

**GOD'S MESSAGES
BIBLE
COMMENTARY
SERIES**

VOLUME 8

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading.
(Nehemiah 8:8).

**COMMENTARY
ON
THE BOOK
OF
HEBREWS**

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Dedication

This volume of the Bible Messages Commentaries
is dedicated

To:

Brother and Sister A.C. Dunkleberger

Brother and Sster Dunkleberger who allowed my
wife and I to live rent free for a year in
a garage house while I attended College.

We did later pay them for the rent,
although they would never have asked for it.

Brother Dunkleberger was the editor of the
Nashville Banner newspaper.

He was also an elder in the Madison church.
God saw fit to bless their home with a daughter
who was a slow learner.

Both her mother and her father loved her
as much as God loves each of His children.

Would this not be a wonderful world if
all the editors of large newspapers,
all of the leaders of the church,
and all of the mothers and fathers
knew the meaning of Jesus words as these two did.

Jesus said,
LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

~ Leon Stancliff

Introduction

The Question of Canonicity.

The first point to which we must give attention in an introduction to the book of Hebrews is the matter of canonicity. Does the book actually belong with the other books of the Bible? Is it inspired of God, or is it simply a well organized work of a human mind?

Hebrews was frowned on by some of the early writers, and also by some in more recent times. The basic problem with the earliest writers was that no apostle's name was attached to it. The title which is found in many Bibles today, ***The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews***, was added at a later date because the majority of the students concluded Paul must have been the author. The earliest manuscripts do not bear such a title. This lack of connection with an apostle was a serious problem since one of the most important criteria for recognizing an inspired book was that it must either have been written by an apostle, or by one who had spent large amounts of time in the company of an apostle.

Among the writers who quoted from Hebrews, and thereby accepted its inspired nature were: Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, and Clement of Alexandria. Clement of Rome quoted almost verbatim from a number of different passages as early as A.D. 96.

The Council of Antioch in A.D. 269 and the

Council of Nice in A.D. 325 both listed the book of Hebrews among those which were inspired. By the year A.D. 400 there seems to have been little question. It was accepted almost unanimously.

However, with the beginning of the Reformation, there were a few doubters. Martin Luther was suspicious of Hebrews. His reason was that it taught the possibility of a Christian moving so far from God that it was impossible to renew him unto repentance. Luther felt this was not in harmony with such passages as Peter's statement that God is not willing that any should perish, and John's statement that if one is willing to confess his sins, God is willing to forgive those sins. Personally, I believe Luther did not recognize the difference between one who deliberately and continuously defies the Word of God until his conscience is seared over, and one who has not yet reached that point. It is not that God is not willing to forgive. It is that the man sinks so far into sin that he is not willing to repent and confess.

The hesitancy of Luther and others has been overcome. It is very clear that this great book belongs in the list of canonical books. It contains vast spiritual riches which may be dug out by those who are willing to spend the effort. It is a difficult book, and requires the student to investigate the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. But the student will find such an investigation well worth the time and the effort. At the close of a careful study of Hebrews, one will have a much increased knowledge of Leviticus, Deuteronomy and the Psalms of David.

The Author of Hebrews.

Who wrote the book? One of the riddles associated with it is the lack of an author's name. This is quite different from most of the New Testament letters. The truth is that this work does not fit the pattern of the letters of that day. The letters of that time normally began with the name of the person writing, and the person, or person written to. Typical of such is the beginning of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. *Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*

Such a salutation is not found at the beginning of Hebrews. Yet, the close of the book is very similar to a number of Paul's letters. Some have said the book begins like a printed sermon and ends like a letter. These facts have caused a number of Bible scholars to delve into the authorship question. The conclusions are far from unanimity. Some have declared confidently that Paul the apostle is the author. Others have suggested other possibilities.

Whoever the author was, he was extremely well acquainted with Jewish ceremonies and thought. There are dozens of references to the priesthood and the sacrifices under the law of Moses. Many prophecies and other statements from the Psalms of David are called upon by the writer.

The level of Greek which is used in the book is that which would be typical of a very well educated

individual. Of course, we must recognize that assuming the book is inspired of God, he is the true author. Nevertheless, God makes use of the styles of the various inspired men. John writes with a different style than Paul. The style of Greek found in Hebrews is elegant.

A very important fact in the identification of the author is that Timothy had been freed and if he came to the author, both of them would be visiting soon (See Heb. 13:23).

This means we have three identifying factors from the internal nature of the book. It was written by one very well acquainted with Jewish life and thought. It was written by a highly educated person. And it was written by someone who was a close friend of Timothy.

Let us next consider the arguments for and against Paul as the author. With respect to the arguments for Paul's authorship, we have close agreement with the three facts just mentioned. Paul was proud of his Jewish background. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He spoke the Hebrew language. He was of the tribe of Benjamin.

Paul was also a well educated man. He had been sent from his boyhood city of Tarsus to study at the feet of the famous Gamaliel in Jerusalem. He was also versed in the poets of the day and quoted from them at times.

No man was closer to Paul than was Timothy. Paul had converted Timothy when the latter was a young man in Asia Minor. His affection for Timothy was so strong that he took the younger man with him on his journeys. On occasion, he would leave

Timothy behind, or send him ahead to tend to important matters in the churches.

In addition, there are some similarities in the figures of speech used in Hebrews and in Paul's letters. Consider I Corinthians 9:24 where Paul talks about running the Christian race. Compare this with Hebrews 12:1.

The view of the Law expressed in Hebrews is much like that of Paul in Romans 7:1-6. No other New Testament writer shows this similarity.

Earlier I mentioned the early writers who quoted from Hebrews as an inspired book. There is a strong correlation between those who quoted it as inspired and those who believed Paul was the author. At first, there seems to have been a split between the Eastern Greek churches and the Western Roman Churches. The Eastern churches were more apt to accept Paul as the author. The Western churches were not that confident. Later, however, the Roman churches swung over into agreement with the Greek churches.

The school at Alexandria appears to have had a strong influence in turning the Western churches toward acceptance of Paul as the author. The turning of the Roman church is quite important. The hierarchy of the Roman church does not reverse itself easily. The evidence must have been forceful to bring about this change of position.

What were the objections to Paul's authorship? First and foremost was the lack of his signature. That is just not typical of the apostle. The very first thing he normally did was to identify himself and establish his right to speak as an apostle of Jesus

Christ. There have been some who say the last chapter of the book, where Timothy is referred to, is Paul's work, while the other chapters are the work of someone else. The book does not begin like Paul, but it does end like Paul.

A second objection is that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. Why would he take it upon himself to write a major letter to Jewish Christians, as this letter seems to be? It would seem that Peter, James or some other apostle would have written for Jewish Christians, while Paul was busy with his labors in the Gentile world.

Then we have the statement found in Hebrews 2:3. *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;* This sounds like the "us" did not actually hear the Lord, but had to depend upon others who had heard him. Paul did hear the Lord. The objectors to Paul as the author feel they must look for an author who was a close companion of an apostle.

One last point made against Paul's authorship is that the book of Hebrews is easier to outline than the known letters of Paul. Paul often departed from his main thought to follow some particular subpoint. Then he would return later to finish his main point. This is not as true in Hebrews.

Who would one look to as the author, if Paul is not? Apollos has been suggested. He was a scholar from Alexandria and would have been familiar with Jewish ceremonies and thought. Apollos might also have become well enough acquainted with Timothy to have made the statement that Timothy would come with him.

Luke has also been suggested as the author. The style of Greek in the book is quite similar to that of Luke's account of the gospel. Even a beginning Greek student can see the similarities. There is a faint possibility that Paul dictated the letter and Luke acted as his secretary, with both men having an impact on the final product.

Others who have been mentioned as possible authors include Barnabas and Priscilla and Aquila. Although the evidence seems to point toward Paul, the conclusion is not clear. I am forced to go along with Origen who said, "Who wrote the letter to the Hebrews, only God knows for certain."

To Whom Was It Written?

Part of the answer to this question is clear. The recipients of the book were Christians. *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 (Heb. 5:12).* They had been born as babes in Christ and should have progressed from the infant stage to a greater degree of maturity. Note also *Heb. 6:1. 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 view of these verses, I think no one would deny the persons addressed were disciples of Christ.

The persons who received the letter were also of Jewish background. The author assumes they had such a knowledge of the Old Testament that he needed not to explain his references. He produced

quote after quote and mentioned one ceremony after another in rapid fire fashion. See for example Heb. 10:1-6). We can conclude then that the writer was addressing Christians who had a Jewish background.

But, who were these Jewish Christians? Was it a local congregation? Were they located in Jerusalem? Or was the letter intended for Jewish Christians in general, whether in Jerusalem, or scattered abroad among the nations? I do not think the evidence is sufficient to draw a solid conclusion. It does seem to me to lean in the direction of Jewish Christians in the area of Jerusalem and Judea. Yet, I must admit that it seems strange to me Paul would write to the Jews in Jerusalem and Judea when he was designated as apostle to the Gentiles, and Peter was more closely associated with the circumcision.

When Was the Book Written?

The gospel was first preached in A.D. 33 on the day of Pentecost. By the time the book of Hebrews was written, the recipients had had time to become teachers, if they had properly applied themselves. This would certainly take some time, although some progress faster than others.

Secondly, they had endured considerable affliction and persecution. Some had no doubt lost their lives due to their faith. *But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; (10:32)*. This sounds like the former days included more than just a few days or months.

The author expected further persecution in the

future. *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Heb. 12:3-4).* This suggests the book was written between two periods of persecution. Those who believe the letter had application to Jewish Christians who were scattered in many nations suggest these two periods of persecution could have been those under Nero and Domitian. This would place the date of the letter between A.D. 62 and A.D. 80.

There are several references in the book indicating the priesthood was still operating and the temple still standing. The temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. The time would then be narrowed to about eight years, between A.D. 62 and A.D. 70.

We know Paul was in a Roman prison in approximately A.D. 62 and A.D. 63. It is possible that he wrote the work in about A.D. 63. This is the most commonly suggested date.

What Was the Purpose of the Book of Hebrews?

Obviously the primary purpose of the writer was to prevent Jewish converts to Christ from turning back to Judaism as a result of persecution. This would have been a terrible mistake. God had prepared for thousands of years to bring Christ into the world and release men from the bondage of sin. Everything possible must be done to take full advantage of the blessings which were introduced to the world through him. Whether or not the apostle

Paul was the author, we know one of the greatest difficulties he faced during his missionary efforts was the opposition of the Judaizing teachers. These teachers felt that the Gentiles must be faithful to the Law of Moses before they could be true Christians. The conference in Jerusalem, which is recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, was precipitated by just such teaching.

The law and the prophets were only shadows of the reality which is found in Jesus Christ. Every Passover Lamb pointed toward the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. Every High Priest showed the way to the entrance of Jesus into the throne room of heaven after his ascension. Every priest who washed in the laver before he offered the sacrifices of the people foreshadowed the cleansing of baptism before the Christian begins to offer himself as a living sacrifice.

Thus the book of Hebrews spent much time in showing the contrast between the perfect sacrifice, the perfect High Priest, and the perfect Lawgiver, as compared with the imperfections of the previous shadows. Why would anyone wish to turn from back the perfect rest in heaven to a temporary rest in the land of Canaan?

But what about today? Does the book have meaning for the present day Christian? Indeed it does! Jesus Christ is still the perfect Way. God has spoken in times past in various ways. Today he speaks through his own Son. We do not need a Mohammed, or a Baha U'llah as a successor to the Saviour. He is both the end of the law and the testimony of the prophets.

The book of Hebrews exhorts today's Christian just as earnestly as it did those Jewish Christians of old to be steadfast and ever move forward in faith and confidence that God will be with them. As examples of this exhortation to be steadfast, notice the following: 3:12; 4:14; 10:23 and 13:22.

I will close this introduction with a reference to a point made by Wm. Barclay in his Daily Bible Study Series. He listed four benefits men seek from their religion. These four are:

1. Access to God.
2. Unity with God.
3. Intellectual satisfaction.
4. A high standard of living.

The book of Hebrews skillfully shows how each of these four may be made a part of the life of the faithful follower of the Lamb of God.

A Summary Outline of the Book of Hebrews

- I. Christ is a perfect leader.
 - A. Christ is the perfect spokesman (1:1-3).
 1. God once spoke through human prophets.
 2. Now he has spoken through the perfect prophet.
 - a. He is the Only Begotten Son of God.
 - b. He is the complete and final revelation of God's will.
 - B. Christ is the perfect caretaker (1:4-2:18).

1. No angel was ever called "My Son."
 2. There is no command to worship angels.
 3. His rule is superior to the angels.
 - a. Because of his eternal nature.
 - b. Because the angels themselves are charged to serve him.
 - c. Because his punishment for disobedience is inescapable.
 - d. Because he is capable of helping man recover his dominion.
- C. Christ is the perfect captain of our salvation (3:1-4:13).
1. Moses was only a servant in the house of God.
 2. Jesus is the builder of the house.
 3. Joshua led men into the earthly rest in Canaan.
 4. Christ leads men to the eternal rest in heaven.
- D. Christ is the perfect High Priest (4:14-10:39).
1. He was appointed by God and not by men.
 2. He experienced our infirmities and conquered our temptations.
 3. He is now in the presence of God acting as our intercessor.
 4. We must take full advantage of his intercession.
 - a. We must leave the milk of the gospel and feed upon meat.
 - b. We must move continuously toward perfection.

- c. Falling away would bring terrible consequences.
 - d. We must exhibit the same patient faith as Abraham did.
5. Christ's priesthood is superior to that of Aaron in several ways.
- a. He is a priest without beginning or end, like Melchizedek.
 - (1) Melchizedek had no recorded genealogy of destiny.
 - (2) Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek through Abraham.
 - b. Christ was confirmed by an oath of God.
 - c. Christ is unchangeable.
 - d. Christ is sinless.
6. Christ is the priest of a better covenant.
- a. He officiates in the true tabernacle in heaven.
 - b. His new covenant replaces one which fades away.
 - c. The cleansing power of his blood reaches to the end of time.
 - d. His sacrifice was his own perfect life.

- II. We ought to live by faith and follow our perfect leader (11:1-13:19).
- A. Faith is defined.
 - B. Faith is illustrated.

- C. By the pre-flood characters: Abel, Enoch and Noah.
- D. By the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.
- E. By numerous Israelites: Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, ect.
- F. Faith is encouraged.
 - 1. All sin and hindrances to progress must be cast aside.
 - 2. Chastisement and correction is to be expected.
 - 3. Our goal is not a terrifying temporal goal.
 - 4. Our goal is the ultimate glorified Kingdom of God.
 - 5. Turning back will bring the consuming wrath of God upon us.
- G. Our faith must not be barren, but must bear fruit.
 - 1. There must be steadfastness in both doctrine and practice.
 - 2. We must be obedient to the authorities God has established.
 - 3. Prayer must be made for those who preach the gospel.
 - 4. There must be correct attitudes toward other persons.

III. Closing Remarks (13:20-13:25).

- A. Let us move onward to perfection.
- B. Suffer patiently in the service of God.
- C. Salutations.



**The Book Of
HEBREWS**

Chapter 1

HEB 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

This document begins with the assumption of God's existence. There are two reasons why this might be done. First, the evidences for the existence of God are so abundant that only a fool would ignore them (Psa. 14:1). Second, the recipients of this letter were Christians who already believed in Jehovah.

God hath spoken! This in itself is a blessing of the highest order. Man plunged himself into spiritual darkness when he sinned in the Garden of Eden. Through the centuries since that time he has been groping and stumbling along. God still loved man whom he had created in his own image. Therefore, he proceeded to bring those men who will hear his voice and open their eyes back into the brightness of his glory. He did not leave us in darkness. Like those rescuers who come with flashlights and torches to find lost cave explorers, God has come with the light of revelation to show us the way.

This was not done all at once! This verse declares it was done in many bits and many manners. The two Greek words translated as "sundry times and diverse manners" are **Polumerw** and **polutrovpw**. They provide a contrast between the way God has spoken in the former times, as compared with the way he has spoken in these last days in which we live.

In the former days he spoke piece by piece and bit by bit; "line upon line, precept upon precept."

Each of the prophets presented one or more of the great truths necessary for man's proper behavior. Isaiah showed us the glory of God. Amos spoke of the need for justice among men. Daniel spoke of an everlasting Kingdom which would never be destroyed. Each of them brought men a bit farther from the darkness and closer to the daylight.

This process of enlightenment was achieved through many different methods. At one time God would speak in thunderous tones from the peak of Sinai. Then again, he would speak with a still small voice. He spoke from a burning bush. He spoke through earthquakes and floods. He spoke in dreams and visions. He led men through the dimness of the patriarchal starlight age, into the somewhat brighter moonlight of the Mosaic dispensation. All of this was done in order to bring the Sun of righteousness into the world with "*healing in his wings*" (*Mal. 4:2*).

HEB 1:2 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;

When the fulness of time had come, God brought forth his Son, born of a woman, and made under the law. This Son of God was the true light, the "Dayspring", the "Bright and morning Star." With his coming, the world entered the sunlight age where one must actually close his eyes if he wishes to remain in spiritual darkness.

There is a vast difference between the prophets who spoke to the fathers in days gone by and the Son of God who speaks in these last days. Although

they were great men, they were but men. Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God.

As the Son of God, *Christ has been appointed heir of all things*. A son normally expects to receive an inheritance from his own Father. This is true with Jesus. However, many have been confused with respect to the inheritance of Jesus. He did not have to wait for the death of the Father before receiving his inheritance. God does not die. When then did Jesus become the heir of all things? It was when the Father appointed him as such. The reader will recall that at the time of Jesus baptism, the heavens opened, the Holy spirit descended upon the Lord, and a voice spoke from heaven saying, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* From that point on, Jesus set out conquering and to conquer. His victory will only be complete when he has taken control of “all things” and has defeated every enemy, including death and Satan.

All things belong to him as heir of God, even now. Yet, because of Satan’s rebellion and man’s sin, Christ must first remove these obstacles before his dominion is clear to the inhabitants of both heaven and earth.

I would also point out that the faithful are joint heirs with Christ. This joint heirship is also presently in effect. All things are ours! Yet, we, along with Christ, must patiently fight the battle of faith until the principalities and powers are taught the folly of rebellion. Hear the words of the Spirit through Paul. *Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the*

world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;

A second reason Christ is greater than the prophets of old is that *all things were created by him*. John, in his account of the gospel says, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:1-3)*. Colossians 1:16-17 repeat the claim. *For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

Having created all things, Jesus Christ certainly has ownership rights. Satan was lying when he offered all the kingdoms of the world to Christ during the temptation. They belong to Christ. Satan is a thief who has attempted to take that which does not belong to him. For a time he has gained partial control. This will not last!

These are but the first two of seven reasons the writer of Hebrews will produce that Jesus is greater than the prophets. The others follow in verse three.

HEB 1:3 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:

Christ is the brightness of God's glory. The Greek word here translated as brightness is **ajpauvgasma**. It can also mean either reflection or effulgence. Several commentators have suggested effulgence as the better translation. It is not as if the glory of God is being reflected off Christ. It is as if Christ is an extension of the glory of God. The rays of the sun actually emanate from the sun. In a sense, they are of the same essence as the sun. Christ is of the same essence as the Father.

Christ is the express image of God's person. No man has seen God at any time. The Son has declared him. He said, "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*" Because God dwells in light unapproachable, no man has ever seen him. Also, God is a Spirit and spirit does not have flesh, blood and bone.

Therefore, we mortals are in need of something visible to demonstrate the character of God. I like the story of the little girl who was terrified during a bad electrical storm. Her mother was trying to calm her fears and told her not to be afraid. God would take care of her. She replied, "Yes, I know, but I want some one with skin on." Jesus came with "skin on."

The text also carries the idea of Christ being the impress or seal of God. Just as a coin allows one to indirectly see the person honored on the coin, Jesus bears the stamp of God's character, allowing men to understand something of the character of God. This was not true of the prophets.

Christ upholds all things by the power of

His word. He is not only the Creator of all things. He is responsible for the continued operation of all things. Every law of nature is dependent upon his sustaining power. In him, just as in the Father, men live and move and have their being. The stars and the other heavenly bodies follow their courses in the heavens under his watchful eye.

Christ has purged our sins. This is one of the key themes of the entire book of Hebrews. Man has sinned. Christ has provided a way of escape from the death which should follow as a result of that sin. This, my friends, makes Christ far different than any prophet of old. None of them had the power to forgive sin. They could tell us what sin is. They could tell us the consequences. But they could not provide cleansing power. Nor can any false prophet such as Mohammed or Baha U'llah match Christ in this area. Christ stands alone as the Lamb of God.

Christ sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The Majesty on high is God the Father. Jesus invited His followers who overcome the world to sit with Him on his throne, even as He overcame and sits upon His Father's throne. He has all authority in heaven and on earth. He received His kingdom when He ascended to the right hand of God. The disciples saw Him rise into the clouds and disappear. John saw Him approach the throne to take the book from the right hand of God. David saw the gates of heaven opened for the King to come in. And Stephen saw Him standing at the right hand of God. Jesus rules from God's throne today. He has ruled from the time of His ascension. No prophet

sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Let me summarize. Christ is better than the prophets of old in seven ways.

1. God appointed Him heir of all things.
2. He was a partner with God and the Holy Spirit in Creation.
3. He is the brightness of God's glory.
4. He is the image of God's person.
5. He upholds all things by His power.
6. He has purged our sins.
7. He is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

It is also to be pointed out that these first three verses present Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. He is a Prophet because He speaks of God's glory. He is a Priest because He has purged our sins. He is a King because He sits at God's right hand.

HEB 1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Now that the writer had established the superiority of Christ to the **prophets**, he turned to the **angels**. The prophets were the spokesmen for God. The angels were God's caretakers. They were charged with many responsibilities as God sought to promote the welfare of those who had been made in his image. There was a danger that the faltering Christians might become so enamored with the power of the angels they would have greater admiration

for them than for Jesus Christ.

But Christ stands far higher than the angelic hosts. Through an inheritance from the Father, he has received a name much greater than theirs. Again, I remind you that Jesus did not have to wait for the death of his Father to receive the inheritance. He received his inherited name because of his nature. What is the name? We are tempted to think of the term “Christian.” The next two verses show this is not the name. The name is “Son.” My earthly father used to call me “son” at times rather than to call me by my first or last name. The Father in heaven takes pride in calling Jesus Christ “Son.”

HEB 1:5 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?

It is interesting that in the first three verses of this chapter, seven reasons for Christ's superiority over the prophets were given. Now the author of Hebrews is going to appeal to seven Old Testament passages of Scripture to prove Christ superior to the angels. The first of these passages is Psalm 2:7.

The second Psalm is Messianic. It pictures the heathen raging against the bonds which are placed upon them by the commandments of the Anointed of God. They assert that they will not permit such bondage. They will cast away the restricting cords. We are then told God will laugh at them in derision. He will place his King upon the holy hill of Zion and

God's King will reign. The King is the Son whom God has begotten. In verses seven and eight we read, *I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance.*

The second reference is to 2 Samuel 7:14-16. David wished to build a house for the Lord. He was told he would not be permitted to build the house. Rather, his son would build God a house. In addition, God would build David a house and through that house, his kingdom would be established forever. It is best that we quote the passage in its context.

2SA 7:11 And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

It is true that this passage had a primary application to Solomon, the immediate son of David. Yet, this is one of those passages with both a primary and a secondary application. The Son of David who was to build the most important house of God was the Christ. It was through him that the throne of David was to be established forever. It was he who was referred to when God said, "I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son."

At no time did God ever call a specific angel his Son. The name "Son", which Christ received by inheritance as the Only Begotten of the Father could never be applied to any angel.

HEB 1:6 And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

This third quotation is found in Psalm 97:7. Many students of the Scriptures believe the word again could be better understood if it were placed after the word firstbegotten. It would then read, "*And when he bringeth the firstbegotten again into the world...*" This does not seem to be just another reference supporting the same points as were already brought out. It seems to refer to a second appearance of the Son into the world. If that is correct, we must ask when the second appearance takes place. The answer given is that it occurs at the return of Christ in judgment. At that time every tongue will confess and every knee shall bow before him. This verse would then mean even the angels are to fall in praise before him at that time.

Another less likely possibility is that the angels spoken of as bowing before him in worship did so at the time of his birth. You see Christ can be said to be the firstbegotten in the new creation. He can also be considered the firstbegotten from the dead. At any rate, the lesson is that in point of dignity, Christ stands above the angels. He does not worship them. They worship him.

HEB 1:7 And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

This reference seems to draw from Psalm 104:4. The word spirits in this verse can also be translated as winds. It is the word **pnevmata**. The statement in this verse is contrasted with the next verse. In some sense, the angels appear and disappear. Just before this verse in the Psalms, we are told God is hidden behind the clouds. Perhaps the idea is that from his abode in the heavens, God sends his angels who appear like a flame and then disappear again, or like the wind which blows for a few minutes and then ceases.

HEB 1:8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

The Son is not fleeting like a flame or a gust of wind. The throne of Jesus Christ lasts until he turns it back over to the Father when this heaven and

was born of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. I think this is not a critical distinction. It was the **same person**, whether or not the Son is as eternal as the Word.

HEB 1:11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

The universe may seem to be eternal. God declares that it is not. The time is ahead when it will have concluded its role in the divine plan. Then it will be removed. It is not so with Christ. He will remain when the heavens and the earth have passed away and have been replaced by new heavens and a new earth.

HEB 1:12 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.

Just as a man or woman decides a piece of clothing has accomplished its purpose and folds it up to be discarded, so God will fold up the heavens and they will be replaced with that which is new. Among the passages of Holy Writ teaching this truth are: Isa. 34:4; 51:6; Matt. 24:35; 2 Peter 3:7, 10; Rev. 21:1.

Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the First and the Last. His statement that “Before Abraham was, I Am.” is an indication he has always been and always will be.

The angels cannot make that claim.

HEB 1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

Let us look now at Psalm 110:1. This is one of the most quoted of all Old Testament passages. The Hebrew writer looks back to it in 1:3; 1:13; 8:1; 5:6, 10; 6:20 and 7:1-25. Luke used it in Acts 2:34 and Paul used it in I Cor. 15:25-27.

When a king succeeded in conquering another king, a common method of showing the completeness of the victory was to force the conquered king to lie on the ground. Then the foot of the victorious king would be placed upon his neck; thus walking all over him. Jesus will not finish his stay upon this earth until his foot can be placed upon the neck of Satan. Satan must be cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. Death must lose its sting and victory must be torn from the grasp of the grave. Until all these things are accomplished, Christ must reign on the throne of David.

No angel has been given such a set of tasks.

HEB 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

In view of these facts, we face a critical question. What then are the duties of the angels? What should be the attitude of men toward them?

I believe angels were created beings, brought into existence to watch over men and serve them because of God's great love for those whom he had created in his own image. Apparently they had an estate, or place of activity, to which they were limited. Jude says they left their first estate. There is reason to believe Satan was once one of the more influential angels, such as Michael and Gabriel. However, rather than serving man, he apparently allowed pride to get the best of him and decided to turn man against God. This seems to have resulted in a host of angels following Satan and fighting against God who created them.

This resulted in Satan and his angels being cast out of heaven and reserved in darkness until the judgment. Such punishment, however, did not stop them from using their power to seduce men into the same pride which resulted in their fall.

There are then, two groups of angels. There are those who are faithful to God. They constantly do all within their power to act as caretakers for the saints and as ministers unto them. Opposing them are the angels of Satan who foolishly try to devour men and enlist them in the forces of the Devil.

We could go into an extensive discussion of the nature, mission and destiny of angels. This is not needed in full discussion of the verse in hand. It is enough to note the position of the angels as compared with the position of the Son of God. All of the good angels and the Son of God are intensely interested in the well being of the souls of men. Nevertheless, the angels are only servants. They wait at the beck and call of the Christ who sits upon the throne of the Majesty on high.

Chapter 2

HEB 2:1 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.

The “therefore” which begins this verse is typical of the entire book. In the last chapter, as the author closes, the entire work is called a “word of exhortation.” Five different times during the course of his letter the author exhorts the readers to maintain and strengthen their faith.

The entire first chapter was devoted to proving the superiority of Christ as a messenger of the Word of God. He is superior to the prophets and he is superior to the angels. He is the Son of God. How could these Christians even begin to contemplate ignoring the gospel of Christ which had been preached to them.

The word which is translated let them “slip” is **pararuwmen**. As it is used in this instance, it is a nautical term. A ship is approaching the harbor. Rather than making the harbor, it allows the currents and the wind to carry it past the safe haven. The word is also used in the Greek language to speak of such things as a ring slipping off the finger. It is unthinkable that the Christian would allow himself to drift past the blessings of the gospel, or let such blessings slip away.

HEB 2:2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and

disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

The word spoken by angels was the Old Testament, as provided on Mount Sinai. Although it is not absolutely clear what part the angels had in its presentation, it is clear that they did have some part. Deuteronomy 33:2 says, *The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.* Psalm 68:17 seems to support the presence of a large company of angels at the time the law was given. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.*

The word “saints” in Deut. 33:2 is literally “holy ones.” If saints is a proper translation of the original, we have an instance of the great differences between time and eternity. When a righteous person dies, does that person escape the bounds of time and pass into another realm? Some things are still secret and belong to God. Other passages indicating angels had a part in the giving of the law are: Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19.

Our English words “transgression” and “disobedience” are somewhat closer together in meaning than the Greek words from which they come. Both disobedience and transgression imply deliberate defiance of what is known to be the will of the lawmaker. The word from which our word transgression comes is one which has to do with

deliberate crossing of a mark which has been drawn to prevent crossing. The word from which our word disobedience comes carries the idea of ignoring or failing to even pay attention to the regulations in the first place.

There are two passages in the New Testament indicating that these saints, or sanctified ones, of the verse we are discussing were angels.

One of these is Acts 7:53. *Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.*

The other is Galatians 3:19. *Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*

A complicating factor in all of this is the fact that Exodus 31:18 states the ten commandments as having been written by the finger of God. *And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.* It may be that there was a difference in the way the basic ten commandments were given and the far more lengthy extensions based upon those commandments. Whatever the case may be, the angels were involved in the presentation of the Old Covenant.

Now that Old Covenant was steadfast in that the punishments for disobeying it and transgressing its regulations were sure and severe. Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire. A man who picked up sticks on the sabbath was stoned to death. Uzzah

lost his life for touching the ark. Moses lost the opportunity to lead the Israelites into the promised land because he spoke inadvisably with his lips and gave not God the glory when providing water for the wanderers (Psa. 106:33).

HEB 2:3 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;

It is not to be expected then that those who have received a far better law, which was given to us through the Only Begotten Son of the Father in heaven should be permitted to treat such graciousness as incidental. Most assuredly, Christians will be held accountable for such ingratitude.

There are many who believe this verse is absolute proof Paul did not write the letter to the Hebrews. Paul did hear the Lord. He took pride in the fact that he did not have to be taught by the other apostles before he began preaching the gospel of Christ. He had been caught up into the third heaven and received personal instruction. I will admit this is a fairly strong point. However, I do not think it is conclusive. Paul did not hear the Lord in the same sense the other apostles did. And he may be using the word “us” in the same manner as it is used later in the book when it is said, *Let us leave the first principles and go on unto perfection*. If the writer was Paul, he was not so immature that he

must break loose from the very fundamentals of the gospel and move forward.

I still contend the authorship of the letter is uncertain. Thus I will attempt to be consistent in speaking of the “writer” rather than accrediting it to the apostle Paul.

HEB 2:4 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?

The divine source of the New Covenant was verified by many supernatural manifestations. Nicodemus once said to the Lord, *We know thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do the miracles thou doest except God be with him (John 3)*. The gospel first came from the lips of Jesus Christ. After Jesus died, he sent the Holy Spirit to continue the revelation which the apostles were not yet able to bear while he was with them. They were guided unto all truth through the wisdom of the Spirit of God. The miracles which were done were the signs of an apostle. The miracles were done for the purpose of confirming them as true witnesses of the divine source from which they spoke.

We ought also to note that these spiritual gifts were not given haphazardly. They were dispensed at the will of the Holy Spirit. There were no angels involved in the presentation of the gospel of Christ. Angels were only attendants. The Son himself is the Great Messenger to the world in the gospel age.

HEB 2:5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

After this concentrated exhortation to cherish the New Testament of Christ and pay careful heed to it, the writer returned to his discussion of the comparison between the responsibilities of Christ and those of the angels. Unlike the angels, Christ has been given the charge of bringing the world to come into subjection to the will of God.

What is this “world to come?” It can hardly be disputed that it had not yet come in the time of the writing of this epistle to the Hebrews. Some would identify the world to come with the Christian dispensation as compared to the patriarchal and Mosaic ages. This can only be true if the Christian age is to see all things brought into subjection to Jesus Christ. I believe the world to come looks forward to a time when the gospel has had a far greater influence in the society of men than it has yet had. This world to come might very well be identical with the reign of the saints with Christ, as described in Revelation 20:1-10. And also where it is said the “Kingdoms of earth are become of the Lord.”

It is true that Christ is King today, and that he reigns presently from the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is not true that all things have submitted to his authority. That time is still ahead. There is still a “world to come.”

HEB 2:6 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?

The place in which these words are found is Psalm 8. The word “man” is general and refers to all of mankind. How amazing it is that God, in all of his wisdom, power and glory would pay any mind to mankind who, when compared to the Almighty, is so weak and foolish!

There are places in which Jesus referred to himself as the “Son of man.” He did so in Matthew 16 when he asked Peter and the rest of the apostles, *“Who do men say that I, the Son of man am?”* This leads some to believe the son of man in this present verse is talking about Christ. It is not. Ezekiel was repeatedly called the “son of man.” The word “son” in the phrase “son of man” is not capitalized, indicating that the translators did not see it as a description of Christ. If one does apply the term here to Christ, he will run into complications in understanding the next several verses of the chapter. The son of man is simply a way of describing the offspring of mankind.

But why should God pay any attention to men? Why should he be so concerned about their welfare that he would take such pains to rescue them from the consequences of their sin?

HEB 2:7 Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with

glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

There is a very strong reason. God created man in his own image. Although not as powerful as the angels, man was crowned with honor and glory, and was placed in a position far above the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms. He was given the supervision of the entire work of God's hands.

We need to go back and look at Genesis 1:26-31 to feel the total impact of what is being said here.

GEN 1:26-31 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made,

and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Now if the reader will move forward from the above passage to verses 4-8 of the eighth Psalm he will see David reminding us of what God did at the time of man's creation. This second chapter of Hebrews must be read in conjunction with both Genesis 1:26-31 and Psalms 8:4-8, or else it cannot be understood.

HEB 2:8 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.

This earth and all that is in it was placed under the dominion of man, whom God created in his image. Nothing was excepted. Man was expected to multiply until the earth was completely inhabited. He was to care for it and have the rulership over it. Truly this was a position of honor and glory!

But what do we see when we look at the situation as it exists today. Man has not lived up to his responsibilities. He allowed Satan to induce him to rebel against God. In doing that, he lost control of his dominion. Today he is at the mercy of floods, earthquakes, famine, war, disease, thorns, thistles and even death, followed by the terror of damnation in the lake of fire.

HEB 2:9 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.

At this point our attention is turned to Jesus. God was not willing to leave man at the mercy of Satan. That is why he has been mindful of man and has visited him through His Son. He desires to release man from the captivity of sin and return him to the position of honor and glory which was intended in the beginning.

Just as man was created but a little lower than the angels, Jesus left the glory of heaven to lead man back from disaster to his intended glory. Man had to be wrested and torn from the clutches of Satan to be given back his dominion.

This was not a matter of justice. It was a matter of compassion, grace and mercy. Jesus did not taste death for me because I deserved his intervention. He did it because of the value of my soul to him; because of the love he and the Father have for me.

There are those who would like to make this verse teach universalism. If Jesus tasted death for **all** men, then all must be ultimately saved. That is not true. He tasted death that all men might have the opportunity of salvation. Some do not desire it!

HEB 2:10 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.

At first glance this verse appears to be talking about God the Father as the Creator of all things. This would mean the Father had decided to bring many sons to glory by sending Christ to lead them through the darkness. It is possible, however, that the one for whom are all things and by whom are all things is Christ himself. In that case the meaning would be that it was appropriate for Christ to make himself the captain of men's salvation by passing through the same sufferings as those whom he leads.

I see the passage as saying God the Father saw fit to send Christ the Son to lead men from sin, sorrow, tears and death, to righteousness, joy, and life and glory.

But how can we say Christ had any need to be made perfect? We must understand the nature of the word "perfect" as used in the New Testament. It does not always mean unblemished. It sometimes means completed and having met the end for which it was intended. A baby might be unblemished, in the sense of having all of its fingers, toes, etc. Yet it would not have been perfected until it had lived a full and complete life.

Jesus had no need of being perfected because of having committed sin. He had no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth. Nevertheless it was necessary for him to perfect himself as the captain of our salvation by traveling the long road of grief and suffering which men must travel while in these mortal bodies.

HEB 2:11 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,

Christ is the one who sanctifieth. We are the ones who are being sanctified. It is necessary that Christ mark the way for us. Those whom he is not ashamed to call brethren are the children of God. What a tremendous thing this is! Jesus left the glory of heaven to come to us. He took upon himself a body which could feel the curse of death. With power to still the storms and raise the dead from the grave, and without the slightest stain of sin, he still delights in calling those of us who are Christians his Brethren. We may at times be ashamed to confess his holy name before men. That is not as it should be. He is not ashamed to own the faithful. How can we deny him?

HEB 2:12 Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

The quotation in this verse and the next come from Psalm 22. This is a beautiful Messianic Psalm which Jesus quoted at the time of the cross when he cried out, "*My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?*" The first part of the Psalm speaks of the terrible persecution visited upon the Lord. The latter part turns from persecution to glory. The message is that Christ must first suffer at the hands

of sinful men. Then he will rise again to lead others in triumph over evil.

The word “church” is that body of persons assembled for the service of God. In the midst of those who place their trust in God, Jesus Christ will sing his praises to his Father in heaven.

HEB 2:13 And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

The song which Christ will sing is one of trust in his Father. He is confident the Father will prove worthy of the confidence which the Son is happy to place in him. He is not only willing to place his own life in the hands of the Father. He knows those who follow him will also be able to lean upon those everlasting arms. Are these children God gave to the Son, Jesus own children, begotten through the Word, or are they the children of the Heavenly Father?

There are a couple of related verses which help us some. Jesus once thanked God that he had not lost a single one of those who had been given to him, except for Judas (John 17:10-12). This sounds like Jesus had been entrusted with God’s children. On the other hand, Isaiah 53:10 predicts, *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; He hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.*

God’s children are the brethren of Christ in that they have the same Father in heaven that he has.

They are his own children in that they have been brought to spiritual life through the Word of his mouth. Either way, it is these faithful ones for whom Jesus is to act as captain of their salvation.

HEB 2:14 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;

As humanity lives in tabernacles made of flesh and blood, they are subject to death. In order to release God's children from the curse of death, Jesus allowed himself to become flesh and dwell among us. As soon as he allowed himself to live in a body of flesh and blood, he made himself accessible to death. This was not because of his own sin, but because of ours. Nevertheless, his flesh and blood body was capable of dying.

But by subjecting himself to death, and then being raised from the grave, he removed the sting from the Devil's most potent weapon. Satan delights in the death of God's children. This is true of both physical and spiritual death. Those who were supposed to be moving through life in the glorification of God, are reduced to first the grave, and then to the agony of eternal torment. Jesus resurrection unlocked the doors of death, hell and the grave. The saints of God can not be contained by them. The Devil has been disarmed.

HEB 2:15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

The Christian may have feared physical death throughout his lifetime. That bondage is temporary. Death does not mark the end for the the true child of God. The Christian will regain his dominion through Jesus Christ who proved death cannot hold its prey. In the end, death itself will be cast into the lake of fire.

HEB 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Jesus did not come to this earth to be made like unto the angels. He came to live in a body similar to that of yours and mine. God made a promise to Abraham that the world would be blessed through his seed. Abraham was a man who lived in a house of flesh and blood. Christ came and did the same. As a descendant of Abraham, Christ became one with all the faithful. In him the promise of escape from death has been made possible.

HEB 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved 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.

Jesus Christ lived up to his true character in allowing himself to be made like those he was attempting to rescue from death. By doing this he was able to qualify himself as a High Priest who could make atonement for the sins of those who will follow him. He can have mercy on those who come to him because he has shared in their suffering. He knows their feelings and can identify with them.

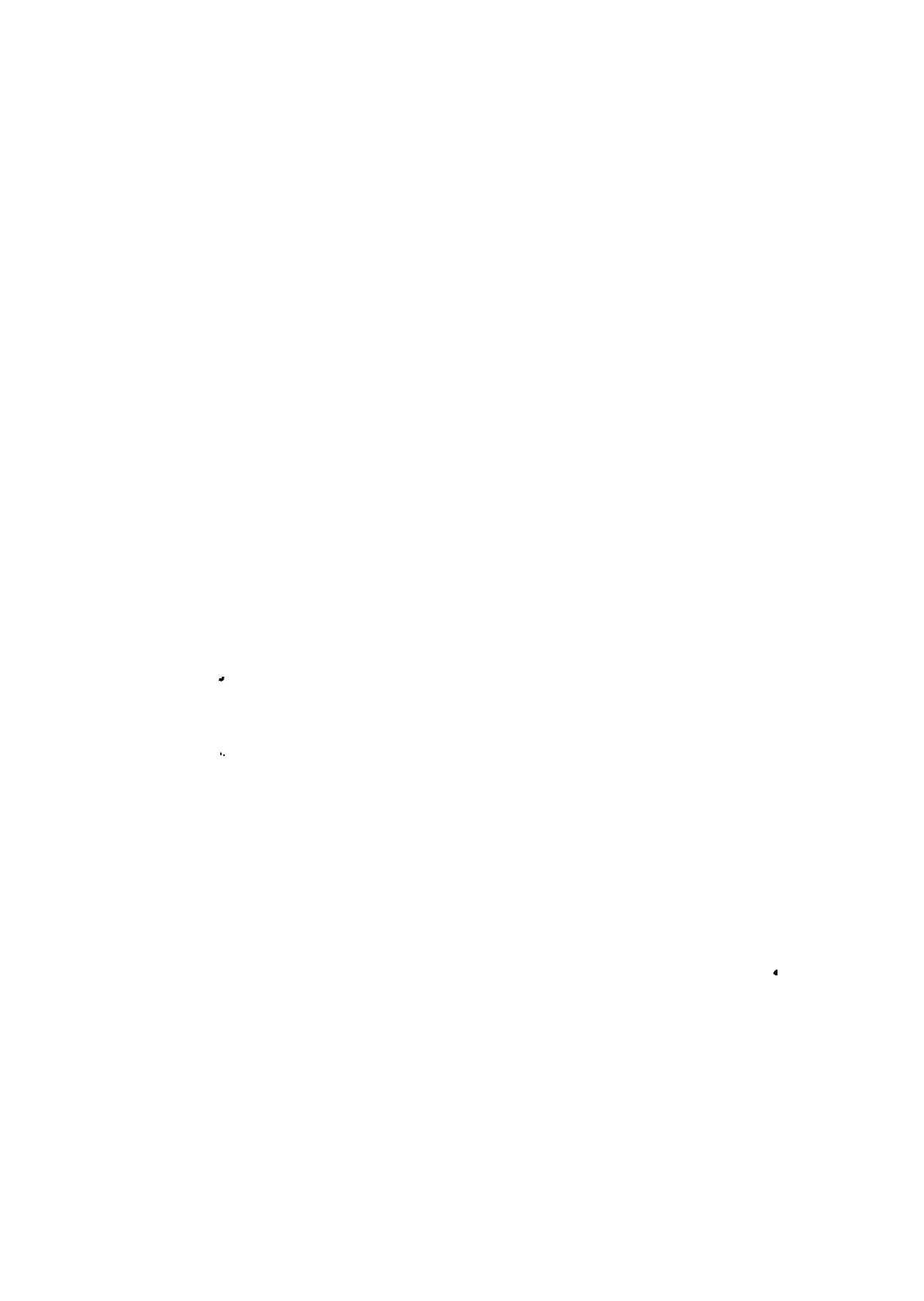
A High Priest made an offering for his people. He then presented that offering to God in order that man and God might be brought together. Jesus offered himself as the offering. Then as High Priest, he was able to present his own life in place of those who heard his voice and followed in his footsteps.

HEB 2:18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

The one who is best qualified to comfort others is the one who has suffered from the same difficulties. A woman who has been recently widowed may afford more comfort than others to another woman who later suffers the same loss. No one was ever presented with greater temptation to turn from the Father in heaven than Jesus was. He had to contrast the conditions on earth to those he had left behind in heaven. He was born of impoverished parents in a manger in Bethlehem. He was assailed by the Devil himself in the beginning of his ministry. He presented the way of life to a dying world, and for that he was mocked by the great teachers of his day.

He lived a spotless life and for that he was accused of blasphemy, breaking the Sabbath, casting out devils by the power of the Prince of devils, being a traitor to the government of Caesar and even of being mentally incompetent. He was beaten, spit upon, mocked by his murderers and died a hideous death upon the cross. All the while he could have called legions of angels to rescue him. Still, he prevailed.

Do you think, dear reader, that Jesus cannot sympathize with your trials and tribulations? He is your brother. He is a fellow child of the Heavenly Father. He has offered himself that he might be your High Priest. Through the power of his resurrection, he stands ready to release you from the fear of death.



Chapter 3

HEB 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

Because of the superiority of Christ over both the prophets and the angels, it is reasonable to take a very close look at his nature and message. The readers are called by a combination of two precious names. They are **ajgioi** or holy and they are **ajdelfoi** or brethren. These names are often used by themselves. They are very seldom combined as they are here. These brethren are holy because their sins have been removed and they have continued to live in a pure fashion. They are brethren because they have been born spiritually into the family of God.

The calling is heavenly for two reasons. It is a call from heaven. But it is also a call to heaven. In addition, when followed, it produces heavenly joy in the heart of the Christian. The readers are partakers with every other true Christian in the discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have heard his voice and they follow him.

Jesus is called an apostle. This is the only time this is done in the entire New Testament. Yet, it is certainly an accurate title for him. An apostle is "one sent." Jesus declared that he had come to do the works of him that sent him. Jesus came with a message from the Godhead. He is divine, but he is also an apostle.

But Jesus is also called the High Priest of our

profession. Some versions have the word confession rather than profession. To profess is to declare one's belief. To confess is to admit one's convictions. Thus there is little difference in the two as they are used in this verse. The Christian confesses Christ as the Son of God at the time of baptism. He then professes that name throughout a life of Christian service. Jesus is called a High Priest because he comes to us with instructions from God. The High Priest of old communed with God through the Urim and the Thummim and then related God's will to the people. Later in this same letter, the emphasis will be upon the role of Christ in making atonement for the sins of men. At this point, however, the emphasis on his part is in delivering the will of God to men.

The prophets, the angels and Moses were all involved in the delivery of God's word to fleshly Israel. Christ does the same for spiritual Israel.

HEB 3:2 Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

The Jewish readers of this letter would have held Moses in very high esteem. In fact, they were so impressed with Moses that there was a danger they would forsake Christ and return to keeping the law which Moses had delivered. It is now admitted that Moses was a very faithful leader. God appointed him to a high position and he had, for the most part, fulfilled his responsibilities. It is true that he lost the opportunity to lead the people into Canaan

because he spoke inadvisably with his lips and gave not God the glory (Psa. 106:32). But that was a glaring exception rather than the general rule.

Both Moses and Christ were faithful in the house of God. It is not really Moses house. It is God's house. Moses was only appointed as an administrator.

HEB 3:3 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.

Even though both Moses and Christ were faithful, Christ is infinitely greater in glory than Moses. Moses was a part of the house. Christ was the builder and maker of the house. Some will wonder how Christ can be called the builder of the house when he did not live until centuries after Moses. The answer is that Christ is divine. He was in the beginning with God. Nothing that was made was made without him (John 1:1-3).

There is no question then that Jesus is to be granted more respect than Moses. He built both the house of God in the wilderness and the church which is God's house today.

HEB 3:4 For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.

Here is the design argument for the existence of God spoken clearly and boldly. Where something has been built, there must have been a builder. All

things have been built. Therefore, there must be a builder of all things. That builder is God. Only the fool says in his heart, “*There is no God*” (Psa. 14:1).

HEB 3:5 And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;

This verse may be a reference to Numbers 12:6-8. *And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*

Moses was only a servant in the house of God. His task was to prepare the way for the Son, who was to come later. There are a multitude of shadows and types in the tabernacle and its ceremonies. Each of these was but a testimony of things which were to be spoken when Christ arrived.

HEB 3:6 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.

While Moses was only a servant in the house of God, Christ was the Son of God and therefore demands greater respect.

The Bible often uses terms in two different senses. The word “house” can mean either a dwelling place, or a household. In this place, it may well mean both. Christians are children of God and therefore a part of his house. But the church is also the temple of God and therefore is a dwelling place for him.

We continue to be the house of God **if** we hold fast to our confidence and hope unto the end. Confidence and hope are considered to be made available through God. If the Christian does not think enough of them to grasp them tightly, it is possible that they may slip through his hands. In that case all becomes vanity and vexation of spirit.

But what end is in view? First of all it must be the end of life. It will not be enough to live sixty-nine years with hope and confidence, then lose both by sliding back into the ways of darkness, or away from the blessings of salvation in Jesus Christ. Secondly, one must endure to the end of whatever trials and tribulations rise up from one day to the next. Jesus endured even to death on the cross. He will expect us to take up our own cross and follow without faltering.

HEB 3:7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice,

Over and over, the writer called references from the Old Testament to his readers minds. This time

he turned to Psalm 95. The first part of this Psalm urges men to hear the voice of God. the second part of it makes it imperative that the voice be obeyed. It is that second part which is presently quoted.

The Psalm is one of David's psalms. It is attributed to the Holy Spirit. Therefore, David is declared to be a man inspired by the Holy Spirit. Men should be cautious about criticizing the Old Testament. This is only one of hundreds of places where the New Testament upholds the inspiration of the things which were written beforehand.

There is an urgency about **today**. Procrastination is deadly. The man or woman who delays obedience to the call which God sends forth runs a risk far greater than they know. Tomorrow is not promised to any of us. We have today. We may not have tomorrow. My friend, if you know what God has commanded, and you have not done it, you need to take action. *Behold, now is the accepted time, Behold, today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).*

God makes man an unbelievable offer. But the offer of salvation does have a time limit. Someday, time will end for each of us.

HEB 3:8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

The provocation was the time in the wilderness when the Israelites provoked God by losing faith in him. The verse is not speaking of the temptation of the Israelites. It is talking about the temptation of

God by the Israelites. His longsuffering was stretched until it finally reached the breaking point. When that happened, those who had hope and confidence had such removed.

HEB 3:9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

Would the readers be so foolish as to follow the disastrous example of their ancestors and lose everything which is to be found in Christ? Their fathers had an opportunity to see what takes place when God is tested to the end. Their unbelief cost them forty years of misery in the wilderness. Within eighteen months, they had reached the borders of Canaan. One writer has suggested that the trip from Mount Sinai where the law was given to the borders of Canaan should have taken no more than eleven days. What a terrible cost they paid for their faithlessness!

There are two explanations given for the statement, "*and saw my works forty years.*" The first is that which I have just given. The works which they saw may be considered to be the punishment which was visited upon them for their lack of faith. The second explanation which has been given is that the works which the Israelites saw was the mighty miracles of food, water, and clothing which God provided for them. Yet, in spite of his miraculous care, they did not believe in his power to lead them. I personally think the first explanation fits the context much better than the second.

HEB 3:10 Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

That generation is the entire adult population who sided with the ten spies who felt they were as grasshoppers in the sight of the inhabitants of Canaan. Joshua, Caleb and Eleazar received an inheritance in the land. The rest left a long trail of graves and scattered limbs of bodies for the scavenger birds to feed upon.

It was not a matter of a single defection which raised the wrath of God. The testing occurred many times.

But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; (Num. 14:21-22).

The student who follows the history of Israel as it moves through the wilderness is caused to wonder why God did not take serious action long before he did.

There was murmuring about food. There was murmuring about water. There was murmuring about the leadership of Moses. There was longing to go back to the cucumbers and leeks of Egypt. It seems that their discontent with God was almost endless.

HEB 3:11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

The rest which they could have enjoyed was to be found in Canaan. That entire generation forfeited the glorious rest which lay ahead because they would not see beyond the trials of the day. Thus, they fell into the hands of an angry God. It is a serious thing to fall into the hands of an angry human. It is a far more serious thing to fall into the hands of Jehovah when he has decided he can do nothing more with you.

HEB 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Why is it that human society has such a difficult time reading the history lessons of days gone by? Instead, each generation seems to find it necessary to suffer the consequences of poor choices which could have been avoided with just a little observation. One thing which is supposed to separate men from the beast world is the ability to transfer information from generation to generation. When men ignore or forfeit that skill, they wander in confusion and society pays a hideous price.

The Bible heart is the seat of emotion, logic and will. When the heart becomes wicked and vile, sin rages out of control. Unbelief in Jehovah throws man upon his own devices. And it is not in man to direct his own steps. *There is a way that seemeth*

right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. To depart from God is to leave behind He in whom we live and move and have our very being.

HEB 3:13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

The second chapter of the book of Acts tells us the early church met from house to house daily, breaking bread and praying. It may be that Christians were meeting more regularly then than they have later on. But, it is not necessary that this exhortation be done in a worship or Bible study assembly. It could be within the family unit, in the workplace or any other circumstance where contact with fellow Christians is made.

It is altogether too easy to gossip about the weaknesses of others than to lend a helping hand in exhorting them to a stronger faith. Both the twelfth chapter of Romans and the twelfth chapter of First Corinthians point out the parallel between the members of the human body and the members of the body of Christ. We are members one of another.

Sin is extremely deceitful. It promises everything and gives nothing. It promises pleasure and gives misery. It promises riches and gives poverty. It promises life and gives death.

HEB 3:14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

As children of our Father in heaven, we are brethren and joint-heirs with Christ. However, this is only true if we maintain our boldness and confidence in the face of every obstacle. The readers of this epistle were warned that there were many in days gone by who had failed to endure unto the end. It was very possible that they also might faint before reaching the goal, just as so many of the Israelites did when they failed to reach the land of Canaan.

When John addressed his letter to the church at Ephesus, as recorded in the book of Revelation, he accused the Ephesian Christians of having lost their first love. This can happen to us!

HEB 3:15 While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Today is the day for Christian action. When the heavenly calling comes to man, he is very unwise if he turns a deaf ear. There are two possible, and very common reactions. One may mock the truth and turn to his own ways. He begins with a soft heart which is penetrated by the Word of God, then the heart turns hard and the Word is expelled. Blessed is the man who receives the Word of God gladly and allows it to fall into a heart well prepared for its implantation, and who then continues to cherish the truth and abide in it until he is called home to meet his Maker.

The Israelites allowed their hearts to become hardened over a period of time. God's will was no

longer welcome to their soul. They heard but failed to **do**.

HEB 3:16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

As was pointed out previously, Joshua, Caleb and Eleazar did enter the land of Canaan. Compared to the six hundred thousand men plus women and children who left Egypt, this presents a catastrophe of the highest order. God's remnant has often been a very small percent of the totality. Eight souls survived in the flood. Only a few of the vast multitude who left Egypt entered Canaan land. It is not wise to provoke the Living God by ignoring or neglecting His will or His invitation.

HEB 3:17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

This verse is not really a question. It is a statement. Those who had grieved God those "ten times", until his longsuffering ran out, felt the full force of his wrath. They left a long trail of sorrow and death stretched out across the wilderness. The word carcass seems a bit raw to us. It's use is in order. We talk about the carcasses of animals. These unbelievers had turned their back on the logical processes which men should demonstrate. They had proven themselves little more than brute beasts.

HEB 3:18 And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

Here is another question which is really a statement. Because those foolish people failed to believe in the one who had delivered them from Egypt, defended them from enemies, fed them and clothed them, they were denied the rest in Canaan which they could have claimed had they acted responsibly.

HEB 3:19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Jesus once said, *“If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”* We today will face the same God who left the carcasses of the Israelites scattered across the wilderness if we fail to accept his guidance and commands. If we do hear him, and obey, we will one day rest from our labors in heaven. If we do not gladly accept his Word, we will find both body and soul cast into outer darkness and eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord.

Chapter 4

HEB 4:1 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.

There is good reason for the Christian to fear. He is surrounded by a society dedicated to the fulfilment of the lust and pride of life. Satan takes dead aim at every opportunity, and Christians must face trials and tribulations of every sort.

Nevertheless, this fear is not the kind that paralyzes one into inaction. It is that which motivates him to action so he will not miss a single opportunity to find God's rest. Every man and woman must be sure he or she is not among those who fail to reach out to the life preserver provided by Christ. God has made a sure promise that his rest is available to those who believe. We must trust that promise.

HEB 4:2 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.

We do not ordinarily think of the gospel as having been preached before the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But there was a gospel preached to the Israelites of old. The word "gospel" means good news. The good news which was preached to them was twofold. They could look forward to rest in Canaan from their travels through the wilderness. But, in addition, the law and the

prophets pointed toward another rest which is far greater than earthly Canaan. The readers of the Hebrew letter had heard a gospel preached, but they had not allowed it to bring forth obedient faith in their lives.

One can hear in many different ways. He can hear mockingly. He can hear defiantly. He can hear indifferently. Or, he can hear with obedient trust. Only the latter will mix faith with the hearing to bring forth fruit unto God.

HEB 4:3 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.

The writer seems to be saying those who hear and believe are entering into rest even while they are still alive, and previous to the final judgment. Of course Jesus invited all who would to come to him and be at rest. Thus, there is a limited rest from the burdens of life during our days upon the earth. But we must not miss the contrast in this verse. There are believers who will enter into God's rest. There are unbelievers whom God has solemnly sworn will not enter his rest.

The promised rest is there. It was established at the time creation concluded. Though the rest has been there all the time, there have been a multitude who have missed entering into it because of unbelief.

HEB 4:4 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.

There are three places in the Old Testament scriptures where this truth is presented. The three are Genesis 2:2, Exodus 20:11 and Psalm 95:11. It is likely that this reference is to Genesis 2:2. After bringing all the works of creation into existence, God ceased from that activity. However, God did not cease all activity. Jesus told us both he and the Father are working (John 5:17). My friend, do not look forward to an idle existence if you succeed in entering into God's rest. We shall serve him continuously. The difference will be that we will relish every moment of that service.

We see then from this verse that God did establish a rest for both himself and for his faithful. It has been waiting for thousands of years. As a reminder that this rest was still ahead, God instituted the seventh day sabbath and commanded that no work be done on that day. It was to be a sign, pointing to both Canaan and to the ultimate heavenly rest (Exo. 31:17).

HEB 4:5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

This "if" is really a strong negative statement. God had sworn that those who did not trust and obey would not enter into his rest. The rest spoken of here is not Canaan. David was communicating

with Jews who had been in Canaan for hundreds of years. He was speaking of the same rest mentioned in Revelation 14:13 where God said the death of the saints is blessed, for they shall rest from their labors.

HEB 4:6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:

God did not prepare his rest in vain. He intended for some to make use of it. Since many of the Jews had not entered Canaan at all, and since David was talking about a rest which remained for the people of God, it must be some other rest which they had not as yet enjoyed.

HEB 4:7 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.

The passage is from Psalm 95:7-11. It was God who spoke, but he spoke through his servant David. David was warning the Israelites who had been in Canaan for a lengthy period of time that they must not harden their hearts against the Word of God. If they did so, they would lose the promised rest.

Twice the word “today” is used in this verse. Behold, today is the accepted time. Behold, today is the day of salvation. There is a tremendous urgency in God’s invitation. Tomorrow is not ours. It can fly

away in a heartbeat. That which we know needs to be done today must never be postponed until tomorrow. Thousands of Israelites waited too late to heed the promises of God.

HEB 4:8 For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

The “he” who spoke afterward of another day of rest was David. But he was moved by God to do the speaking. It would be foolish to speak of a coming day of rest if there was none ahead.

The use of the word Jesus here causes some difficulty. There is no difference between the Hebrew word for Jesus and that for Joshua. The idea is that Joshua led the children of Israel into Canaan. But Joshua did not provide the rest about which God was speaking through David. That rest was still to come.

HEB 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

We have here the simple conclusion of the evidence presented in the last several verses. The people of God include both the faithful of Old Testament times and also those of the Christian age. There is a rest ahead. We must not miss it.

HEB 4:10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

God worked on the creation for six days. He then rested, or ceased from his creative work on the seventh day. The faithful Christian works until the night comes when he can work no longer. Then he also ceases his work in this mortal body and enters into the rest which he is invited to share with God. God's rest then becomes his rest also.

HEB 4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Rest follows work. One does not rest from his labor when he has not first labored. The admonition here is to work as diligently as possible in order that one not miss the great rest which God has waiting. The Israelites are an example of what can happen when God's people fail to trust him completely and ignore his warnings, his promises and his directions.

HEB 4:12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged 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.

Not a single person will slip into the heavenly rest past the watchful eye of Jehovah. A man may deceive his fellow men. He may even deceive himself. But he will never deceive the Judge of all the earth. The unfaithful will not enter the glorified eternal city of God.

The standard by which men will be measured is the Word of God. The Spirit will bear witness with our spirit that we were true to that Word. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. Words are powerful. They bring action into being. Wars have been fought because of the words of men. Cities have been built. Empires have been established and demolished through the power of human words. The Word of God is even more powerful and energizing.

The power and energy of the Word of God allows it to penetrate into the inmost parts of the human soul and spirit. There is no part of man which can not be seen by the all seeing eye of God. It allows a man to see himself, and it allows God to see him, utterly and completely. One can become mired down in this verse by placing too much emphasis upon the difference between the soul and the spirit, or the relationship between the bones and the marrow. The soul of man is usually thought of as the life giving part of him. The spirit is considered to be the intellectual aspects such as will, emotions and logical ability.

There are several scriptures which should be placed beside this one when considering the nature of man. One is 1 Thessalonians 5:23 where man is said to be body, soul and spirit. Another is Jesus statement in Matthew 10:28 that we should fear him that is able to destroy both body and soul into hell. Add to this the fact that on several occasions the entire man is spoken of as the soul. For example there were threesore and ten souls of the house of Jacob which came into the land of Egypt (Gen. 46:27).

Without belaboring the matter, the point in this present verse is not as much the nature of man as it is the penetrating and perceptive ability of the Word of God. Every deed, and even every thought and purpose of the innermost part of a man can be examined and evaluated by God's Word.

HEB 4:13 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.

Not only is the Word of God capable of examining each individual thoroughly, without the slightest sin being hidden. There is no man who can hide from examination. God can find every man, and he can see into the heart of every man. Since every man has sinned, there is not a one of us who could enter into God's rest without his mercy and grace being extended.

HEB 4:14 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.

Since we so desperately need God's mercy and grace, we should be everlastingly grateful that Jesus Christ has taken his place in the throne room of God as our High Priest. He is not just any high priest. He is the Great High Priest. He has, as Paul put it, "*fought the good fight and finished the course.*" Having faced both life and death triumphantly, and

having passed from earth to the immediate presence of God, he intercedes for us.

Again, we can become entangled in speculations which are beyond the ability of the human mind to resolve. How many heavens are there? Can we identify each of them? Regardless of the fascinating nature of these wonders, we will miss the point of the Hebrew writer if we pursue them. Whatever the number or the nature of these heavens, Jesus has moved through them from earth to the abode of God. He now has a place higher than the heavens. He is no longer a high priest limited to earth. He stands at the right hand of God.

Would it not be foolish to turn away from Christ? We read of the unbelief of the Israelites who escaped from the chariots and horsemen of Egypt, received manna from heaven and water from the rock. We wonder how they could murmur and rebel against such care. Yet multiplied millions have begun to follow Christ and then turned back in unbelief. They will not enter into God's rest.

HEB 4:15 For we have not an 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.

Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, is truly God. As the Son of God, he is divine. It is amazing that he willingly emptied himself of the glory which he had in heaven and came to this land of sorrow in which we live to save us from our sin. But he did! As a

result of partaking of the flesh, he subjected himself to the basic temptations which come with the flesh. He has been where we are. He has experienced our feelings and temptations. He can then sympathize with us and lead us.

We can even go farther. Since he passed through this life without falling to the temptations which Satan hurled at him, he would have felt the full force of Satan's arsenal of weapons. Satan's attitude toward men is well illustrated by the example of Job. Job was an extraordinary man. Satan considered it a special challenge to see whether he could cause Job to curse God and die. If he felt that way about Job, think of how he must have felt about the absolutely sinless Son of the God. If he had succeeded in defiling Jesus, he would have had a victory which lasted past time and into eternity. We can be sure Christ endured stronger temptation than any man who ever lived, or who ever will live. Yet he came through without sin.

HEB 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

With Jesus as our High Priest, we may fearlessly come to God through the privilege of prayer. He can offer to us the grace and mercy which will be so necessary to us when we plead our case before the absolutely pure and holy Creator and Judge of heaven and earth. Would any rational man reject such a blessing?

Chapter 5

HEB 5:1 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:

At the close of chapter four, the writer had urged his readers to boldly approach God's throne because Jesus Christ had made such an approach possible. Thus mercy and grace were available through the mediatorial action of God's own Son. The writer will follow this plea with proof that the High Priests of the Aaronic priesthood were far inferior to the High Priesthood of Jesus. Several reasons are given for that stand.

1. All High Priests are taken from men, but Christ was also Son of God.
2. High Priests are expected to have a high level of compassion for men.
3. High Priests must be appointed by God himself.
4. High Priests must be capable of presenting qualified sacrifices.

Jesus Christ fills each of these qualifications in the highest degree.

The primary function of the High Priest is to communicate between God and man. Through the Urim and Thummim, the High Priest of Old Testament times received information from God for the people. From the people, the High Priest received sacrifices and presented them to God. This made him a man of very high importance and prestige.

The pomp surrounding the High Priest and the honor paid to him was extremely important to the Jewish people. No other priest received such glory. The Hebrew writer knew very well there was a danger that the Hebrew Christians would miss that visible excitement and be tempted to turn back to Judaism. Therefore, he attempted to show them such a step would be backward and not forward.

It is easy today to see the fascination men have with certain religious leaders. The Pope of the Roman church is adored by millions throughout the world. He is introduced often as the Holy Father, the vicar, or representative of Christ on earth, and as the successor to Peter. As the man passes by the crowds, individuals will press toward him just to receive a wave of his hand or a nod of the head. This is a sad state of affairs. The Pope is not our High Priest. Christ is our High Priest and each Christian is a common priest in the royal priesthood of which all of us participate. Each presents himself as a living sacrifice. Each reigns as a conqueror over Satan, sin and self. Each is a spokesman for the gospel of grace.

I must go one step farther. It is deplorable that preachers are often elevated to unauthorized levels of honor. This becomes so serious that the preacher is expected to do the studying, the praying, the visiting and the evangelizing for the members of the congregation where he labors. In a sense, he also receives adoration which is undeserved. Why are men so determined to place other men between themselves and the throne of God? Such things ought not to be!

What are the two classes mentioned in the verse? Is there a difference between gifts and sacrifices for sins? I see two possibilities. One is that a person might well offer a gift to God which had nothing to do with his sin. He simply loved God and wished to give him something. The sacrifice for sins would then be contrasted in being a required offering rather than a voluntary one.

Secondly, it is possible that the gifts were those offerings which were not blood sacrifices, while the sacrifices for sins were blood sacrifices.

HEB 5:2 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.

The High Priest must be capable of empathy toward those he represents to God. Each and every one of them will carry a load of ignorance and waywardness. No person has absolute knowledge of the entire mind of God. Every man is a sinner. The High Priest must help to overcome these deficiencies and lift men toward God. The Aaronic High Priest could fully understand these deficiencies because he also lacked complete understanding and he also sinned.

We might be tempted to understand the phrase “compassed with infirmity” to mean surrounded by infirmity. In view of the next verse, it seems to be compassed by infirmity is to be defiled by it. Otherwise, there would be no need for him to sacrifice for his own sins.

HEB 5:3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

Before the High Priests of Judaism were allowed to offer sacrifices for the people, it was necessary to offer sacrifices for their own sins. This was true on the Day of Atonement. But it was also true for every daily sacrifice. At no time did the High Priest offer sacrifices for the people until he had offered for himself.

HEB 5:4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

God himself is in complete control of the appointing of High Priests. Such appointment is not the prerogative of men. If a man attempts to seize the office through personal power, he is usurping the authority of God. If a group of men decide to appoint a man to the office of High Priest, they also have overstepped their bounds. When the Roman emperors of old decided to appoint the High Priest for the Jewish people, they were out of order. The Roman church has fallen into the same pit.

We can see the consequences of unqualified men making such appointments. Both the High Priests appointed by the emperors, and the Popes appointed by the Roman church have shown a drastic lack of compassion for the common people. God has appointed Christ as High Priest today. Any who seek

to take Christ's office have attempted to steal that which does not belong to them.

HEB 5:5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

Jesus Christ has a unique position. He is a Prophet like unto Moses. He is a King, like unto David. He is a Priest like unto Aaron. In each of these cases, it was God who made him such. The Hebrew writer will now show through Old Testament Scripture that Christ is a greater High Priest than those of the Mosaic age because he combines Kingship with Priesthood, and God appointed him to both offices.

He first reminded the readers that he had previously proved Jesus to be God's appointed King from Psalm 2:7. The words quoted from this second Psalm are only the beginning of a very impressive statement. Verses seven through eleven of the Psalm expand upon the matter:

PSA 2:7-11 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

HEB 5:6 As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Yes, God himself had appointed Jesus as King of all creation. But God had just as surely appointed him as a High Priest. This combined office separated Christ from all other High Priests. God had spoken through David again in the 110th Psalm concerning this same matter. The quote is from the fourth verse of the Psalm.

Long before the time in which the Hebrew Christians lived, there had been a priest who typified Christ. This priest was Melchizedek. Melchizedek was both a priest and a king. No more is said about this ancient priest at this point. A good bit more will follow later as the writer went into much more detail. The point being made is that Christ stands far above any High Priest who ever lived. It would be foolish to return to life in Judaism and forsake what is offered by the Son of God.

HEB 5:7 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;

The days of his flesh refers to Jesus in the days of his incarnation. John says he became flesh and dwelt among us. Paul said he took upon himself the likeness of men.

But when were these prayers and supplication with strong crying and tears uttered? Surely this was the time of the agony in the Garden of Gethsemene when his sweat became as it were mixed with blood. Though Jesus was appointed both High Priest and King of the universe by God in heaven, he qualified himself for extending compassion toward men by suffering more than any man ever did. He knows the meaning of mental anguish. He knows the meaning of temptation. He knows the meaning of physical pain. In the face of these obstacles, Christ never wavered. He obeyed the will of God in humble submission until he finally cried out upon the cross, *“It is finished.”*

The Father could have saved him from the agony of the cross. Jesus said legions of angels could have delivered him. However, that would have left men without redemption from sin, or hope of heaven. It was the will of God that his Only Begotten Son be made the perfect sacrifice for penitent men. God did hear his prayer that the cup pass from him if possible. But, it was not possible that it pass. There was no other way.

HEB 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

The sons of important men often escape the trials which the sons of less powerful and influential men must face. Even though Jesus is the Son of the Heavenly Father, he found it necessary to experience

obedience in the midst of tremendous pressure. We recall the words of the apostle, who said Jesus was subject to his earthly parents in all things. This verse does not mean that Jesus was at one time disobedient and had to learn to be obedient. It means he learned what it means to be obedient. One must give up his own will and become subject to the will of another. Jesus was willing to do that so we might have a High Priest who had been subjected to the consequences of sin and could be compassionate toward those who desire relief from sin in every age.

HEB 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Nor was Jesus ever imperfect. It was he who “*did no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth.*” It was not that he had been overcome by the tempter and needed to be cleansed of soul. The word perfect is not used in that way here.

The Bible often uses the word “perfect” to mean developed to the end. As an example, a baby might be a splendid specimen of infancy. But the baby has a long road ahead before it becomes a splendid specimen of adulthood. Jesus was the divine example of humanity from the cradle to the grave. However, he was only perfected as our High Priest when he had passed through the “days of his flesh.”

Having been perfected, Christ could then become the fountainhead of a salvation which would never need to be purchased again. That salvation would

be available to all who followed in his obedient footsteps. Universalism is a lie. All men will not ultimately be saved. Only those who obey are to be honored with the gift of eternal life.

HEB 5:10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

No further comment is necessary on this verse. It merely leads into the admonition which is to be offered in the next few verses. Such an important relationship as that between Christ and Melchizedek must be investigated.

HEB 5:11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

Is it Christ about which many things need to be said? Is it Melchizedek? I think it is the mysteries of the plan of salvation that are wrapped up in the similarities between these two who were both kings and priests. At any rate, these things were difficult to explain. It was not that they were incomprehensible to men who had properly developed their spiritual senses. The writer could have presented the series of thoughts to spiritually mature persons. The difficulty was in the immaturity of the readers. They had failed to open their ears and had therefore lost the ability to grasp meatier truths. When the physical senses are not used, they become insensitive. The same is true with spiritual perception.

HEB 5:12 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.

Anyone who has been associated with religious people for a lengthy period will realize the lack of correlation between time and spiritual maturity. There are some who have been Christians for but a year or two who have grown to greater spiritual stature than others who have been Christians for fifty years. Of course, some of this difference is due to God given talent. Nevertheless, there are many who have simply neglected to take advantage of the wondrous blessings made available.

I am constantly amazed that long-time Christians know no more about Bible history and geography, the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, the types and antitypes and the providential working of God as God causes all things to work together for good to those who are called according to his purpose.

These readers could not fully grasp what he had to tell them about Melchizedek because they had failed to listen to the elementary teachings of the Word of God. Or else they had become so careless they had forgotten and needed to be retaught. You cannot teach people who are not basically ready to receive the teaching. A second grader cannot be taught algebra until he learns to add subtract, multiply and divide. One cannot be taught to write a novel until he can handle the alphabet.

HEB 5:13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

The writer of Hebrews considers the matter to be very serious. These readers were like nursing babes. They were no more ready to understand the High Priesthood of Christ than a two month old infant would be ready to digest a sirloin steak. Some commentators think such statements overdo the situation. I rather doubt it. These Hebrew Christians were having severe indigestion when fed with the meat of Christ's gospel.

I do think it is interesting that after having rebuked them so sharply, the writer proceeded to move into a detailed discussion of Melchizedek and Christ. Apparently there were at least a few among them who were able to handle solid food.

HEB 5:14 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.

There are means by which one may reach spiritual adulthood. This requires taking advantage of every opportunity presented, and making use of all the talent and skill God has provided.

The Hebrews writer is not talking about reception of some special insight offered only to an elite group. He is talking about the opportunities and talents of average men. Time alone does not grow a strong

man in the faith. Such a man will have communed with his Heavenly Father in Bible study and prayer. He will have cherished fellowship with devoted Christians, attending every assembly in which he could share. He will have watched for opportunities to do good to his fellow man, particularly those of the household of faith. And he will have met Satan and overcome him time after time.

The kind of man pictured above will be ready to pass on from the first principles of the Word of God to such things as the High Priesthood and Eternal Kingship of the Son of the Living God.

Chapter 6

HEB 6:1 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,

The writer of Hebrews will now make an attempt to sharpen the spiritual senses of the readers. It is possible to help those who are physically dull of hearing through hearing aids. Spiritual dullness of hearing is voluntary. It must be healed through an approach to the mind. That will be the procedure.

To leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ is not to ignore them. It is to make use of them to build a more mature life. It is pure folly to continually lay foundation without ever building on that foundation.

Six principles of the doctrine of Christ are mentioned. They are:

1. Repentance from dead works.
2. Faith toward God.
3. Baptisms.
4. Laying on of hands.
5. Resurrection of the dead.
6. Eternal judgment.

Each of these six are involved in persuading men to become Christians. We need to explore the importance of each to the conversion of an alien sinner.

It is wise to compare these with what preachers today often call first principles. That list would include the following: Hearing, Believing, Repenting, Confession and Baptism. In reconciling the two lists, we note that it would be utterly impossible to develop faith or bring about repentance until one has been introduced through hearing the gospel. Second, we observe that repentance precedes faith in the list given in our present text. This is not surprising in that faith is necessary to bring about repentance, and is also to be continuously strengthened after repentance. Third, confession is missing from the list of principles in the Hebrews list. The Hebrew writer was not exhausting the list of principles. He was pointing out some which were obvious.

With the above in mind, we will proceed to comment on each of the six mentioned by the author of Hebrews. The first is **repentance from dead works**. Works may be classified as “dead works” for two different reasons. Works of the flesh are works which lead to spiritual death. Works of merit are dead works because they do not have the power to earn salvation. These dead works are to be contrasted with works of obedient faith, which are necessary to please God. Faith without works is dead. When faith comes to life in obedience, spiritual life is manifested. The works of the Law of Moses might be classified as dead works in that they are incapable of removing the guilt of sin and obtaining eternal life.

But what happens when men repent? There are several successive actions. First, one is persuaded of the horror of his sins. This brings on godly sorrow.

The godly sorrow leads to repentance. The repentance is a change of will which leads to a change of thought and action. In brief, we have godly sorrow, repentance, and change of thought and action, in that order.

The second of the six principles is **faith toward God**. Faith which saves has two ingredients. First, under the weight of the evidence, one comes to the realization that God truly exists. However, this is not sufficient. Even the Devil believes and trembles. The faith that saves is a faith which trusts so completely that it comes to life in unquestioning obedience, even when human logic would point in another direction. One first determines there is a God. He then determines the Bible is a message from God. After that, the response will be, "*Speak Lord, Thy servant heareth.*"

There is, however, a present day overemphasis upon the role of faith. To hear some talk, or to read their writings, one would think the rest of the six principles pale into insignificance when compared with faith. That is a mistake.

HEB 6:2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

The third of the six principles is the **doctrine of baptisms**. The interesting thing about this phrase is that it is in the plural. Ephesians 4:5 distinctly states there is but one baptism. How can we reconcile the two passages? There is little doubt

that the one baptism of Ephesians 4 is the baptism in water which was commanded by Jesus Christ in the great commission and was obeyed by the Ethiopian nobleman as recorded in Acts 8:38. Yet John the baptist spoke of two other very important baptisms. He said he had come to baptize with water, but that Jesus would baptize with fire and with the Holy Spirit. In persuading one to become a member of the church of Jesus Christ, it would have been quite understandable in the first century that all three of these baptisms be discussed. Baptism in water would have been discussed as the point at which the believer was relieved of his sins. Baptism with fire would have been the consequence of ignoring the offer of salvation. Baptism with the Holy Spirit would have been discussed as the procedure by which spiritual life entered into the church and was thus made available to every believer.

The **laying on of hands** had three purposes. First, spiritual gifts were imparted by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. Second, there were those in the days of the apostles who were able to heal the sick through the laying on of their hands. Third, hands were sometimes laid on individuals who had been selected for special tasks as Paul and Barnabas were in Acts 13:2-3. It is likely that this particular mention of the procedure had to do with the miraculous powers resulting from the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

The **resurrection of the dead** was a critical part of practically every sermon preached in the

book of Acts. If it had not been for the resurrection of Christ from the dead, the apostles would have returned to their fishing boats and their tax collecting, etc. If it had not been for the hope of life after death, the gospel would have lost much of its power to motivate men toward service in the face of tribulation. The resurrection should play an important part in present day sermons, just as it did in those early days.

The last of the six principles is that of **eternal judgment**. Daniel spoke of a time when men would be raised to face either glory or damnation, depending upon the pattern of life shown during their lives. Jesus spoke many times of everlasting life and everlasting torment. Paul reasoned with the philosophers of Athens concerning the resurrection and judgment.

The readers of the Hebrew letter had been instructed in all of these fundamentals at the time they became disciples of Christ. There should have been no need to lay that foundation over and over again. An occasional refreshing should have been enough. It was high time they quit laying foundation and moved on to the superstructure of Christianity.

HEB 6:3 And this will we do, if God permit.

The “we” here is not an admission on the part of the writer that he also had been negligent in spiritual development. He is only encouraging his readers to go with him to greater spiritual heights.

Why does he add, “If God permit?” Because God does not permit some to reverse the damnable state to which they have descended in their rejection of all things spiritual. He will explain further in the next few verses.

Be careful that you do not interpret this to mean that God would not be pleased when any man turns from sin, or that he would not allow any man who chooses to turn from sin to do so. *“God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”*

HEB 6:4 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,

Take note of the word “for” with which this verse begins. That is indication what is about to be discussed is an explanation of God’s denial of certain apostates.

The matters explained in these verses leave no question whatsoever that a man may fall from the grace of God. One who tries to find perseverence of the saints in this chapter will only find himself bent into the form of a pretzel. These are not persons who have never known the truth or experienced the blessings of Christianity. They have fed sumptuously, and then turned away mockingly to embarrass the Saviour before all men.

What a list of blessings are traced here as the writer shows just what God had showered upon these

former faithful ones. They had been enlightened. Spiritual light comes through Jesus. John presented Christ as the light of the world. These apostates had seen the difference between the light and the darkness. They had then turned from the light to the darkness.

They had tasted of the heavenly gift. God has given more than one gift. There is the gift of his Son (John 3:16). There is the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). There is the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23). We are safe in saying the rejection of one of these gifts is the rejection of all three. The three are so closely related one cannot turn away from one without losing both of the others.

To be made a partaker of the Holy Ghost was to have been given the Holy Spirit to dwell within. The one who has not the Spirit of God is none of his. The children of God are led by the Spirit of God. God gives his Spirit unto all that obey him. The Spirit sheds love into the heart of the Christian. He is the Spirit of life, thus energizing and empowering the man of God to good works.

HEB 6:5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

God's Word is sweet to the spiritual taste. According to David it is sweeter than the honeycomb. Elijah was told to eat a book containing the Word of God and he described it as being sweet in the mouth. John the apostle also found it to be sweet when digested. The apostates described here had

feasted on the bread of life and then had turned up their noses at it.

They had also tasted of the powers of the world to come. The power of the Holy Spirit today is but an earnest of that which is to follow for the faithful. The power which turns a man from sin to righteousness is the same power which raised Jesus from the grave. It is the same power which will raise the faithful and clothe them with new and glorious incorruptible bodies capable of life in the new heaven and the new earth. How could one taste of such power and knowingly despise it?

HEB 6:6 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.

One cannot fall away from a condition which they have not attained. These persons had enjoyed the fulness of the blessings of life in Christ. They had fallen from the grace of God! This was not a simple slip into an occasional sin. It was gross mockery of everything right and good. They had cut every last thread of the cord which once bound them to God and holiness. They had reached such a point that their consciences were seared beyond help. If they had lived in the time of the crucifixion, they would have been in the front row of the mockers around the foot of the cross. Like the passersby at Golgotha, they wag their heads and leave Christ hanging in shame to be made a laughingstock for

the unbelievers. And while they put the Son of God to shame, they themselves have no shame.

HEB 6:7 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:

They were like a field which had been carefully cultivated, and upon which the rain has come in abundance. If ever a field had opportunity to produce good fruit, this one had. It could be expected to grow a fine crop of the produce the owner intended.

HEB 6:8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

Instead of the expected fruit, the field brought forth only thorns and thistles. I can personally bear witness to the discomfort which arises when thorns and briers grow up in a hay field. While one handles the hay, the hands are torn and bleeding from the pricks of the thorns. The field described here is even worse. It brings forth nothing the owner expected. The only thing left is to light a fire and burn it to ashes. It is worse than nothing. It even contaminates the soil in the fields nearby.

Sometimes a farmer burns off a field to cultivate it at a later time. That is not so in this case. The field itself is useless. It deserves only utter destruction. These persons who had been showered

with God's blessings and had then cursed him were fit only for the fires of hell. They had gone so far God had given up on them. He had not given them up because He no longer cared about the value of their soul. He had done so because they had gone so far **they would not repent.**

HEB 6:9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

By this time the writer of Hebrews had drawn a very clear picture. It was a picture of what the readers would become if they failed to respond to the blessings God had made available to them. He did not believe any of them had yet reached the condition he was presenting. It had been necessary to speak sharply. However, there was great danger. They had been dull of hearing. There was a need to move toward maturity. He expected them to do that.

HEB 6:10 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.

The writer did not intend to say the readers had not done anything in the service of the Lord. They had produced some good things. And God would not overlook those good things. They had shown love toward their fellow saints. When Jesus sees a

Christian doing good to his brother, the Lord considers that to be done to him. *“He that doeth good to one of the least of these my brethren, hath done it unto me.”* They not only had ministered to other saints. They were continuing to do that. Their ears had not been completely stopped just yet.

HEB 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:

The concern he had was that they might cease to do these good works. Every one of them must continue in well doing until they were called home at the close of life. The hope which they had in Christ was to provide them with confidence that God would reward them in the world to come.

HEB 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Laziness has no place in the life of a Christian. We must work the works of him that sent Christ to earth. The night cometh when no man can work. We must carefully follow such faithful as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs through the ages. They are already in position to inherit the promises God made in the long ago.

This is one of those places where the New Testament appears to teach a blessed condition for

those who have died in a faithful condition. It does not say they **will** inherit the promises. It says they are inheriting the promises. Abraham was seen to be in Paradise in the account of Lazarus and the Rich Man of Luke 16. Can one inherit the promises before the final judgment. The answer to this question may lie in the difference between living within the boundaries of time here on this earth and passing into eternity at death. Your commentator does not presume to have the capacity to follow such matters to the end.

HEB 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself,

God made a solemn promise to Abraham that he would be blessed with a multitude of descendants. For many years Abraham went childless. He did not lose faith in the promise of God. Then, after being presented with a son after the time of normal childbearing, God told him to sacrifice that son. Abraham went to the very brink of killing his own son at the command of God. The Lord then repeated his promise to the man who was to become the “father of the faithful.”

HEB 6:14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

It was not easy for Abraham. If ever a man had an excuse to doubt God's promise, Abraham did. He

lived to be one hundred years old before Isaac was born. He did not live to see the vast multitude of descendants whom God later gave him. He did not see the multiplied millions of those who followed his footsteps in trusting God.

HEB 6:15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Nevertheless, Abraham kept on serving and trusting in the promises God had made to him. That is what the readers of the Hebrew letter must do, and what we in the latter days must do if we expect to receive the promise of life beyond.

HEB 6:16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

When men wish to make a very special promise, they sometimes back the promise with an oath. The oath is an appeal to some object or person more powerful than themselves. The oath is made with the superior object or person as a witness. If the truth is not told, the object of the oath is called upon to visit punishment upon the one breaking the oath.

Most of the time such an oath is respected by other men. It is considered so binding that the individual making the oath will not lie.

HEB 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise

the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

For the same reason, God made a promise to Abraham, and then backed that promise with an oath that the promise would be kept. He did not do this to make his promise more secure. When God makes a promise, that promise is secure without an oath. The oath was made for the sake of human confidence rather than to prevent God from breaking his promise. God is not slack concerning his promises, as men count slackness.

HEB 6:18 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:

We may have absolute confidence that God will protect us in this life and reward us in the one to come. Both his promise and his oath back up our hope. This is the strongest possible consolation and comfort that we are not laboring in vain. We must constantly abound in the work of the Lord knowing that such is true (I Cor. 15:58).

HEB 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

The hope we have in Christ is like the anchor of a ship. The anchor itself has been set into heaven.

It is fastened tightly there. The rope tied to it reaches from heaven to our own hearts. Though the winds of temptation and false doctrine whip the waves of the sea of life into foamy froth, we will not be capsized. Our anchor will hold tight.

HEB 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Jesus Christ is our forerunner in that he has already passed through death, hell and the grave. He has entered beyond the vail of the flesh into the Most Holy Place of heaven. There he serves as our High Priest forever.

The forerunner was the soldier who scouted out the territory and prepared the way for those who were to follow him. The point has been made that Jesus was superior to Aaron as a high priest in that Aaron was not a forerunner. No one followed Aaron into the Most Holy Place. Christ, however, has entered in and waits for us to follow.

Chapter 7

HEB 7:1 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 writer has now made a gallant effort to awaken the spiritual senses of the readers. If they had aroused from their lethargy and dullness of hearing, he was ready to continue in his attempt to explain the reasons for not turning back from Christ after once having begun to follow him.

He had said that he needed to discuss the relationship between the High Priesthood under Christ, as it was related to the priesthood of Melchizedec and also to the High Priesthood authorized under the Law of Moses. That would not be a simple task, but it was time to begin.

The fourteenth chapter of Genesis records a war between an alliance of four kings on one side and five kings on the other. Four kings had banded together and invaded the general territory where Lot had settled in Sodom. These kings were: Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, Tidar, King of Golim, Amraphel, king of Shinar, and Arioch, king of Eliasar. These four kings had been successful in plundering the entire area.

In the course of their marauding, they attacked the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah had been defeated, and the citizens fled to the mountainous regions nearby. The attacking kings took all the valuables of the defeated

people, including their food supplies. They also took Lot captive, along with his possessions, and moved northward.

When Abraham heard of the disaster, he called his own men together, along with the forces of the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim. This combined army pursued the invaders. They caught up with them near the city of Damascus, defeated them and regained their possessions.

As they were returning, they met Melchizedec, the king of Salem, who brought forth bread and wine to refresh them. The precise wording describing what took place is from Genesis 14:18-20.

GEN 14:18-20 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

HEB 7:2 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;

Take note that this Melchizedec is called priest of the **Most High God**. This is very interesting. Melchizedec was apparently from the non-Hebrew population. This is evidence that a knowledge of the one God who owns heaven and earth was possessed

by the ancient people, and was not introduced through the Hebrews as some critics would contend. The movement of religion was not from polytheism to monotheism. It was from monotheism to polytheism. The echos of the one God who created all things had not died out, even though the memory of him had dimmed out through much of the world.

Who was this Melchizedec, king of Salem? Was he the king of Jerusalem? Was he a manifestation of God himself? Was he an angel? Was he an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ? These are all suggestions which have been put forth. If we read only the Old Testament record, we might easily conclude he was only a local king who befriended Abraham and his allies while they were passing through his territory. The difficulty arises when we read the next verse of Hebrews which assigns him neither mother or father and says he had neither beginning of days nor end of life, but was made like the Son of God; and abides a priest continually.

Melchizedec is given two titles. He was first, king of Salem. The word Salem is related to the word of greeting which the Hebrews use even to the present time, the word “Shalom”, meaning **peace**. Since Melchizedec was king of Salem, he was king of peace. But that is a description of Christ, Prince of peace. Yet, the name of the capitol city of Palestine is Jerusalem, or Abode of peace. Was Melchizedec the king of earthly Jerusalem at one time, while Jesus Christ is the king of the New Jerusalem?

Some have held that his kingship was not over Jerusalem but over the smaller city known as Salim

and mentioned in John 3:23. This would have been more directly in Abraham's path as he and his forces returned from Damascus to the area of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But further, Melchizedec is said to have been king of righteousness. The name Melchizedec is made up of two Hebrew words. Melchi is taken from the Hebrew word for king. Zedec is from the Hebrew word for righteousness. Thus, his name meant king of righteousness. The mystery continues. Jesus Christ was a king who reigned in righteousness. And so, the rule of Melchizedec parallels the rule of Christ in two very critical areas.

HEB 7:3 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.

If Melchizedec was truly a human king, it is obvious that he had both a father and a mother, and that he had a beginning of life and a time of death. In what sense then could he be pictured in the fashion of this verse?

The point is that as far as the Biblical account is concerned, there is no record of his mother or his father. A priest under the law of Moses had to have a carefully checked genealogy to prove he was a descendant of Levi. Melchizedec lived long before the time of Levi. As far as a record of his birth or his death, there is none! He appears on the scene. Then he disappears. As far as the record goes, he

might have existed forever in the past and remain alive until the present. He would then be like the Son of God in abiding forever. His priesthood would be perpetual.

One commentator tells us the Jews considered the proselytes who were converted from the non-Jewish world to have no father. Since they had no Jewish father, it was the same as having no genealogy. They began life at the point of conversion.

HEB 7:4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

Just how great was this man Melchizedec? He was great enough that Abraham honored him by making an offering of one tenth of the goods taken from the kings he had defeated. To this very day, the Jews regard Abraham as the greatest of the patriarchs. For him to have been so great that Abraham would honor him placed him on a rare pinnacle.

It should be observed that as early as the time of Abraham, one tenth of what a man had was an appropriate offering to God. This man was a priest of the Most High God, and Abraham gave him one tenth. This tells us the promise of Jacob to give one tenth of all which God prospered him was not the origin of tithing. There are also extra-Biblical records of very ancient people who offered a tenth to the gods. It is not inconceivable that this process began with Cain and Abel.

HEB 7:5 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:

The Levitical priesthood had the authority to take tithes from the people for their own support. The people gave tithes to the tribe of Levi. Then the tribe of Levi gave tithes to the priests among their tribe. This was done out of respect for the mediatorial work the priests did. They dedicated themselves to matters concerning the people's relationship to God. They had no inheritance and therefore had to depend upon the support of the other tribes.

HEB 7:6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

However, in the case of Melchidezec, we have a priest who lived well before the time of Levi and the Aaronic priesthood. He could not have been a priest under the law of Moses. Yet, he did two things which priests were expected to do. He received tithes, and he blessed Abraham.

HEB 7:7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

Both of those activities indicated the greatness of Melchizedec. He was given honor as the recipient

of offerings intended for God. The fact that he was able to confer a blessing upon Abraham indicated he was greater than Abraham. One who has the capacity to give what another needs is greater than the one who is in need.

The writer of Hebrews had taken the greatest man among the Hebrews and proved Melchizedec to be greater. This was important because he intended to show that Christ could be a greater High Priest than the Aaronic High Priest.

HEB 7:8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

A second major reason Christ is greater than the Levitical priesthood is that Christ is alive forever more. The Levitical High Priests died and had to be replaced. Even Aaron, the first of them, is recorded as dying and being buried on Mount Hor.

Here, is on earth. Earthly High Priests die. But **there** is in heaven. There, Christ continues to live and we have the witness of those who saw him after his resurrection that he was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven in the clouds. Christ is superior to the Levitical High Priests in never needing replacement.

Burton Coffman makes an interesting point here. Coffman believes since Christ is in heaven receiving tithes, his disciples here on earth should be offering tithes. He does not press the point sharply, but it is apparent that he does have strong conviction.

HEB 7:9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

We would probably say, “And I might add.” What does he wish to add? The priesthood of Melchizedec was greater than that of Levi in that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedec. Although the Levitical priests received tithes, they had also paid them. How so?

HEB 7:10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

This statement is surprising to us. It would not have been surprising to the Hebrews. At that time it was thought that every descendant actually existed in some sense, from the beginning of the first man, and passed through the loins of his fathers from generation to generation. In a way, this is still true, since the genetic map does tend to pass from parents to children through egg and sperm.

Is it all that far fetched to say Levi paid tithes to Melchizedec through Abraham? It may be that we are more familiar with such actions than we think. Every time a coach makes an agreement that his team will play another team, he makes that agreement for each player on the team, even though they have not personally signed the agreement. Melchizedec was greater than Levi in that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedec, even though not yet born.

HEB 7:11 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 Levitical priesthood was unable to remove the guilt of sin and make men acceptable to God. Many statements were made that men's sins were forgiven. In fact, Jesus once told a man who was suffering from palsy, "*Arise, take up thy bed and walk. Thy sins are forgiven thee.*" Later in this same book of Hebrews, however, we will find a statement that without the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ there was no true forgiveness. Forgiveness of sin in the days of the Levitical priesthood was dependent upon the blood of the Lamb. Until that blood was shed the forgiveness waited for that event. Men who complied with the commandments of that day had done all they were able to do, but Jesus still had to offer himself.

If the Levitical system had been sufficient, there would have been no reason for God to install another High Priest who was not even of the tribe of Levi or the family of Aaron? Both the priesthood and the law associated with that priesthood had been shadows of the reality which came through the Priesthood of the Son of God.

HEB 7:12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

The law was administered by the priests, and the priesthood was regulated by the law. Clearly, when Christ arrived, the priesthood had changed, and the law regulating the priesthood had changed along with it. If this had not been true, Jesus could not have become our High Priest.

HEB 7:13 For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

He of whom these things are spoken was Christ. He had come from a tribe which was not permitted to make offerings at the earthly altar under the law of Moses. Saul once faced the wrath of God for having offered a sacrifice which it was not his right to offer.

HEB 7:14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

Any Hebrew could have checked the genealogy of Jesus Christ and discovered that he had arisen from the tribe of Judah rather than the tribe of Levi. Under the terms of the Law of Moses, he had no right to become a High Priest. Notice the wording of Exodus 28:1. *And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons.*

The priests were to be taken from the descendants of Aaron. The Levites were to be assigned various duties with respect to erecting, transporting and dismantling the tabernacle, etc. But, both the Priests and the Levites were to be from the tribe of Levi. God did not give such authority to any man from the tribe of Judah.

HEB 7:15 And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

It should then be quite evident that this new priest, Jesus Christ, was not like the priests of the Mosaic Law. Rather than being like them, this new priest had arisen. And he matched the characteristics of Melchizedec far better than those of the priests under Moses.

HEB 7:16 Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

The priests under the law of Moses had to meet the requirements of fleshly genealogies. It was not so with Christ. He qualified himself as a High Priest through the quality of a perfect and endless life.

HEB 7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Here, we return to Psalm 110:4. The author of Hebrews has this oath of God stamped firmly upon his mind. The emphasis this time is on the word “forever.” All the priests of the Law of Moses had served to foreshadow the all sufficient priesthood of the Son of God. As he had pointed out through numerous lines of evidence, Jesus was superior to the High Priests of the past. He met the needs of man in every detail. There would be no need for a better one to follow.

HEB 7:18 For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

The earthly commandment which selected priests who qualified through their kinship with Levi and Aaron had to be annulled. It had weaknesses and did not completely meet the needs of humanity. Each priest had sins. Each sacrifice was imperfect. What was needed was a perfect priest and a perfect sacrifice. Only such an arrangement could serve the eternal purposes of God and the needs of his worshippers.

HEB 7:19 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 pointed out the nature of sin and the penalty for sin. It did not bring any man to the point

where he was ready to approach the throne of God's mercy and grace. In contrast, the hope produced by the sacrifice of Christ led men into the presence of the Almighty.

HEB 7:20 And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:

The Levitical priests were placed in office as a result of their lineage. But Christ was placed in the office of High Priest with the oath of God behind him that he would be a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedec.

HEB 7:21 (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:)

God does not repent because of his own sin. To God, repentance is simply a change of mind which leads to a change of action. The present verse teaches that God will never change his mind and remove Jesus Christ from the position of High Priest. His office will last as long a man needs a mediator.

HEB 7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

“By so much” refers to the superior method by which Jesus was made High Priest. Not only was

his installation superior, the entire priesthood is superior.

Sometimes the word **diaqhvk**” is translated “testament” as in this present case. Other times it is translated as covenant. Some have said the word testament is lacking here because the testator is truly alive. Others have said the word covenant is lacking because a covenant implies equality on the part of the parties making the covenant. Regardless of the propriety of the English translation, with Jesus as the guarantee, it will be better.

HEB 7:23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

Someone has tallied the number of High Priests who held office from the institution of the High Priesthood until the birth of Christ and arrived at the number sixty-seven. From the birth of Christ until the destruction of the temple at the hands of the Romans, fourteen more are added, making a total of eighty-one. Death claimed every one of them.

HEB 7:24 But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

Since Jesus is the perfect High Priest in quality of life, and since he continues to live and mediate for us in the presence of the Father in heaven, he has a priesthood which needs no further alteration. It will remain until time is no more.

HEB 7:25 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.

The blood of Christ reaches backward to the beginning of time and forward until the end of time. Every man who lived a life of faith, regardless of the time period in which he lived, will be made clean by the blood of our Lord. It will not be a matter of remembering sins from year to year, as it was under the Mosaic Law. Jesus is able to save men utterly and completely. He is our intercessor. To intercede is to plead the case of the one for whom one intercedes. If we were to meet God pleading our own case, we would be hopeless. We have sinned. The penalty of sin is death. However, through faith, repentance and baptism, the blood of Jesus is sprinkled upon our hearts and we are able to stand in the presence of God while Jesus presents us spotless.

Satan will no doubt plead his case that we belong to him as a result of our sin. Jesus will reply, "This one is my own. He or she has been cleansed. They have been sealed with the Holy Spirit in the forehead and in the right hand. They are wheat and not chaff. Thus, throughout life and on into the final judgment, we are secure as long as we hold to the hand of the man from Galilee.

Reach out to him. He is there today. He will be there always.

HEB 7:26 For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

One lady will sometimes say to another, “That hat really becomes you.” She is not as likely to say, “That hat is unbecoming to you.” That which is becoming to a person causes him to be approved by others. Jesus Christ becomes every person who will allow him to act as their High Priest.

The list of adjectives applied to Christ is intended to sum up much of what has been said in the previous verses about his High Priesthood. He is perfectly holy or sinless. He will never harm any man who attempts to follow him. He is unstained by the filth of this world. Our iniquities separate us from our God. Jesus, having no iniquities, has separated himself from sinners and moved into the Holy of Holies. Having passed through the heavens, he has received a name higher than all others.

HEB 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

It was required under the Law of Moses that the High Priest offer sacrifice for himself before he was fit to offer sacrifices for the people. The procedure was very elaborate on the Day of Atonement. Even the common priests, had to wash in the lavers before handling the sacrifices of the Israelites.

There was no need for Jesus to sacrifice for his own sins. There were none. There was a need for Jesus to offer a sacrifice for our sins. He did this once and for all when he died upon the cross and presented his blood in the Most Holy in heaven itself.

HEB 7:28 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.

When the High Priest was installed under the law of Moses, it was always true that he had sin which must be covered. Not so with Jesus. When God swore by his oath that his Son would be priest for ever, there would be no need for any further consecration.

The Hebrew who would forsake the perfect and eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, and attempt to turn back to life under the law of Moses left himself without a host of blessings which were available through the Messiah.

But that is not the end of the matter. The Christian who today decides to turn back to the ways of the world and ignore the way of life has done despite unto the entire Godhead; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He commits spiritual suicide.

Chapter 8

HEB 8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

I am informed that the word **kefavlaion**, which is translated as “sum” in this verse does not indicate a summation of the previous material. Instead, it refers to a crowning point of what has gone before. It had been stated that Jesus is a High Priest after the order of Melchizedec. The readers had been warned that they must open their spiritual ears if they were to understand this similitude. Those who are dull of hearing will not comprehend the importance of the matter. Now, we must ask ourselves, as modern readers, if we are sufficiently mature to perceive this chief point.

The point is that a High Priest after the order of Melchizedec is available to Christians. He is vastly superior to any High Priest to which men might turn as an intermediary between themselves and the Holy and Almighty God. The nature of this superiority may be difficult to grasp, but it is very real, and very important.

Additionally, we need to note that men of every age and every race have realized the need for an intermediary. The sinfulness of man and the holiness of God are altogether too evident to ignore. There must be an intercessor. Sometimes men have turned to the worship of idols which are obviously not perfectly holy. Other times they have appointed their

own priests and priestesses to stand between themselves and that which is perfect. In the days of the law of Moses, God himself provided both common priests and a High Priest from among men.

We also note that Jesus is said to have **set** on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. The Most Holy Place in the tabernacle of old did not have a chair. The High Priest stayed constantly busy from the time he entered until he left. But Jesus has completed his offering. Having completed the offering of his own life, he sits in glory.

HEB 8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

The Most Holy in which Jesus is seated is located in heaven, not in earthly Jerusalem. That fact separates it sharply from the Most Holy of the tabernacle of old. This is the real tabernacle, of which the one built under the supervision of Moses was but a shadow.

We need to ask ourselves just what this true tabernacle is. Is it the church which is described as the temple of God? Or is it far beyond the sky, in the very abode of God? It is certainly relevant to notice the gradual development, from the tabernacle and the temple of the Mosaic age, to the church, or temple of God in the Christian age, to the true tabernacle and sanctuary in God's heaven.

But right here, we may be running into the very difficulties the writer of Hebrews was discussing

when he urged the readers to arise from their spiritual lethargy and pay close attention. I think there is no man on earth who fully comprehends the relationship between the blessings in heavenly places, available to the living, and those which are available in the coming glory which follows the resurrection and the judgment.

In one sense, God has spread his tabernacle over us today within the church. Yet, there is coming a time in which the faithful will tabernacle with him in the city where all tears are wiped away and there is no temple, for God and the Lamb are the temple thereof. In one sense, every faithful Christian dwells in heavenly places today (Eph. 1:3). In another sense, every Christian looks forward to entering the city of gold through the gates of pearl (Rev. 21:21-22).

I do not know about you, my friend. But I am afraid I stand like a first grader in the presence of an examination which might be given to a candidate for a doctor's degree. The degree of understanding of the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ is directly dependent upon the level of spiritual development reached by the seeker.

HEB 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

The High Priest was never to enter into the Most Holy without the blood of animals. Jesus is no exception. He also must present a sacrificial offering.

In his case, it is his own blood. It is the life blood of he who is both Son of God and Son of man. It is the supreme offering. There is none equal to it.

HEB 8:4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

Being a High Priest after the order of Melchizedec, Jesus is not subject to the regulations of the Law of Moses. If he were a part of the earthly system, he could not even be appointed as a priest. He is not of the tribe of Levi, nor the family of Aaron. The law prescribed, the qualifications of the priests, the nature of the sacrifices, and the ceremonies associated with those sacrifices. Christ does not meet those regulations.

HEB 8:5 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.

The reason Christ does not meet them is that they were only types and shadows of the the true tabernacle in which Christ sits today. They were not perfect. They only prefigured that which is perfect.

When Moses was instructed to build the tabernacle in the wilderness, God specifically commanded him to make it according to a pattern

which he was shown. See Exodus 25:40 and Numbers 8:4. We are not told the details of how God revealed this pattern to Moses. However; it is abundantly clear that Moses was allowed to catch some view of the true tabernacle, after which the one he built was constructed.

God does expect men to follow the patterns he has presented. We have patterns for marriage. We have patterns for worship. We have patterns for Christian living. Those who deplore pattern theology deplore the very wisdom of God. The present chaos in the religious world has resulted from the disregard for God's divine patterns.

HEB 8:6 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.

Every priest has a ministry. The priesthood of old was inferior to that of Christ because it was a part of an imperfect covenant. The promises made by that imperfect covenant fell far short of those of the second covenant, of which Jesus is the High Priest. We will see shortly what those better promises were.

HEB 8:7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

The first covenant was ordained by God. Did God produce that which was imperfect? There were two

reasons why that first covenant was insufficient. One of the parties of the covenant did not keep it. And God had promised another covenant which would follow it. That covenant was perfect for its designed purpose. That purpose was to foreshadow the new covenant of Christ.

HEB 8:8 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:

The quotation is from Jeremiah 31:31-34. Israel had been given every opportunity and encouragement to do their part in keeping the old covenant. Because they had not done so, God prepared a new covenant to replace it. This new covenant was to be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, just as the previous one had been made. In the time of Jeremiah we have a divided Kingdom. The prophecy of Jeremiah shows the foreknowledge of God in that a time was to come when both the house of Judah and the house of Israel would once again become one in Christ.

HEB 8:9 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.

This new covenant of which Jeremiah spoke was to be superior to the old one. After God had brought them out of the land of Egypt and carried them on the wings of eagles to Mount Sinai, he had invited them to make that covenant with him. If they would obey his voice and allow him to be their God, he would then nourish and care for them as his people. They agreed to listen to his voice and he promised that as long as they did so, he would be with them.

Before Moses ever descended from the mountain, they were busily engaged in worshipping a golden calf. When they moved through the wilderness, they constantly murmured and complained. When they arrived in Canaan, they turned from God to idols. When he sent prophets to warn them of their danger, they abused the prophets.

Because the people failed to keep the covenant, God allowed them to go into captivity in Assyria and Babylon. After their return from captivity, God sent Jesus Christ as his Only Begotten Son. They murdered him. Shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus looked out over the city of Jerusalem and wept. He pronounced woe upon that earthly city. He proclaimed that their house would be left unto them desolate. The house was the temple. It was no longer God's house. They had made it their own. God abandoned it to the Roman army who demolished it to such an extent that a plow was drawn over the site to show how true the words of Christ had been when he told his disciples there would come a time when one stone of the temple would not be left upon another.

The Jews were to be made a hissing and a byword among all nations.

HEB 8:10 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:

Now the better promises begin to come into view. In order to make a proper comparison between the promises made to Israel before Christ, and those made through Christ, we need to look back to the time of Abraham. It is true that a covenant could not be made with the house of Israel until it exited from the land of Egypt as a nation of perhaps two million persons. Nevertheless, the promises which Israel was to enjoy were outlined to Abraham at the time he was called out of Ur of the Chaldees. Those promises were four in number.

1. Abraham would have a multitude of seed.
2. God would be with Abraham and his seed.
3. Abraham and his seed would receive an everlasting possession.
4. All nations would be blessed through his seed.

Now what we must see is that there was an earthly sense in which these promises began to be kept during the days of the first covenant. And there is a spiritual sense in which those promises are being kept under the new covenant.

HEB 8:11 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.

This is a shocking statement. Is not the Christian religion one of evangelism and teaching? How can it be said that under the new covenant there shall be no need for a man to teach his neighbor or his brother about a knowledge of God?

The answer lies in the fact that all of those under the new covenant received the knowledge of God before they entered into the covenant. This new covenant is reserved for those who are sons of Abraham by faith in Christ Jesus. They are not Abraham's seed by flesh. They are the seed of Abraham by faith. Faith requires a knowledge of the existence and will of God. One enters into the new covenant when he has heard the gospel, believed and confessed Christ to be the Son of God, repented of his sins and been baptized for the remission of those sins. Once this has been accomplished, there is no need to tell that person about the existence of the True and Living God. He already knows him.

This was not true under the old covenant. One became a Jew by being born a Jew. As a child grew, that child had to be taught to know God. Once taught, he could take part in the blessings which were available under that covenant.

We have here a very great difference in the promises of the old covenant and the new. One does not have to be a fleshly Jew to enjoy the blessings

of the new covenant. It is available to both Jew and Gentile.

HEB 8:12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

A second promise, which is far superior, is that of the remission of sins. Every time the High Priest of the old covenant went into the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement, it was a reminder that the guilt of sin was still there, unless some later provision was made. Sins were remembered from year to year. That is not true in the case of the new covenant. Sin is completely blotted out and is remembered no more when one repents of those sins and is baptized into Christ. When the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon the heart of the Christian, the sin is gone forever.

HEB 8:13 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.

Like a garment which has served its purpose. A garment which has been worn until it has holes and must be replaced with another. The old covenant had accomplished that for which it was established. It had demonstrated the need for a perfect High Priest and a perfect ministry. It was about to vanish.

At the time this letter was written, the old covenant was **about to** vanish away. This brings

on further discussion. There is no doubt that this letter was written after the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. According to Colossians 2:14-17, the old covenant was nailed to that cross.

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ (Col. 2:14-17).

If the ordinances of the law were nailed to the cross and taken out of the way, how can it be said that it was **ready to** vanish away? Perhaps this is related to Paul's attitude toward the keeping of the law during his ministry. Although circumcision was nothing to Paul as far as pleasing God, he did encourage Timothy to be circumcized when the Jews insisted upon it. Paul also honored the keeping of vows which were kept under the law of Moses (Acts 21:20-24).

Robert Milligan suggests that the law as a religious obligation was taken away, but that, as a set of civil ceremonies, God tolerated it until the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple and the Jewish nation. The reader will note that in the passage in Acts 21, the **Gentiles** were told they were under no obligation to observe such things. One is

compelled to consider the possibility that the Jew had obligations during this period between the crucifixion and the destruction that the Gentiles did not have.

Chapter 9

HEB 9:1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

This chapter will contain a lengthy discussion of both the structure and furnishings of tabernacle in the wilderness, as well as the services conducted in association with it.

That tabernacle was constructed and operated under the covenant delivered upon Mount Sinai through the agency of Moses. It is contrasted with the later covenant which is delivered through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The ordinances of divine service were the regulations given by God for the construction and operation of that early tabernacle. The tabernacle was built according to the pattern, and it was operated according to regulations given in the law.

That first covenant which God delivered through Moses specified that a tabernacle be built from various materials found in this world. It was constructed and operated by men who inhabit bodies composed of the dust of the earth.

HEB 9:2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.

When one thinks of the tabernacle of Moses day, the entire tent area is usually in view. That is not

the case here. The first tabernacle is the eastern part of the tent. It consisted of an area ten cubits by twenty cubits. It is called the first because as one entered it from the east it was necessary to pass through it before arriving at the second tabernacle. The first tabernacle was called the Holy Place. The second was the Most Holy, the Holy of Holies, or the Holiest of all.

The candlestick was actually a lampstand with seven branches. We are reminded that Jesus Christ is called the Word of God and that the Word is called the light of the world. The candlestick was made of one talent of solid gold. Considering the fact that a talent was equal to about ninety-six pounds, we can see the enormous value of the golden candlestick. Each of the seven branches held oil as fuel for light.

The table of shewbread was made of acacia wood. It was about three feet long and eighteen inches wide. It stood twenty-seven inches high. It had a border of gold around the top. Four rings were fastened to the sides, through which staves could be passed to carry it when traveling. There were utensils of gold, including spoons, cups, and bowls. Twelve loaves of bread, one for each of the twelve tribes, were kept on the table at all times. This time we are reminded that Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life.

HEB 9:3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

We have mention now of a second veil. The first veil was a curtain which separated the Holy Place

from the courtyard outside. One had to pass through that first veil to enter the Holy Place. This second veil separated the Most Holy from the Holy place. One had to pass through this veil to enter into the Most Holy, or Holiest of all.

This veil was made of beautiful cloth of three different colors. These colors were blue, purple and scarlet. It is my belief that the blue represented heaven, or the habitat of God, the purple represented the media between heaven and earth, and the scarlet represented the habitat of man. Thus, in passing through this curtain, one was moving from the habitat of man to that of God. When Jesus died, this veil was rent from top to bottom, indicating that the way from earth to heaven had been blazed.

HEB 9:4 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;

Passing beyond the curtain, one found the ark of the covenant. This represented the throne of God's power and mercy. The ark was a chest about forty-five inches long, twenty-seven inches wide and twenty-seven inches high. It was also made of acacia wood and covered with gold both inside and out.

Inside this ark were three items. There was the rod of Aaron which had given him power to perform miracles, and which budded at one time to show that God had designated Aaron and Moses as leaders

rather than some who had challenged that leadership.

The second item within the ark was the pot of manna which God had commanded be placed there in memorial of his providing the Israelites with food during the wandering. This pot of manna contained one omer, or about seven pints. Both Aaron's rod and the pot of manna disappeared with the invasion of various enemies of Israel. By the time of the Roman victory and destruction of the temple, Pompey found the ark itself missing from the Most Holy Place. There are many extra Biblical guesses about the present location of the ark of the covenant.

The third item found within the ark was the tables of stone upon which God had written the ten commandments. We are not given the dimensions of the tables of stone.

HEB 9:5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

A cover of solid gold fitted on the top of the ark of the covenant. It was about three fingers in thickness. This cover and the cherubim which rose above it were called the mercy seat. The two cherubim were fashioned out of the same mass of gold from which the cover was made. Each of them stood at one end of the mercy seat, facing each other, with both their wings reaching out toward the other cherubim. This is but one example of the presence of angelic beings guarding the presence of God from

human invasion. There were cherubim placed at the edge of the Garden of Eden to prevent man from returning there. There were cherubim embroidered upon the veil which separated the Most Holy from the Holy Place. There were cherubim around the throne of God in the fourth chapter of Revelation.

It was from between the wings of the cherubim that God communicated with the High Priest of old. But even then the High Priest was not allowed to see God. The smoke of the incense obscured God from his sight.

We have a problem now. In verse four, we were told that the Most Holy had a golden censor, in addition to the ark of the covenant. There is no mention of a golden altar of incense. However, in Exodus 30:1-10 we are told a golden altar of incense was placed before the veil, in the Holy Place. The golden censor would have been associated with the altar of incense. There is much discussion over whether the ark was the only piece of furniture in the Most Holy, or whether the golden censor was there also. It is my own view that the statement in verse four above that the Most Holy Place **had** a golden censor simply means that the golden censor was to the Most Holy as a mailbox is to a house. Each house **has** a mailbox, even if the mailbox is not inside the house.

We must not leave our discussion of the furniture before we look at the golden altar. Do not get this golden altar of incense confused with the brazen altar upon which the burnt offerings were placed in the outside courtyard. This golden altar stood thirty-

six inches high. It was eighteen inches on each side. It was made of acacia wood and covered with gold. It had rings into which staves could be inserted for carrying it. There were prongs or horns on each upper corner. Between these horns, the priests burned sweet incense. This reminds us that the prayers of the saints arise before God as a sweet smelling savor.

HEB 9:6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

Now that the furniture of the tabernacle has been described, the author of Hebrews turned to the ceremonies which were held within the enclosure.

The common priests were allowed in the Holy Place, but were not to enter the Most Holy. Twice each day, one of the courses of priests were assigned to take their turn in caring for the lampstand, the table of shewbread and the golden altar of incense. The reader will remember that when John the baptist's father, Zachariah, beheld the angel who announced the coming birth of his son, Zachariah was in the temple, attending to such duties as are mentioned here.

The priests were to light the seven lamps on the golden candlestick each evening, and trim those lamps each morning. They were to burn incense upon the golden altar each morning and evening. The recipe for the incense was specified by God. It

was abuse of such directions which caused Nadab and Abihu to lose their lives.

Each sabbath day, the priests were to replace the loaves of shewbread on the table of shewbread. There were twelve of these loaves. Each of them was made of two tenths of an ephah of meal. An ephah was about equal to a bushel. This means each of these loaves was about twelve pounds. Some commentators described them as being thin and flat. That cannot be correct. They were very likely stacked in two piles of six on each end of the table. Each sabbath, the loaves were removed. They were replaced by new loaves and the priests were permitted to eat the loaves which were removed. It was loaves such as these which David and his men ate because they were hungry and God did not destroy them for doing so.

HEB 9:7 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:

One sees the degree of darkness into which man was plunged in his separation from God by the barriers which existed in the tabernacle. The common people brought their sacrifices to the door of the courtyard for the common priests to take inside and offer on the brazen altar. The common priests were forbidden to enter the Most Holy. The High Priest could only enter the Most Holy one day of the year, and then was prevented from seeing God by the smoke from the incense.

On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest was a busy man. First, he sacrificed a bull as a means of purifying himself and his family from their own sins. He also had to discard his normal robes, wash himself and dress himself in robes of white. Before taking any blood into the Most Holy, he took incense from the golden altar and burned it before the ark. This produced a cloud of smoke which obscured any view he might have of God. He then took the blood from the bull into the Most Holy and sprinkled it seven times on the ark of the covenant. Following this, he went back outside and killed a ram, or he-goat. The blood of this ram was for the cleansing of the people. He took the blood of the ram into the Most Holy and sprinkled it on the ark of the covenant.

It is clear that the High Priest went into the Most Holy more than once. The use of the word "once" in this verse must mean once during the year.

HEB 9:8 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 fact that the High Priest was restricted from passing beyond the veil into the Most Holy was a message from the Holy Spirit that the people had no direct access to God while the tabernacle was standing, and before the death of Jesus Christ. At that time the veil was parted and the way into the Most Holy was opened.

HEB 9:9 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;

By looking at the pattern of the structure of the tabernacle and the ceremonies which took place there, one can see that the system left much to be desired upon the part of the people. The gifts and sacrifices which they offered were strictly for the purifying of the flesh. They were not able to cleanse the conscience.

HEB 9:10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

They had meat offerings and drink offerings. They washed their bodies and obeyed a number of commands dealing with the material creation. However; all of these were only shadows of the cleansing of the conscience which was to come through the blood of Jesus Christ. The times of reformation are the Christian age. With the coming of Christ, a new creation was begun. A new tabernacle is erected. The sacrifices are of a spiritual nature and far superior to those of Moses day.

HEB 9:11 But Christ being come an 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;

The good things to come are certainly the spiritual blessings which arrive through the life, death, burial and resurrection of the Lord.

Jesus passed through a greater tabernacle typified by the Holy Place, and entered into a greater Most Holy. There, he is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high and his blood is available for the cleansing of the consciences of those who would follow him.

But what is this greater Holy Place through which Jesus passed as he entered once and for all into the Most Holy of heaven itself? Although there are many suggestions, I believe it was his life in the flesh. It was when he died upon the cross and his flesh was torn by the spear of the soldier that his blood was shed. John was told, in the book of Revelation, to behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah. When he looked, he saw a lamb which had been sacrificed, coming before the throne of God and worthy to reveal the mystery of godliness to mankind. When his soul departed from his body, the veil of the temple was rent and he passed from life in the flesh to the throne room of God where the blood which he shed is available for sprinkling on the hearts of obedient men.

HEB 9:12 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.

Neither the blood of bullocks or rams is sufficient to wash away the guilt of sin from the hearts of men. Those sacrifices were made every year. They had no eternal effect. It is true that Jesus told a palsied man his sins had been forgiven him. It is also true that Abraham appears to have gone into place where he enjoyed a state of spiritual happiness. But, every case of this kind depended upon the later perfect sacrifice of God's Only Begotten Son for its eternal ratification.

HEB 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

What do the ashes of a heifer have to do with the circumstances we have been examining? A red heifer was sacrificed and her ashes were used to make a water of purification which was for the purpose of cleansing those who had come into contact with the dead, either accidentally or necessarily. As an example, it was necessary for someone to bury the dead. This left them unclean and there was a need for purification. This process then can be added to the blood of the bulls and goats as means of purifying the flesh, but not the purifying of the heart.

HEB 9:14 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?

Compared with the insufficient cleansing power of the blood of beasts, the blood of the only perfect man who ever lived is infinitely better. Reader, have you wondered at the goriness of the sacrifices. Yes, most certainly blood is gory. But, it is very closely associated with life. Sin leads to death. Death is very efficiently represented by the loss of blood. As the blood of an animal or a human leaves the body, the life leaves with it. Every time men of old saw the blood of an animal spurting from its body, they were reminded that the life of that animal had been taken during the sacrifice. The lives of bulls and goats were reminders, but they were, in no way, paying the penalty for human sin. Only the blood of a perfect man had sufficient cleansing power to wash away the sins of men. In one sense, the blood of Christ is a horrible memory. But in another sense, it tells us a perfect life was given for a host of sin stained lives. Life replaced death. In that sense, it is beautiful.

The word “Spirit” is capitalized in this verse. This leaves us with the impression that it was by direction of the Holy Spirit that Jesus was sacrificed. There are some who object to that because Jesus went to the cross willingly. I do not see this as a problem. The relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is so close that each is in complete harmony with the other two. Christ had the Spirit without measure. From all eternity, the will of the Father, the will of the Son and the will of the Holy Spirit were agreed in the necessity of the sacrifice of Christ. It was for that hour that he had come into the world.

The dead works from which the blood of Christ cleanses men are the works of the flesh. These are the works which lead to death. You will note that there is a contrast in this verse between the **dead works** and the **living God**. The blood of Christ can purge our consciences from the guilt of sin which leads to death, and can bring the mercy of God upon us.

HEB 9:15 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.

We will understand this verse better if we read it “Because of this.” As a result of having shed his blood for the remission of sins, Christ is now capable of acting as an intercessor, pleading for our redemption from the clutches of Satan. The cleansing power of his blood not only extends from the cross to the end of time. It reaches back to cover the transgressions which were committed under the first covenant, when the blood of bulls and goats was insufficient. Through his death he has placed the promise of eternal life within the grasp of those who have responded to the call of God.

The New Covenant is called a New Testament in this case because the emphasis is now upon the consequences of the death of Christ. The word rendered testament may be translated as covenant also. The better rendition here is testament.

HEB 9:16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

The Jews ridiculed the idea that the Messiah would be murdered. The Messiah was expected to relieve them of the bondage of Roman oppression. Even the apostles asked that they be placed on Jesus right and left hand when he came into his Kingdom. The argument here is that his death actually marked the initiation of his New Covenant or testament.

HEB 9:17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

Through Christ's death the testament gained its authority. We understand this in the affairs of this world. Why should it be different with Christ and his spiritual testament. He had to die before the testament could take effect.

HEB 9:18 Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

The Old Testament makes it exceedingly clear that blood was an important part of the establishment of the law of Moses.

HEB 9:19 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,

As soon as the entire set of statutes had been delivered to the people, Moses saw to it that both the book of the law, and the people themselves, were sprinkled with the blood of calves and goats. The wool was wrapped around a branch of hyssop and soaked with blood. The blood was then spattered upon the objects which were to be dedicated.

HEB 9:20 Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

Until the blood was applied, the covenant did not stand. For the people to stand in proper relationship to God, blood had to be shed. Life had to be sacrificed, even if it was the life of animals.

The similarity is very strong between this statement of Moses and that of Christ when he instituted the Lord's Supper and said, "This is my blood, shed for you."

HEB 9:21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

Every item which was associated with the worship in the tabernacle had to be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrificed animals. This would

include major items such as the ark, the candlestick and the table of shewbread. It would also include the cups, bowls and spoons on the table, as well as the lampsnuffers, etc.

HEB 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

The word almost is interesting here. This leaves room for some purification to be accomplished without blood. However, this purification had to do with ceremonial uncleanness rather than the guilt of sin. The one who touched the dead was purified by the water of purification, made from the ashes of the red heifer. The meal which the poor offered in place of turtledoves was probably supplemented with a blood sacrifice by the priests. The forgiveness of sin required blood. Eternal forgiveness required the blood of the perfect man, Jesus Christ.

HEB 9:23 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.

It was satisfactory for the moment to purify the earthly tabernacle through the blood of animals. It was not satisfactory for the heavenly sanctuary, after which the earthly one was patterned, to be purified with animal blood. A heavenly sanctuary required a heavenly sacrifice.

HEB 9:24 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 did not enter into the Holy Place in that earthly, worldly tabernacle. It was only a copy of the original in heaven. Christ entered through the veil into the very presence of the Father in heaven. There, he has presented his blood that we might have mercy and stand justified.

HEB 9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

Nor did Jesus have to die every year, as new animals were sacrificed annually. The High Priest entered into the Most Holy with the blood of animals which had no choice as to whether or not they died. The High Priest took their blood and used it to gain access to the Most Holy. Jesus did not have to die repeatedly. His sacrifice was voluntary. His one sacrifice was sufficient for all time.

HEB 9:26 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 not been true, Jesus would have found it necessary to be incarnated, persecuted, crucified and raised from the dead thousands of times, year after year. That was not necessary. Instead, he died once in the end of the Jewish age and through his death, he made possible the remission of sin for faithful men of every age.

HEB 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

It is the general rule that men die once, and only once. There were some exceptions such as Lazarus and Enoch. There will be some who will not die when Jesus returns in judgment. Nevertheless, death and judgment face the vast majority of men. We dare not face the Lord with sin stained consciences.

HEB 9:28 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.

For that reason, Christ came to earth. He took our sins upon his back. As the scapegoat carried the sins of the Israelites out of the camp. Jesus has taken ours away. His suffering and death were a way of escape for us. The only way we can ever repay him is to live our lives in the obedience of faith. Then, when he returns in glory, no longer burdened with our sins, we shall rejoice along with him, over our salvation.

Chapter 10

HEB 10:1 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.

The discussion of the superiority of Christ as High Priest began in the first verse of chapter seven. It is now beginning to reach a climax. In the midst of this chapter we will see a transition from theological presentation to exhortation based on that presentation.

At present, the author is still showing the insufficiency of the covenant given through Moses. There are three levels of observation either stated or inferred. The first level is that of the shadow. One can tell some things about that which casts the shadow. However; there are many things which cannot be observed in the shadow. The second level is that of the image. One can see the image of George Washington on a one dollar bill. This is superior to the shadow, yet falls short of seeing the real man. The third level of observation is to see the reality itself.

The High Priest under the law of Moses was a shadow. Christ in the flesh is the image of God. Someday, the faithful will see the reality of God face to face. We sometimes speak of the starlight age of the Patriarchal period, the Moonlight age of the Mosaic period and the Sunlight age of the Christian dispensation. There is, however, a brighter day

ahead. When time has melted away into eternity, the reality of the New Heaven, the New Earth and the New Jerusalem will replace all that has gone before. We now see through a glass darkly. Then we shall see face to face.

The good things to come are the blessings of the Christian age and of heaven itself. The sacrifices of the Law of Moses only provided a shadow. The reality lies beyond this life in the flesh. Here we only taste the wonders. Then we shall relish the entire feast.

But notice that it was the law itself which is the subject here and not simply the sacrifices decreed under the law. It is the entire law which provides the shadows. It is the entire law which is to be replaced, not just the sacrifices.

The sacrifices offered under the law were repeated daily, weekly, monthly and yearly. This was proof within itself that something more efficient was needed.

HEB 10:2 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 those sacrifices had been capable of blotting out sin forever, there would be no need whatsoever for them to be repeated. One sacrifice would have sufficed for all the sin of all time. That was not the case. When those sacrifices were offered, the worshipper found it necessary to face them again

and again. The guilt of sin remained on their conscience and the penalty of death loomed ahead.

HEB 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Every year on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest repeated the same ritual. You do not remember that which no longer exists. We sometimes speak of the sins being rolled forward to the time of the death of Christ. That is neither a scriptural statement, nor a precise statement. The sins were still there. They could only be said to be forgiven in the sense that when the blood of Christ was shed, they would be removed. The Day of Atonement insured that these sins would be remembered until that time.

HEB 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

Why is it that the blood of bulls and goats is not able to take away the sins of penitent men? First, the sacrifice had to be more valuable than the life of an animal. The life of a man is required. We are also safe in saying that the life of no man who ever lived on earth was valuable enough to cancel out, or wash away the sins of all men of all time. Every man has sinned and come short of the glory of God. Such men are not sufficient to redeem others. The only sacrifice sufficient to redeem all the sinners of

all the ages is the Divine Man, Jesus Christ. His goodness is sufficient to pay such a ransom. The goodness of God is greater than the wickedness of men.

The consequences of sin are bondage, guilt and alienation. Christ is capable of releasing men from the bondage, erasing the guilt and reconciling them to the Father in heaven.

HEB 10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

When he cometh into the world refers to the willingness of Christ to leave the glory of heaven and be incarnated into a body composed of flesh, blood and bone. There was no animal sacrifice, nor any human sacrifice which would accomplish what needed to be done. Sin comes about when man decides to use his body as an instrument of evil rather than an instrument of righteousness. Sin results in death. The only sacrifice which will achieve what mankind needs is a body which does only that which is righteous, and which does so willingly.

Therefore God the Father prepared a body for Jesus Christ to use as he blazed a trail of perfectly righteous behavior in this world. There were times when Jesus wished he did not have to go through the ordeals of his earthly pilgrimage. But the will of God had to be done. We recall his words, *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, thy will be done.* His sacrifice was absolutely voluntary.

HEB 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

God had certainly commanded the offerings and sacrifices of the Law of Moses. Was he not pleased when these sacrifices and offerings were given to him? In one sense, he was. Such actions were a mark of obedience to his will. But, within themselves, they were never enough to pay the debt of sin. God would never be completely satisfied until a ransom large enough to pay that debt was offered.

HEB 10:7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

The volume of the book is, without doubt, the book of the law with its numerous references to the coming of the Saviour of the world. He would come as a perfect sacrifice, and also a willing sacrifice. Remember, the law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.

HEB 10:8 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 four terms, sacrifices, offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings probably include every type of offering and sacrifice made under the law of

Moses. We need to look at the words of Samuel as he rebuked Saul for his disobedient attitude as he sacrificed without the authority of God.

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams (1 Sam. 15:22).

The sacrifices offered under the law could not atone because they did not present the attitude of perfect obedience God required to please him. Obedience will always lead to the proper sacrifices. However; bulls and goats may be presented by the thousands at the hands of extremely disobedient persons.

HEB 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

With the coming of Christ into the world, the situation changed. It is true that the words spoken above were from the mouth of David, as recorded in Psalm 40:6-8. This is no problem. David was not only a type of Christ. He was also a very important ancestor of the Lord. Jesus Christ was often referred to as the “Son of David.” In a sense, Christ was speaking through David.

The reason for the quote is the attitude of submission stated in the Psalm. Jesus Christ came

to use the body the Father had provided for him in perfect obedience, even unto the death of the cross. With his entrance into the world, and the life he lived while here, he paved the way for the establishment of a new and better covenant.

HEB 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The will of the Father and the will of the Son were identical. The perfect obedience of Jesus led to placing of his body upon the cross. While other men have always combined humanity with both righteous and unrighteous behavior, Christ combined humanity only with righteousness. The willing death of a man who had lived in perfect righteousness allowed his one sacrifice to make possible the sanctification of all who will follow him.

That sacrifice, being everything God desired, never needs repeating. It reaches backward to Adam and forward to the end of time. It does not, of course, sanctify rebellious and impenitent men. Such men will die and find themselves facing the everlasting wrath of God if they do not repent. The “once for all” does not teach universal salvation. One cannot continually spurn God in this life and live with him in the next.

HEB 10:11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

It is of interest that the word “standeth” is used. The Levitical priests never sat while performing their duties. Day after day, they came back offering lambs, calves and goats. No matter how many of these were offered, no sin was ever completely abolished. There is no way of knowing just how many of these sacrifices were made.

HEB 10:12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;

Note the word **MAN** in this verse. Christ was not a sheep, goat or bull. He was the Only Begotten Son of God. He was also the son of Mary. As a combination of the Divine and the human, and having no sin of his own, he became the ultimate and all sufficient sacrifice. Having given his life, there was no more need for any other sacrifice, other than the living sacrifices all men are expected to present. With his sacrificial activity concluded, he sat down on the right hand of the throne of God. His administrative responsibilities as King of kings continue.

HEB 10:13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

There will be no end of his reign at the right hand of God until there is a complete victory over every foe. This complete victory is pictured in both 1 Corinthians 15 and in Revelation 19. The kings

of Biblical times often celebrated their victory by placing their foot upon the neck of the vanquished king to show the finality of the victory. Every knee shall sometime bow, and every tongue will sometime confess that Jesus Christ has a name above all names.

HEB 10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

God commands that man be perfect. One of these commands is found in Matthew 5:48, "*Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect .*" A second is from 1 Peter 12:16, "*Be ye holy, for I am holy.*" There is some reason to believe this may mean acceptability with God. Job was called a perfect man in his generation. Abraham was said to be perfect. Both are said to have committed sin.

Even so, there is a way by which men can be accounted as perfect and holy. When the blood of Christ is sprinkled on a believing and penitent heart, that person becomes both perfect and holy in the sight of God. His sins are remembered no more. If he continues to walk in the light, the blood of Christ will continually cleanse him (1 John 1:5-7). That blood does not have to be offered every year. In addition, that blood maintains it's cleansing power from generation to generation and from century to century throughout all time.

HEB 10:15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,

How is it that men can be so positive that they have been purified and cleansed? It is because the Holy Spirit has spoken on the matter. Through Jeremiah, God had spoken in the long ago.

HEB 10:16 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;

As an inspired prophet of God, Jeremiah, told of a new covenant which would be made in the days to come. It would be different in several ways. The laws of that New Covenant would be implanted in the hearts of men. Through the example of the Son of God, men would be made to realize the truth and obey it because of its nature.

HEB 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Here is the crux of the matter. When the New Covenant had replaced the Old Covenant, sins would no more be remembered every year on the Day of Atonement. They would be completely blotted out. When man forgives, he normally remembers the offense. When God forgives, there is no more remembrance. The guilt of that sin is gone forever.

HEB 10:18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

The word translated “remission” means literally to “send away.” The scapegoat was sent out into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement. Christ has taken our sins away in a far more efficient departure. There will be no more offering for sin. If one rejects the blood of Christ, he need not expect another channel of forgiveness. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit have done all they are going to do in opening up a way of escape.

HEB 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

The author of Hebrews is now ready to lay out the responsibilities which rest on us because of the Divine sacrifice. For most of the remainder of the book of Hebrews, our obligations will be pressed upon us.

The High Priest of Israel dared not enter the Most Holy Place without the blood of animals. His life would have been forfeited if he had entered without that blood. With the blood, he became bolder and felt safe in entering. It is the same with us. We would have no right to enter into the presence of God with our petitions, or even our praises, unless we come with hearts purified through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. With the blood of Christ, we may come before God and cry out, “Abba, Father.”

HEB 10:20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

Men have attempted many and various ways of communication with divinity. Jesus said, "*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*" (*John 14:6*). All those who try to enter in any other way are thieves and robbers. The only successful way to the throne of God's mercy and grace is through Christ.

Like many other items of the tabernacle, the veil was typical. The torn veil which was rent from top to bottom at the time of the release of Christ's spirit from his body, represented the opening of the barrier between man and God. There were cherubim embroidered on the veil. There were cherubim stationed at the edges of the Garden of Eden to keep men from the direct presence of God. When the flesh Christ was rent, the veil parted. The way from earth to heaven was made evident through his life and death in the flesh. We will not find our way into the presence of God unless we do so by offering our own bodies as a part of the body of Christ today; that is the church. As he passed through the flesh, we also must pass through it. It is a living way rather than one made of concrete or asphalt. As reported by Burton Coffman, "All other ways are dead end streets."

HEB 10:21 And having an high priest over the house of God;

The House of God is the church of God. We are blessed beyond measure by having had Christ establish himself as our High Priest. We must not neglect such an unbelievable offer from our Father in heaven.

HEB 10:22 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.

There are two basic requirements for approaching God. We must first have honest and sincere hearts. God has always hated hypocrisy. The double minded or double tongued person should not expect to be heard. There are religious groups who believe in sprinkling as a mode of baptism. Baptism is immersion, not sprinkling. The only sprinkling which takes place in the redemption process comes from the Divine side when the blood of Jesus is sprinkled on the heart. The only heart upon which it will be sprinkled is a true and penitent heart.

The second requirement is that the body be washed with pure water. This forever blocks any argument that baptism is not essential to salvation. The levitical priests had to wash their bodies and put on clean garments before offering sacrifices. The person who wishes to approach the throne of God today must have the blood of Christ sprinkled on the heart, and must have the body washed in the water of baptism.

Once these two requirements are met, the petitioner may come before God in complete confidence that all will be well with his or her soul. Jesus Christ has made it possible.

HEB 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

We profess our faith by allowing all men to know of our belief in the Sonship of Christ and the wondrous promise of eternal life. We must not faint. If we remain faithful and unwavering, we may be certain he will keep his promise. Our labor will not be in vain.

HEB 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

The word “provoke” is a negative word in modern minds. We do not like to think of provoking someone. However; the word is used here to mean “stir up into action.” The idea is to encourage our fellow Christians to serve God with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. It is to stimulate our brethren to bring forth fruit of the Holy Spirit.

HEB 10:25 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.

Mutual edification among Christians is vitally important. Early Christians recognized its importance to the extent that they would allow almost nothing to prevent them from the first day of the week assemblies. Such meetings on the first day of the week may well have begun while Jesus was still with the apostles, after his resurrection from the dead.

There are many assemblies that may draw Christians from their own assembly. To allow other interests to take priority over the gathering of the brethren is to place ourselves in tremendous danger.

What is the “day” which is seen approaching? There are at least four suggestions which have been made: (1) The Lord’s Day on the first of each week, (2) The Day of Final Judgment, (3) The Day of destruction for Jerusalem and the Jewish nation, (4) The day of one’s own death. Since verse twenty-seven makes it so clear that the one who forsakes the assembly will have to answer in the judgment, I feel the context demands that it be that day. Nevertheless, the assembling on the first day of the week provides the opportunity to exhort others that they may be presentable on the day of judgment.

HEB 10:26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

Now just how serious is the neglect of assembling one’s self with the saints when they come together? It is so important that God considers it willful sin and says it forfeits the wonderful sacrifice which has been described throughout much of the this book of Hebrews, and particularly in the material from chapter seven until this present point.

If one can only approach God’s throne with the blood of Jesus, it is incredible that anyone would reject him. Once one has received the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God, he must not ignore that

evidence. To deliberately refuse to encourage the fellow saints in the weekly assembly is to ignore the evidence. This is not ignorant sin, committed without knowing better. It is high-handed sin. In the Old Testament, God refused to accept sacrifices for high-handed and presumptuous sin.

HEB 10:27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

If one turns Jesus down, he has left himself without a means of access to God. He has made himself an enemy of God. He is without hope. The earth was once destroyed by water. The next time, it will be destroyed by fire. The enemies of God will not stand. They will be fed to the fire as the chaff which is separated from the wheat (Matt. 3).

HEB 10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:

Moses' law named several sins for which death was the penalty. When one broke those laws, there was no mercy. When the guilt was proven, death followed. The man who was found picking up sticks on the sabbath was stoned to death.

HEB 10:29 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?

With a blessing so much more valuable than any of those made available under the law of Moses, one can easily see why the punishment for despising the commandments of the New Covenant would be much more serious.

What has the man done who forsakes the assembly? He has spurned all three persons of the Godhead. First, he has insulted God by rejecting the saving power of his Son. Second, he has insulted Christ by refusing to follow his example and considering his blood as inconsequential. Third, he has insulted the Holy Spirit by ignoring the revealed will of God in the inspired scriptures.

Dear Reader, it would not be wise to insult the king of any country on earth. Consider how foolish it is to insult the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

HEB 10:30 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.

God is the final Judge. We may escape the judgments of men. Human judges can be bribed. Human courts may fail to obtain all of the evidence in the case at hand. Judges and juries may be

prejudiced. It is not so with Jehovah. When a man stands before him in that last day, all things will be open before his eye. He will not be deceived in any way. He will not fail to do right.

How horrible it will be for those who have declared war against the God of heaven. When he takes vengeance, men hide under the mountains and cry out for them to fall upon them. Teeth gnash and cries of anguish ring out amidst groans of pain and tears of regret. Alas, the regret will be too late.

HEB 10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Many persons in days gone by have learned the lesson stated in this verse the hard way. Uzzah learned it when he reached out and touched the ark which was being carried on a new cart rather than with the staves God had commanded. Nadab and Abihu learned it when they offered strange fire on the altar of incense. The prophets of Baal learned it when they lost their lives in a contest with Elijah, the prophet of God. The list goes on and on. There will come a time when all men, both dead and alive, will be called upon to face God's open books. If they are found to have neither known God or obeyed his commandments, they will face his fiery wrath.

HEB 10:32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;

The readers of the book of Hebrews are urged to recall the times shortly after their conversion when they exhibited such a strong faith they were able to endure each and every obstacle, no matter how terrifying. Dear reader, if you have never spent any time with Fox's *Book of Martyrs* you would do well to locate a copy and spend a little time perusing its pages. There, you will find examples of the very type of afflictions mentioned. Many of these experiences are almost beyond description. The mind becomes numb after reading ten or twenty pages. These readers had survived the horror of those days. They must not give up now. Nor, as present day readers, do we dare to do so.

HEB 10:33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

The word **qeatrizovmenoi**, which is translated as “gazingstock” implies they were displayed in theatrical fashion as a spectator sport. It is said that Christians were smeared with tar and were impaled on poles as one would run a stick through a weiner. Then the pole was stuck into the ground and the flame from the roasting person would be used to give light for theatrical events. At times, Christians were forced to fight with hungry animals. Then again, they were pitted against each other. The victor was then forced to fight again and again until he met a foe who was stronger.

They had not only managed to survive those days of agony. They had gone to the aid of their fellows who were worse off than they were.

HEB 10:34 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.

The writer knew very well about this latter boldness. He had been in bonds himself. When others found out about his plight they did everything possible to make him more comfortable and give him hope. This is one of the verses which persuades many students of the scriptures the writer was Paul the apostle. While confined under guard, Paul had received assistance from other Christians such as Onesimus and Timothy.

The Christians who had lost their possessions to those who were cruel enough to rob them had not given up. When their earthly goods were taken, they looked upward for help and remembered that they had treasures laid up in heaven where thieves could not break through and steal. The things of this earth will pass away. Those riches that are laid up in heaven will never be lost.

HEB 10:35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward.

The Lord himself is our example of patience and poise in the face of affliction. When he was reviled, he reviled not again. When they cast lots for his garments at the foot of the cross, he gazed down upon them and prayed, *“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”* The reward for maintaining a steady path toward heaven is well worth the effort. There is no way we could possibly suffer enough, or labor hard enough, to earn the glorious reward which waits. Notice it is not called wages. It is called reward. When one finds a billfold on the street and returns it to the rightful owner, one is not paid for the act. The return was not done in anticipation of remuneration. However; very often a reward is offered. God’s reward will bring joy and great gladness.

Recently I watched what was called an “iron man triathlon” on television. One of the contestants was attempting to win it for the seventh time. It was not to be so. Another contestant passed this person in the last quarter mile of the race. The one who had been passed collapsed and had to be given water. After some ten minutes the individual managed to rise and walk in staggering steps for the last few hundred feet. When the finish line was crossed, the spectators gave a tremendous cheer to the person as a reward for the effort. My friends, we may have to stumble along for the last days of this Christian race. If so, the book of Hebrews can be a source of encouragement. The reward waits.

HEB 10:36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

I visited a very elderly man this week who loves to attend worship services. He is now very feeble. He has had a stroke and for a couple of years he has only been able to take short mincing steps. Others have led him by the hand to make sure he does not stumble and fall. He has finally reached the point where he is just not physically able to get to the building. When I told him we were missing him at the services, he replied in a pitiful trembling voice, "I can't get there." He has shown the patience God is talking about when he says, "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."

HEB 10:37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

It will not be as long as it might seem. Jesus said, "I come quickly!" Only the Father in heaven knows when the end will come. But we are warned to be constantly ready. All too soon this life will fly away. When that day comes we must be among those who cry out with joy and not with sorrow. We must be counted in the friends of God and not among his foes.

HEB 10:38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

This is a quotation from Habakkuk 2:3-4. It can be taken in two different ways. One can read it with the emphasis upon the word **live**. In that case it means the one who maintains faith unto the end will live in heaven. The quote can also be read with the emphasis upon the word **faith**. In that case, the meaning is that the pattern in this life must be one of faith. Perhaps it is best to combine the two ideas. If we do that, the person who lives by a life of faith now, will live in heaven later as a result of that faithful life.

HEB 10:39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

This chapter closes with a ray of hope. These Hebrews had been dull of hearing. Some of them had been forsaking the assembly and were dangerously close to the precipice of apostasy and descent into the lake of fire and brimstone. That did not prevent the writer of this letter from telling them to move ever onward toward perfection. Those who failed to do that would cast their lot with the ungodly and the angels of Satan. Those who lived by faith would, on the other hand, receive the crown of life which is laid up for them that believe and obey.

Chapter 11

HEB 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

We have just been told, “The just shall live by faith.” We now have a chapter devoted to a definition and numerous examples of that faith by which the just shall live.

According to our author, faith has two vital characteristics. First, it is a foundation. The English word “substance” is a very good translation of the Greek here. Christian life and service is laid upon the Christian’s faith. If there is no faith, there will be no obedience or service. You cannot build a superstructure without something on which to build. Faith and hope are not identical. Faith brings forth hope. With faith there can be hope. Without faith there is no hope. Hope requires confident belief plus expectation. The hope of heaven requires belief in the reality of such an abode. It also requires expectation that one will someday attain that abode.

Second, faith is based on evidence. The man of faith does not actually sense that on which his faith is fastened. But neither does he act upon blind guesswork. Let us note an example from the life of Jesus. The Lord once asked some fishermen to forsake their nets and follow him. He promised to make them fishers of men. They did what he asked. They had not yet seen the men for which they were to fish. They did not know how they were to do the fishing. However; they believed Christ and acted

upon his instructions. Did they act blindly. Not at all. They had been present when Jesus was baptized. At that time the heavens opened. The Holy Spirit descended and alighted upon Jesus. God spoke from heaven and declared this to be his Beloved Son in whom he was well pleased. Thus the disciples had evidence upon which to make their commitment.

Religious faith and secular faith have much in common. The scientist in his laboratory makes use of faith every day. He does not see an atom. Nevertheless, on the basis of the observations he and others have made in the past, he is confident that these unseen objects exist. He is so confident, in fact, that he will spend much effort and time in setting up new patterns of action, called experiments, based upon that confidence.

Yet there is also a sharp difference in religious and secular faith. Secular faith has its origin in the observations and the logic of men. The source of religious faith is the declared Word of God. Once one has examined the overwhelming evidence that the Bible is a divine message, reason demands that the honest man **believe its facts, obey its commands, heed its warnings and hope for its rewards.**

HEB 11:2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Such a pattern of life is precisely that of the ancient people of God. The word “elders” in this verse does not mean persons of mature years. It refers to those who have lived many years ago. We

are to be given an extended list of God's faithful from days gone by. Each of them is approved of God and commended for their confidence, trust and obedience. It is of great importance to have a good report card from God. These individuals had one.

HEB 11:3 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 are taken all the way back to the first chapter of Genesis. You see, faith sometimes reaches into the past, sometimes into the present and sometimes into the future. Faith causes our belief that God created the cosmos which we see around us from nothing. Once there was no universe. Now there is. Only God can make something from nothing. Faith causes us to believe God sustains this universe, that he brought the plagues upon the Egyptians, that he fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness, that he caused Christ to be born of a virgin, that he raised him from the dead, and that he lifted him up to his right hand and made him our High Priest and our King.

Faith causes us to believe there is presently a God in heaven, that he hears and answers our prayers, that he knows and cares about his children on earth. It causes us to believe Christ presently brings our petitions before the throne of mercy and grace, and that wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he is there in the midst of them. It

causes us to have confidence that the Holy Spirit is capable of guiding us into the paths of righteousness, and giving us all the support we need to overcome every adversary on our way to the City of God.

Faith causes us to believe both the Father and the Son will keep their promises; that there is a crown of life waiting for those who are faithful unto death; that these corruptible, mortal bodies will someday be replaced by those that are immortal and incorruptible, and that Jesus will return to take us to a mansion which he will have prepared for those who love and obey him.

Yes, dear reader, faith is past, faith is present and faith is future. The man who despises those who live by faith, and considers Christians to be intellectual cripples, is blinded by secular near-sightedness.

HEB 11:4 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.

Both Cain and Abel offered a sacrifice to God. God accepted the sacrifice of Abel. He rejected that of Cain. This brought on the first recorded murder. It happened shortly after a worship service, and it was perpetrated by a man against his own brother in the flesh. What caused God to say the sacrifice of Abel was by faith while the sacrifice of Cain was not by faith?

Romans 10:17 informs us, "*So therefore faith*

cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” God had obviously given instructions as to the nature of the sacrifice Cain and Abel were to offer. There is strong reason to believe Cain’s offering was offensive to God because it came from the vegetable kingdom rather than being a blood sacrifice. This is not absolutely certain. Some of the sacrifices God commanded later, under the law of Moses, were meal offerings. However; there is no doubt God had given clear directions as to the objects to be sacrificed and the manner in which the sacrifices were to be offered. Abel offered as God directed. Cain did not. Therefore, Abel has the everlasting testimony of God that he was a righteous man. He trusted God and acted in accordance with that trust.

HEB 11:5 **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.**

Very little is said of Enoch when he appears on the scene in the fifth chapter of Genesis.

GEN 5:18-23 *And Jared lived an hundred sixty and two years, and he begat Enoch; And Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died. And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: And Enoch walked with God after he*

begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years:

There are two references to Enoch in the New Testament. One is found in Jude 14 where he is said to have prophesied the coming of the Lord with ten thousand of his saints. The other is the one here in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

Enoch enters the record here because he was an outstanding example of faith. Through that faith he pleased God. Because he was pleasing to God, he was translated and did not see death. One other person was translated in similar manner. That was Elijah the prophet. It seems that both of these individuals were translated in such manner that their friends wondered at their disappearance and sought to find them without success.

HEB 11:6 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.

Verse six very naturally follows the fact that Enoch pleased God because of his faith. Without faith, no man can please God. Enoch must have believed two very critical things. First, he believed God exists. Second, he believed God rules the universe in a moral manner. He rewards the faithful and punishes the unfaithful. The same principle is active in every age. God exists. God knows our works.

There will be a final judgment. God will reward and punish according to our works.

Faith will cause men to zealously seek out the will of God. Having found that will, they will attempt to obey it. Faith is not doing that which seems righteous in our own eyes. God sharply condemned the idea that man could follow his own religious traditions or his own philosophical conclusions. Religious tradition is often a dead end. The contradictory conclusions of human philosophers prove the danger of following them. However; the revealed will of God in heaven is never misleading. Enoch was a wise man.

HEB 11:7 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.

In the midst of a generation whose thoughts were on evil continually, Noah was found to be in sharp contrast. When God decided to cleanse the earth of its spiritual corruption, he warned Noah to prepare an ark that would make the salvation of his wife, his sons and their wives possible. Noah believed God and eight souls survived the flood.

From the human standpoint, such a flood was inconceivable. At this time the earth was watered by a mist which arose from the ground. The water cycle we know today had not begun. There was no

way Noah could have predicted a rainstorm which would last for forty days and forty nights. Nevertheless, he respected God's wisdom and power. He even set out to preach to the wicked people of his day. We can almost hear them mocking and reproving him for trying to meddle in their affairs.

There were two very critical results of his obedience. He condemned the world. Every man who preaches the will of God, either by word or by deed, condemns those who hear and see his life. The moment they reject what he preaches, they are condemned. They remain condemned as long as they continue to mock God.

The second result of Noah's obedience was that he became an heir of the righteousness which is of faith. Every man who is faithful to God has the righteousness of God imputed unto him. This is something only the Father in heaven can bestow. He is righteous. Through faith we become his righteous children, and therefore his heirs.

HEB 11:8 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.

When God decided to build a faithful family, he spoke to Abraham, who at that time lived in Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham was told to leave his country, his family and his people. God promised a replacement for all three. He would have a family as numerous as the sand of the sea or the stars of

heaven. He would become a blessing to, not one nation, but all nations of the earth. He would be led to a new land and a new city with foundations which would never be shaken.

HEB 11:9 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:

Without having the privilege of seeing the land of promise, Abraham believed God and set out for that land. He was led to the land of Canaan. Yet Abraham realized God had something far more important in mind. Abraham never considered earthly Canaan to be the land which had been promised to him. Although Abraham was a very rich man with large herds and flocks, he wandered around in Canaan without ever owning a single acre of that land. It is true that he purchased the cave of MacPhelah for a burial place. But he did not make use of it until after his death.

HEB 11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The city of Ur, in the Chaldees was a city whose foundations would some day be shaken. The earthly city of Jerusalem fit the same pattern. Abraham was not satisfied with either of them. The city which he sought was a spiritual city. It was a city whose

foundations, walls, gates and streets were built by his own Maker.

I am reminded of a statement which was credited to Albert Einstein. Einstein lived a very simple life. Much of the time he spent at home was limited to a small bedroom. It had a bed, a plain chair and little else. Someone asked him one day why he did not liven up the atmosphere with a few more nice furnishings. His reply was that he tried to live in such a way that he could part with any of his possessions at a moment's notice.

Christians have their citizenship in heaven. They have laid up their riches there. They are convinced their names are enrolled there. Jesus has gone to prepare a mansion for them. He has promised to return and take them to where he has gone. We also should live in such a manner that we could part with earthly possessions at a moment's notice

HEB 11:11 Through faith also Sara 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.

The careful student will wish to take a very close look at this verse. Some of the Bible scholars believe the King James has a mistranslation. The two Greek words **katabolhn spevrmato** translated as "conceive seed" are literally "to throw seed against." This is a masculine act rather than feminine. Sarah's name may be used in a passive sense here. The

passage invites further investigation.

Clearly Sarah had also passed the age of childbearing. She laughed when she heard of the possibility of her giving birth to a son. She had reached the age of ninety. Her words were, “*After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?* ”

HEB 11:12 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 in-numerable.

God’s promise of a multitude of descendants has been kept, both physically and spiritually. Physically, there may have been hundreds of millions alive at one time or another. Several million Jews and Arabs are presently spread over much of the earth. The number of spiritual descendants is also very large. Every obedient man or woman of God is a child of Abraham by faith. It is as impossible to count them as it would be to count the stars or the grains of sand.

HEB 11:13 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.

Who are the “all” mentioned here? Apparently Abraham and his companions are in view. We must not forget, however, that the author has mentioned

four heroes of faith, Abel, Noah, Enoch and Abraham. No doubt various promises were made to Abel, Noah and Enoch, as well as to Abraham. In Jude 14, which we noted previously, Jude prophesied of the coming of the Lord with ten thousand of his saints. He must have received this information as a promise. All of these were men of **faith**. Neither Enoch nor Abraham experienced the Christian age.

Still, there is a focus on the wanderings of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. These individuals had visions of things to come. They were fully persuaded that life on this present earth was but preparation for something far superior. Strangers and pilgrims do not settle down. They are not at home.

HEB 11:14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

A person who sees himself as a stranger and a pilgrim has made it absolutely unmistakable that he is looking for a country which he can call his own. The Greek here for country carries the meaning of “father land.” Persons who move from the country of their birth and settle in a new country sometimes refer to the native country which they left as their fatherland. Abraham and the others mentioned just above had not left their fatherland. They were seeking for it.

HEB 11:15 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 companions had desired to do so they could have returned to Ur of the Chaldees. God would have allowed them that privilege, if they were willing to take the consequences of ignoring his will.

God does not force men to become Christians, or to continue to walk the Christian way. Vast numbers of people have begun to march with the Master, and have then turned back because of a greater fondness for the world. They will, of course, face the consequences of departing from God.

HEB 11:16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Human eyes have never seen; human ears have never heard; human minds have never conceived of the wonders of that land which God has readied for the heirs of salvation. There is a New Jerusalem. There is a new heaven and a new earth. There are new and spiritual bodies ahead. We are given just a hint of the great contrast in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians when the body which is raised is said to be as much more glorious than the one which is sown, as the sun is brighter than the stars.

HEB 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had

received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

Just how firmly was Abraham convinced that God would keep his promises? He was so sure that he was willing to sacrifice Isaac his son as a burnt offering when God commanded it.

Remember dear reader, this was Abraham's hope of seeing God's promise of a multitude of descendants come true. For many long years Abraham had waited and prayed. He and Sarah had given up and tried to assist God by allowing Abraham to have a son by Hagar. Finally God had done what seemed impossible and given them the power to bring a child into the world. Now God had commanded that the child be killed. How could the promise be kept? As one commentator expressed it, "That was God's problem, not Abraham's." If God had caused a ninety year old woman and a one hundred year old man to bring a child to life, he could certainly bring that child back to life after his father had sacrificed him.

When we are told in this verse that Abraham had received the promises, the meaning is not that the promises had been fulfilled, but that the promises had been made.

HEB 11:18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

Before Isaac was born, Abraham had even requested God that Ishmael might be used to provide a means for obtaining the multitude of descendants God had promised. God denied the request and said

that Sarah would bear him a son, and that in that son, Isaac, his seed would come.

HEB 11:19 Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

When Abraham took Isaac and left the rest of his traveling companions behind, he told them they would return. Abraham intended to come back from the altar with his son alive. One hint as to how he expected this to be done is found in his reply to Isaac when Isaac asked him where the lamb for the offering was. He said, God will provide himself a lamb. Abraham may have been convinced God would change his directions and provide a lamb in place of Isaac. The other possibility, and I believe it is a much stronger one, is that Abraham believed God would allow him to sacrifice Isaac, and would then bring him back to life. This verse seems to favor the latter view.

The word “figure” is used often in the Bible. Many times it is the Greek **tupo**, usually translated as “type.” This time it is the word **parabolh**. This means to “throw down beside.” In other words, it is not exactly the same, but has many similarities when laid down beside something else. Thus, Abraham did, in a sense, receive his son back from the dead. He had already drawn the knife back to kill his son when God intervened. In his mind, Abraham had already killed his son.

We have our answer to the question, “Just how much did Abraham believe in God and trust his

commandment?” He trusted enough to plunge a knife into the heart of the son in whom his entire hope of the fulfilment of God’s promise lay.

Some of the readers will have heard of Brother Marshall Keeble’s illustration of faith. He said if God commanded that he try to run through a brick wall, it was his job to do the running, and God’s job to make the hole.

HEB 11:20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

The chain of faith did not stop with Abraham. Abraham believed God would continue to work out his plans for the blessing of the nations through Isaac after Abraham was dead. Isaac held that same confidence. When he was old and ready to die, he blessed Jacob and Esau with full confidence that his own death did not mark the end of God’s promise. Jacob, in particular, was to be a key figure in the plan of redemption.

HEB 11:21 By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

The fact that his death was very near at hand did not prevent Jacob from looking ahead. He also blessed Joseph’s sons. Joseph would be extremely important in the continuation of God’s plans for blessing all nations. Joseph would be instrumental in bringing Israel into Egyptian bondage and

teaching them the importance of freedom. The freedom which they grasped in escaping from Egypt would be typical of the freedom men may cherish in Jesus Christ.

HEB 11:22 By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Notice how many times forms of the word “die” are found in this chapter. God’s promises transcend death. Men come and go. God’s promises go on. Joseph was so confident God’s plans for Israel would proceed that he commanded them to take his remains with them when they returned to Canaan.

HEB 11:23 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.

Saving faith is never separated from works. Faith without works is dead. Faith resulted in Amram and Jochabed hiding Moses and saving him from the decree of Pharaoh that all Hebrew male babies be drowned in the river. Moses was placed in the river, but the river provided the means by which God saw that he was taken to the palace of Pharaoh himself and protected by Pharaoh’s own daughter. God’s plan for man was not defeated. Moses would

lead the Hebrews from bondage.

Moses parents did not fear the commandment of Pharaoh. There is no need for any man of God, no matter what the time or circumstances, to fear men. God takes care of his own. If they are tortured or killed in this life, they inherit life eternal.

HEB 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

Moses refusal to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter was no small event. He gave up a possible succession to the throne of Egypt. He turned away from the luxury and vice which would have been available in the palace. He forfeited tremendous riches. He was separated from boyhood friends and from the affections of the woman who had taken him from the reeds in the river and nourished him as her own child.

HEB 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

In place of all those things just mentioned, what did Moses obtain? At first sight it would seem that he gained nothing. He found himself in the wilderness near Mount Sinai, keeping the sheep of Jethro. Later, he was to become the leader of the people of Israel, but only to suffer the constant murmuring and complaining of the people over lack

of food, lack of water and what they perceived to be poor leadership on his part. Ultimately he was punished by being prevented from leading the people into the land of Canaan because he lost patience with them and spoke inadvisably, not giving glory to God (See Psa. 106:32-33).

HEB 11:26 Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the re-compence of the reward.

All those things which Moses suffered because he chose a life of service to God and God's people rather than the pleasures of Egypt are called the reproach of Christ. There are several reasons why these trials might be called the "reproach of Christ." First, they are similar in nature to the reproach Christ suffered when he also attempted to lead people to the new and better promised land. Second, it is likely that Moses knew Christ would follow him. Remember that he said a prophet would follow who would be like unto him.

Deut. 18:15, 18-19 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; . . . I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that

whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

When Moses compared the riches of Egypt with the value of that which was to come through Christ (The Prophet of whom he spoke), he considered the rewards of the Kingdom of Heaven as immensely greater. Paul made a similar comparison when he said all that he had given up to follow Christ was as dung when compared to that which he possessed in the service of the Saviour.

HEB 11:27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

It was not primarily because Moses feared the wrath of Pharaoh that he left Egypt. It was because he had caught a vision of the one to come, who could not at that time be seen. He had made a choice. The choice was to serve God in moving toward the blessing of all nations.

HEB 11:28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

Moses probably had only a shadowy view of the Saviour who was to come. He could hardly have been expected to understand the significance of the the passover feast which he helped to initiate. We, however, in the end of the ages, have seen its full

significance. The first passover was a memorial which looked back to the release of the Hebrews from the bondage of Egypt. It also looked forward to the sacrifice of Christ as the true Lamb of God who has released men from the bondage of sin. The Lord's Supper took the place of the passover. It looks backward to the release from the bondage of sin, and looks forward to the return of Christ to take the faithful to the real promised land in heaven.

HEB 11:29 By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

Israel received a severe shock as they left Egypt. They had come to the edge of the Red Sea. The horsemen and chariots of Pharaoh were bearing down upon them. There was apparently no way of escape. From the human viewpoint all was lost. But all was not lost. They had faith in God, and God had the answer. Moses was told to stretch out his hand over the Red Sea. When he did as God commanded, an east wind came up and the water was separated so completely that they walked on dry ground to the other side. It took considerable faith to walk through the wall of water which formed on both their right hand and their left. What would happen if the water closed back in while they were in the middle of the sea?

We are made perfectly aware of what would have happened when the Egyptian army, who had no faith, attempted to cross at the same point. The waters

did close in upon them. They were utterly destroyed. God's plan moves ever forward.

HEB 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

After the Hebrews had wandered for forty years in the wilderness because of their lack of faith, God finally guided them into Canaan from the east of the Jordan rather than from the south where the land had first been spied out. The first city they came to was a fortified city. Jericho had protective walls which had been placed there for just such circumstances as now existed. From human wisdom, it would have been ridiculous to think about untrained men such as the Hebrews breaking through those walls and invading the city.

When men's faith and God's power combine, walled cities do not stand in the way. After marching around the city of Jericho once a day for seven days, followed by seven times on the seventh day, the priests were told to blow loud blasts on their trumpets. When they obeyed God's command, the walls of the city crumbled and fell flat. Every man was able to march straight forward into the city.

God's plan of building a nation through whom the Saviour would come, went on uninterrupted.

HEB 11:31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Joshua 2:1-22 records the account of Rahab's cooperation with the plan of God. There is some disagreement over whether the word which is translated "harlot" indicates that Rahab was a woman of the night. I believe she was. The word is **povrnh**. It is the base word from which we get our present day English word "fornication." Some do not like to think of a prostitute being listed in the genealogy of Jesus Christ. This woman does seem to be the Rahab found in Matthew 1:5 as the wife of Salmon. It may be that Rahab departed from her evil ways and became a respectable woman after taking part in the protection of the Hebrew spies. Even if not, it would be wise for the majority of us to be cautious about an ancestor of Christ more than a dozen generations back not having the best of reputations.

I recently found it possible to trace my own lineage back ten generations to a stonecutter who immigrated from England. There were a couple of preachers in the list. At the same time, there was also one who had advertised that his wife had run away and he needed help in getting her to return!!

We must not fail to note that now God's people were in the process of taking the land. When it was done by faith, things went well.

HEB 11:32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets:

There were so many other persons who lived by faith that the author of Hebrews knew there was neither time nor space to give a list of all of them. He decided to list six more and then start discussing them in groups.

We will first take a look at each of the six who were listed individually. Gideon led a small band of 300 men to victory over a large army of Midianites and Amalekites. Because Israel followed the instructions of the Lord precisely, the opposing army became confused and started fighting among themselves (Judges 6-8).

It is very surprising to find Barak listed as a man of faith. Deborah was judge of Israel at the time of Barak. Deborah called Barak to her and told him the Lord had directed him to take an army of ten thousand men to fight against the army of Sisera, a general with nine hundred chariots under his command. Barak hesitated. Finally, he decided to go if Deborah would go along and accompany him. This sounds like cowardice. It may not be. It is possible that he perceived Deborah as a leader approved by God. In that case, he would have been placing the battle in God's hands.

Samson was a judge of Israel who fought fiercely against the Philistines. At the time of his death when he brought down the temple of Dagon upon both himself and the Philistines, he was responsible for destroying a large number of them. It is true that Samson had a multicolored life. He was easily led astray by foolish women. The author of Hebrews is not dwelling upon his weaknesses. He is pointing

out the portion of Samson's life which fit into the progress of Israel in the taking of the land from the Philistines. There were others also who were wicked and idolatrous (See Judges 13-16).

Jephthah was the son of a concubine. He was somewhat reckless and brash. At one time he vowed that since God had given the Israelites victory over their enemies, he would sacrifice the first thing that came out of the door of his house to God. It was his daughter who came out. Again, the writer is not concentrating on the weaknesses of Jephthah. He is pointing out his victory over the enemies of God through his faith and trust in Jehovah (Judges 11-12).

David is the next one mentioned. David's faith in God is well documented. He was the one who while still a lad, questioned the full grown men of Israel's army as to why they did not go out to meet the giant Goliath. What was it they feared? If God was with them, there was no need for trembling. Then, with his sling and a small stone, he dropped the giant in his tracks and cut off his head. It was this David who wrote so many of the beautiful Psalms telling of God's wisdom, power and goodness.

Samuel is mentioned by name, but is grouped with the prophets in general. Samuel loved God and tried to serve him with all his heart. He was responsible for teaching in a school for the prophets. He traveled in a circuit judging the people of God and settling their differences. Late in his life he challenged anyone to show of an instance where he had defrauded any of God's people in any way. None spoke up.

Others of the prophets are then listed without giving individual names. We could add the names of Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah. . and on and on.

HEB 11:33 Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.

What did some of these faithful men do? A list is given. I will try to make an orderly chart naming someone who did each of the things mentioned.

HEB 11:34 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.

Gideon subdued the Midianites.

Samuel was righteous enough to survive any accusation against him.

Joshua obtained fulfilment of God's promise that Israel could take Canaan.

Daniel stopped the mouths of lions.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego quenched the violence of fire.

Elijah escaped the sword of Jezebel and Ahab's soldiers.

David became strong while still a young boy and defeated Goliath.

Joshua put Sihon and Og to flight because God sent hornets before Israel.

HEB 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

There were several women who received their dead back to life. Elijah raised the son of the widow of Zarephath. Elisha raised the son of a Shunamite woman. In New Testament times, Jesus raised the son of the widow of Nain. These were all persons who were working with God in bringing about his eternal plan.

Torture became common during the time of the Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes. The gruesome events of that time are almost beyond belief. There is an historical account outside of the Bible of a man named Eleazar who was ordered to eat pork which was unclean to the Jews. When he refused, he was tied to a large wheel and beaten to death. On another occasion a woman was forced to watch her sons tortured. Their hair was pulled off their heads, taking the skin with it. These people chose to suffer the torture rather than disobey the commands of God. These latter events are not recorded in the Bible but are from historically dependable sources.

Now what was the better resurrection which they expected to obtain? Better than what? If one is killed as a martyr in the service of God, there is a resurrection far better than being raised back to this life as in the cases of the sons of the woman of Zarephath and the Shunamite woman. The better resurrection is the one which lifts the faithful from the grave to the very throne of glory.

HEB 11:36 And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

Jeremiah was mocked and thrown into a well with water in it, where he sank into the ooze. Many were scourged and imprisoned during the time when Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the church. Then Paul himself was beaten and imprisoned. As he became the persecuted instead of the persecutor.

HEB 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

Stephen was stoned to death. Extra Biblical traditions tell us Isaiah was tied between two boards and sawn apart. Some were tempted. This does not sound severe enough to be listed with the other horrible persecutions above. It may well be even more difficult. I am not certain that Jesus suffered more on the cross than he did in facing Satan at the beginning of his ministry.

It is likely that the entire list above has its limits within the pre-Christian ages. The very last verse of this chapter would indicate that, in that it talks about us in the latter days being made perfect with them.

HEB 11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in

mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

At any rate, the world which thought God's people were the scum of the earth, were quite mistaken. God's people have always been **light** and **salt**. It is the man who rejects God and his children that has become an abomination. Perhaps not an abomination in the sight of this world, but certainly an abomination in the sight of the True and Living God who knows the real value of men.

HEB 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

God is the one who passes out the valid report cards. As was said early on in this chapter. Without faith it is impossible to please God. With a living, active and obedient faith, men may rest assured that they have obtained a good report from the one who determines the final rewards and punishments. This lengthy list of the faithful did not receive the great promise while they wandered as pilgrims and strangers. The blessings of salvation from sin and a place in the heavenly city which stands upon foundations made by God waited for them until a later day.

HEB 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

The better thing which we will share with the faithful heroes of the past is life in the eternal City of God. It is true that we now enjoy a taste of heaven upon the earth. We have been given the earnest of the Spirit and have tasted of the heavenly gift. With the coming of the resurrection and the judgment, a new era will begin. Then that which is perfect in the fullest sense will have appeared. The perfect law of liberty will have led imperfect men to the blood of Jesus which will have washed away the guilt of sin and the wages of death. All death sorrow and tears will have passed away. Corruptible and mortal bodies will have been exchanged for those which never die and never decay. The light afflictions of this present life will have been shown to be just that by the great weight of glory which shall shine forth from the children of God.

Is this not worth our enduring unto the end. We must not be among those who faint or draw back unto perdition!

Chapter 12

HEB 12:1 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,

A conclusion in the form of an exhortation is to be drawn from the list of heroes of faith produced in the last chapter. They are a great cloud of witnesses who should spur us on to perfection. The term “cloud” is used to indicate a very large mass of them. As a cloud overshadows the sky, this cloud of witnesses is so great that it should not be ignored.

In what sense do these faithful heroes of the past witness? Do they witness **to us**, or do they witness **us**? There are two functions of a witness. The person can be a witness because he has observed some truth or action. He can then serve as a witness when he informs others of what he has observed. Some believe this cloud of witnesses are spectators who are observing the faithful today and urging them on to the completion of their faith. Others hold that the witness is through the Word of God as it speaks to us of their faithful and obedient lives. The just shall live by faith. These have witnessed to us the meaning of that statement.

I lean toward the latter view. I believe chapter eleven was written to show those who came afterward that faith must be put into action, or else it will not save. At the same time, I cannot completely

rule out the possibility that the faithful dead are aware of our efforts to please our Father in heaven. The rich man and Lazarus both were aware of the plight of the brothers who were still alive.

Regardless of the sense in which the faithful of yesterday are witnessing to us. The exhortation of the Hebrew writer should still inspire us. I like to apply the message here both ways. These past heroes have provided me an example which I cannot ignore. I would also like to think they know of my struggles and that they rejoice when I make progress in running the race myself.

HEB 12:2 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.

My father once gave me some wise advice while I was growing up on the farm. He told me that if I wanted to plow a straight furrow the first time across a field, I should keep my eyes on some object at the other side of the field. As long as I kept my eyes on that object and steered straight toward it, the furrow would not waver. He was absolutely correct. But his good advice was not limited to plowing the earth. It applies in so many other areas of life.

Jesus is the object at the other end of the field of life. He is the one upon whom our eyes must be fixed if we are to live by faith. His is the perfect life.

If we keep our eyes constantly upon him, we will not waver or faint. In both senses of the word “witness”, Jesus fills the bill. He has already run the race. Furthermore, he watches anxiously as we attempt to follow in his footsteps.

From the beginning of our faith to its end, Jesus is critically involved. It is in Christ that our faith begins. He is with us every step of the way. He will go with us even through the valley of death, if we remain true. We must confess him to become Christians. We must call upon him to mediate and intercede for us every day we live. Then we must die in him in order to rest from our labors.

This means we will have to make the same choice Jesus did with respect to trials and suffering. Jesus considered the rewards of being faithful to the Father far more weighty than the fleeting pleasures of this present world. He did not want to go to the cross. It was a shameful death, reserved for the most hideous of criminals. At that time it carried the same shame and terror as a hangman’s noose or a guillotine.

Who would think of a hangman’s noose in the same breath with the cross today? When Jesus died upon that cross in the first century, it was forever changed. It no longer stands for shame and disgrace. It speaks of love for others, self-sacrifice and glory. Jesus himself urged men to pick up their own cross and follow him. The light affliction of the present is nothing to compare with the joy which waits for those who serve in patience and in hope.

HEB 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

What contradiction is referred to? The word translated as “contradiction” is **ajntilogivan**. Literally, it means to speak against. But, in this case, it includes far more. It takes in every thought, word and deed Satan and his agents could muster in their efforts to defeat the Son of God. We will never know just how fierce the battle was that raged around and inside our Lord. If he could finish the race and say with confidence, “It is finished.”, we ought to take heart and move forward. We cannot fall short. We must be faithful unto death, even the death of the cross if that becomes necessary.

Paul, the apostle, showed us the dual nature of the struggle. We fight against the foe on the outside and also on the inside. We war against our own lust and pride. We also war against sinners who would discourage and destroy us from the outside. But, we must overcome every obstacle if we desire to inherit the promise of eternal life in the presence of God and his faithful children for ever.

HEB 12:4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

How far must we go in our attempts to please the Father? The answer is clear. We go to the last step of the way. The readers of the Hebrew letter

were still alive. Jesus was not alive. He resisted unto blood. James was not alive. He had been put to death by Herod. Stephen was not alive. He had been stoned to death by the unbelieving Jews. Thousands more could be added to this short list. For these martyrs, God had a special affection. He informs us in the book of Revelation that the martyrs will live and reign with him for a thousand years. I understand this to mean the cause of Christ will overcome the world. And so, dear reader, do take up your cross and follow him. If it means the spilling of your own blood, face it with the confidence that others have trodden that same pathway. It leads to glory.

HEB 12:5 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:

A reference is now made to Proverbs 3:11. *My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction.* Solomon, the wise man, had much to say about children's obedience to their parents. Among his admonitions was this one which informs us of the value of chastisement. While Solomon spent much time on the relation between parents and children, this time he was talking about the chastisement of God's children by their Father in heaven. When we are chastised by the Lord, we are not to kick back at it or complain that we must

endure it. Above all, we must now allow ourselves to give up and quit. The attitude must be, “Lord, I have sinned. What must I do?”

HEB 12:6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If you escape chastening of the Lord, it will be because you are not one of his children. Even after God gives up on his children because of their apostasy, they will still undergo suffering because of the way the universe is made. One does not step off a ten story building. The law of gravity will not be repealed simply because one has ignored it. The spiritual laws which God has placed in operation cannot be ignored. Pain, sorrow and death will result.

But in a very special way, God looks after the children who seek to please him. When they go astray he will guide them back into the ways of righteousness. Sometimes it will only require a gentle nudge. Other times, it may take a severe spanking. Nevertheless, as long as you are God's child, and he has not given up on you, there will be corrective measures taken. You may expect it.

HEB 12:7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

What kind of a Father would God be if he failed to discipline his children both positively and

negatively. God disciplines us positively when he provides Jesus Christ as an example and the Holy Scriptures to furnish us completely unto every good work. He must be expected to discipline us negatively through punishment and discomfort when we do not walk in the light.

In the world of the 1990s, there are a multitude of sons and daughters who have never learned the meaning of discipline. A wave of undisciplined adults has now engulfed the earth. These grown men and women are still babies. They have temper tantrums when they do not get their own way. Now a babies' temper tantrum is fairly easy to handle. But when a grown man or woman throws a tantrum, they can cause great destruction. This is especially true if they happen to have entered into a marriage relationship, or have gained a supervisory position in business or government. The world would have done well to ignore the advice of Dr. Benjamin Spock with his permissive philosophy, and paid more attention to the wisdom of Solomon and of the writer of Hebrews. A wise parent will reward his children for proper actions. He will also chastise his children in loving kindness when they go astray.

HEB 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

In the sixth verse, the writer had said God chastises the children whom he receives. What kind of a child would not be received? A bastard child

would not be accepted as worthy of attention. Now God is not so morally corrupt as to produce bastard children. God does not have any illegitimate children. Therefore, all of his children will begin their spiritual life by being received of him.

There is, however, a problem. If one turns away from God and denies him as his Father, God will ultimately give up on him. The first chapter of Romans gives us a picture of what life becomes for those who have been privileged to know God and who have then decided they would rather be the sons of Belial. It is not a very pretty picture.

HEB 12:9 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?

I hope you were fortunate enough to have been raised up by a father who loved you enough to correct you. My own father was a very strict man. When he spoke, he expected me to listen. I was not told four times to get a pitchfork and put hay down for the cattle. I was told once. If I ignored his directions, disaster followed. I knew that for the most part, my father wished to see the work on the farm go well and that work included my own maturity. I needed to learn to behave in a correct manner.

I appreciate my father for caring enough about me to make those corrections. Now that I have raised children of my own, I know he did not enjoy the

discomfort he gave me in scoldings or corporal punishment. (Yes, I did say corporal punishment. Let me explain. Corporal punishment is punishment administered to the body. Part of the time this was administered to the posterior of my body a little below the belt line.) Try it fathers. It works!

If you and I respect our earthly fathers and honor them for their concern, why should we not respect and honor the heavenly Father? The question answers itself. We should!

A point of special interest is found here. What is the meaning of the Father of spirits as compared with fathers of the flesh? The commentators are far from being agreed on this. I will not give a list of the different views. I think the true meaning is quite easy. A physical life was begun when our earthly parents brought us into this world. But, in order to become a child of God, a person must be born a second time (John 3:3- 5). The natural life comes to an end when the spirit is separated from the body. The spiritual life comes to an end when the spirit is separated from the presence of God and condemned to the lake of fire. Our fathers in the flesh could train us for this temporal natural life. Only God can train us for a perfect and eternal spiritual life in heaven. If you object that the soul continues to live after consignment to eternal punishment, I deny it, and point out that spiritual existence separated forever from God is not life. It is death!

HEB 12:10 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.

Earthly fathers are not always perfect in judgment. On occasion I was convinced my father made a bad error in punishing me when I did not deserve it. I also felt he missed a number of opportunities to praise and reward me for tasks well done. The “few days” mentioned in this verse turned out to be about eighteen years in my own case. Then I left home and his chastening largely came to an end. On a few occasions Dad’s discipline smacked more of his own pride and lost temper than it did of guidance for me. That will not be true of the Father in heaven. He will never make errors of judgment. He will never chastise to satisfy his own selfish feelings. The chastening of the Lord is always applied in order that his children may grow up and pass from glory to glory until they see him face to face.

HEB 12:11 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.

We would not need chastening if we did not require a change of direction. The directions we take are the result of applying our will. It is not usually pleasant to have our will changed from the outside. Even the tiniest baby will cry when it does not get

its way. The older a person gets, the more discomfort he feels when his will is thwarted. This is true whether or not his will is taking him in the right direction.

Therefore, it is grievous to be chastened. Our will must be overcome. The more stubborn the will, the greater the discomfort will be. The child weeps bitterly when effective chastisement is given. Soon, however, the little child crawls back into its father's lap and places its arms around his neck. It wants to be sure father still loves it. The time comes when even the strong willed teen ager who is finding himself or herself and shouts out, "I hate you.", returns to say "Thank you Dad."

Cultivating corn is an interesting parallel to raising a child. As the shovels of the cultivator move past the growing corn plants, the roots of the plant are sometimes disturbed. But when the weeds are removed, the corn grows rapidly into a mature plant which brings forth dark green leaves and full rowed ears.

Some of God's own children become disobedient and refuse to be exercised by discipline. They will not accept it. If this attitude does not change, they will lose their inheritance. Paul described such children as having fallen from grace.

HEB 12:12 Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;

In this verse we are reminded of the tired runner in a foot race. The coach has told him time and

again to keep his arms up and not let them hang down. He must keep up his gait and not lose stride. No matter how weary the Christian may become, he must cross the finish line standing.

He has help. Jesus Christ promised to send the Comforter to help us along the way. In this instance the Holy Spirit is called a **paraklete**. A paraclete was one who ran alongside and encouraged the runner. All of us have seen races in which a runner was so tired he could hardly stand up as he approached the finish line. One of his friends would then run alongside him at the edge of the track and encourage him to be strong. With the help of the Spirit of God, we can finish!

HEB 12:13 And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Feet that wander aimlessly will have a more difficult time reaching the goal. Feeble knees and hands that hang down go along with wandering feet. If this continues, it is possible that the individual will never arrive at the finish line. The thing to do is reach out for healing. I have noticed in the long endurance races, persons will be stationed along the course with nourishment for the runners. There is spiritual nourishment available for the Christian who is willing to receive it. That nourishment is found in the study of the Bible, the fellowship of the brethren and the comforting power of the Spirit of God. There is much healing power. We need not fall or turn back before we finish.

HEB 12:14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

A few years ago there were two female runners who were superior to the rest of the runners in an international race. During the race, one of the runners stepped on the foot of her competitor. Neither of them won the race. Some observers felt the interference was intentional. If this was true, it is an apt illustration of the lesson being taught here. Bitter rivalry among Christians prevents the most effective running of the Christian race. Holy and peaceful cooperation will insure the best possible performance by everyone concerned. When Christians bite and devour each other the Devil dances with glee.

HEB 12:15 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 potato bin in the cellar was filled in the fall of the year. At that time the potatoes were firm and well formed. There was not a rotten one in the bunch. Later on in the winter one could see a potato here and there with soft or rotten spots. We knew it was time to get those rotten potatoes out of the bin. If we did not, they would pass on their rot to the rest of the bin.

It is the same with the Christian family. Any root of bitterness will spread until the entire family

is harmed, and some will even lose their spiritual lives. We must keep our eyes fixed upon the Christ who, having finished the race, waits patiently for us to finish also. If we do not, we may become the rotten potato that spreads its bitterness to many others.

A root is expected to produce nourishment for the entire plant. A root of bitterness will not bring forth pleasant fruit to the glory of God.

HEB 12:16 Lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Jehovah despises fornication. He also despises profanity. If persons with such tendencies manage to enter into his family, they can produce just the sort of lameness and defilement that has been discussed in the previous verses. Any such persons need to be either healed of their sin, or delivered to Satan through disfellowship.

Fornication in either form, fleshly or spiritual, can be deadly. The persons who are guilty have cut themselves off from God. Those associated with them run the risk of picking up their evil ways. The world looks on with amusement at the contrast between the claims of the Christian family and the practices of such members. Sexual appetites were given to men for a holy purpose. It is a mockery of God to turn these appetites into lascivious orgies.

Was Esau a fornicator? The Old Testament says nothing about fleshly fornication on his part. I tend

to think two classes of persons are addressed in this verse. One class is the fornicators. The other class is profane persons such as Esau. Either type is dangerous to the health of the family of God. We must be careful to recognize the difference between verbal profanity in which the name of God is taken in vain, and the more general profanity in which valuable spiritual blessings are discounted as Esau did in the case of his birthright and his blessing.

HEB 12:17 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.

Esau regretted his folly after it was too late. He stood to inherit a double portion of the family wealth. And, as the eldest son, he was in line to be the patriarch after the death of his father. He gave all of this up for a simple bowl of bean soup. Even more, he cut himself off from the direct ancestry of the Messiah.

When he recognized his mistake, he begged for a reversal of the results. This was not to be. Even tears upon his part did not affect the outcome of his actions. There comes a time in our departure from the will of God that certain deeds cannot be removed from the record. We may even be personally forgiven. The problem is that the others whom we have defiled may never be reclaimed for the Lord.

HEB 12:18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

Why be so careful? Why is there so much concern? It is because we are approaching God. We can partially understand this by considering the events at the time the Hebrews came to Mount Sinai to receive the law. The entire mountain seemed to burn with fire. Yet upon the summit of the mountain there was a gigantic and fearful set of events. As if it were a tempest or a thunderstorm, the day turned into night. It was a terrifying experience for all of the Israelites.

HEB 12:19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

From out of the darkness came a voice which sounded like a thunderous trumpet. The people were so shaken they cried out that the voice be heard no more. They could not bear up under it. It was clear that they were in much danger, being this close to God.

HEB 12:20 (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:

The people were told not to touch the mountain. Only Moses and Aaron were given permission to move upward upon its sides. Not only were the people to refrain from touching the mountain; the beasts were not to walk upon it. If an animal did so, it was to be stoned or speared. Both of these methods of killing can be accomplished at a distance, thus the people did not even have permission to touch an animal which had touched the mountain.

HEB 12:21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

Although Exodus does not record the fear of Moses, Deuteronomy 9:4 tells us this great man trembled with fear. I have heard claps of thunder that caused me to want to hide somewhere when I was a young boy. I can imagine the horror which comes upon people when a hurricane is headed toward their home. I believe the emotions of the Israelites were something like that as the law was delivered through Moses.

HEB 12:22 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,

The conversion of a Christian means he has made an approach to God which is even more impressive than the meeting between God and the Hebrews at

Sinai. The mountain we come to is a mountain of spiritual might rather than one made of rocks. And built upon this Mount called Zion is the City of God, the New Jerusalem. Thus far it had been in preparation in heaven. But with the coming of Jesus Christ, it became the future abode of the faithful. Although not living in it, they can claim it as their true home. It is to be their eternal home. They have a mansion waiting in that holy and spiritual city.

The number of angels serving God is uncountable. There are ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. When the names of the saints are written in the book of God, these angels await their coming.

HEB 12:23 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,

The Christian has come to a vast assembly of spiritual beings. Some are angels. Some are the dead who have passed on before them. The family of God is not limited to the true church on earth. God has a family both in heaven and on earth. What a joy it is to realize that millions and millions have passed the test and are ready to welcome us when we have also proven faithful.

Nor do we need to worry about this family of God being defiled. The Judge of all the earth is God. He will do right. No wicked will pass his judgment. No righteous will be rejected. When the books are finally

opened and the names are called out, you and I must live in such manner that Jesus Christ will confess us as his brethren, and children of the Heavenly Father.

HEB 12:24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

The covenant to which the Israelites came was one which defined sin and spelled out the consequences. No man kept that law perfectly. Every man was condemned until the New Covenant replaced it. We now have a captain, a mediator and an intercessor who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty. Jesus took his own blood with him as he entered the Most Holy to plead for us. The Hebrews did not have that blood while they were alive. They had to wait until the sacrifice was made upon the cross before their sins could be completely and eternally removed.

Yes, the blood of Christ does speak better things than that of Abel. The blood of Abel spoke of murder and jealousy. The blood of Jesus Christ speaks of love, grace and mercy. We must listen to the message of Christ's blood. To reject it is to crucify him afresh. To receive it is to make his suffering and agony worth while.

HEB 12:25 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:

Men who rejected the Word of God as given through Moses died without mercy. Some were burned up by fire, as with Nadab and Abihu. Some were swallowed up in the earth, as with Korah. Some died by pestilence, sword and famine.

We deceive ourselves when we think God is not going to hold us accountable for our response to his love. Peter tells us it is not because God is slack concerning his promises that we continue to exist. It is because he desires that all men come to repentance. We shall no more escape from his wrath than those early Hebrews. It may not happen instantly as it did in the early Christian days when Ananias and Sapphira died on the spot after lying to the Holy Spirit. But, we will give answer to God for the way we have dealt with his blessings.

HEB 12:26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

At Sinai it was only the earth that shook. The time is coming when the entire universe will be shaken. The very elements will be melted and the earth will be burned up with all the works which are in it. The reference is to Haggai 2:6. The same topic is found in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22.

HAG 2:6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

ISA 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

ISA 66:22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.

It is my conviction that the shaking has already begun. It began with the entrance of Christ into the world. This shaking will continue until the Kingdom of God stands victorious over all opposition. In a sense, we live today in a New Heaven and a New Earth. However; there is much that is still impure. When the mystery of God has been finished God will have presented the gospel message to the entire globe. Men of every tribe and nation, kindred and tongue will have had the chance to deal with it as they will. Then, when God has made up his family, he will replace this physical abode with a new and permanent spiritual home for the righteous.

There is much mystery involved. Some believe this present earth will be cleansed by fire and will be changed so radically it will be unrecognizable, much as a corn plant is different from the seed which was planted in the ground. Others believe the word of Peter in 2 Peter 3 leave no room for any trace of this heaven and earth whatsoever. I think the matter is too deep for us.

But one thing is certain. God is preparing an abode for a prepared people. If our faith is strong enough, we will see it. If we faint or fall away, we will not hear our names called out from the book of life.

HEB 12:27 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.

The people of Biblical times were quite aware of the demolition power of earthquakes. Many of their buildings had large pillars with chapiters on the top. After an earthquake, these beautiful pillars would be found lying on the ground in many pieces. Many things seem to be indestructible. Great mountains seem as if they had existed forever. They have not. Closer examination often reveals fossils buried in the layers of the mountain. Even the mountains have come and gone. Someday everything which is not eternal will be eliminated. Even time itself will be no longer. When that happens there will be some things that will outlast the changes. Among these things are the three persons of the Godhead, the souls of the righteous and the Heavenly City.

HEB 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Day by day throughout the years God has been building his kingdom. When the temporal things have been eliminated and only that which is eternal is left, the Kingdom of God will stand proudly. God will protect it and cherish it in that Everlasting Day.

We will be a part of that joyous environment if we do not faint. Only service in reverence and honor throughout our lifetime will allow us to enter into heaven.

HEB 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Much preaching is done these days proclaiming the love and mercy of God. We certainly should not fail to present that side of the God we serve. Nevertheless, there is another side of God which is just as real and just as motivating. He can be just as severe as he is good and merciful. We must never forget Romans 11:22.

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off (Rom. 11:22).

Chapter 13

HEB 13:1 Let brotherly love continue.

The author has now completed his extensive argument for the superiority of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant. This last chapter will conclude the letter in much the same way that Paul concluded so many letters to which his name is attached. The pattern is much the same as the Roman letter. A lengthy argument is presented. Then the readers are urged to live lives in harmony with the information which was produced.

There are several ethical principles listed: brotherly love, hospitality, concern for persecuted fellow Christians, respect for marriage, avoidance of covetousness, contentment and trust in God, as well as respect for church authorities.

What a wonderful world we would have if all men and women were Christians, and if all Christians lived by the principles covered in this list.

The first in the list is the love of the brethren. Our example is Jesus Christ. He loved us enough to die for us. If he loved us, we should love one another. One of the foremost fruits of the Holy Spirit is that love for the brethren is shed forth in the heart.

HEB 13:2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Love is not to be confined to the brethren with whom the Christian is constantly associated. Strangers are also to be treated hospitably. We in modern America do not understand the important place of entertaining strangers in New Testament times. Preachers like Paul and his associates had to move across the country many times. There were no hotels or motels as we know them. The inns of the day were usually places of bad reputation. One could be robbed of everything he had and left beaten or even killed.

The reference to entertaining angels unawares no doubt refers to Abraham. This man of faith took in three strangers who later turned out to be angels. By befriending them he gained the approval of God and may have saved the life of his nephew, Lot.

The passage does not teach that we today are likely to have angels for visitors if we invite strangers in. The lesson for us is that by aiding those in need, we will be placing ourselves in a position where we may be blessed beyond our expectations.

HEB 13:3 Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Many Christians in the first century were imprisoned and beaten. When the apostle Paul was in prison some of his fellow workers did all they could to alleviate his discomfort and see that everything possible was done to spread the good

tidings of the gospel. Every Christian belongs to the one body of Christ. The church is his body. When one member suffers all suffer. When one member rejoices, all members rejoice.

HEB 13:4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

The King James Version makes the first part of this verse a statement. Many of the later versions present it as a command. Both forms are instructive. We certainly should keep our marriages and our attitudes toward marriage upright and honorable. It is also true that God approves of marriage relationships and uses them to bring new life into existence. The attitude some take that one is more pure and holy remaining single than by being married is not a scriptural position. Sex is not filthy when experienced within the bounds God has set.

God hates fornication and adultery. They pollute and dilute the marriages into which they intrude themselves. God's abomination for them is so strong he describes the worship of other gods as spiritual adultery.

There is a difference between adultery and fornication. Adultery occurs when a third party is injected into a marriage. Fornication is a more general term involving any illicit sexual relationship, including homosexuality and even bestiality.

HEB 13:5 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.

The word “conversation” here is more than speech. It includes the entire manner of life. It is a way of life that cherishes that which belongs to another. The person who is covetous is never satisfied with that which he or she has. There must always be more!

Covetous persons have two serious flaws in their thinking. First, they place entirely too much confidence in the power of the things of this world. Second, they have a very low opinion of the willingness and ability of Jehovah to care for their needs.

HEB 13:6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

The quote is from Psalm 118:6. In the great commission Jesus stated that he would be with the faithful unto the end of the world. David said, God would be with him even through the valley of death.

The last few verses of the eighth chapter of Romans must be considered in parallel with the words of this verse.

ROM 8:31-37 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give

us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

HEB 13:7 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.

I believe this verse has been misinterpreted by many of the commentators. They insist on applying it to such persons as Stephen and James who had been martyred for the cause of Christ. This position is taken because the verse says to consider the end of their conversation. This is seen as looking at their completed life. That conclusion is not demanded by the grammar. It can just as well mean for the readers to think about what faces the person who is faithful. The “end of their conversation” is a present life of godliness and a hope of heaven hereafter. God's children do not have to be dead for an observer to realize this is the outcome of their faithful lives.

The word which led the King James translators to translate as “rule over you” is the Greek

hjpgoumevnwn. It does carry the meaning of governing. Those who have the rule over you are the elders of the church. They are to be examples for the flock over which they have been made overseers. They are to rule through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Their words of wisdom are to be heard and their lives of holiness are to be followed.

HEB 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

This verse naturally follows what has just been said about following the faith of the eldership. It also leads directly into the next verse. Jesus Christ is not driven about and changing from day to day. His teachings were once for all delivered to the saints. They are stable and can be depended upon in every age until the end of time.

There are two solid reasons why Jesus is the same always. He is divine and divinity does not change (See Mal. 3:5). He is also perfect and any change would bring imperfection.

HEB 13:9 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 person who follows Christ has an anchor of hope. He will not be blown about by every new teaching which comes along. His heart will be firm and steadily fixed upon the words of the Saviour.

It seems clear that someone among those of the readers had been teaching that certain meats must could be eaten and others must be avoided. This was being taught as a religious doctrine. There are several passages in the New Testament teaching that dietary restrictions are insignificant in the Christian age. Cornelius was taught this in the tenth chapter of Acts. Timothy taught the same in 1 Timothy 4:1-6. Paul taught it in Romans 14:17.

It is true that some persons will be instructed by their physicians to avoid certain foods. But such instructions deal with the physical or mental health rather than with any spiritual benefit.

HEB 13:10 We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

Under the Old Covenant and also among the pagan people, sacrifices were made to God, or the gods. Then a part of the meat of the sacrifice was eaten by the priests and by those who offered the sacrifice.

We, as Christians, also have an altar upon which sacrifice has been offered. The Great Sacrifice which was offered on that altar is Jesus. Now those Jews who did not believe in the divinity of Christ had no right to eat from that altar. Believing Christians do eat of it. They do so in partaking of the Lord's Supper. They also eat from it when they nourish themselves with the Bread of Life and refresh themselves with the Living Water which is found in the teachings of

the Master. Neither Jew nor Pagan may eat from that altar. By their unbelief they have disqualified themselves.

HEB 13:11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

Some of the sacrifices under the Old Covenant were burned outside the gates of the camp. The blood was taken by the High Priest and offered at the altar. This was typical of the sacrifice of Christ.

HEB 13:12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

When Jesus was crucified, the event took place outside the gates of Jerusalem. It was as if he was considered garbage by the Jews who despised him. Yet his blood provided the atoning power of the New Covenant. He entered into the Most Holy of heaven itself to take his seat at God's right hand and make intercession for those who would follow him.

HEB 13:13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Any who seek to take advantage of the saving power of Christ's blood will find it necessary to separate themselves from the camp of earthly Israel

and join Christ. They cannot remain inside the city which can be shaken.

Just as Jesus bore the reproach of the cross, every man who seeks to become a part of his body will have to muster the courage to share in whatever reproach may come their way as a result of uniting with him.

HEB 13:14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

The city of Jerusalem and the Old Covenant are not eternal. They may be shaken and removed. The Christian seeks the New Jerusalem, the New Heaven and the New Earth. None of these will ever be destroyed.

It is true that the New Jerusalem is still to come down from heaven. We only have our names enrolled. The time will arrive when the faithful will actually be caught up in the air to meet the Lord and be with him forever. Then we will abide in that city along with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the others who were listed among the heroes of faith in chapter eleven. They admitted to being pilgrims and strangers here. We must do the same.

HEB 13:15 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.

Although Jesus offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice only one time upon the cross, there are

other sacrifices which he expects his brethren to make. They are found at three levels. They begin with the thoughts of the heart. This is followed by the fruit of our lips as we confess his name and present our thanksgiving to all three persons of the Godhead.

HEB 13:16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

The third level is that of acts or deeds. A vital part of Christianity is in loving and caring for fellow Christians. To communicate is to share our joys and sorrows as well as our possessions, our hopes and our understanding of God's truths. We are one body. We must act accordingly. Such things are the sacrifices with which God is pleased in the age of Christ.

HEB 13:17 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.

The same word is used here that was used previously in verse seven when the readers were told to follow the example of those who had the rule over them. I believe it to be the same group of persons. The Greek is not that which is normally

used for the elders. It is **hjgoumevnoi**. There are three words usually used for the elders. They are **poimen**, **presbuteros** and **episkopos**. However, those to whom Christians are to submit and who look after their souls must be undershepherds who serve under the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

The most honorable service on this earth is entrusted to those who watch over the tender ones of the flock of God. Their reward will be great if they are faithful in their duties. Their guilt will be great if they neglect their responsibilities. Every Christian in the congregation over which the bishops watch must feel the obligation to behave in the best manner possible. It is difficult enough to handle the cares which come about when every member loves every other member. It is a very grievous work when the sheep run wild.

HEB 13:18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

It is possible that the admonition to pray for “us” means only the author. We could call this an editorial “us.” I think, however, this is a sign that the author had someone with him whom he wished to have included in the prayers of the readers.

This verse sounds very much like Paul. We can almost hear him say, “I have served in all good conscience.” The words of Paul were not aye and nay. They were aye. The writer of this epistle declares he is making every attempt to live without duplicity.

HEB 13:19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

The reason for requesting prayer is that there might be a reunion of the author with his readers. This means he had at one time been with them and found it necessary to attend to tasks a distance away. He has no doubt that the prayers will make a difference. God will hear and God will answer. This was true from Eden to Egypt and then to Calvary itself. It will be true today and tomorrow until the eternal day breaks in the land where there is no night.

HEB 13:20 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,

Yes, he is the God of peace. Even when man rose up in rebellion to make war against him, Jehovah prepared to make an atonement through his own Son. When man faces disease, old age, confusion in society, and a hundred other things, God stands ready to calm his heart and cradle him in his everlasting arms. We must feel free to cast our cares upon him. He does care!

He cared so much that he raised his Son from the grave to make peace between man and man, as well as between man and God. Christ was made the Great Shepherd of the sheep by shedding his blood

upon the hill of Calvary. Thus the Everlasting Covenant was established and man was provided a way home.

HEB 13:21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Jesus commanded his followers to be perfect, even as the Father in heaven is perfect. We are not left alone in the effort to obey that command. As long as we are intent on doing the various good works which God has placed before us, he will fit us for those good works. Those works will be accomplished through our union with other Christians within the body of Christ. No one of us works alone. We are all members of the one body. In Christ we do that which pleases our Father. And when the works are done it is Christ who should receive the glory. Again I remind you of Revelation 4:11 which tells us we were created for the purpose of pleasing our Creator.

HEB 13:22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

The author of Hebrews is a bit concerned that the blunt tone which he used at times to wake the readers from their lethargy may have caused a

negative reaction. Although it may seem that this is a quite lengthy epistle, when the importance of what is being said is considered, it is but a few words. The discussion could have been extended far beyond what it was. One commentator has suggested that the entire epistle could be read aloud in less than an hour. The readers must not set aside the exhortations which are so very critical to their spiritual welfare.

Again, there is a clear similarity to the expressions of Paul. For example see Ephesians 3:3.

HEB 13:23 Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

I do not know for certain who wrote this letter to the Hebrews. I do know this entire thirteenth chapter sounds very much like the writings of the apostle Paul. It is also true that Timothy was like a son to Paul. A number of times Timothy was assigned to solidify a work which Paul had begun while Paul went on to another place. This passage sounds like Paul talking about his son in the faith.

The verse is evidence that Timothy had been imprisoned at some time. Some believe the verse simply speaks of some task with which Timothy was involved which prevented him from leaving until it was completed. I think the more logical meaning is that he had been confined in prison. As soon as Timothy was freed, the author planned to come with him to visit with those to whom the letter was addressed.

This verse also proves the letter was not written to converted Jews who were scattered abroad. If they had been scattered, the author could not come to visit them in the sense that is obviously used here.

HEB 13:24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

For the third time a reference is made to those who have the rule over the readers. A special admonition is given to them that they respect these shepherds and teachers. It is not unimportant that such an admonition is placed at the very close of the letter. The need for respect of the eldership is extremely important in seeing that faith is maintained among the members of any congregation.

The saints are not those who have died and received special recognition by those who still live. Every true member of the body of Christ is a saint. Each has been sanctified for special service in the temple of the Living God.

HEB 13:25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

The letter closes in the same manner as nearly all of Paul's epistles. There is no greater act we can perform for our brethren in Christ than to pray that God's grace rest upon them.

What a tremendous book we have just concluded. The person who sees this epistle as merely as caution

to the Hebrews of the apostolic age to avoid turning back to Judaism has missed the heart of the message. The letter places New Testament Christianity above all other systems of religion. The priesthood is perfect. The sacrifice is perfect. The goal is perfect. The messenger is perfect. Surely no Christian of any age should consider turning away from Christ for either Judaism, Humanism, Atheism or any other competing philosophy of life. Let us go on unto perfection!!

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