6. Where do the laws of Christ live, in relation to His people?
7. Because of His sacrifice, we have _____ to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. Recalling the two sections of the temple, the veil that separated those rooms is paralleled with the _____ of Christ. Through His body we are able to go into whose presence?
8. What warning is made about Christians forsaking the worship assembly of the church?
9. What awaits those who die in wilful sin?
10. When a Christian sins wilfully, describe what he has done to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 11

Text

1. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
2. For by it the elders obtained a good report.
3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.
4. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead yet speaketh.
5. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.
6. But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.
7. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.
8. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.
9. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;
10. For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.
11. Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.
12. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.
13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and

confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

14. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

15. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

16. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city.

17. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called;

19. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

20. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

21. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

22. By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

23. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

24. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

27. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.

28. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

29. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

31. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

32. And what shall I more say? For the time would fail me to tell of

Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephtha, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets;

33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection;

36. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yes, moreover of bonds and imprisonment;

37. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38. Of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

Theme:

The Recounting of the Faithful.

1. “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*”

This verse is a clear and precise definition of faith.

We hope for the fulfillment of the promises made to us, and our faith serves to assure us that those things will be, as the evidence or conviction that the things we do not see truly exist.

2. “*For by it the elders obtained a good report.*”

Because of their faith, the righteous men of old lived such godly lives that a record of them is made in the Scriptures.

3. *“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”*

We were not there when the creation took place, but through our faith in God we believe that the worlds were formed by His spoken Word. Matter was made up of atoms which are too tiny to even be seen. Since the writer of Hebrews would not have had access to this scientific truth, it is an amazing point of revelation and proof of inspiration that this knowledge was written here almost two thousand years before men discovered it (Genesis 1:1).

4. *“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”*

God Himself (through inspiring the record in Genesis) tells of the gifts of Abel and of the fact that they were accepted over Cain's. Since faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), it must have been by direction from God that Abel offered a blood sacrifice which was acceptable, while Cain's offering of produce from his fields was not. By his example of obedience, Abel speaks today (Genesis 4:4-10).

5. *“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”*

Enoch (Genesis 5:22,24) was such a godly man that God chose not to leave him in a world of sin. He did not die; his body was changed (he did not simply shed his body for a spiritual one, because it was not found after his translation) to an eternal substance, because he pleased God.

6. *“But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”*

These men, previously named, lived by faith, and they pleased God. It is not possible for anyone to please God without

faith. We must believe that God exists and that He will keep His promises of reward to those who seek Him earnestly and sincerely.

7. *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”*

God warned Noah of the approaching flood, and Noah moved by faith in the building of the ark, working for 100 years, and preaching to the people concerning the destruction that was to come. None listened to him. His faith, contrasted with their faithlessness, served as condemnation for the world, while the heritage of Noah himself was the righteousness that naturally develops in a heart filled with faith and moved to obedience (Genesis 6:13-22).

8. *“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whether he went.”*

Abraham lived in the land of Ur and worshiped God in the midst of paganism. God called him to leave his home and to go to a land He would show him (Genesis 12:1,4) and Abraham obeyed, not knowing where his faith would lead him.

9. *“By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:”*

Abraham lived as a pilgrim in tents in the actual land God promised him for an inheritance. Isaac and Jacob also lived as strangers in the promised land, by faith, though all of their lives the land that had been promised to them was owned by others (Genesis 12:8).

10. *“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”*

Abraham looked for an eternal abiding place, a home designed and built by God.

11. *“Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.”*

Sarah laughed when she first heard the Lord, in the appearance of a man, telling Abraham that she would have a son, but when she knew that the promise was from God she accepted by faith the fact that even though she was past the age of bearing children, one day she would have a son. The reason for her conviction was the belief that God would keep His promises (Genesis 11:19).

12. *“Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.”*

The promise was first made several years before it was fulfilled in the birth of Isaac. But because of the faith of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac was born; and of parents who, as far as their ability to have children was concerned, were the same as dead. Of this one son came descendants that were too many to be counted, even as God had promised (Genesis 22:17).

13. *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”*

All of these lived by faith and died, still believing, though they had not received the inheritance promised to them; but they, by the eyes of faith, saw the inheritance from afar, and believed in it and clung to the promises, in spite of the fact that they themselves were wanderers and strangers on the earth (Genesis 23:4).

14. *“For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.”*

When Abraham and the others confessed that they were aliens in the countries in which they wandered, they were also declaring that they were looking for a country of their own; for the spiritual land of promise, heavenly Canaan, which would be their eternal home.

15. “And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.”

If Abraham and his family had kept emotional ties with Chaldea, the country that had been their home, they could certainly have returned there if that had been their desire.

16. “But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.”

But instead of looking back, Abraham believed God and followed Him, looking toward the heavenly place God had prepared for them. This verse stresses Abraham’s faith in the spiritual world, even over the “land promise” that might have been uppermost in his mind. Because of this faith and this longing, God was not ashamed of the testimony of being known as their God.

17. “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,”

In order to show Abraham, through the actual endurance of the test, just how strong his faith was, God told him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. Though this way was completely contrary to God’s past behavior, Abraham did not question or argue. His conviction was so great that he who had accepted the promises which were bound up in the life of Isaac also raised the knife in his hand to take that life, because his faith in God demanded obedience (Genesis 22:1-9).

18. “Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:”

Abraham knew, even while making preparations to kill Isaac, that the promise had been made that it was through Isaac that Abraham’s descendants would come (Genesis 21:12).

19. “Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from when also he received him in a figure.”

Abraham’s only explanation to himself was that God had, in reality, given Isaac through “dead parents” (too old to bear chil-

dren), so he believed that if He could do that He could also raise him from the dead. This was the ultimate test of Abraham's faith.

20. *"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come:"*

Isaac did not see the fulfillment of the promises either, but in anticipation that God would do what He had said, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau (Genesis 27:27-39).

21. *"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff."*

And Jacob, on his deathbed, passed the blessing on to his sons and grandsons, and showed his faith in God, even to the end, by leaning in his sickness on his staff to worship (Genesis 47:31; 48:4,16-20).

22. *"By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones."*

Joseph, believing the promises and looking toward their fulfillment, told the children of Israel to take his body with them when the time came that they would leave Egypt for the promised land (Genesis 50:25; Exodus 13:19).

23. *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment."*

At the time of Moses' birth, the male Hebrew children were being put to death by the commandment of the Pharaoh. But his parents had faith in God's promise and, because they saw in Moses an exceptional child, they defied the king's command and kept him alive (Exodus 1:16-22; 2:2).

24. *"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;"*

Even though Moses had been raised as a prince in Egypt, when he grew up he refused to continue to live in that role (Exodus 2:10,11).

25. *“Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;”*

Instead, he chose to be recognized as an Israelite and to suffer with the people of God, rather than to be a part of the idolatrous and sinful household of Pharaoh (Exodus 2:11).

26. *“Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.”*

People often make the mistake of seeing Christ only as a person of the New Testament, but numerous Scriptures show that He was working throughout both testaments (John 1:1-15). Read John 8:58 with Exodus 3:14 to confirm that He was the Person who appeared to Moses on that important occasion. 1 Corinthians 10:4 says that Christ was the spiritual rock which followed Israel. 1 Peter 1:11 speaks of the Spirit of Christ testifying through the prophets. Hebrews 3:5,6 shows Christ as the Son over the house in which Moses was a servant. Philippians 2:9,10 and Ephesians 3:14,15 teach that Christ is head over the whole family of God, both those of the Old Testament and those of the New Testament. So, Christ was very much a part of the Old Testament, and it was for the sake of His coming that the nation of Israel existed, for it was through that lineage that He was to be born. We can thus understand how it could be that for the “reproach of Christ” Moses was willing to suffer, and he even counted the suffering of that reproach as greater riches than all that Egypt had to offer. He, too, believed in the promise God had made.

27. *“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”*

Moses’ overall attitude toward Pharaoh was one of fearlessness: when he chose to endure affliction with his people rather than to claim the security of being the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; when he defended a fellow Israelite, jeopardizing his own life; when he

chose to accept the unknown in flight from Egypt rather than seeking to be reconciled to the royal family; when he endured forty years of shaping for the work God wanted him to do. Through all of this we see Moses' basic attitude of fearlessness based on his great faith in God, the invisible One who led him (Exodus 10:28,29; 12:37). It was defiance of injustice, conviction of right, and trust in God that prompted Moses' departure from Egypt, not fear.

28. *“Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.”*

Just before the exodus from Egypt, God sent the death angel to destroy the firstborn of all Egypt. The instruction to Moses was for the Israelites to put blood over their doors so that the death angel would pass over them. Moses' faith led him to obey (Exodus 12:21).

29. *“By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.”*

It was also because of great faith that the Israelites walked through the Red Sea on dry ground, while the Egyptians were drowned trying to do the same thing (Exodus 14:22-29).

30. *“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.”*

In Joshua 6:20, the walls of Jericho fell flat after the faith of Joshua and the Israelites had led them to compass the city seven days as God had told them to do.

31. *“By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.”*

Rahab was a woman of Jericho who was moved by faith to hide the spies and to help them escape. When the city was taken, she and her family were not destroyed with the other inhabitants (Joshua 2:1; 6:23).

32. *“And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephtha; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:”*

The pages of the Old Testament are filled with examples of living faith: Gideon, who won a battle with only 300 men; Samson, who single-handedly fought the Philistines and controlled them during the years he judged Israel; Jephtha, who made a rash vow to God but whose faith was so strong that he kept the vow, even though it meant taking the life of his only daughter; David, who was called a man after God's own heart and who established the line of kings for Israel; Samuel, the last of the priest-judges; the prophets, who usually worked against great opposition and were often killed because of their faith (Judges 4:6; 6:11; 12:7; 1 Samuel 1:20; 16:1-13).

33. *“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,”*

As already mentioned, the faith of these men caused them to do great things (Jeremiah 14:5,6; 1 Samuel 17:34,35; 2 Samuel 7:11; Daniel 6:22).

34. *“Quenched the violence of fire: escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”*

The three Hebrew children quenched the violence of fire (Daniel 3:25); Elijah escaped death by the sword (1 Kings 19:10-14); many instances occurred of weak men becoming strong through their faith, of men whose faith made them courageous in battle because they believed that God fought with His people.

35. *“Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:”*

On two occasions in the Old Testament (1 Kings 17:22; 2 Kings 4:36), women had their children restored to life because of their faith; some of the faithful chose the endurance of torture, looking for a better resurrection rather than to accept deliverance at the price of faith.

36. “And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:”

Many forms of torture have been used through the ages (Jeremiah 20:2; 37:15), including scourgings, bonds, imprisonment — and the faithful have endured these when necessary, without denying their faith.

37. “They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;”

Even though some of the faithful were stoned, sawn in two (possible referring to the death of Isaiah under Manasseh), endured the temptation to give up their faith, suffered being destitute and afflicted, ill-treated, yet they kept their faith (1 Kings 21:13; 2 Kings 1:8; 2 Chronicles 24:21).

38. “Of whom the world was not worthy; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and dens and caves of the earth.”

Such people of faith were, and are, so far above the typical person that the world is not really worthy of being blessed with their presence. Yet, though they were the best of the earth’s inhabitants, they were forced because of opposition to their faith to wander homeless and destitute among men.

39. “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:”

Through the record of their faith, God has testified to their righteousness; yet even such righteous men did not see the fulfillment of the promise of the coming of the Messiah.

40. “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

Those who live, as did the Hebrew Christians, under the law of Christ are recipients of the “*better thing*” God has provided for us. No previous age has been so blessed with “*all spiritual blessings*” and with the full light of God’s will as revealed in the Gospel. This is the culminating age of God’s dealing with man. The people of

faith of earlier ages were a part of the family of God, but they lived in expectation of the fulfillment of the promise of the Messiah. Today the Messiah and His church work as one unit to bring salvation to the world, so the church completes the work that was begun through faith by Abraham and his descendants. And one day, all will be gathered together in Him, in all fullness and perfection (Revelation 6:11).

Discussion Questions:

1. Give a definition of faith.
2. What do we understand about the creation, through faith?
3. What do the Scriptures tell us about the faith of Abel? of Cain?
4. Why is it impossible to please God without faith?
5. Discuss the faith of Noah. How did his faith condemn the rest of the world?
6. Tell of Abraham's faith, and of Sarah's, and of some of the things they experienced as they learned to live by faith. Abraham is called "the father of the _____".
7. All of these great people _____ in the _____, without ever seeing the fulfillment of the promises of God. They considered themselves as being what kind of people on the earth (Verse 13)?
8. They were looking for a city, whose builder and maker is God. In spite of hardship and challenges to their faith, what did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph do?
9. Tell of the challenges to Moses' faith, and of the choices he made. Describe some of the terrible things suffered by the people of God through the ages.
10. Verse 40 says that even though all of these people were great examples of faith, God has provided something even better for those of this age. What has this era, or dispensation of time, experienced that they never saw?

Chapter 12

Text

1. “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,
2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.
3. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.
4. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.
5. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him;
6. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.
7. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?
8. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.
9. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?
10. For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.
11. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.
12. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;
13. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.
14. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:
15. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

16. Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.
17. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.
18. For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,
19. And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:
20. (For they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:
21. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)
22. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,
23. To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,
24. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.
25. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven:
26. Whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.
27. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.
28. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:
29. For our God is a consuming fire.

Theme:
**The Greatness of the New Testament
in Comparison to the Old.**

1. *“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,”*

As with the examples given in Chapter 11, Christians are constantly under the observation of those around them, possibly of the righteous who are in Paradise, and certainly of those yet living in today’s world. These observers watch as we run the “Christian race”. In this verse, the parallel is drawn between the games in the arena and the life of the Christian. We are encouraged to put aside anything that would hinder or encumber us, and every sin that would hold us back in our development, and to put all of our energy and patience into the “race” before us.

2. *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

As we run, we are to keep our eyes on Jesus, who is the beginning and the completion of everything concerning our faith. He Himself looked to the joy, the bringing of many to God in glory (Hebrews 2:10), and was willing to endure the cross, despising the shame, in order to accomplish His purpose. This verse shows that the cross itself was a test of endurance for Christ, not only physically because of the intense pain and suffering, but also because it was in His death on the cross that He was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21); and because of our sin His Father had to turn His back on Him. This, indeed, was a terrible price to pay for the love He bore for man, but the love was strong enough that He was willing to endure all, not counting the shame of crucifixion as a com-

mon criminal to be too great a price for our salvation. Now that work of atonement is finished and He is seated at God's right hand, to intercede for man and to rule the kingdom, both in heaven and on earth (1 Corinthians 15; Matthew 28:18-20).

3. *"For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."*

It was within the power of Christ to call down legions of angels for His defense (Matthew 26:53) but, instead, He tolerated the contempt and mockery of despicable sinners. When we see all that He could have done — yet He did not — He serves as a wonderful example of strength so that we will not become weary and fall by the wayside.

4. *"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."*

In Christ's resistance to sin, His blood was shed. The writer reminds the Hebrews that they have not yet died for their faith.

5. *"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him:"*

Because humans — even Christians — are imperfect beings, there will be times in life when we must have correction. This verse is a reminder that we must expect chastisement when we have been wrong, and that this is the work of a loving Father in the guidance of His children. We must have our minds attuned to this type of guidance, so that we will be benefited by it, and not fall by the wayside from discouragement or loss of faith. Often our greatest growth comes through adversity in our lives.

6. *"For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."*

When an erring Christian suffers chastisement, it is his assurance that he is God's son, received of Him and loved by Him (Proverbs 3:11,15).

7. *"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"*

In human families, every father who behaves as a father corrects his children: in the same way, God corrects His sons.

8. *“But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.”*

Since all of God’s children are chastened, in order to mold and shape them for His use, it is reasonable to conclude that any who are not chastened are not His children.

9. *“Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?”*

When children are properly chastened by their physical fathers, their response is one of respect rather than resentment and anger. How much more should we show respect and subjection to God, since His correction is for the purpose of preserving us for the inheritance of eternal life?

10. *“For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but He for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness.”*

Even the best of physical parents chastens his children according to human judgment, and sometimes that judgment errs. But God makes only the corrections that are necessary and profitable for us, based on His ability to know all things that are involved in shaping us into personalities developed according to His own holiness. Becoming an actual partaker of the nature and holiness of God is the core of Christian development, and all of God’s guidance and correction in our lives is made with this end in view. (See 2 Peter 1:4)

11. *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”*

Even though we often see that we were wrong and needed correction, yet the pain of being corrected is not pleasant. But later, as one learns more fully to live in the peace that comes as

a result of righteousness, he can appreciate the correction and even the value of the pain endured. This kind of “exercise” is indispensable in the growth of the Christian.

12. *“Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;”*

Understanding these things, we should endure correction, recognizing it as the watchful care of God that it is, and we should guard against reacting with downcast spirit and trembling fear.

13. *“And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.”*

The previous verses are not intended to encourage a person to walk in error so that he can enjoy correction from God, but we are told to make straight paths (work which we can do toward disciplining our actions) for our feet to walk in. One purpose for this is to help the “lame” sickly brother who is following our steps so that he will be strengthened as he walks in our path, rather than being led away from God.

14. *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:”*

If children of God are to be blessed in seeing the Lord (being eternally saved to be with Him), they must first live lives of peacefulness with their fellowmen, radiating holiness in their godly attitude.

15. *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”*

The word “grace” means “unearned favour” and, truly, no person deserves the salvation and favour shown by God, but the obedient children have had their sins forgiven, and they walk in constant forgiveness (1 John 1:7). However, by walking carelessly, faithlessly, lacking in spiritual diligence, having a negative (bitter) attitude in response to correction, it is possible for a child of God to “fail of the grace of God”, that is, to fail to enter heaven.

If, in our walk as Christians, we respond with bitterness to whatever life brings our way, we will be the cause of many others being discouraged and possibly lost.

16. *“Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.”*

God has given precious blessings and He wants man to be aware of their value and to treat them with proper respect. In the Old Testament period, the firstborn was entitled to a special heritage, called a birthright. Esau valued this blessing so little that he sold it for a bowl of food (Genesis 25:33). Fornicators sin against the bodily treasure God has given them (1 Corinthians 6:16-18), and against His Holy Spirit who indwells us, as well as against the sacredness of marriage, the first institution created by God.

17. *“For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”*

Later, after Esau realized what a loss he had brought on himself, he tried to change the consequences of his rashness by appealing to his father. But the blessing had been given to Jacob, and Isaac could not change it (or repent — un-do — the words he had said) even though Esau wept in his plea to his father. In like manner, we often must suffer the consequences of rash or profane actions, even though we realize our wrong and would ask God’s forgiveness. Forgiveness can be extended, but many times the natural consequences of our sinful actions must be endured, even though the heart has changed (for instance, the alcoholic may have bad health because of damage done to his body before he quit drinking; the fornicator may eventually die of sexually transmitted diseases, even though he realized his wrong and stopped sinning against his body).

18. *“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,”*

The reference in this verse is to the time of Israel coming to Mount Sinai to receive the law from God. The scene was a frightening one of fire, of blackness, and storminess.

19. “*And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:*”

The voice the people heard was a voice of words as the sound of a trumpet. They were so frightened by the overwhelming sound that they begged not to hear it any more.

20. “*(For they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:*”

In this setting of fright and awe, God commanded that the mountain was not to be touched while His presence was there. If even an animal touched it, it was to be killed. The impact in the minds of the Israelites was of the greatness and awesomeness of God, that He was one to be revered and feared.

21. “*And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:*”

Even Moses was so overawed by the effects of God’s presence that he trembled in shock and fear.

22. “*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,*”

This verse begins the contrast between the awesome presentation of God to the Israelites and the warmth and love surrounding His dealings with Christians. “*Ye*” (references the Hebrew Christians to whom the letter was directed, but the same truth would apply to all Christians) “*are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God*” brings to mind the mansions and the prepared place Jesus promised in John 14:1-3, and the city of beauty and peace, perfection and holiness described in Revelation 21 and 22. But the use of the verb “are” indicates that

the writer refers not only to our future home but to the fact that even now we dwell spiritually in the presence of God. Ephesians 3:6 says that through our conversion “*God hath (He has already done this) raised us up together and made us sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*”

We are, as Christians, also in the presence of the numberless angels. See Hebrews 1:14; 13:2, and Revelation 5:11,12. These beings are part of God’s creation, His messengers, servants, who work in behalf of man.

23. “*To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,*”

We are also spiritually in the company of all Christians, those who make up “the church of the firstborn” (the church of Christ — Colossians 1:15), those who are known to God by name (Revelation 13:8), and those whose names are written in God’s book of life (Revelation 21:27).

We are come to God, who is the Judge of the righteous and the unrighteous (John 5:30). The standard or guide by which God will judge mankind will be the Bible, His word, given through Christ (John 12:48).

We are, as the children of God, in company with all those righteous souls who have been made perfect, or whole and complete, through the purifying blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:15).

24. “*And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*”

We have come to Jesus Christ, who, as the Son of God and the Son of man, has the right to approach God in man’s behalf, to mediate between Him and us, according to the New Covenant which is revealed in the New Testament (1 Timothy 2:5).

We have come to the blood of Christ. Under the law of Moses, the blood of the sacrificial lamb was sprinkled on the altar before God for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:15).

This sacrifice was like a shadow or a picture of the sacrifice that would eventually be made for all men by Christ when He shed His blood in the crucifixion.

The blood of Abel cried to God concerning the first murder, the first shedding of blood, and it was a witness against Abel's brother who had killed him (Genesis 4:8-10). In contrast, the blood of Christ purifies and cleanses those who obey Him, so that it "speaks" for us, witnessing to God of our salvation and perfection in Him (Romans 6:3-5; 1 John 1:7). Instead of crying for vengeance, as did the blood of Abel, the blood of Christ speaks to God for forgiveness and mercy.

25. *"See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven:"*

Moses was only a man, but he was directed by God in the things he said, and therefore those who refused to listen to him and to obey him were punished. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are filled with accounts of the blessings for obedience and the punishment for disobedience during the time Moses served as the leader of God's people. But today the One who speaks to us (Hebrews 1:1,2) is not from the earth but is from heaven: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who spoke the words God told Him to speak (John 8:28; 12:49; 14:10; 16:27,30; 17:8). If we fail to hear Him, there can be no escape for us.

26. *"Whose voice then shook the earth; but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven."*

When God spoke during the time of Moses (Exodus 19:18) the earth shook, but the promise is made that the time will come when God will shake not only the earth, but the heavens as well.

27. *"And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which can not be shaken may remain."*

This verse is an inspired commentary on the previous verse. The statement, “*Yet once more*” indicates or means that the promised disturbance to the physical world will not be simply an earthquake but it will bring about the complete removal of the created world. Read 2 Peter 3:7-13. At that time, only those things which are of an eternal and enduring nature — and therefore cannot be destroyed — will remain.

28. “*Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:*”

Based on these facts, the conclusion is reached that the kingdom of Christ, the church of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Colossians 1:13,18,24; Mark 9:1) is eternal in nature and cannot be destroyed. Christians — those who have been washed in Christ’s blood — are the citizens in His kingdom. We are encouraged to live for God, serving Him with respect and awe.

This verse states very clearly that at the time of the writing of Hebrews, the kingdom (the bride, or church of Christ; Ephesians 5:22-33; Romans 7:4) was already in existence. Those who believe that when Christ comes in the clouds, He will begin to rule His kingdom physically in the literal earthly city of Jerusalem for 1000 years are not listening to such verses as these.

29. “*For our God is a consuming fire.*”

God is the giver of life, the merciful Father who loves His obedient children and pours out blessings upon them (Genesis 2:7; Luke 11:9,10; Malachi 3:10), but we are also reminded that He is a consuming fire if we fail to obey Him (Hebrews 10:27,31).

Discussion Questions:

1. As though describing an amphitheater, with a host of spectators watching a race, what does verse 1 say?
2. Who is the author and completion of our faith? What was His attitude about the cross? Was crucifixion a shameful way to die?
3. Considering what Christ endured for us will help to guard us against which dangers (verse 3)?
4. Does God ever chasten or correct His children?
5. What is the reaction of a child to his father when he is chastised?
6. Why does God chastise us? What are the results of God's corrections in our lives?
7. What must we do if we expect to see the Lord?
8. What warnings are made against the possibility of falling away from God because of a poor attitude toward His corrections?
9. Compare the scene, when the Israelites came to Mount Sinai, with the heavenly scene when we, as "*the general assembly and church of the firstborn*", come before God. Who is part of that spiritual assembly?
10. Is there any escape for us if we turn away from the One who speaks from heaven? How is the kingdom described, in relation to the power of that voice? Will it be moved? How is God described, concerning those who are disobedient to Him?

Chapter 13

Text

1. "Let brotherly love continue.
2. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.
3. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.
4. Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.
5. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.
6. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.
7. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.
8. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and for ever.
9. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.
10. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.
11. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.
12. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.
13. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.
14. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.
15. By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.
16. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.
17. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may

do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

18. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

19. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

20. Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21. Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

22. And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

23. Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

24. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

25. Grace be with you all. Amen.”

Theme:
“Last Minute” Advice,
Such as We Would Offer
to Loved Ones
before Leaving Them to Go on Alone.

1. “Let brotherly love continue.”

It is fitting that the first word of advice is that love among brethren should continue. This love is one of the primary marks which distinguishes us from the world (John 13:34,35).

2. “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Christians are also reminded that they should be hospitable even to strangers. The reason is given that, in so doing, some have shown kindness to angels, not realizing that their visitors

were angelic beings who appeared as men (Genesis 18:3; Matthew 25:35; 1 Timothy 3:2). That the admonition is given to Christians shows that even in today's world, angelic beings are used by God to do acts of service for those who will be heirs of salvation. As described in this verse, the angels did not appear with "haloes" and as spirit beings, but as "strangers", ordinary humans, yet in reality they were angels doing service for God.

3. *"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."*

We are to show prayerful concern and remembrance for those who are imprisoned or are suffering persecution because of their love for God. Romans 12:15 says, *"Weep with them that weep."* Our concern for them is to be as if we were suffering their imprisonment and torture in our own bodies.

4. *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."*

Through the centuries, marriage and the physical love between a husband and wife, as God intended it to be, have often been corrupted and degraded by the sin into which man has fallen. In modern times, fornication, homosexuality, divorce, adultery, and infidelity have marred the beautiful picture of marriage and love (Genesis 2:21-25; Ephesians 5:22-33). But marriage is still to be an honored relationship and the marriage bed is to be pure, undefiled by sin and infidelity. God Himself will judge these sinful people who break His laws concerning marriage (Revelation 2:8; 22:15).

5. *"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."*

Our lives ("conversation" means one's manner of life) are not to be filled with coveting, or longing for money or all the things that money can buy. We are to be satisfied with whatever we

have (Philippians 4:11,12; Matthew 6:24-34). God has promised to help us with our physical needs, if we put Him first in our lives.

6. *“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”*

Because we have this promise, we can say with courage and conviction, *“The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”* The Christian cannot honestly say this if discontent, covetousness, and a striving for more “things” dominate his life.

7. *“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.”*

Those who *“have the rule over you”* in this case refers to the elders of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4), who had taught them the Gospel. Christians would do well to follow the example of Godly elders, learning from the unfolding and completion of their lives how much happier and more fruitful life is when it is lived in obedience to Christ.

8. *“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”*

Jesus Christ is eternal Deity. His attributes, His nature, His purposes, never change. This is a statement concerning the *nature* of Christ, not the dispensations of time or the covenants between God and man. These things have changed, according to God’s foresight and plan.

9. *“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.”*

The world is full of all kinds of strange teachings (Ephesians 4:14). God has given man Truth. Any deviation or change in that message comes from Satan, and we are warned to stay away from his teachings (Galatians 1:6-9; James 1:6-8). The conviction in

the heart of the Christian is to come from his realization of God's grace, His merciful forgiveness. It is not to be built on the offering of animal sacrifices, offerings which have no power to remove sin (Hebrews 10:4).

10. *"We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle."*

The contrast is made between the spiritual altar on which the Christian offers his living body in service to God (Romans 12:1,2) and the altar used by the priests for animal sacrifices under the law of Moses. The two offerings conflict with each other. Those who would continue to hold to the law of Moses, as binding upon men, have no right to try to partake also of the altar of Christ.

11. *"For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp."*

This verse describes the sacrificial offering by the priests under the law of Moses.

12. *"Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate."*

As the real substance, compared with the animal sacrifices which were only a shadow of what was to come, Christ suffered death by crucifixion outside the wall of Jerusalem (John 19:17,18), in order that we might be cleansed by His blood.

13. *"Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach."*

These words beautifully portray our *"taking up our crosses and following Him"* (Matthew 16:24) even though people may scorn us and try to heap shame upon us.

14. *"For here have we no continuing city but we seek one to come."*

The world's opinion of us should not discourage us, because our real home is not here but is in the new heaven and earth.

15. “By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”

God does not desire dead, burning sacrifices. He chooses instead the sacrifice of praise from our lips as we worship Him, as we speak of Him to others, and as we thank Him for all that He means to us (Hebrews 2:12; Ephesians 5:19).

16. “But to do good to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

The two sacrifices that please God today are the good that we do in His name and the teaching we do in sharing our knowledge of Him with those who know Him not (Hebrews 6:10).

17. “Obey them that have the rule over you, submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.”

The second reminder is given, that Christians are to look to those in authority over them, to the elders, deacons, and evangelists in the church. The emphasis this time is not that we should look to them as examples, but that we are to be obedient and submissive to them, because they are responsible before God for the souls entrusted in their care. Elders have a grave responsibility in shepherding the flock. In like manner, the members they lead must respect their authority under God.

18. “Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things to live honestly.”

The writer of the book acknowledges his need for others to pray for him, even though his sincere desire was only that he might live in good conscience, honestly, before God. All of us stand in need of the strength to be gained by the prayers of other Christians.

19. “But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.”

The writer evidently was hindered, possibly by imprisonment, from joining his Hebrew brethren; he asks their prayers in this matter.

20. *“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,”*

This verse begins the concluding words of the book, invoking the blessing of God through the blood Jesus, shed to seal the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:14-28).

21. *“Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

The prayer was that God would make them whole and mature in the good works that would be His will; that He would work in them that which is good, as He does in the lives of all obedient children (Romans 8:28). Our relationship is through Jesus Christ, who is worthy of being glorified forever.

22. *“And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.”*

The writer begs that they listen to, and heed, the words he had written to encourage them.

23. *“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.”*

Timothy, a fellow worker, had been imprisoned and was now released. The writer expected to be joined by Timothy, and they would travel together to see the Hebrew Christians. Probably it is this verse that leads most commentators to say that Paul is the author of the book. However, often Timothy was not with Paul, but must have been with other brethren during those times. It is also possible that Paul had been martyred by the time Hebrews was written, and that Timothy was working with others.

24. *“Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.”*

They were to greet all the fellow Christians of their area, especially the elders. The writer sent greetings from the church in Italy, which indicates that he would have been in that country when he wrote the letter.

25. “Grace be with you all. Amen.”

Without God’s graciousness to us, we could not go on. The blessing of His continued grace is asked in this final verse. “Amen” — So be it.

Discussion Questions:

1. What words of advice are given concerning our brothers?
2. We are told to be hospitable toward strangers. What is one reason that was given?
3. How were they, and we, to think of those among us who are enduring troubles?
4. What strict rules were given regarding marriage and sexual immorality?
5. What is to be characteristic of the life of a Christian?
6. Regardless of what comes into our lives, what is to be our attitude, according to verse 6?
7. What is to be the attitude of Christians toward those in positions of leadership in the church?
8. Discuss the statement concerning Christ, that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Does this mean that He always deals with man in the same way, under the same requirements and laws?
9. What kind of sacrifice are we commanded to offer to God continually?
10. By doing what is pleasing in the sight of God, through Jesus Christ we become _____ in every _____ to do His will.



A Commentary on Hebrews

Who wrote the book?
When was it written? What
was its primary message for
Christians of the first century?
What is its message for Chris-
tians today?

This verse-by-verse commen-
tary grew out of lessons prepared
for classes at Four Seas Bible College in Singapore. Knowing
the need for helpful study materials among churches of Christ
in foreign fields, the book was printed and circulated in India,
and now we are printing it in the US, believing that it will be
of benefit to Christians here as well as overseas. The lessons
are laid out with questions at the end of each chapter, to aid
in class discussions.

J.C. and Betty Choate

For 52 years J.C. and Betty were a team, thankful to be
privileged to work together in God's kingdom, whether with
local congregations of churches of Christ in the US or estab-
lishing new work in foreign fields. They learned that Jesus
keeps His word: if we give up fathers and mothers, sons and
daughters, houses and lands for the sake of the kingdom, He
returns those "sacrifices" one hundred fold! They loved
home and family in many places. On February 1, 2008, J.C.
was blessed to go to that long home of the soul.