

HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY

FOR GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS

WITH PERSONAL STUDY WORKSHEETS

BY JAMES P. STEEL

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The editorial comments and interpretive postures contained in this syllabus represent Mr. Steel's personal position only and should not be construed as the position of any school, church, or ministry he may be serving.

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DEDICATION

These notes are dedicated with gratitude to my loving wife, Anne, whose role as a loving helpmate has enabled me in all my endeavors for Christ during the past fifty plus years. Her constant encouragement, wise input, and helpful assistance have affirmed her full partnership in all of our endeavors.

FOREWORD

WHY ANOTHER SET OF NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS?

Whether there is a need for yet another set of notes on Hebrews is debatable. These notes were not produced to bring something new and novel to the forum on Hebrews. Rather, they have been provided to address a specific teaching context. Essentially, here is what the reader will find.

- These notes are designed first, for the typical believer, and secondly, for the pastor who ministers to the congregation as a whole. For this reason, they are *devotional* in style. While the reader will find many academic issues addressed, the notes are primarily a model for teaching or preaching through Hebrews. This style precludes some more formal writing conventions and includes generous reference to the writer in the first person. It's warmer that way.
- Don't underestimate these notes. They are designed to tackle difficult problems head-on. They often begin where other commentaries leave off when addressing the tougher questions of Hebrews. While every effort is made to represent the opinions of others fairly, these notes do commit to specific interpretive positions while respecting divergent views.
- The notes model a *thematic* expositional style which is best understood by reading. While careful attention is paid to good language analysis, the weight of the lessons center around the great biblical themes and arguments of Hebrews, rather than on syntax and grammar. They interpret the scriptures from the perspective of Jesus Christ, our Messiah.
- Finally, while no personal harm is intended, these notes specifically name and identify those movement and groups which tend to draw glory away from the Lord Jesus Christ in their theology. While this may concern

some, it should be noted that these groups also reserve to themselves the right to point out those with whom they disagree. The popular practice of not naming names and organizations has left the average Christian unequipped to obey 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

THE NATURE OF THIS STUDY:

Pastors looking for a deeply exegetical treatment of Hebrews will not find it here (See the bibliography in the Appendices section). While every effort has been made to respect the Greek and use it when appropriate and necessary, the notes in this text contain a mix of both information and exhortation. They are designed to be read and understandable by adults in general. They are in a format which lends easily for use in preaching and in teaching.

As much as is practicable, the author will make himself available to anyone who needs assistance working with these notes or understanding Hebrews.

A WORD ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim Steel has served equally in church planting, missions, and Christian education endeavors. His doctrinal position is available at BreadcrumbsMinistries.org. His ministry has focused heavily on the centrality of Christ and he stands without apology for the full and complete inspiration of the Bible and the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through the sacrifice of our risen Christ. Dr. Steel is available for personal contact through the web sites noted above.

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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Heb. 1:1 - Chapter One

AN EVER-SO-BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO HEBREWS

Our introductory study of Hebrews will address a few of the most important questions that are normally considered when studying the book of Hebrews. We have intentionally avoided attention to detail in these opening paragraphs, choosing instead to get right to the meat of the text.

Just before beginning your study, please do three things:

- 1.) Look over our Goals for the Course in the Appendix. Do not expect to understand fully these goals at this time. They will become clear as we progress. Just get an overview of the things which are important to the tone of this study.
- 2.) Look over Hebrews – A Quick Overview. This is also at the back for quick reference and easier reproduction.
- 3.) Read the footnote 1 at the end of this book.

WHO WROTE THE BOOK OF HEBREWS?

It appears that it was the author's intent to remain generally anonymous, though there are hints in the book that indicate our author knew some of his readers and they knew and loved him. For the recipients knew he was "in bonds." They knew Timothy as well. The book appears to have been written from Italy. (Heb. 13:22-25)

Typically, the more influenced one is by mid nineteenth century textual criticism, the more one will lean away from Pauline authorship. MacDonald insists that, in spite of the generalizations of early fathers, "Few today, however, would maintain Pauline authorship. Origin agreed that the contents were Pauline, and there are some Pauline touches in it, but the style in the original is very different from Paul's." He adds that this does not rule out Pauline authorship. Typically, the more one leans on traditional sources, the more likely he will lean toward Paul's hand in the letter. Clearly, it serves no purpose to spill any blood over the issue.

The pursuit of the human author of this "crown jewel" of the New Testament will likely rage until the return of Christ. It is the stuff of lively debates and its examination provides rich reward. It is our intent, however, to respect the author of Hebrews' wishes and leave it at that. At the same time, this author apologizes for any slip of the tongue that might reveal his own preference for the Apostle Paul!

THE REAL STRUGGLE

The issue of human authorship is inconsequential when laid along side a far more critical question. To whom was the book written? Beneath the superficial response that it was obviously written to the Hebrews, the Jews who were living in the middle of the first century lay deeper currents. Were these Hebrews believers? Were they unbelievers? Were they a mixed group of both believers and unbelievers?

When examining Hebrews, one's position regarding the recipients forms the linchpin for his entire interpretive model. There is simply no room for neutrality and emotions rise quickly as the discussion ensues. This will become very obvious as we examine the famous "warning" passages of Israel

with their severe declarations. If these warnings are directed to believers, the interpreter must do some serious footwork in order to keep the doctrine of eternal security, taught everywhere else, in tact. If, on the other hand, these warnings are essentially for unbelievers, the interpreter is still obligated to explain the occurrence of certain phrases such as “partakers of the Holy Spirit” which can be made to apply only to brethren in Christ.

Make no mistake. The issue is worth addressing, and these notes leave no room for debating this instructor’s position . [Note: In this author’s personal opinion, the idea that Hebrews is not first and foremost an evangelistic thesis is incredible. This mentality robs us of our ability to use the book as God intended us to and places heavy demands upon us to invent complex schemes in order to interpret the warning passages.]

Gromacki notes: “As indicated before, the readers had been saved for a rather long period of time (5:12)” and writes the issue off by noting that they had been severely persecuted and even killed, (12:3-4). Based on that reasoning we are to assume that the book was written to Christians. It would be unwise to dispute that many such Hebrews did endure such suffering, but this does not imply that the book was intended only for them. The recipients of this book were a mixed group consisting of both unregenerate and newly regenerated Jews. Rather than mounting defenses for this position in advance of our study they are integrated with the passages in question.

It would be to our advantage to carry things one step further. Our purpose will also be to show that at least a portion of the recipients of this thesis were participants in a Qumran like cult. The evidence that connects us to this conclusion rises out of information we glean from the Dead Sea scrolls. The striking relevance of Hebrews to these people is difficult to ignore.

A FEW MORE APPETIZERS FOR OUR PLATE
It is generally assumed that this thesis-turned-letter was written within a twenty year period between 50 and 70 A.D though some commit to dating as late as 95 . Hester leans with Robertson in assigning A.D. 69 as most acceptable. Most folks settle in around the year 68 and most are convinced that the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (A.D. 70) had clearly not occurred at the writing of Hebrews. They also cite the sense of urgency in this book that admonishes these Jews to decide while it is “Today”. This will be noted in our study.

The doctrinal contributions of this book are of inestimable value. The doctrine of faith is expanded and defended as it is nowhere else in the Bible. The person of Jesus Christ, however, is the centerpiece of this book and His superiority in every arena will be nailed down so tightly that there will be no wiggle room left for even the most imaginative cultist. And, as the beauties and glories of our Savior are unfolded one at a time we will immerse ourselves in the stunning tapestry of the priesthood which is above all other priesthoods. We will be exhilarated by our discoveries as we examine a book written expressly for exhortation (13:22). But, be forewarned! Starting into Hebrews is like jumping off into the deep end of the pool! From the moment we look at verse one we will see ourselves as trifling children walking through the treasure troves of a great Monarch.

THE FIRST SUBJECT OF HEBREWS IS REVELATION

Before we dig in too deeply, take an overview of verses 1-4:

(Heb 1:1-4 KJV) God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, {2} Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; {3} Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his

person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; {4} Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

I. God's Method Changed

Though it may take a few readings before the observer notices it, the substance in verses 1-4 focuses on the theme of revelation. We may well title this section, "Christ – A Superior Revelation!" The opening word of this book is God. His existence is simply assumed, as it is in Genesis 1:1 and in John 1:1. The fact that He communicates with us is simply assumed. We do not need to wonder about His supposed silence. His voice has been heard in every generation.

His method of revelation, however, has changed. In times past, He spoke unto the fathers by the prophets. In these last days He has spoken unto us by His Son. The term last days had a slightly different connotation to these readers. Jewish readers saw the beginning of the last days period as the end of the Babylonian captivity. It should be noted, that four hundred year period, between the end of the captivity and the coming of Christ, was painfully silent. From the Jews' point of view it was very disconcerting. The voice that they had been accustomed to hearing from heaven through the proclamations of the prophets had long become silent. One hundred, two hundred, three hundred, and now, four hundred years have ticked off while Israel wandered in darkness, never recuperating from a captivity that had separated whole generations of Jews from their prophecies and revelations. Then, at the exact moment in time, when the tension was at its highest, God spoke again from heaven. Only this time, His method of revelation had changed. The prophets were replaced with His Son.

II. God's Revelation Described.

Why is God's last days Revelation superior to the

revelations given in "times past" in various times and ways?

1. Like the former prophets of old the Son spoke God's Word, but unlike them, He is God's Word . Joseph Smith and Muhammad can make no such claims. Nor can any other true prophet who ever lived.
2. What separates Christ from the prophets is the fact that He represents a higher genre. He is a son. With the higher genre comes a higher authority, or more specifically, a greater accountability to heed the message! These Hebrew recipients may not set His message aside – and neither may we!
3. While there were many prophets, there is but one son. Later in Hebrews we will see the great importance of this "many to one" comparison. You may take a peek now at Hebrews 7:15 through 23 and ff.
4. The word spoken by the Son is different than the words spoken by the prophets because His word is complete and un-fragmented. While the spirit of Messiah has taken over the spirits of the prophets (such as David) in the Old Testament, these words of Messiah are unfiltered, unmasked. The usual process of Old Testament inscripturation was certainly accurate and inspired in every sense, but the revelation of Messiah Himself, in His own person, without the usual inscripturation through a prophet, sheds a richer, deeper light on God's truth than man had ever seen before! God is the revelation!
5. Finally, His word is the last Word. He has spoken unto us once and for all (aorist), thus, signifying the end of progressive revelation as it was known in times past. The difference is in the permanence of the New Covenant. While the Old Testament looked forward to this New Covenant, the fact that it is revealed in an eternal Person, means that it is an unchanging revelation which will never be replaced. As we will notice later in our study, the Book of Mormon, supposedly written in A.D. 400, not only regresses into Old Covenant teachings, it seeks to replace the New Covenant with yet another covenant.

God has spoken unto us once and for all through
His son.

These five statements argue the important fact that
all those earlier prophets were really pointing to the
one Prophet. The road ahead promises to reveal new
secrets about this marvelous Prophet.

THE SON APPOINTED HEIR

Heb. 1:2 - Chapter Two

THE SON APPOINTED HEIR

Intro: Find your way to Hebrews 1 and prepare to read verses 1 and 2 one remaining time:

(Heb 1:1-2 KJV) God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, {2} Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

In a former church a man reaching retirement age shared an incident from his childhood school days. The class had just begun to examine the works of Shakespeare when one of the rather backward young men from the hill country began to question the worth of it all. He wanted to know why anyone would bother with such stuff, and what good would the knowledge of Shakespeare do for anyone anyway. His teacher had one response and it was to the point. Her words were “May God have mercy on you if you never live to understand the answer to your question.”

That same remark is appropriate when it comes to understanding the difference between a Son and a prophet. There is such a gap, such an ocean, such an infinite distance between Jesus Christ and all who ever came before Him or after Him that no simple pastor or teacher could ever express it. But, we catch a glimpse, a small glimpse, in the very words which we have just read. And we must look one final time at these words before we move on. Mull over these words “...hath in these last days spoken unto us by His [or a] son.”

What does it mean to us when we learn that God has spoken to us by a Son? Let's line up some key words.

I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A SON?

A. Access. To be a son implies access.

John Owen wrote so beautifully: “The Lord Jesus Christ, by virtue of the union of His Person, was from the womb filled with a perfection of gracious light, and knowledge of God and His will.” This instructor agrees with Owen, but only to a point. We must never think that the Lord Jesus Christ knew everything there was to know at any given point in time. As God, He was omniscient. But when Christ came as the Son of God He laid aside the independent use of His divine privileges and, submitting Himself totally to the will of the Father, only exercised those divine privileges and powers which were appropriate at the time to doing the Father's will.

So, while we must not say on the one hand that Christ was born with instantaneous knowledge of all things we must understand that as surely as an earthly son has access to his father in a way which no others have there was a relationship between Christ and the Father which no prophet could ever experience. The closest prophet to come to this, we will see in our study of Hebrews, was Moses, but not even Moses could approach at will the living God. That privilege to approach a father at will is reserved for sons.

During the Clinton Administration we had a lot of media talk about access. Lincoln's White House bedroom was unofficially renamed the Lincoln Bed and Breakfast. The Chinese Central Committee contributed openly to the Democratic Central Committee,

all in the name of access. Jesus Christ, however does not need to purchase such influence. He is a son and has full access to the Father. Secondly:

B. Ability. To be a son implies the ability to understand and communicate the Father's message.

We hear from Owen once again:

“The commission, mission, and furnishings of the Son as incarnate and Mediator, with abilities for the declaration of the mind and will of God unto the Church, were particularly from the Father...”

God spoke to and through His Son in a way we find nowhere else. We preachers are death on red-letter editions of the Bible. We are death on them because they create the impression that the words written in red are more inspired than the words written in black because Jesus spoke them. Those of us who know God's Word know that is not true. We know that every word of the Bible is inspired of God and we know that every word of the Bible is equally inspired. We know that, in the final analysis, every word in the Bible IS the Word of Christ. Even so, when we read those red letters we have only one response, “...Never a man spake like this man.” And our minds return quickly to the words of Christ Himself, as He spoke of Himself through the prophet Isaiah “The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned,” Isa. 50:4.

Was there ever a tongue like this? Was there ever speech like this? What are we saying? We are saying that the sonship of Christ is reflected in His very words, and we would roll in uncontrollable laughter at the ignorance of those imposters who claim any share of His glory, especially when they think to mimic or improve upon His Words!

If the reader will endure a little humor, it was reported to me recently that one medical finding has just revealed that, on the average, the area of the female brain which involves communication skills has been found to be 20% larger than on their male counterparts. The report went on to say that this is

why women excel in certain professions more than men. Not to be undone, the male radio personality posed a question to his female partner wondering that, if the brain were 20% larger in the communication area, what other portion of the brain had to shrink proportionately in order to accommodate it? He went on to say that, perhaps, it was the logical portion of the brain which suffered the loss. At this point the broadcast cut, wisely, to a commercial.

But, consider this. All of this time we have been announcing that no man or woman has ever used even 10% of his or her brain capacity. We have wondered if maybe Adam did before the fall. But, here is another wildly different thought. Maybe this extra capacity was reserved for the One person who would need to take on an earthly body, the One person who was the Son of God, who was so unique in every way that no one has ever come near Him. In any case, this Son of God has an ability which the prophets never had.

There is another implication of sonship:

C. Adaptation. To be a Son implies that His nature is God's nature.

It is an issue of nature. Owen notes:

“That Jesus Christ in His Divine nature as he was the eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father, not by a voluntary communication, but eternal generation, had an omniscency (sic) of the whole nature and will of God as the Father Himself hath, their will and wisdom being the same.”

I have purposed to settle for the beauty and not to delve too deeply into the theological implications of that statement, but it bears reading again. This time, perk up when we come to the term eternal generation. “That Jesus Christ in His Divine nature as he was the eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father, not by a voluntary communication, but eternal generation, had an omniscency (sic) of the whole nature and will of God as the Father Himself hath, their will and wisdom being the same.”

One must never get on the bandwagon with some Johnny-come-lately who, in his own inimitable scholarship comes up with the idea that Jesus Christ was never God's Son in eternity past. Such a teacher stands very much alone in the train of great biblical teachers who have grappled with these wonderful and inexplicable truths.

These teachers could not find words to describe what little the scriptures have to say about the eternal nature of the trinity, but they clung firmly to the doctrine of eternal generation. Jesus Christ was *eternally* a Son, eternally proceeding from the Father. In a word, it is the nature of the second person of the trinity, not just some earthly role He assumed.

But there is more to this matter of adaptation. It is not just that He is adapted to the nature of God. It is that this One who "tabernacled" among us, (John 1:14) was also adapted to our natures. That is, He has become the bridge between two natures, the nature of God and the nature of man. He was one of us in every way. Jesus Christ does not represent a mix of two natures; He is the conjunctive expression of them. The evidence of this follows in the next phrase.

"...whom he hath appointed heir of all things"

With the insertion of this phrase, "...whom he hath appointed heir of all things" the human nature and the messianic nature of Christ come into play. The prophets did not have this advantage. They could only glance upon the nature of God from their human perspective.

With this discussion, all the tension between true Christianity and the cults comes into play. You see, we are all confronted with the dilemma, with the ultimate question, is Jesus Christ God or is He man? The answer is that He is both and both truths are equally important to us. Because this union of two natures is seamless, pervasive, and conjunctive in every way it is virtually impossible to reduce the discussion to textbook terms. But, if you will just

remember these simple thoughts you can be spared from a lot of difficulty:

1. First, remember that Jesus Christ is completely God and therefore, as the son, has the nature of God. He has God's nature.
2. Secondly, Jesus Christ is completely man and therefore has a human nature.
3. Finally, you must never associate man's fallen nature with His human nature. The Adventists, for example, fall into a terrible error here. Some Adventists assume that because Jesus had a human nature it had to be a fallen nature. Ellen White said that Jesus had a mean and sinful spirit. But Jesus was not fallen man. He was not in Adam as you and I were. He was born of a virgin, conceived of the Holy Spirit. We have one final thought before we leave the discussion of heirship:

D. Authority. This Son, as heir possesses all things.

Keep this distinction in mind, it is the Son who is appointed heir, not the heir who is appointed Son. Jesus Christ is never appointed a Son. That position is never given to Him. He was only declared to be the Son of God, and that declaration was made on several occasions. It was made in the Old Testament as we will see momentarily. It was made at His baptism, and it was made in the context of His resurrection. The Sonship of Christ is always declared in scripture. It was never given to Christ as a title.

But heirship? That is a different issue. It is an appointment, and it is one that He receives as a Son. So let's ask ourselves a few critical questions.

1. *What is an heir?* An heir is one who receives the possessions of someone else, usually a near relative. It is as simple as that.

#2. *If Jesus Christ is an heir, doesn't that mean He must wait until the father's death before He can claim his possession?* The answer is, in our culture this is common but not necessarily in biblical culture. Any

parent can opt to give any of his possessions to his heir, prior to his own death. In fact, it is wise to do so when it is practical in order to avoid probate. But there is more to the discussion than this.

In Roman times a father normally adopted a child who came of age. That is, a child was declared to be a son for legal purposes. Was he a son before this? Yes, but when the legal declaration was made he became a legal son and a full heir. Under Roman law that son became full co-possessor of his father's goods.

The story of the prodigal comes to mind. Have you ever noticed the arrogance of this son who demands that his share of the inheritance be given to him before his father's death? So, keep this thought firmly in your mind: While a will cannot be executed before the death of the testator, a possession can be turned over to a son at any time. But let's ask an even more important question.

#3. Doesn't the fact that the father declares the Son to be His heir mean that the Son is in some way inferior to the Father? The answer is no. The Son is no more inferior to the Father than my wife is inferior to me. Jesus Christ came to do the Father's perfect will. It is therefore important for the world in general, and the Jews in particular to see that the Father approved and acknowledged the sonship of Christ.

#4. Just exactly what did Jesus Christ inherit?

a. First, as a son of Abraham he inherited all of the promises made to David. In the course of our study of Hebrews we will learn about the laws of God's promises. We will learn that Jesus Christ is the rightful curator of all of God's promises and that He is the inheritor of these promises.

b. Secondly, he is the inheritor of the nations. In Psalm 2 we read these words spoken by the Father to the Son:

**7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me,
Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.**

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

#5. What else does He inherit as the Son? According to the text before our eyes he has inherited all things! And that is exactly the point of our author. No prophet ever received such authority. No prophet ever received such possessions. In a word, a prophet could only speak the words of God. His authority began and ended with the words "Thus saith the Lord..." That was the limit of his authority.

That is not how it is with this Jesus Christ. He is the one who said "Ye have heard that it was said of old... but I say..." (Mat. 5:21,22) No man spoke with such authority as this Christ.

That authority was asserted over the religious world. We read in Matthew 7:28 and 29:

**28 And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:
29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**

That authority was asserted over the demon world. We read in Mark 1:27:

27 And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.

That authority will ultimately be consummated in ultimate victory. As Paul noted, speaking of our resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:24:

24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

Christ's authority is directly linked to His heirship, and His heir-ship is directly linked to His sonship.

I want to close this section, not from Hebrews, but from a passage in Galatians. Notice Galatians 3:26-29. It is important to do this because we need to be reminded just exactly where we fit in this great picture:

(Gal 3:26-28 KJV) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. {27} For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. {28} There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Did you catch all those key words? You are sons. You are heirs. The day you were baptized into Christ all of this became yours, sonship and heirship according to the promise! Yes, in Christ you (who know Christ as Savior) share in the benefits and blessings of these positions.



THE PRIMACY OF THE SON - PART I

Heb 1:2 - Chapter Three

THE PRIMACY OF THE SON - PART I

Intro: In a word, we have been considering the primacy or superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ. To this point, we have considered all but the last phrase of verse two as we have taken our first childish steps on our journey into the heart and character of God as represented in His Son. We read concerning this God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, that He:

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;

The first announcement is that God has spoken to us. This simple statement does away with all those who accuse God of injustice for His silence. He has spoken in a clear, identifiable, and undeniable way. And when God spoke through His Son He spoke in a way unlike any of His past revelations to men. When God speaks it obligates us to listen. When God speaks to us we would be fools to shut His message out.

The second announcement is that God has spoken to us by a Son. We have bathed, though only momentarily, in the rich glow of the Sonship of Christ as we have sought to extend the distance in our thinking between being a son or being one of those times past prophets. When God speaks it obligates us to listen. When God speaks through His Son we would be fools to shut His message out.

The third announcement is that, by virtue of His Sonship this son is also the heir of all things. And, by virtue of His heirship, this Son has both title to

all things, and authority over all things. When God speaks it obligates us to listen. When God speaks through His Son we would be fools to shut His message out. When God speaks through His Son who is the heir of all things we would be insane to turn a deaf ear.

We may say that we have seen primacy through agency. God spoke through Christ. We have seen primacy through sonship. We have seen primacy through His heirship. We come to the **fourth announcement** which follows logically, not incidentally, after the third.

...by whom also he made the worlds;

In these words that open the door to our present study we are going to consider the primacy of this Christ who is over and above all things. We are going to see:

I. The Primacy of Christ through the Creative Order.

A. Consider what is meant by the words, by whom also he made the worlds.

Because of our proximity to the English terminology we would make the immediate assumption that God created the universe through this Son. And that is correct. That is what is being taught in this verse. But the truth of the matter is that far more is being taught here than the simple fact that Jesus Christ was the agency through whom the physical universe came into existence. Much more is being taught. The actual Greek words read:

δι ου και τους αιωνας εποιησεν
by whom also the worlds he made

And the Greek word aiona (.aion, ahee-ohn') or

worlds is a very inclusive word. It not only includes creation itself, but it includes the creative order. It includes the biological orders and kingdoms and as you know, there are many. It includes the spiritual orders and kingdoms. It even includes the historical march of the ages. Jesus Christ is the originator of it all. In short, all of the meanings which are normally attached to the Greek word *kosmos* (kosmo”), are included in this word *aion*” or worlds. All orders of existence, both material and living were created by Jesus Christ. If it exists physically, biologically, or spiritually, He made it.

B. Consider the significance of the words, by whom also He made the worlds.

The Son has primacy because He is the source of the creative order. He is the source of the creation and all of its kingdoms and spheres. He is first. There is no one ahead of Him.

1. Order is important to God. There was, as one might suspect, an ancient heresy that arose insisting that Christ must be inferior because He was the agent through which God created the world. We have already countered that in other contexts.

a. We have explained that a son is not inferior to his father any more than a wife is inferior to her husband and that, in fact, the very opposite is true. There is order in equality. We expect orderliness in the mind of a God of order. Simple order never implies inequality. Agency never implies inferiority.

b. And there is another reason why we know that the creative agency of Christ does not make Him inferior. It has to do with the how of the matter. How did God make the worlds through His Son? The Bible tells us that God spoke the worlds into existence. In the beginning was the Word, the *logos*, and it was the Word which was with God and the Word which was God, and it was the Word which became flesh and “tabernacled” among us according to John 1:14. Thus, to assign Christ responsibility for creation is to argue His equality, not his inferiority.

2. The creation itself is important to God. There is more to this discussion. There is something so basic, so systemic, that we dare not pass it by even though it may seem incidental. It is a point so obvious that we can waltz right past it in ignorance. When God created the heavens and the earth, through the Word, the living Word, Jesus Christ, God pronounced it good, not bad. God does not make junk. We make junk. It is a fundamental Gnostic error to assume that either matter or flesh is intrinsically evil. God created both. Giant trees from little acorns grow. When we get it in our minds that matter or flesh is evil we will ultimately have a problem with who Jesus Christ is because God became flesh through Jesus Christ.

3. The creation was made perfect, reflecting the perfections of Christ in it. Please let me insert just one more supplemental thought. Consider the Second Law of Thermodynamics. That law teaches us that everything in creation is going from a state of complexity to a state of simplicity or equilibrium, but it is not reverting to a disorderly state, as you will often hear scientists and philosophers speculate. The creation began in an orderly state. The second law was imposed upon the orderly state when Adam sinned. Do not blame the disorder you see in creation, on the inefficiency of Christ. [Note, the very definition of this Law of Entropy is debated. The reader should “Google in” the Second Law of Thermodynamics for full exposure to this discussion.]

Let’s get back to the mainstream. We have seen that the primacy of Jesus Christ is seen in the creative order. He is not the first created as the so called Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints would have us believe, He is the first and only creator. John 1:3 says:

3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Joseph Smith did not create anything but trouble. Muhammad did not create anything but trouble. Buddha did not create anything but trouble. There was nothing left for them to create! Jesus Christ had

created all things.

We must move to the second thought. It is locked up in the first phrase of verse 3.

3 Who being the brightness of his glory,

Here we see:

II. The Primacy of Christ Through the Shekinah Glory.

Again, it is extremely important that we look very carefully at the Greek where we find these actual words:

ο” ων απαυγασμα τη” δοξη”
who being [the] effulgence of [his] glory

The word which interests us is 541. απαυγασμα (apaugasma, ap-ow'-gas-mah) from a comp. of G575 and G826; an off-flash, i.e. effulgence:--brightness.

It should never be rendered reflection, as it often is. Jesus Christ is the effulgence, the radiance, the brightness of God's glory.

There is no possible way that we can divert to this whole discussion of the Shekinah glory at this time in order to tell you how important God's glory is to Him and to tell you how critical this whole discussion of God's glory is and how much a part it plays in all of the Old and New Testament scriptures. The discussion of the glory of God is everywhere, and we do mean everywhere, in our Bibles.

We will avoid that digression for now, but we urge you to remember one biblical concept which stands above all others when discussing God's glory: The glory of God is always associated inseparably with the presence of God. They are inseparable. The presence of the divine glory signifies the presence of the divine Person. Period. No exceptions. God's glory never went where *His presence* did not go.

Thus, when we read: “And we beheld his glory, the

glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” we are reading a confession that Jesus Christ is God.

Concerning you and I who know Jesus Christ as Savior, we are comforted with the benediction of Jude 24

Jude 1:24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, **25** To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

What do we see Jude doing in these verses? First, we see him associating the glory of God with the presence of God, and secondly, we see him praying to the only wise God our Savior, offering glory, majesty, dominion, and power both now and forever to Him. So, who is the only wise God who has this glory? Is it the Father or the Son? Clearly, they are both included!

Rest assured that Satan hates this truth concerning the radiant glory of Christ and that the ancient heretics also tried to detract from Christ by suggesting, once again, that this was an expression of Christ's inferiority. The false teacher would like you to think that Christ is only a reflection of God's glory, and if Christ reflected the Father's glory and not His own glory, then, surely the Father must be more glorious.

These ancient heretics missed the boat completely. For, the scriptures clearly tell us that God is very defensive about His glory. In Isaiah He declares:

Isaiah 48:11 For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

That verse would stand in direct contradiction to John 17:24 where our Savior says to the Father..

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given

me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

We cannot have our cake and eat it too. Either the Father has contradicted Himself or the glory given to Messiah, the Father's glory radiating from Messiah, is evidence that they are One.

Again, at the risk of sounding redundant, no prophet, no great man of earth, has ever manifested the glory of God. The glory was manifested solely by that one to whom it rightfully belongs, Jesus Christ. And it belongs to Him because He is God. The glory of God always represents the presence of God.

Let's move to our final consideration. We have seen the primacy of Christ in the creative order as evidenced in the words ,by whom He also made the ages. We have seen the primacy of Christ in His Shekinah glory as evidenced in the words who being the effulgence of His glory.

A final phrase:

3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person,

While our cultist friends may express disdain at our insistence that Christ was not created, and while they express even more dislike when we show that Christ is the effulgence of the Father's glory, there are no words that the cultists hate more than the words we now come upon.

III. The Primacy of Christ in the Expression of God's Substance.

Jesus Christ is the very expression of the living God.

The issue relates to this term,we cannot express image. It is the word from which we get character. It is the idea of an engraving or an exact stamped copy.

What the author is saying is that Jesus Christ bears

the very stamp of God's person or essence. When there is an exact expression it means that there are no dissimilarities. It means that Jesus Christ, in no way falls short of the character or nature or essence of God the Father. All of the glorious perfections that belong to God belong to Christ and vice versa. He is exactly the same in every way. There is nothing unique to the Father that is not unique to Christ. We cannot say that the Father is more wrathful and the Son is more loving. We cannot say that the Father stronger and the Son is tenderer. There are no differences, not one shred, not one hair, not one tiny little speck of difference, period. There could be no stronger argument for the deity of Christ found anywhere in our Bibles.

The reader is clearly aware how embarrassing this is for Mormons who believe that Jesus Christ has not yet arrived at the level of God's perfection. In truth, there are two groups of Mormons regarding this issue. Those Mormons who follow Brigham Young's Adam God Discourse hold that Adam is superior to Christ and that Adam physically cohabited with Mary in order to produce Christ. The other group believes that God the Father physically cohabited with Mary in order to produce Christ. The one group makes Christ inferior to both Adam and the Father. The other group makes Him inferior only to the Father. But, if Jesus Christ has not arrived at the same level of Godhood that Elohim has arrived at then how can the Bible say that He bears the exact stamp, the exact image of the Father? .

Jesus Christ can only be the exact essence of God if He is God. Do you know what the whole purpose of the gospel is? Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:6.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the perfect expression of God the Father. When we saw the face of Christ we saw the face of God (though, of course, He is a spirit). When

we saw the compassion of Christ we saw the compassion of the Father. When we heard the words of Christ they were the very words of the Father.

You and I are being changed into the image of Christ by beholding His glory. We are in character (Greek: “char-ak-tar”) training. He, on the other hand, is and always was in the Father’s image.

What does this all mean to us?

If we believe in the Primacy of Christ in the creative order we are happy with who we are, when we were born, what our lot in life is, and what God’s purpose is for us. If we truly believe that Jesus Christ is the head of creation we willingly submit to Him as our Creator. We accept our place in His order.

If we believe that Jesus Christ is the glory of God we will court His presence in our daily walk and activities. We will want His lordship at every point in our lives so that His glory will shine through us. We will not seek our glory. We will seek His.

If we believe that Jesus Christ is very the essence and image of the Father we will not love one Person of the trinity more than another. We will attribute to each person the glory and honor and authority that belongs to Him.

And, most of all, we will understand that when one already has the best there is nowhere else to go. There are no other alternatives. If salvation cannot be found in Christ there is no salvation. If hope cannot be found in Christ there is no hope! If truth cannot be found in Christ there is no truth!

One is not a fanatic when he makes this Christ the center of his life. He is simply following the pattern God set out for us. So, when you carry Him into the classroom and workplace this week carry Him forward with pride. No one can hold a candle to the treasure which you bear about in your body, the treasure of the glory of God, reflected in the face of Jesus Christ.



THE PRIMACY OF THE SON - PART II

Heb. 1:2 - Chapter Four

THE PRIMACY OF THE SON. PART II

Intro: We have been speaking about the primacy or superiority of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen:

- Christ's Primacy Through Agency. He is the spoken Word.
- Christ's Primacy Through Sonship. He is a son.
- Christ's Primacy Through Heirship. He is the heir.
- Christ's Primacy Through The Creative Order. He made it.
- Christ's Primacy Through The Shekinah Glory. He is it, not a reflection of it.
- Christ's Primacy Through The Expression of God's Essence. There is no difference between Christ and the Father.

Reading all of verse 3 we will continue with the next statement made in the verse:

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;

When we read the words upholding all things by the word of His power we are seeing the primacy of Christ asserted in still another way. We are seeing:

I. The Primacy of Christ in the Forward Movement of All Things.

A. To Uphold is to Carry Forward

The word upholding represents the action that is taking place. It is from the Greek *ferwn* (phero, fer'-o;) and it means, "to bear". But it means more

than just to bear something up. It carries with it the thought of driving something forward. It is not enough simply to label this the doctrine of preservation or sustenance. Christ does sustain the universe. He does preserve it. Colossians 1 adds to the weight of this whole passage that we're looking at and it would be good for us to turn there:

14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

16 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:

17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Notice verse 17 again, "...And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

The word consist means to stand together. And that is the doctrine of preservation. Jesus Christ holds everything together. But in the verse that is before us, we have something even more than just preservation. We have direction. Christ, not only bears up the creative order, He drives it forward. That argues control. Preservation argues power, but bearing forward argues control and direction.

B. The Term "All Things" Extends Far Beyond the Materials of Creation

When noting that Christ upholds all things, commentators invariably suggest that this means the physical creation. And it does. But it speaks to more than just the physical universe. The term all things refers to the whole creative order. This is no minor

technicality. This means that Jesus Christ drives forward 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 drives all things forward.

This Savior is no Atlas, bearing the world on His shoulders while standing on a turtle in the midst of a cosmic sea. He is the first “everything”. He drove forward your last breath. He drove forward the machinations of the world’s monarchs this past week. He drove forward the march of the stars and the comets.

He drove forward Hale Bop. I saw a scientist on national television explaining how a comet works. He had a big bowl of ice, a bowl of dry ice, some water, some dirt, and some syrup. He threw them all together blew a fan over the fog he had created and announced that he had formed an authentic comet. Predictably, he couldn’t miss his lick against Christ. He said, “Now, do you see this syrup I am pouring on this? That represents the organic materials we know to exist in comets. Scientists believe that this organic material could be the substance which spread the seeds of life throughout the universe.” Wrong. That is not how it happened. Jesus Christ created and organized life and the details of the process are found in Genesis 1, not in Hale Bop.

What have we stressed? We are stressing the primacy of Christ, not only in the creative order, but also in the creative progression of all things. He caused the daffodils to pop up this spring. He caused the underground caverns to burst forth their lava.

I’m sorry Joseph Smith. I’m sorry Buddha. I’m sorry Muhammad. There’s nothing left for you to do. There is no glory left for you to steal. Jesus Christ has it all. You are all hopeless, helpless impostors.

C. The Word of His Power is Not the Power of His Word

Christ upholds, or drives forward, all things, not just material but immaterial - all processes. And He does so by the Word of His power.

Notice what the verse does not say. It does not say that He upholds all things by the power of His word. Rather, it is the word of His power. Once again, the Spirit of God takes us directly to this matter of the Word.

It is the Greek ρημα – rhema - {hray’-mah}. It is translated word just like the Greek logos (logo”) in John 1:1 where we read in the beginning was the Word. But it carries a different intonation. The rhema is the spoken word, that which is actually going forth from the mouth or from the lips.

As a result of misunderstanding this word rhema, Kenneth Hagan, a new age “Christian” teaching old lies, has misused and abused this Greek word. We will not be detailed, except to say that, in the final analysis, Hagan teaches that there is actual power in the literal words spoken by God. In other words, he teaches that even God Himself submits to the laws governing words, and that the power does not necessarily lie within God Himself but within the words which God speaks. [Note: It has not occurred to Hagan that this is essential pantheism. God is transcendent from His creation and subject in no way to it.]

Subsequently, when we learn how to properly confess the proper words we can unlock their power; thus, confession theology. Remember this important fact: The power of God does not lie in the words which God uses. There is no power intrinsic in any word or language. There are no chants, no mystical spells which can be cast simply by the use of words. Part of the grand satanic scheme is to detract from Jesus Christ, the living Word and the spoken Word of God. Its roots lie in Gnosticism and can be traced back to Babel.

Please remember, we are reading about the word of Christ’s power, not the power of His words. In the Greek this is an argument of instrumentality. Christ is asserting His power through the instrumental-

ity of His Word. The power is not intrinsic in the word. The power of CHRIST is applied through the WORD He speaks. Christians understand each other when we speak of the power of the Word of God, and the power of prayer, but we must be extremely careful that we understand the source of that power is not in the words or in some prayer that we speak. The source of the power is always God Himself. Prayer simply releases the promises of God on our behalf. There is no power in prayer itself. The power lies in the God who hears it.

Examine that last phrase, the last words of verse 3:

...when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

II. The Primacy of Christ in the Purging of our Sins.

A. The Argument Has Not Shifted

We know the author is still arguing the primacy of Christ, because the emphasis here is on the words by himself. Salvation, redemption, deliverance and cleansing from sin – these are all the properties of Jesus Christ. Not even the most scholarly Jews understood the full implications of what it took for God to forgive sin.

One of the most shocking revelations that Jesus Christ made was that He could forgive sin – and the Jews hated Him for it. We read about their response in Mark 2, beginning with verse 5:

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

But they missed the most important question. The question isn't how can Christ forgive sin? The question is, how could God the Father forgive sin?

How could any just God forgive sin? The truth of the matter is that God the Father could never have forgiven one sin of mankind if it had not been for the finished work of Jesus Christ, who by Himself purged our sins. To repeat, not even God the Father could have forgiven sins. God could not forgive sin until the death penalty for sin was exacted.

So, all of you would be Saviors, you are too late, you are too impotent and you are too twisted and small and sinful to ever take on such a task. Only Jesus Christ could purge sin, and He did so by Himself. Others need not apply.

B. The Purging Was Not Applied to All

Though it is not the thrust of this particular passage, please note: Because Christ purged our sins does not mean He applied that purging on behalf of all men everywhere. He did not universally apply the benefits of this marvelous salvation as Barclay, and so many others have erroneously taught. One must come to Christ, and by faith, ask to have that shed blood applied on his or her behalf.

C. The Purging Was Once For All

Christ not only by Himself purged our sins, but, when He was finished, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High.

In that act, by sitting down He signified that His work was complete. The purging was once and for all. When we read here that He purged our sins the action took place once and for all at a single point in time. We will see, as we proceed into Hebrews that the Bible clearly eliminates two all too familiar errors concerning Christ's redemption. It eliminates the error that Christ is continually being sacrificed at every mass as the bread and wine are mysteriously turned into His blood and body. It also eliminates the doctrine that the Lord Jesus Christ, (as Adventism teaches) may have only died once, but is propitiously sprinkling His blood upon us, based upon our conformity to the laws of God. Jesus Christ, by Himself, once and for all, purged our sins and sat

down as evidence that it had been completed. Please do not miss the whole point of all this: Jesus Christ was acting as high priest!

D. The Purging Opened the Way for Christ to Resume His Position

When we look closer at the words sat down we discover another precious truth. The words sat down do not merely mean that he pulled up a chair, as such, next to the throne. A.T. Robertson stresses an important nuance here. In summary, he says that the first aorist active of *kathizoi* (took his seat) indicates a formal and dignified act. Jesus Christ was also resuming his original dignity and glory.

So, we are seeing the primacy of Christ in the marvelous provision of our redemption and in the purging of our sins. And while we're at it, please notice Who Christ sat down next to. He did not sit down next to The Man Upstairs. The next time someone makes some passing reference to you about the Man Upstairs you might consider asking, "What Man? Are you talking about the Majesty on High?"

We have now completed the author's formal introduction. Our discussion will soon shift as we focus on the superiority of Christ over the angels of God. But, for the moment, consider what the author of Hebrews has done for us.

In three short verses the author of Hebrews has predisposed us to everything else that is going to be said in this book. In three short verses we have seen that, before the starting gun could ever be fired, Jesus Christ finished the race.

In three short verses we have seen our Savior set out so far ahead of runners up that they cannot even be considered. They are all disqualified at the starting line. He is prophet. He is priest. He is king. He is the source of all things. He is the ongoing momentum in all things.

I once sat down to play chess with an expert who insisted I play with him in spite of my confessed

ignorance. After making only two or three moves, He rose up in indignation and said "I cannot play chess with you. You are ruining my game!" I was so ignorant and so far behind he could not even tolerate me in a game. This is the way it is with our great Savior. He has no players with whom to compete. There is no one else to play the game with. There are no equal. There are no competitors, only impostors.

We will marvel through all eternity at the glories of our great Savior! Do not be confused by the world's imaging and packaging of Christ. Do not be misled by the cultists who rob Him of the glory that belongs only to Him. This Jesus Christ took up His rightful place and resumed His rightful dignity and glory at the right hand of the Majesty on High. He is the One with whom we have to do.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Heb. 1:4-14 - Chapter Five

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

A WORD ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION OF HEBREWS.

The passage that we now confront, namely, verses 4-14 of chapter one, marks the beginning of a new section in Hebrews. The first three verses served as the prologue or introduction to the book and, as we have noted, prepared us for much of the material yet to come.

Viewing these three verses as a group we could entitle them The Primacy of Christ, or Jesus Christ, the Superior Revelation. (For folks who like to “dig down deeper and come up drier,” we are about to address the subject of God’s transcendence.)

Entering our second section, we are going to strike right at the heart of the Jewish “sacred cows,” so to speak as our author presents Jesus Christ as The Superior Intermediary. Three dominant intermediary themes are going to surface. These dominant intermediaries of the Old Covenant are 1.) Angels (in general), 2.) Moses, and; 3.) Aaron. Anyone having even the slightest feel for Old Testament Judaism can begin to understand that the author of Hebrews has just taken a master step in his effort to reveal Christ to us.

ANGEL TALK

At present we talk only of angels as we focus on verse 4.

4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath

by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

His Primacy Over Angels Declared

First the CLAIM: Becoming so much better, so much more superior, than the angels.

Then the supporting EVIDENCE: We know this to be true because He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent or superior name than they.

The question immediately occurs to us: Why? Why was it important to stress the superiority of Christ to angels? It seems to us to be such a moot question. Who, in his right mind would place Christ on or below the level of an angel? The answer is: more folks than we’ve ever dreamed of. The most obvious in our time would be the Jehovah’s Witnesses who see Jesus Christ as none other than Michael the Archangel, specially created, no doubt, but nonetheless, an angel.

His Primacy Over Angels Required

In the time of the writing of Hebrews, however, it does not take long for us to assume some very good reasons for this very important declaration of Christ’s supremacy over angels. Consider just a few possibilities.

1.) For one, remember that the Jews did see angels as revelators of the will and Word of God. During the inter testamentary period, however, the Jews interest in angels had become more and more of an obsession. The more silent the heavens became the more interest Jews had in apparitions of all sorts. “Fiddler on the Roof” is a classic example of the Jewish mindset concerning the netherworld. It was considered healthy to be focused on apparitions in general

and focus on angels in particular.

It is a personal opinion that wherever a vacuum exists, Satan will do his best to fill it and whether it be in the form of extra terrestrials (our term) or angels, (the Jewish term), you may be assured they will always have an audience. Those demons who could no longer express themselves in the pagan idolatry which obsessed the Jewish people for so many centuries have now offered the Jews a new form of idolatry in the voluntary worship of angels. For a thorough study of the history of the Jews in this respect, be sure to research the works of Alfred Edersheim as well as the Jewish Encyclopedia.

If Jesus Christ is seen only as a man, or even if He is seen on the level of an angel, then His Word is only the word of another man or angel.

2.) *Other reasons for Hebrews emphasis on Christ's superiority can be found in Gentile origins.* The eastern religions with their heavy focus on Gnosticism were obsessed with the higher scientific knowledge that came from preoccupation with what they called angels. We know that demons are angels.

3.) *And then, there was kind of a mix of Jewish and Gentile thinking which was also occupied with angels.* They are represented in the Qumran cult, the place of the origin of the Dead Sea scrolls. These folks had a prophetic system that called for the coming of two messiahs, (a common misunderstanding of the time) two messiahs who, interestingly, would both be subordinated to Michael the Archangel. Let's make our point: The Holy Spirit had good purpose in showing these Jewish readers that Jesus Christ is superior to all angels.

His Primacy Over Angels Proved

The question is this: How is He going to do it? How are we going to show that Jesus Christ is superior to the angels? How can we show that Jesus Christ is superior to Michael the Archangel? We have already seen it. The evidence is provided in this verse:

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

His name indicates His superiority over any and all angels. Look at Ephesians 1:18 and following:

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

Philippians 2:9 speaks of the self emptying of Christ who took upon Himself the form of a servant becoming obedient to the death of the cross:

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[Note: A study of the Apostle's use of the name of Jesus in Acts will reveal many Old and New Testament truths about this wonderful Person.]

God has given Christ a supreme name to help us see the supreme honor and dignity to which He has been elevated.

God has given Christ this name that is above every

name. What is the name? Is it Jesus, as noted in verse 10? Is it Christ or Lord, as noted in verse 11? Yes, surely these names belong to our Savior, but that is not the argument in front of us here in Hebrews.

The Name That Sums It All Up

In this case, it is not Jesus. The specific name that is superior to the angels is revealed for us in verse 5.

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?

Thou art my Son. That is the supreme name. That is the name that bespeaks His great dignity and honor. Oh yes, He is called many names in scripture. Many of us have seen posters that list nothing but the names of Christ from top to bottom. But the supreme name is Son.

If you were a Jew you would see the contrast here with ordinary angels for angels were also nicknamed sons of God. But that was only given to them in a general sense. By naming Christ the Son of God, as we have already explained in this study, Jesus Christ is in the position of the firstborn inheritor. In other words, the key qualifier for the word son is inheritor. That is Christ, by inheritance hath obtained a better name than did they.

SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT QUOTES THAT WRAP IT UP

You have probably also noted that our writer has begun quoting from the Old Testament --- not once, but seven times. We are going to assemble seven strong Old Testament references that will distance Christ from the venerated angels. We will complete our study in this section by making simple and brief references to each of these seven quotes.

[Note: There is a supplemental insert in the ap-

pendix entitled Seven Old Testament Quotes that Distance Christ from the Angels.]

1. The first is the quote we are looking at is “Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee...”

This quote comes from Psalm 2, the Psalm of the Son:

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

This Psalm was readily accepted in both Jewish and Christian circles as a messianic psalm. It is important to notice that the Son receives the inheritance. You and I, take note, the heathen, the Gentiles, are His inheritance.

Augustine suggested that the today in this verse was in reference to the day of God's eternity. He said, effectively, that the Son was the Son for all eternity and that what we have in these earthly events is a reaffirmation of an eternal fact. I happen to believe that Augustine is correct, but not in reference to this verse. Others associate the today in this verse with the day of Christ's birth. Still others associate it with His baptism. I believe, however, that we are witnessing a declaration made at the resurrection of Christ.

Keep one finger in Psalm 2 and turn to Hebrews 1 and look at verses 4 and 5 one more time:

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

5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

The Son has, by inheritance, received a better name by virtue of the declaration of His sonship.

Now look at Psalm 2: 7 and 8:

**7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me,
Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.**

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

Can we sum it up in a few simple sentences?

a.) The SONSHIP which Hebrews is declaring is the same sonship which Psalm 2 is declaring.

b.) This SONSHIP is not in reference to His position as the eternal son and it is not in reference to His birth, or His baptism, where He is also declared to be the Son. No inheritance is mentioned in those contexts.

c.) The SONSHIP of Psalm 2 is linked to His inheritance, which is His by virtue of His assumption of the position of firstborn (protokos) the first in position. In this regard we read that Jesus Christ is the firstborn among many brethren. That is, He is first in position. It is the heir who is first in position in the home. In Bible times he usually received the inheritance.

d.) It is the resurrection of Christ which guarantees the inheritance of the nations and His millennial reign. Neither of these two feats can be accomplished without the resurrection. He had to assume the position of firstborn to receive this inheritance.

Look at the six remaining quotes from the Old Testament. The second quote is from 5b:

2.) "Or again, 'I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son'"

This comes from 2 Samuel 7:14 and is, strangely, taken from a quote by Nathan to David promising him that a son in his line would take up the task of building God's house.

14 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:

We know that this imperfect man Solomon would be chastised. But we also know that the Jews saw more in this prophecy and in associated passages, and that they saw beyond Solomon to another David, a Messiah. Huges notes:

"That this Hebrew expectation based on the promise of 2 Samuel 7:12 ff was still alive at the end of the four-hundred year inter-testamentary period is evident...from the Midrash on the passage discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls which specifically interprets it as relating to the messianic "Branch of David." Pg 57

3.) The third quote is in verse 6.

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

Setting the details aside just note that this quote is from the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX. Suffice it to notice that angels do not worship angels, and this firstbegotten will be worshiped by all the angels of God. This was evidenced at the manger. Clearly then, He is higher.

4.) The fourth quote is in verse 7:

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

The author is quoting from Psalm 104:4. Setting aside interpretive issues surrounding winds and fire, and so forth, let's just point out the fact that angels are not generally allowed to walk among us with bodies making themselves known. They may have made specific appearances, but no angel has spent more than a few minutes or possibly hours (in the case of Sodom) in the presence of men. They are ministering spirits and do not carry out their

program in bodies as did Jesus Christ. There is also a status issue intoned here in the fact that they are servants sent from God, not the Son sent from God.

5.) Moving to the fifth quote we recognize it as coming from Psalm 45:6 and 7 when we read it in Hebrews 1:8 and 9:

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.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Jesus Christ is here clearly identified as Elohim. It is true, that there has been some mistranslation offered here. There are some who say that this verse should be rendered "...God is thy throne forever and ever." but don't you believe it, even for a heartbeat.

Notice the Greek interlinear form:

ο θρονος σου ο θεος εις τον αιωνα του αιωνος
the throne, thy the God is forever and ever

And, remember, you are not only picking your fight with the Greek but with the Hebrew. For Psalm 45:6 says: thy throne, O GOD is forever and ever! One cannot get around it. Why would the Greek be translated differently from the Hebrew?

Jesus Christ is here called God, the equivalent of the Hebrew Myhla (elohiym el-o-heem). No angel is called God. Regardless of our position on the rendering of the verse the Hebrew clearly links Christ with the Messiah and the Old Testament clearly links Messiah with God.

6.) Verses 10-12. Remember these words are speaking of Christ.

10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands:

11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all

shall wax old as doth a garment;

12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

And what is the point? The point is that our author is quoting from Psalm 102:24-27. That is the point. And to whom is the Psalmist talking to in Psalm 102? He is talking to God. He is talking to Elohim. Jesus Christ is being called Elohim. No angel is ever called God. All the works of creation are, again, being attributed to Him.

And, we might note interchangeably that He is being called Jehovah in verse 21. Jesus Christ is Jehovah God, period. That is a far distance above the angels!

Finally, the 7th quote:

7.) Taken from Psalm 110 we read in verses 13 and 14 of Hebrews 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?

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

There was no debate whatsoever that Psalm 110 was a messianic psalm. It is quoted numerous times in the New Testament, including Mark, Luke, Acts, Romans, Corinthians, and Ephesians, Colossians and 1 Peter. In those passages the superiority of Christ is seen not only as the Son and as the Lord, but He is also shown to be our High Priest and Redeemer.

Each of the seven quotations represents the stuff of an entire study. There are great stores of truth that we have left unexplored. But I hope you have grasped the big picture, the overall argument. I hope you have seen Jesus Christ declared to what He was throughout all eternity, the eternal Son. And as the firstbegotten Son, He is the heir of the nations and the ruler of the world; firstbegotten because of the resurrection we celebrate each Lord's Day.

We have just undergone some spectacular biblical canon fire. We have had this whole issue of the deity of Christ wrapped up and put to bed for us – in one fell swoop. If there was ever a passage in the Word of God on which the Jehovah’s Witnesses will be judged, it could well be this passage. They simply cannot dance on the heads of all seven of these pins! It is hopeless to try to argue your way out!

A WARNING WORTH HEEDING

Hebrews 2:1-5 - Chapter Six

A WARNING WORTH HEEDING

Let's refresh our memories. While we have been arguing the superiority of Christ, we have been specifically emphasizing the deity of Christ. We have examined the seven Old Testament quotes which associate Jesus with Elohim and Jehovah of the Old Testament. This author wants us to know that the Son is completely God and, clearly, by nature Jesus Christ is superior to angels. Nor is our author at all finished with his argument. He is going to continue on in chapter two, but he's going to stop long enough to make an application and provide us with an important warning.

As we read through Hebrews we will begin to get a feel for this style of writing. He will lay some foundations, build to a point, and then burst forth with an urgent warning. Read the first four verses. Please look for the operative words as you read.

(Heb 2:1-4 KJV) Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. {2} For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; {3} How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; {4} God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

There are warnings and there are warnings. This is one of the six major admonitory passages in the

book. There are warnings that we take and warnings that, when we read them we know they really mean business. The warning we have in front of us is very serious because it concerns our eternal destinies. There is simply no way we can construe this warning to be directed toward saved folks. This is directed to each of us who have yet to get serious about this matter of our personal salvation.

In this respect, the Jewish mentality is very much like the South Dakota mentality where we once lived, and the western mentality in general. Unless someone is under the influence, he usually does everything he can to avoid a serious confrontation. We are as indirect as we can be to get the job done. If a man hires someone to do a little construction and the contractor starts the job and doesn't finish it, a Californian might call him up and say, "Be here tomorrow or I'm taking you to court!" A South Dakotan is more likely to cozy up to the guy, call him by his first name, and jaw awhile about his family or grandkids, and then get around to letting him know the job needs to be finished. We gain what we want through non-confrontational friendship. That's the cowboy way.

That was the way things were in Jewish times. Things were accomplished through relational motivation. They were not task oriented. In this respect we have no idea how out-of-character these warnings are to the fabric of Jewish mentality. These really firm warnings are almost seen as impolite. So, even here, we see a writer who is couching his terms. *We ought to give the more earnest heed.* You can see the tension in there, but you can also see him holding back a little bit. This is not the picture of two guys on a football field telling each other the way it is. The strong grip of courtesy remains, even though the admonition is severe.

The first question that comes to our mind is, More

earnest heed than what?

What are the things we have heard? In a most general sense, we are talking about the word spoken by angels. This first word carried a severe penalty if disobeyed. We are now to pay even more earnest heed to the words of Christ who is superior to the angels. Follow the argument. Follow the context. The author is not suggesting, at this point, that we should not pay attention to the law, but he is telling the Hebrews that they should pay the most attention to the words of Christ. His words carry a higher authority.

This is a profound assertion to make to the Jews. It's going to take some doing to convince any self-respecting, Bible loving Jew that he is to pay more attention to the words of Christ than to the words of the law which were administered by angels. But our author is up to the task! We will see that in his argument here.

The second question, What is the nature of the danger?

Why must we do this? Look at the verse and find the answer. Lest we let them slip. Where is the risk in slipping? This instructor is operating under the assumption that these Hebrews have heard the words of Christ. They are not that offended by the words of Christ. They are agreeing with much of what Christ has said, though they haven't integrated it and appropriated it.

A while back my wife and I were at the Shoshone Falls in Idaho. These falls are actually higher than the Niagara Falls. We were there a few days after a young man lost his life. He did not lose his life because he was being foolish. He lost his life because he was not aware of the danger. He stepped on the edge of the cliff. The soil was moist from the mist from the falls, the grass was slippery, he misstepped, and he dropped like a rock into the water. As we stood at the sight we were surprised at the Park Service for not at least putting up a warning sign! We could have stood on the very same soil and experienced the same fate. The greatest danger that

we face is the danger of letting this gospel slip, by not attaching the right importance to it.

Actually, the picture here is, in some ways, more of drifting than slipping. One can lie on his back on a raft or in a boat and have absolutely no sensation that the boat is moving. A few minutes later he can be a half-mile from his first location and not even notice. It is in our natures to drift. We are given a marvelous truth. We put that truth in a can, so to speak and label it as a great truth. Then we empty the truth from the can until the label is meaningless. It is in the way of man to drift. We could easily devote one chapter to listing the great truths that the evangelical culture is letting slip. And, dispensationalists who have been entrusted with the greatest truths of all, are the greatest offenders.

In our context, remember, we are talking about letting the truth of the gospel drift away without acting upon it. Essentially, you can mix much of what Christ taught into the Jewish batter and get along just fine. But you can still miss the message of Christ that saves. Exactly what occasion prompts this warning at this time in Hebrews? Why are these particular Jews being warned? These Hebrews are likely getting careless with the content of the gospel. They are probably moving into a live-and-let-live posture. They are hearing the claims of Christ. While some are opposing the gospel, many are simply not opposing it. But they are all drifting farther and farther away from the day they heard the gospel. And, they are drifting fast toward a great cataclysmic day (their own destruction) that will be upon them in a few years from this writing. There is no luxury of indecision. We too, are living in a day when we have let too much slip. We have less time than we may think. The hour for warning is here. Our fathers became too soft spoken. We must proclaim these warnings once again.

The third question, Why should I be expected to place more importance on these words of Christ?

Two answers are provided.

1.) *I am expected to place more importance on these words because of the One who affirmed them.*

We may well ask, if the entire Bible is equally inspired is one word more inspired than another word? No! But are some words more important? Yes! The Bible does not contradict itself in any place, but there are some words we are to pay far more earnest heed to or we will not properly understand other words! The Jews saw the Ten Commandments as the most important part of the Bible. They paid more earnest heed to those commandments than anything else. They had good reason. Until Christ, no truth had ever been revealed in the way the commandments were and no truth was authenticated so dramatically or thoroughly. Study the events of the giving of the Law at Sinai and understand that that day was burned permanently and indelibly into the collective mind and memory of Israel!

But here's a curious point. While we don't read it in Exodus, here is what the author of Hebrews knows. Angels were the prime ministers of the Old Covenant. This is one reason why Jews so venerated (to a disobedient extreme) the angels. You ask, where do we learn this? Both Testaments clearly affirm this point. Galatians 3:19 tells us the law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. God gave the law. Moses received the law for Israel. He was the mediator. The angels ordained the law. According to Stephen in Acts 7 the angels delivered the law. They instituted the Old Covenant under the hand of God. Notice also Psalm 68. Thousands upon thousands of angels effected this event at Sinai. It is no wonder these people had such respect for both the law and the angels.

If the reader begins to let his mind drift at this point he may risk misunderstanding Pentecost and what is going on there! If one does not understand Sinai he becomes susceptible to the errors of Pentecostal theology and misses the purpose of this great event. Angels, not the Holy Spirit, were the prime administrators of the Old Covenant (though the Spirit surely

participated).

Now Hebrews 2:2 makes sense. Did God keep His word concerning the enforcement of the Old Testament law? He surely did. When the nation obeyed did God bless? When they disobeyed did He dispose them? He surely did. The just recompense of reward associated with law established the authenticity of that law! The modern Jew cannot get away from this point, no matter how angry with God he is. He knows that God predicted they would go into captivity and God even told them the exact amount of years. His recompense was just and exact. The blessings and the cursings remain in tact to this very day! Get the point. The authenticity of this law (administered by angels) was proven by God's consistent enforcement of it. Now, if God was that thorough enforcing what the angels administered, how much more are we at risk who disobey the authority of His Son!

While this is primarily an evangelistic argument, the believer needs to see the warning which rests here for him as well. Grace is no excuse for disobedience. God will just as surely execute the demands of grace as He executes the demands of law. The laws of sowing and reaping remain. In fact, we are even more accountable than the Jews whose administration was put in place by angels. Jesus Christ Himself put our ministration in place!

Now the question arises, did God confirm the words of Christ in a way in which the Jews could be absolutely certain?

Look at verse 4 again:

(Heb 2:4 KJV) God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

God Himself bears these apostles witness with signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost. We are tiptoeing on a monumental picture. The argument is from lesser to greater. Our accountability

is far greater. A higher truth has been put in place and it is being confirmed by a higher authority. Why do we have Pentecost? What were those signs and wonders about? This is why it was necessary. It was there to confirm to the Jewish mind that a higher order was now being imposed. Pentecost upstages Sinai. There were voices at Sinai, there were voices at Pentecost. The purpose for Pentecost was not to prove to unbelievers that there is a God. The purpose of Pentecost is to prove, once and for all, that what is now being put in place is far more important than what was put in place at Sinai.

Furthermore, it has never been God's purpose that we seek to replicate Pentecost over and over throughout this age anymore than Sinai was replicated over and over. We do not need to return to first grade. Obsession with Pentecostal phenomena is impertinent. We who are not Pentecostal are firm believers in spiritual gifts, but we are convinced that the sign gifts relate to propagating the message of Pentecost to the then known Jewish world. As the knowledge of God's Pentecostal affirmation of the New Covenant became universally known among the Jewish people, those sign gifts dropped off.

As an aside, it will be noted later that the Mormons see the Book of Mormon as a third Testament. But it is a testament without authority or authentication! We are required to receive Joseph Smith's word about a revelation given to him in private! The best the Mormons can do is produce a few sea gulls! Not much behind that covenant!

There is another point that should not be ignored. The book of Hebrews was written late in the parade of New Testament books. Notice that the author of Hebrews treats these signs and wonders as something which took place in the past. There is very good reason to believe that they were not occurring while he was writing Hebrews or he would have alluded to them as a continuing affirmation. This would have been the perfect time to use those signs as current evidence. These signs that were exercised primarily by the Apostles (2 Cor. 12:12) had served their purpose. God was in the past bearing witness

to those who were affirming this New Covenant. It appears that the process has stopped.

To what are we to pay the more earnest heed? We heed the words of Christ in preference to the words of angels.

What is the danger of not paying that heed? The danger is slipping away and losing this.

Why should I be expected to place more importance on these words?

We have provided the first of two answers

1.) *1.) I am expected to place more importance on these words because of the One who affirmed them. The Holy Spirit affirmed them directly, not the angels.*

Now the final reason:

2.) *Because of the One who spoke the words. Vs. 5-9. The Holy Spirit affirmed them, but look Who spoke!*

(Heb 2:5-9 KJV) For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. {6} But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? {7} Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: {8} Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. {9} But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Take note for a second, of the words in verse 7 repeated in verse 9: "...thou madest him a little lower than the angels". Commentators in general agree that

we would be most honest and accurate if we would render these words as follows:

“...thou madest him, a little while, lower than the angels”.

There is no doubt that these words can be translated more than one way but context suggests that this is the best and strongest rendering.

Grasp the power of this. We see Jesus, who was made a little while lower than the angels – for what purpose? The suffering of death. That was the purpose. How do we see Him now? Crowned with glory and honor. This was done so that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man. This resolves the apparent contradiction which surrounds the manhood of Christ. There is so much to say about these verses, but we restrict ourselves to this single thought at this time. We see Jesus. We s-e-e Jesus.

He was made a little lower than the angels. The word made is not in reference to creation or generation by birth. The word here means to lessen. He was lowered for a little while a little lower than the angels. But He was higher before he was lowered. He was not made lower in the sense that that's where He began. That was Arius's error. He thought there was a time when Christ was not.

Again, we point to the Mormons who think they have a newer covenant than the New Covenant (Look at the title of the Book of Mormon – Another Testament of Jesus Christ). They want us to think their newer covenant was also affirmed with signs and wonders. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were mere men. They were not even angels. So here we have God affirming His first covenant through angels, His second covenant directly through Jesus Christ, and now, His third covenant through men? The Mormon wants us to believe he has a higher message than the New Covenant even though it is revealed through a lower order. This requires us to believe that Jesus Christ has rescinded the second covenant in order to institute the third – and He has

done so in spite of the fact that it is called an everlasting covenant. Of course this foolishness becomes even more obvious as we delve into Hebrews and compare the priesthoods of the Old and New Covenants, and then look with disdain on the imagined Mormon priesthoods that administer exactly nothing.

The argument of Hebrews (for the Jew and the Mormon) is this. How are you going to escape if there is no other covenant maker and there is no other sacrifice? How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation that was so miraculously affirmed? How are you going to escape the consequence? There was a consequence when you disobeyed the first covenant. How will you escape the consequence of disobeying the second?

For you and I who live in modern times, we must be quick to set aside a modern preconception. We must never present the gospel offer as an option. It is not an option it is a mandate. When one rejects this covenant he does not go to a Christless eternity simply because he is a sinner. He goes because He has rejected so great a salvation. He is guilty of despising and profaning the glorious gospel of Christ. The gospel offer is far more than an offer, it is an obligation that God places upon all men everywhere who are commanded to repent and embrace it. The New Covenant is not merely in a Person, it is a Person. To reject this covenant is to reject not merely a great salvation, but a great Savior!

You can come under this New Covenant at this very moment by embracing the Christ of this covenant who is Himself, the sacrifice, and the satisfaction for God's wrath. He is the giver of resurrection life.



IT BECAME HIM - PART 1

Heb. 2:5 – 6 - Chapter Seven

IT BECAME HIM. PART I

Intro: In the broadest of terms, we have been studying the superiority of Christ in contrast to the angels. This Christ speaks with greater authority than the angels who ordained the first covenant. He does so, because His message was also affirmed with signs and wonders and miracles, but greater ones than those associated with Sinai. These signs and wonders were the work of the sovereign Holy Spirit. His message was also greater because He spoke it personally.

And why, was it important to make this point? Do you understand? The Jew placed all his hopes on the message of that covenant delivered to Moses at Sinai. That was his covenant. This is why the New Covenant, delivered by Jesus Himself had to be shown to be superior before any Jew would listen. That is the first objection which must be overcome when witnessing to the Jew, but there was another objection, another source of confusion concerning this person of Christ.

We now address the greatest confusion that the seeking Jew would face when confronted with the claims of Jesus Christ. It concerns just exactly who this Jesus is and why it was appropriate for this Jesus, more than anyone else in the universe, to be the source of the New Covenant.

Listen in as the author throws down his challenge to the Jewish mind. See if you can tune in on his message. We will take his reasoning one step at a time and, if we have listened carefully, we will understand some amazing truths.

Remember the big picture. We are comparing the ministry of Christ with the ministry of angels. Ini-

tially, we saw that:

1. The Ministry of Christ was affirmed by a higher authority. The message of Pentecost equaled and then exceeded the message of Sinai. Now we see,

2. The Ministry of Christ has a higher purpose.

Verse 5:

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

No promise has ever been made that the world to come will be ruled by angels. If anything, it seems as though we have seen fewer and fewer angelic manifestations since the time of Christ. Angels, some of us think, seem to have served a great purpose in Old Testament times, but much of the ministry that angels assumed under the covenant is not required in the same manner under the ministry of the New Covenant. Angels clearly have a diminished role, at least at this moment.

We'll organize our thoughts with five "Whats?"

a. What do we mean when we say angels now have a diminished role?

What do we mean? Under the Old Covenant these ministering spirits were sent forth from God to confirm His word. Under the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit does this. Under the Old Covenant these wonderful beings were sent alongside at times to direct or redirect the saints. Under the New Covenant, the indwelling Holy Spirit performs this function. He, very clearly, is the messenger. So, it is not likely that we are going to notice so much of them in this age. They would be supplanting the ministry of the Spirit.

b. What do we mean when we speak of the world to come?

But what about the world concerning which our author speaks, namely, the world to come? What about the age to come? Clearly, and indisputably, they will have an apocalyptic role in administering the instruments of execution when that great and terrible scroll is opened. But that is essentially as far as they will go. No promise has ever been made that the world to come will be ruled by angels. Again, no promise has ever been made that the world to come will be ruled by angels. In fact, what we find, we find the opposite. They will be ruled. The angel class will be ruled. Thus, the question of the moment is, why or how could a higher genre be ruled by a lower genre? What about this administrative “oikoumene”, [oy-kou-men'-ay], this coming world empire, the final and greatest of all empires?

As an aside, we are saddened when unbelievers talk about their new world order. All of our greatest leaders in the last fifty years have been advocates of the new world order to one extent or another. Our key leaders in congress, in commerce, in education, in every American institution are working fervently for this day. I could tell you hair-raising stories of our present surrender to the United Nations, our financial system, etc., etc. But you already know all that. You know you are sitting right on top of it and already, virtually under its control. You also know that the world government toward which mankind works will be short lived and will end in utter failure.

But stay with the argument of Hebrews momentarily, for our author has chosen to quote one of the least likely passages in all of God's Word in order to make his point. He says in verses 6:

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 author is quoting from Psalm 8. Originally, Psalm 8 was not considered at all to be a messianic psalm. It is not until we begin reading the apostles that we discover the marvelous secret. Psalm 8 was never recognized by the rabbi's to be speaking of Christ. Nor should we have expected them to recognize it, much less to be prepared for this amazing argument that is now being laid before us. Follow along closely now and enjoy this masterful, masterful presentation (always keeping in your mind the number one objection of the Jewish people, the objection being that Jesus was merely a man).

c. What do we mean when we ask, “What is man?”

What is man? That thou art mindful of him? That is why those planets and stars are plastered all over the night sky. They are there in such mind-boggling abundance and in such unprecedented sizes and shapes to bring glory to God, yes. But God could outdo that little parade of lights any time He chooses. They are not there just to bring glory to Him. They are also there to bring humility to man. When we look at the heavens we ask two questions, who is this GOD that can finger paint with the stars? And equally as important, who is man that He even bothers with him? Man doesn't even rank angel status.

The author of Hebrews continues in verse 7 and 8:

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:

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.

Every now and then I encounter one of these pictures that everyone else in the whole world can understand but me. When you first glance at them you only see the picture on the surface. But if you relax your eyes and shift your focus slightly you see an entirely hidden image. I have never, even once,

discerned those images. In his inimitably Jewish style, our author has done something with Psalm 8 akin to one of those pictures. He is pointing out the Person in the picture who has been there all along. Jesus Christ is the man. Jesus Christ is the One who gives dignity and worth to this wretched, deprived, depraved mannish race. How did He do this? Jesus Christ has elevated manhood by His own descent into manhood. Jesus Christ provides the answer to the rhetorical question of Psalm 8, What is man that thou art mindful of Him? Hughes says in this respect:

“...our author...marks the point of transition from the concept of [now listen] ... from the concept of man-in-general, which was in the Psalmist’s mind, to the distinctively Christian concept of man-in-particular, namely, the incarnate Redeemer who in a unique sense is designated the Son of man.”

The key at this moment is not in understanding the term, Son of God. That is always a statement of Christ’s God nature. The key is in understanding the term son of man. All men are sons of men. Rightfully, the whole human race may be designated the son of man. But, Jesus Christ took this special title upon Himself. It was one of His own favorite designations of Himself. Over and over and over again – dozens and dozens of times this Savior calls Himself the Son of Man. Why? Because Jesus Christ is the consummate man. But more specifically:

Jesus Christ is the source and reason for the elevation of mankind to a position higher than the angels. He is the answer to the Psalmist’s logical question, How could God be mindful of men? Jesus Christ dignifies humanity. The lower genre has now been raised to the higher genre.

Now the puzzle is solved. Now we discover how mankind can see any dignity in himself. The atheist hates this, and the evolutionist is culpable. If there is anything which evolution robs from us it is our dignity. One of these days, I’ll contain myself no longer and be forced to devote an entire study to this matter of human dignity in order to argue how

it is being robbed from us and from our children at every level.

I am repeatedly amazed how that when the subject of human dignity comes up everyone rushes to Genesis 1. We lay stake to the claim of human dignity because we were made in the image of God. I have no argument with that. James uses that same logic in the New Testament. But, Christian, it is Jesus Christ who consummates and culminates that dignity.

d. What do we mean when we say, God set Him over the works of His hands?

Come back to the argument of the text. We are absorbing ourselves in a most remarkable truth. We have said that Christ’s ministry has a higher purpose than the ministry of angels. Its purpose will be to rule the world to come. This declaration is bold and undeniable. Christians are not opposed to world government. We are all for it. Our contention is that there is only One rightful world leader. Where is that contention made? Where do we get this idea that Christ is the rightful ruler of men?

For starters we have verse 7 where we see the legality of His rule:

7 Thou madest him a little {that is, a little while} lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

He was sent by the right Person. He was crowned by the right Person. He was commissioned by the right Person. All of the works of the Father’s hands are under Him. So, Jesus Christ has the legal authority to rule.

Notice verse 8. Here we see the extent of His rule:

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.

We also see an important clarification as we read the last phrase of verse 8 and verse 9. We are going to see the justification for His rule:

But now we see not yet all things put under him.

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

Here's a technical question. When was David anointed King? Was it before, or after the death of Saul? Clearly, he was anointed king long before Saul died. In God's eyes, (not in David's eyes but in God's eyes) who was king? From the time of the anointing of David he was king instead of Saul. But clearly, God was very weak, wasn't He? He was not able to dethrone Saul and seat David. God had to bide His time. We know better.

Our author reminds us, But now we see not yet all things put under him and for good purpose. This Savior for the suffering of death was to taste death for every man.

e. What do we mean when we say, He tasted death for every man?

Our coming world leader did just that. And He did not just taste His own death – He tasted death for every man. Is there anyone here who can fathom that statement or explain it to us? Are there any great leaders or teachers among us who can fathom those words He tasted death for every man. Are there any library books or any great works of theology which can open our childish eyes and give us the meaning of this phrase He tasted death for every man? Can any tell how it felt for Christ to do this? Can any lead us, blind flailing children, down the path of understanding?

This is one path we could never follow. I have often said concerning myself that I dare not think too much on the horrors of hell for I would go insane.

I fear the discussion of the flames of hell like I fear holding my own hand over a fire. It is not because I am going there; it is because the thought is too much for me to bear. I cannot bear the thought of the eternal suffering of one soul in that fearful pit, much less untold masses. I cannot bear it.

But there is a thought, which properly understood, would drive us to a far greater insanity. That is not the thought of one man going to hell. It is rather, the thought of One Man, tasting the death and hell of all men everywhere. One Man did this.

So observe Mr. Righteous Bigot who points his finger at God proudly announcing that he can't imagine how a loving God could send even one soul to hell. Why has he never criticized God even once for His greater crime? Why has he not criticized this God for laying the sins of the entire world at the feet of His Son making Him taste death for every man?? He was an innocent, sinless, spotless Son. Is there a more horrible thought than the thought that God sends men to hell? Yes there is, the most horrible thought of all, is the thought that one Man tasted death for every man who ever lived or ever will live. One Man. It is a horrendous sin to turn our backs on so great salvation.

And, allow me to point out that Jesus Christ did not just taste death for every elect man. He tasted death for every man. Every man. And, in fact, our text may even be leading us further. He not only tasted the death for all men but the Greek construction in this phrase intimates that He tasted death for all things (pan). This is in keeping with the fact that both man and the cursed creation will ultimately experience redemption. Perhaps that is so, but I am sufficiently exhausted wondering, pondering, mulling and meditating over what it meant for Him to taste death for every man. What does death taste like?

This is the justification for His rule. Every four years America has an election. Do you know why? We have an election every four years because we know that no man will serve us well. No perfect leader will ever arise. Elections are a compromise with our hu-

manity. The best we can do is to try to find the best among us and we are disappointed election after election. That is because these men are only interim rulers, temporary stand-ins, while we bide our time waiting for the perfect Leader in that coming day.

Jesus Christ has been rightfully crowned with glory and honor not the glory and honor which He had with the Father before the world began, (though that is His as well) but another glory, another honor. This is the glory which was earned through suffering and the honor which was earned through suffering.

We have seen the *legality* of His rule. God who created all handed it to Him.

We have seen the *extent* of His rule. He will rule over anything God has created.

We have seen the *justification* for His rule. For the suffering of death this son of man is crowned with glory and honor because He tasted death for every man.

In our next study we will see the most compelling argument of all, the one which will permanently change the world view of any self respecting Jew who follows the reasoning of this passage. But we have come far enough for now. In fact, it is too much to think upon as we contemplate the tasting of that death, and the wonderful provision of our salvation.

Christ has for sin atonement made.

What a wonderful Savior!

We are redeemed; the price is paid.

What a wonderful Savior.

What a wonderful Savior is Jesus, my Jesus

What a wonderful Savior is Jesus, my Lord.



IT BECAME HIM - PART II

Heb. 2:9-18 - Chapter Eight

IT BECAME HIM. PART II

Intro: You understand now, the mind of the Jew considering Christ. Two elemental questions must be answered.

First, Why should I take the word of this Christ over the word of the first Covenant? We have, of course, answered that in the first few verses of chapter two. This New Covenant is affirmed by the Holy Spirit and does not need angelic mediators. It is spoken directly by the giver of the covenant.

Secondly, (the source of our previous study), such a Jew would likely ask why did this Jesus appear as a man? Men are inferior to both angels and God. Of course, you and I know that Jesus Christ IS God and that he is superior to the angels. But that does not necessarily satisfy all our questions about His “mannishness”. So, we will labor a while longer on this thought.

I. WHY HAS CHRIST BECOME A MAN?

What purpose does it serve? We have already explained that the first reason is likely found in verses 5-9.

A. Christ Became Man in Order to Elevate Manhood.

By becoming man, the answer to the Psalmist’s question is provided: What is man that thou art mindful of Him? Until Christ blended His nature with the nature of man there was no answer to this piercing question.

My son brought some interesting light on this discussion as he was explaining a secular philosophical question that seems to be under current discussion. It relates to what philosophers call Anthropic Ontology. Stated succinctly, and in the words of one philosopher grappling with this issue, the question of anthropic ontology is properly worded: What is man that the universe is mindful of him? Yes, that is a direct quote.

The point which the philosophers are making is that when one looks at our galaxy in general and our earth in particular there are so many cosmic and environmental variables which come together making life for man possible, that the odds of this happening under the so-called laws of probability are stretched beyond all recognition. In their own words, it is almost as though the universe itself has moved over, so to speak, and made room for the existence and survival of man in this one small corner.

That is a valid question. But, if you truly believe in God there is an even more perplexing question. Why is He mindful of us? Why did He move over, so to speak, and make room for this miserable race? The ultimate answer is this: His Son is now a part of this race of ours. His Son has dignified this miserable race by becoming part of it. This is a most glorious truth. Without the entry of Christ into the race of mankind the existential depression of the philosophers is more than merited. Christ became man in order to elevate manhood. It is not enough that we were created in His image. That likeness was perverted at the fall.

Notice the second reason why Christ became man.

B. He became man in order to subjugate all things to Himself.

We saw the legality of His rule, the extent of His

rule, and the justification for His rule. This process is not complete but it is the ultimate goal. Thirdly,

C. He became man in order to taste death for every man (or all things).

In God's words, For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. Man brought his sinful condition upon himself and that sinful condition could only be resolved through a man, so Christ became man.

We need to ask that question again, only placing the emphasis on another word. We asked: Why was it necessary for Christ to become a man? We want to ask:

II. WHY WAS IT NECESSARY FOR CHRIST TO BECOME A MAN?

Why Christ? Verse 10 continues as an explanation of verse 9:

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.

It became Him – it was fitting for Christ to do this. In fact, only Christ could be the one to do this. That is the statement. Here are the reasons.

A. It was fitting for Christ to do this because it is HIS DOMAIN.

It is no one else's. Our author says all things are for Christ and all things are by Christ. It is His plan and His program. He is the initiator and the executor of the plan. One responds, Oh that is so elementary, so basic. Yes it is, but it is absolutely foundational.

I heard a test pilot talk about the military planes that his company had produced for the government. When asked whether he had broken any speed re-

ords he replied: "I have probably flown faster than any of the military pilots who hold the records but they hold the official records." You see, the military took oversight on the design of the plane, the military financed the plane, the military flies the plane – that plane is in the domain of the military. It is only appropriate that one of the military holds the speed record. That is appropriate.

But there is more than the mere argument of propriety. It is also a matter of glory and honor. The Jehovah's Witness says that Jesus Christ is none other than Michael the Archangel. He is only an exalted angel. Do you understand what that means? It means that this whole domain of mankind is of and for an angel! That's right. The glory belongs to an angel! And worse yet, it means that an angel became man. And what is wrong with that? If it was only an angel who elevated man, man will never have nature any higher than the nature of angels. Can you really, now, bask in the great sacrificial love of Michael the Archangel? I don't think so.

Or take another matter under consideration. Think about the Virgin Mary. The Catholic Church calls Mary the Co-Redemptrix. That is right, she is considered a co-redeemer with Jesus Christ. But she could not be such a person. Because this domain was not of her and it was not for her and she did not descend into humanity. She was born a human and she did not taste of death for every man. All she did was carry a baby. As wonderful as that is that is still all she did.

Are you getting the point? The glory belongs to Christ alone, not to an angel, not to a saintly mother, but to Christ alone.

Have we finished with verse 10? We have said it was appropriate for Christ to do this because it was His domain. It was both appropriate that He do it and it was a matter of honor and glory. Are there any other reasons why Christ was the one to carry out this remarkable task? I think yes. Look again. We have yet another surprise awaiting us.

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.

Let me also add verse 11 and 12.

11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

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

I believe embedded in these verses is another reason why it was fitting for Christ to do this, a reason so sweet and precious that it dare not be passed. It is, at the same time, like the strawberry hiding under the leaf. If you do not truly want to find it you will miss it.

We are too quick to discuss the matter of our salvation only in legal terms. We see the holiness of God satisfied through the blood offering of a holy Savior who became a man in order to make that sacrifice infinitely efficacious for all men. I have no contest with that truth. It is correct. But there is more than legality and technicality associated with our salvation.

B. It Was Fitting to Bring About a Change in Our Human Natures.

There is new life, restoration, revitalization, regeneration of our very natures and our very selves. And there is more, more than just restoration to our original condition before the fall. That was not good enough. For if we are only restored to our pre-fall condition there is nothing to keep us from falling again. There must be a systemic change that comes about in us, a change in our natures, so to speak. How is this to be done? The answer is so amazing, so beyond us, that it is beyond genius. Here is how the problem is to be resolved. There are two facets on this precious jewel.

1. *The first facet:* If the nature of man is to be essentially changed it must be mixed or blended with another nature. The recipe must change. Clearly, to mix the nature of man with the nature of angels is not adequate because the angels are capable of being deceived. They too, are capable of falling. While my wife is quick to say I am an angel she never specifies what kind of angel I am. It cannot be the nature of angels.

It was fitting for Christ to do this. Why? Because His is the only nature sufficient to resolve the ongoing problems of our human natures. But, how is this to come about? How am I to become a new creation?

2. *The second facet.* If Christ is going to blend or mix His divine nature with us it means that our nature must be mixed with His. He must take on the nature of man, not the nature of angels. The nature of angels is not enough. Notice verse 16.

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

So, what will happen to Christ when He takes on the nature of man? What essential changes will we notice in Him?

a. Does this mean He will have a fallen and sinful nature? That is what Ellen White taught us. She said Jesus had a mean and sinful nature even though He was tempted and yet without sin. The answer to that question is no. Man was not created sinful. Man was not created fallen. When Jesus took on the nature of man He took on the nature man had before the fall. He was born of a virgin and for good reason, because, to redeem man there must be a second Adam who was not in the first Adam.

b. But notice that we have not answered the question how did it essentially affect Christ to take upon Him the human nature? Could He be tempted then, as Adam was, and fall into sin? Could there have been another fall, so to speak? The answer is no. Because Christ was both God and man He could not have fallen. We have the record of the temptation to prove

that fact (and set our consciences at ease). We can trust this Christ, this second Adam, not to fall. He will not fail us as our first Adam did. Mankind then, needs a change in natures if man is to be the ultimate victor over sin. Angelic nature would not be enough.

We still have not answered the question how did this essentially affect Christ to take upon Him the human nature? The answer is right under our noses. Among other things, it pleased Him, the Bible says: "...to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings".

We must not bask in the fact that Christ took on human nature – and then shun the consequences of that decision. If Christ is to take on the nature of man He must experience the nature of man. He must be essentially changed. In other words, it is a reciprocal blending of our natures that occurs at the cross.

What if, as a man, you were told that all the women in the world had a virus and the only way they could be saved was if you were willing to be injected with a drug that would change you into a woman. Imagine how it would feel to wake up, men, responding to life through the nature of a woman (or vice versa, you women, imagine the opposite). I could just see myself being pulled over by a police officer, bursting into tears, or expecting my mate to protect me; or wanting to goochy-goo every little baby that comes along. That would come as quite a shock to me.

Imagine the Son of God taking on the human nature and being forever changed. That was love!

We do not stop simply at this hypostatic union of the natures of God and man. We learn that Christ must also share the human experience in every way. That is why we read that our Savior was made perfect or matured through suffering. Was He not already perfect? Was He not already mature? As God He certainly was. As human flesh, flesh and blood, He certainly was not. This is the price He paid, the price of the human experience.

And look at verse 11. This precious Savior was not in any way ashamed to call us brethren. He did not see it as a step down. He saw it as a privilege and pleasure. He saw it as a joy. We cannot fathom these things. We cannot imagine them. We can exclaim, what a Savior!

Remember the ones to whom we speak. We are talking to this Jew who has shrunk away from Christ because He came as a man, because He suffered. And now, this author of Hebrews is explaining that the manhood of Christ is proof of His greatness, not His weakness. And just to set the biblical record straight he starts quoting from the Old Testament Scriptures:

Verse 12:

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

Verse 12 is a quote from Psalm 22:22, and verse 13 is a quote from Isaiah 8:17 LXX. We will not examine the respective passages, but will settle for the point only. By becoming man Christ became our brother. He took on our natures. He was not ashamed to do so.

Verses 14 and 15 are sweet and succinct:

14 Forasmuch then as the children...

[remember, these are the children God gave to Messiah as noted in verse 13.]

...are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

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

Here is final reason why it was befitting for Christ to take on our natures:

C. It was fitting because He could not die if He did not do so.

He could not experience and then destroy death. He could not destroy the one who had the power of death, the devil (not the death angel) He could not deliver those who, through the fear of death, lived all their lives in bondage.

Satan's power of death is a secondary power, allowed to him by God. It may be because Satan was the first to die that he qualifies as the father of death. We set that issue aside for another study. Most importantly, we need to know that he will be destroyed along with death and all of its arbitrary power.

Secondly, do we know anyone who is living all of his or her life in bondage, right now, because of the fear of death? Of course we do. Have you seen all the tricks which men use to help men deny the reality of this grim reaper? Can you remember anymore the silent horror under which you lived until Christ changed all that, the unspoken agonies, the uncertainty of not knowing? Do you remember fearing, yes, knowing the worst? We must never forget that we have the Savior who alone is the fitting one to solve all of those problems. We have the answer and it is in a Person. We have the keys. Pray, by God's grace, that we will be able to use them this very week!

D. Our Fitting Response

Now, read over these last few verses which really give us the essence of the chapter. Hebrews 2:16-18:

16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. 17 Wherefore in all things it 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. 18 For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

The salient thoughts jump out of the text and into our hearts, producing profound joy. Notice how the ideas build. We have both *forensic* (legal) and *family facts*:

Fact: Christ could not and did not begin as an angel or perform His work as an angel. This truth flies in the face of Watchtower, Adventism, and, the Gnostics of ancient times.

Fact: Because He took on *human form* qualifies Him to be our substitute.

Fact: Because He took on that human form *as the seed of Abraham*, made Him the rightful inheritor of the messianic promises made to and through Abraham.

Fact: Because He took on human flesh, and was made of the seed of Abraham, qualified Him to perform *the priestly ministry of reconciliation*.

These *forensic* truths are rich and powerful, and testify to the absolute precision and truthfulness of our God, Jesus Christ. While these truths may not seem to be all that practical on a day to day basis, they really ground us in the absolute assurance that this salvation of ours works. We may be absolutely certain we are saved when we accept Christ's provision.

And then there are the *family facts*. As we scan backward over these verses and look forward to the ones to follow in chapter three we see the repetition of those familial terms: "brethren, brethren, children, children, children, brethren, holy brethren, house, household, son, fathers." He is one of us! He was tested just as we are! He understands! He identifies! He is family. He is blood! In God's infinite wisdom He gave us family, the ultimate source and circle of our greatest love and affection. And this Jesus, is our most beloved family member! This is salvation at its fullest!

This is no mere legal transaction performed to satisfy a legal debt alone. God has joined our family!



FAITHFUL SERVANT, FAITHFUL SON

Heb. 3:1-6 - Chapter Nine

FAITHFUL SERVANT, FAITHFUL SON

Intro: A special lecturer came to our Bible institute to teach on the Thessalonian letters. As a young student in Bible school, it would be an understatement to say that my gentile senses were offended by this old roaring fundamentalist lion, the likes of whom I had never seen or heard. This lion slew more of the enemy with his jawbone than Samson ever did with the jawbone of that ass. There was not much about this arrogant outspoken preacher that I liked at all, except that, even then, I conceded he handled the scriptures with great accuracy and authority and he did speak the truth.

Years later I was to meet this same man again. This time I saw him through different eyes. This time I saw him as my father-in-law, and his wife as my mother-in-law. This time he did not offend me in any way, but rather, I was attracted to him. And the closer I looked, the better he looked. Eventually we even worked together under the same yoke in Christian ministry.

What changed my perspective? In a word, it was love. I had fallen in love with his daughter. Because I loved her I loved everything about her, and any family that could produce her must have been a great family indeed. I not only loved my wife, I grew to love all that was hers. I had become part of her household, just as she had become part of mine, and it changed my world view.

The stuff of Hebrews three is the stuff of households. And the more we read these remarkable verses that present themselves to us, the more precious they too, become. They are precious because they are about Christ, the One whom we love dearly. And

not only do we love Christ, we love all that is about Him. We want to peer under every nook and cranny in order to uncover some new hidden secret about His character, some old picture in the family album that will endear Him even more to us. One who loves Christ must love Hebrews for Jesus Christ is the theme of this book.

This third chapter falls into two distinct divisions. The truth concerning Christ is presented in the first six verses. The warning against ignoring this truth completes the chapter. We might call them the argument and the admonition. Read the first six verses and consider the challenge which presents itself.

I. THE TRUTH CONCERNING CHRIST

(Heb 3:1-6 KJV) Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; {2} Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. {3} For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. {4} For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. {5} And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; {6} But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

Can you think of any questions that you would like to ask about these verses? I can only think of a hundred or two, but I suggest only three:

1. *Why is the word wherefore here?* In other words, why does this relate to the context? And why are we

comparing Christ to Moses in these 6 verses?

2. *Who are these holy brethren?* Are they believers? Are they saved? If they are saved, then why the stern warning? Why is the suggestion made that they risk not entering in as verse 19 intimates? Can believers lose their salvation? Must we endure to the end in order to be saved?

3. *And what about this household business anyway?* Why would this argument carry any weight with our readers?

Hopefully, prayerfully, these questions will be clearly answered. You may encounter a thing or two you have not considered before. I do ask you to apply both your mind and your heart so that you may enjoy Christ. At times we will look at the big picture and at times we will look at parts of the picture.

A. An Invitation to Consider.

Verse 1. Examine the assertion one more time.

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

...Wherefore ... Let's look and see what it's therefore ...holy brethren, partakers... To whom are we speaking? Let's set that aside for just a minute. ...consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession... Let's look at the offices.

1. "Wherefore" What have we just finished doing? Since the day we started Hebrews we have been showing the superiority of Christ. In chapter one we see that He is the superior Son because this Son is the Son of God and the Son of Man. He is superior as the Son.

We have also seen that the Son is superior to the angels. No angel could have saved men. Jehovah's false Witnesses tell us that Jesus Christ is Michael the Archangel. If this is true then the best we can

have with the blending of our natures is the nature of angels. Angels are susceptible to the fall. Christ, on the other hand, took not on Himself the nature of angels. He is superior to them, and thankfully, our new natures are superior to the angelic nature, as wonderful as it is. But, the author of Hebrews is by no means finished dismantling Jewish preconceptions.

2. "...holy brethren, partakers," To whom are we speaking? Let's set that aside for just a minute and look at the next words:

3. "...consider" the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.

B. An Anomaly to Resolve.

We are about to see a superior Apostle and High Priest.

When our author tells his readers to consider this Apostle and High priest of our profession, he wants them to fix their eyes and their mind on Him once and for all. HE is to be their focus. He is not one of many as the world presents Him, He is the one and only, as the scriptures present Him.

And, what is it in particular that we are to notice about this Apostle and High Priest? To whom are we to compare Him? We shall be comparing Him to Moses, verse 2:

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

Ponder for a minute. Why are the terms APOSTLE and HIGH PRIEST associated with faithful Moses? Was Moses an apostle? Was Moses a high priest? There is a touch of curiosity in this because the greatest hero of the Jewish faith bears another title. He is a prophet. However, there was a sense in which the Jews saw Moses as an Apostle and as a priest.

Concerning the word apostle the Hebrews had a

similar word to the Greek *apostolos*. Hughes notes that the word *shaliach* is a Hebrew term synonymous with the Greek *apostolos* but with the special connotation of an envoy. In a word, this term was also associated with the high priests. Rabbinical history (not biblical history) tells us that the Rabbis regarded God's priests as shaliachs, God's special apostles or envoys, and this history also tells us that these Rabbis considered Moses to be a high priest. Moses was, of course, a sent one according to Exodus 3:10.

Why did the Jews see Moses as a high priest? It was not because of his sacerdotal duties. That would be Aaron's role. Rather, Moses was seen as a high priest because of his great intercessory role.

So, for Hebrews to speak of Christ in terms of Moses as an apostle (or envoy) and high priest would not surprise the Jewish readers at all. But there is more, and it is very important.

What is the real point of comparison between Christ and Moses? What is the issue over? The issue is over faithfulness.

When we think of Moses we ask ourselves, what was the primary character trait of this man? We are likely to think of meekness. Moses truly was the meekest man who ever lived. But that is not the trait for which the Jews remembered and commemorated him. They commemorated Moses for his faithfulness in leading this recalcitrant pack of rebellious ingrates for a term of forty years. Moses' claim to fame was faithfulness.

We must not be expected to trust those who are not trustworthy. The Israelites trusted Moses because Moses himself was trustworthy. He was faithful. There are numerous Old Testament passages to which we could turn in order to defend Moses right to the title of being faithful but I have selected only one, Numbers 12:6-8:

6 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.

7 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.

8 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?

This was a high honor. This places Moses at the top of the prophets' list. He is the prophet to beat. He was faithful in God's entire house.

C. A Great Contrast to Explore

1. *About Houses and Households*

Looking again at the Hebrews passage, let's narrow the discussion of this faithfulness by noting that Moses is commended specifically for being faithful in all of God's house. Whatever do we mean by this?

a. Israel was seen as God's household. The word house is the Greek *oiko* (*oikos*). It can mean a physical house, or it can mean the household (all of those who live under one authority). For example, Acts 16:31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" or *oikos*. Israel was also seen in God's eyes as a household or a house. Jesus commanded the disciples in Mt 10:6: "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Moses was faithful in this house.

b. The temple was also called the house of God. For an example notice Matthew 12:4.

c. But most importantly for you and me, as members of Christ's church we are seen as God's temple and God's house. Paul told Timothy his reason for writing to him:

1Ti 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. {ground: or, stay}

This is, of course, why no man may lead in the church who cannot lead his own household according to 1Ti 3:5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

But please notice 1 Peter 2:5:

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

You and I as living rocks are built up (oikodomeo) a spiritual house, (oikos) a holy priesthood.

2. How Christ's Domain is Contrasted With Moses.

a. So, that is the word, *oikos*, and it refers to the word household. And what are we seeing? We are seeing that the natures of the houses are different. Moses was over the House of Israel an earthly house as an earthly apostle ministering as an earthly priest. Jesus Christ was over a spiritual house as a heavenly apostle with a heavenly calling.

In New Testament times you already know that stewards commonly ran households. These were the *oikonomos* - the faithful household servants. These were highly educated, highly motivated, highly trusted slaves who literally ran the household. In 1 Corinthians 4:1 we learn that the servant of Christ postures himself as a faithful steward of the mysteries of God. Do you remember the discussion of the faithful steward in Luke 12? Jesus said in verse 42:

42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

We must not limit our discussion to the faithfulness of Moses and Christ. We must consider our own faithfulness in these matters.

b. The argument does not rest here. We read in verses 3 through 6 that this Person was counted worthy of more glory than Moses because Moses only wore one hat. Moses was a faithful servant, a faithful steward over the household. But Jesus Christ is worthy of more glory because He built the household. And lest there should be any doubt in anyone's mind about what this means the author spells it out in no uncertain terms:

Vs. 4. This builder is God. This Jesus Christ is the builder. This builder is God. This Jesus Christ is, therefore God.

Vs. 5. The record of Moses' servanthood was put there as a testimony of things that were to be spoken after. In other words, Moses' example was intended to point us to another. Moses said it best in his own words. Moses said it best in his own words in Deuteronomy 18:15:

15 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;

Like unto me? How would this prophet be like unto Moses? He would be like unto Moses in that He was faithful in His entire household. But He is greater than Moses because He built the household.

We noted earlier that there were a group of Jewish cultists who taught that Messiah would come as an angel. It interests us to know that one of the secrets revealed by the Dead Sea scrolls is that there were also those who taught that Moses himself would return as Messiah. And frankly, if Messiah were to be a man, who better than Moses?

But this Son is better. He is the faithful servant (the faithful servant of choice) in verse 5. And in conclusion, according to verse 6 He is the Son, not just the servant. He is the Son over His own house.

I believe that Jesus Christ has come to us as the Messiah, first as the faithful, suffering servant, and

then, as the reigning Messiah. I further believe that we who are in Christ inherit those tasks and that the faithful servants who are faithful over His household now will later rule His household. It is required of a steward that he is found faithful, faithful, faithful! You and I are not Christ like when we are not faithful.

If I were to ask you who is the greatest ball player who ever lived? Who do you think it would be? Would you say Babe? Would you point to a hitter? Or would you point to a pitcher? Good pitchers are rarely good hitters, you know. How would you determine the greatest? But what if I could show you a ball player who was a perfect hitter who never missed, a perfect pitcher who never lost a game or even walked a batter, the fastest base runner who ever ran the diamond, the best catcher who ever stooped behind the plate, and then, in addition to all that I could show you that he was also the coach of the team and had never lost a game. And then, for good measure I showed you he was the creator and owner of the team? Would you agree that he was the greatest ball player of all time? Of course you would.

This is what our author is doing. He is matching this Jesus Christ up against all comers, all the heroes and the greatest offices of Judaism. Moses, the greatest icon of all in the Jewish mind, as wonderful as he was, pales in the light of our Savior. And Moses, of all men, would have wanted it this way, in fact, he told us it would be this way.

This makes it a very dangerous and risky thing to ignore the claims of this great and glorious Savior!



STERN WARNINGS

Heb. 3:7-19 - Chapter Ten

STERN WARNINGS

Intro: We have explained that the stuff of Hebrews 3 is the stuff of households. We began with the Argument and left the Application for this session.

I. THE ARGUMENT

The Argument, which is found in verses 1-6, consists of an admonition to consider, to observe carefully, this Jesus Christ, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession who is more faithful in His household than Moses was in his entire household.

In showing the superiority of Christ we learn that it is not Moses' unfaithfulness which makes Christ superior (After all, Moses' claim to fame was exactly that, his faithfulness) but rather, Christ is superior because that is all that Moses was, a faithful servant, household steward. Christ, on the other hand, was a faithful steward, a faithful son, and the builder of the house.

That is the Argument. Beginning with verse 7 we turn our attention to:

II. THE APPLICATION

How are we to respond to all this? And, just as importantly, from our point of view – why would this argument carry so much weight with the Hebrews? I think we have some keys, which, if properly applied, will not only help us understand these questions they should also make US very nervous!

In order to control our time and thoughts, let's place our emphasis on two areas. First, look briefly at the

warning, and then look a little more closely at the ones receiving the warning. In so doing we will see why the warning was so relevant.

A. The Warning.

Notice that *two* days are being compared:

Read verses 7–19:

(Heb 3:7-19 KJV) Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, {8} Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: {9} When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. {10} Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. {11} So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) {12} Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. {13} But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. {14} For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; {15} While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. {16} For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. {17} But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? {18} And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? {19} So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

What, then, is the warning?

- We are not to harden our hearts as Israel did in the day of testing. Verse 8
- We are to “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” Verse 12
- We are to “... exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Verse 13
- We are to remember those who did not enter into His rest because of unbelief.

This is serious business. In a word, Jesus Christ is not an option. He is not an alternative. He is an imperative. The issue is a high stakes issue. We must not lose our confidence in Christ. We are not talking about works here. We are talking about faith. The verses focus on our hearts, not our hands. We are not to harden our hearts through unbelief. Unbelief is ultimately the sin for which all men are condemned to a lost eternity. The failure to place our confidence in Christ is the greatest failure a man can experience. It is unbelief.

Every word of this warning applies to you, reader, if you do not know Christ as Savior. I have had, in virtually all of my churches, a group of folks I have called salvation holdouts. They are not just those who have rejected Christ, they are those who take great pleasure in being the holdouts. They are the unconverted among the converted. In some cases, I have seen them come to Christ. In most cases they go blithely to their graves. It is because they do not know they had hardening of the arteries. They do not sense or feel the cholesterol of unbelief building up in their veins. One must understand that every rejection of the gospel places him at greater risk of having the spiritual coronary which will take him to Hell.

But let's look a little more closely by considering:

B. The Ones Receiving the Warning

1. *To whom is our author speaking?* First, consider

some facts we can gain from the text itself.

According to verse 1 we are talking to holy brethren, partakers (or participants) of the heavenly calling. While it is true that the Jews also called themselves brethren, the term holy brethren seems to be a term reserved for believers. These participants in the heavenly invitation may well have been God's elect.

But then, as we absorb ourselves into the heart of this severe warning we read statements such as verse 12.

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

We ask, can a true believer have in him an evil heart of unbelief? Can the elect harden his heart in such a manner that would cause him to lose his salvation?

The answer is, of course, no. That cannot happen. We will learn why this cannot happen a little later in Hebrews. Our problem, as we examine these verses, is that we are asking ourselves the wrong question.

Never ask yourself, when reading Hebrews, is the author writing to saved or unsaved? Numerous commentaries devote large portions of their prologues to this issue. Any reader can tell when the emphasis is being placed on one group or the other, on the believers or the unbelievers. For example, in this lesson, I have already addressed both saved and unsaved. That was no problem for the listener or reader. Sometimes I even do this when I am absolutely certain everyone in the congregation is saved. Why do I do it? I do it because I do not know when or where a particular tape will go and I never want to miss that opportunity to address both groups.

But, let's think for a minute about these Hebrews, because I truly believe that as we understand them we will see why these verses that seem so enigmatic to you and me who live in the church age were very relevant to them.

2. Consider some facts we know about the Jewish mind in general.

In the Jewish way of thinking a Jew could not separate his nationality from his religion. He saw the world as a mix of two groups, Jews and Gentiles. If you were a Jew you were one of God's people. You were the chosen race.

Many Jews, regretfully, associated their personal salvation with their national position. In our terms (a term they would never use) they were saved because they were Jews.

Those Jews who knew God, however, knew better. They knew that inside the household of God there were two groups of Jews, those who were the sons of Abraham by birth and those who were the inheritors of the promise to Abraham by faith. But they were all Jews.

So, Moses' household consisted of both believers and non-believers.

We must not think so with the household of Christ. These Hebrews must not make the same mistake their forefathers made. One is not a partaker of Christ because he is a fellow traveler with Christians any more than the mixed multitude who came out of Egypt were saved because they walked with Joshua and Moses.

This is why the severe warning is necessary. Take heed, our author says, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

The problem is not dissimilar to the problem we have today. We have, in our culture, tens of thousands of men and women who call themselves CHRISTIANS or Christ ones. We have Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Catholics, Presbyterians, Church of Christ, Lutherans, the Russian and Greek Orthodoxies, United Pentecostals and other Jesus Only groups, along with a wide array of charismatic. This is not to speak of the cults such as Advent-

ism, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses who also call themselves Christians.

Are they all Christians? This is serious business. If Episcopalians, Orthodox, Catholics, Church of Christ, and United Pentecostals are born again Christians they are so in spite of the false gospels which each of their respective churches teach. If modern, and I underscore modern, Presbyterians and Methodists or United Church of Christ have born again persons in their ranks they are so in spite of the great apostasy which their denominations endorse. If Mormons, Adventists, and Witnesses are born again, they are so in spite of their leaders who clearly teach salvation by law keeping and works. Yet these folks all call themselves Christians!

So, what is our point? Just as there were many who saw themselves as a part of the household of God in Bible times, there are tens of thousands, no, millions, who see themselves as part of Christ's household who are not.

How do we win them? Do we win them by gathering them all together as Promise Keepers does (for the most part) and then, proclaiming them all to be Christians breaking down the so-called denominational barriers? Or, do we warn them as the author of Hebrews does?

And how do we warn them? Do we say, Oh, you are a Catholic, you could not possibly be saved!!! Of course not. Interestingly, we approach every one of them the same way. We effectively say to them, where is your confidence?

Look at verse 14.

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

Where is your confidence? Is it in Christ and Christ alone? Where is your faith? Is it in Christ and in Christ alone? On what do you rest? Is it on Christ and Christ alone? Where is your hope? Is it based on

Christ and Christ alone?

Those groups either teach us that man is saved by grace through faith in the work of Christ alone, or they teach in one way or another that man must earn his way. If they have not held fast their confidence in Christ alone they have departed from the living God.

Getting back to the text, try to understand the point. Try to understand the Jewish mind. Try to understand that these Jews, many of whom thought they were saved because of their birth, had to be warned that they had to place their personal confidence in Christ. Their own history showed the results, the results of Jews who had not placed personal faith in God but relied only on their national identity. These Israelites, instead of moving forward with confidence in God chose, instead, to put Him to the test. Consider one more thing.

3. Consider some historical facts we discovered more recently.

When I first studied Hebrews we did not have the advantage that we have since the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls. In those days I had already concluded that both the elect and the non elect, the mixed multitude, were being addressed in Hebrews. But we did not know so much about Jewish sects as we know now. And we certainly did not know about the Qumran sect.

a. One of the interesting facts about the Qumran sect is that they were very zealous, but very confused. They were confused about true Judaism and confused about true Christianity. Their doctrines were a terrible mix of fact and fantasy.

b. Another interesting fact which we learn about them is that they had retreated into the wilderness from the corruption of mainline Judaism and the Roman Empire in the hopes of regaining the spiritual purity of Judaism.

c. Another interesting fact is that many of these

“Qumranese” (which you already know) believed Moses himself would return as the Messiah. Thus, we see the necessity of showing Christ superior to Moses.

d. But the plot thickens when we begin wondering just exactly how they were able to construe Moses as the coming Messiah. Remember, Jesus (the suffering Messiah) had already come, and died, been raised from the dead, and ascended. The answer is found in their allegorical and metaphorical system of interpretation.

These folks actually saw themselves as having their own Exodus from Apostate Judaism. They are already seeing themselves as having a parallel experience with their forefathers who came out of Egypt. They are going through their own wilderness wanderings. Keep in mind just exactly how long those wanderings were. They were 40 years.

Let me read a quote from Hughes which will shed a little light.

“Is there some special thrust in the mention of the ‘forty years’ in the quotation from Psalm 95? F.F. Bruce draws attention to the evidence in the Qumran literature ‘of a belief that God’s dealings with Israel, which began with a probationary period of 40 years, would be rounded off at the end-time by a probationary period of like duration.’ He points out, that assuming this epistle to have been written shortly before A.D. 70, it was now almost forty years since Jesus had accomplished His ‘exodus’ at Jerusalem (see Luke 9:31, Greek exodos - exodus - ex-od-os), ‘hence the urgency of the present appeal to the readers to take heed’ so long as it is called ‘today’ (verse 13) IF INDEED the recipients of this letter were in some measure disposed to view with favor doctrines distinctive of or similar to those held by the Dead Sea Sect, then the mention of this period of forty years, so significant in the past and now again significant in the reckoning of this community who had returned to the wilderness existence, and the solemn lessons drawn from the history of the Israelites could well have come to them with partic-

ular force.”

Did you grasp that? TODAY! Is there not a touch of irony in that? Just as Israel wandered 40 years after her rebellion, so Israel remained 40 years after her rebellion against Christ. And that grouping of 40 years is the TODAY grouping.

As I thought about that and I thought about how important it was for these Hebrews readers to place their confidence in Christ I could not help but think about our today. For over and over in my mind comes the reminder of what the Lord Jesus said about the fig tree sprouting her leaves indicating the coming of summer in Matthew 24:

32 Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

33 So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

34 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Consider that this prophecy likely relates to the conclusion of the tribulation and the establishment of Israel in her kingdom. As we observe the stirrings of Israel it is difficult not to conclude that the end time events of the Day of the Lord may well be upon us. The day of salvation, this day today, may well be at an end.

Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts! Today is the day of salvation.

Footnote: The author apologizes for not having access to the citations in this chapter from F.F. Bruce and Hughes commentaries on Hebrews.



REST EASY

Heb 4:1-8 - Chapter Eleven

REST EASY

Intro: We are discussing the concept of biblical rest in general and entering into the Sabbath rest discussed in Hebrews 4. I would like to vary our format for these nine verses and speak in the persona of four different persons, a lawyer, a detective, an interpreter, and a preacher. For this reason, you will not find a typical “outline” of these verses.

I. AS LAWYER

Good lawyers begin and end everything with a disclaimer, and I shall follow in their paths. These nine verses are worthy of an entire study in themselves and a thorough treatment would require many pages and we will not do justice to them here. The commentary which we provide serves only as a brief treatment of a few major truths. Students who desire to involve themselves completely and thoroughly in the entire Sabbath discussion are encouraged to read Dale Ratzlaff’s Sabbath in Christ. While this book seems to be written especially in the context of clarifying sabbatarian issues between the cultists and ourselves, Ratzlaff’s pursuit of the truth has also led him into a good understanding of the New Covenant. In chapter nineteen, The Rest that Remains, the reader will find a thorough treatment of the issues we do not address in this study.

II. AS DETECTIVE

A. The Broad Overview

To view these verses we must paint with three brushes, the broad overview, the immediate context, and the actual verses. In order to gain a broad perspective of the theme of biblical rest, you will want to look at the inserted graphic in the Appendix entitled **Rest Easy – Seven Biblical Rests**. It is important for the student to notice each of the seven rests mentioned while looking up the appropriate scriptures. Each of these rests represent worthy studies. The truths in the chart are elementary and generally agreed upon by all.

The chart clearly indicates that Hebrews 4:10 is dealing primarily with redemptive rest. The operative word in this context is, primarily, as you will see when I move to the role of interpreter.

B. The Immediate Context

It is important for the reader to notice that the subject of rest does not begin with Hebrews 4:1. The author has already salted our oats in chapter three. Notice 3:11, and 3:18:

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

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

The reader should have the events of Israel’s failure to enter the promised land clearly in mind. It is vitally important to understand that this style of building on Israel’s historic past as a nation is a key trait of our author. It was a logical and consistent way to approach the Jewish people. In this case, his picture of Israel’s past failure would paint a thousand words for our author who wants to confront his readers with their present obligation to take a step of the same gargantuan importance. He does not want

his readers to fail to enter into this Sabbath rest. Because the above verses make it clear that this subject is very important to God, (He swore in His wrath) this subject is very important to the listener, (One can fail to enter into this rest.) It is also clear that this rest is entered into through the exercise of faith or belief. Because we have already read the whole of chapter three we know we must believe specifically in the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ.

C. The Actual Verses

Please read Hebrews 4:1-8 in a block:

Heb 4:1-8 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. (2) For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. (3) For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. (4) For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. (5) And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. (6) Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: (7) Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. (8) For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

Again, notice the salient points are summarized on the graphic insert. There was a “Canaan” rest, verses 1-4. This rest foretold a deeper truth, verse 4. Not all enter into this rest, verses 5 and 6. God is clearly speaking of a salvific rest which may only be entered by ceasing from our works, verse 8 and following.

We are immediately reminded of Ephesians 2:8-9:

Eph 2:8-10 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

We become God’s workmanship first; then God works in and through us. We are not saved by our own works of righteousness (Titus 3:5) but by appropriating by faith what Christ did for us. We can make a dangerous oversight at this point which can destroy our souls. As surely as the Israelites had to take a conscious step of faith, so too, we must consciously appropriate what Christ has done on our behalf. A generic belief in the goodness of God, and even a belief that Christ died for our sins is insufficient to save our souls. We simply are not saved until we rest our hope in that truth.

III. AS INTERPRETER.

In the above interpretation of Hebrews 4, we have made it abundantly clear that the message of the text is geared toward a group of Israelites who need to appropriate the sacrifice of their great Apostle and High Priest, Jesus Christ. Further, they need to appropriate this as a singular action and rest in the Christ who is our Sabbath.

At the same time, a careful Bible student will notice that theme precedes detail, though it never contradicts detail. Details descend from themes. While this is an advanced concept that needs to be grasped in a dedicated study, it is still illustrated here. The next study begins by stressing there remains a rest for the people of God as well. What we note here will bear repeating then. The Christian walk functions on the same restful dynamic. Our daily rest is the result of our ongoing appropriation of our position in Christ.

There is also another open point of discussion for

serious Bible students who are beyond the basics in this matter. It is one thing for the believer to associate the first day of the week with the celebration of the resurrection of Christ and the new creation that we all are in Christ, in contrast to the old creation which was commemorated by the seventh day. It is quite another to argue that there is a Sabbath fulfillment in the resurrection which arbitrarily allows us to assign Sunday as the new Christian Sabbath. This would, in effect, equate Sabbath rest with resurrection rest. While this may be a fine point of distinction, the application of that hermeneutic becomes a portal for vesting a number of Old Testament concepts, including even dietary laws, into the realm of the New Covenant. Fruchtenbaum does a masterful job of treating this on pages 287 and 288 of his work on Israelology. Suffice it to say that this weak excuse for importing Old Covenant values into the New Covenant, not only opens a Pandora's box which inevitably ends in mixing works with grace, it robs Christ from His rightful title as our Sabbath. In fact, our rest is in the Person and work of Christ. Christ Himself is our Sabbath rest.

you have appropriated Christ by faith you already have that acceptance. That is what it means to labor to enter into rest. It is labor because it is the hardest thing in the world for a man to do. Are you enjoying that rest?

*Please see the chart entitled **Rest Easy** located in the appendices and answer the simple questions.*

IV. AS PREACHER

The reader may have already noted a certain irony in this. One must labor to enter into this rest, (vs. 11). It goes against the very grain of our natures to think that we cannot work in order to gain favor from God. This very reliance upon works is evidence of the deep need we feel within us to make up for our lack. Many compliant children, for example, work hard to please their parents in order to make up for their own feelings of insufficiency. They feel they will find validation in their parents' commendations. Ironically, that pattern rarely succeeds and often ends in even more bitter disappointment for the child. At the core of the believer's walk with Christ is a fundamental sense of sufficiency. Because he is in Christ he does not need to seek that kind of approval. If the work you are seeking to do for the Lord is intended to gain His favor it will not suffice either for your salvation or for your walk as a believer. If



THE SWORD OF GOD

Heb 4:9-13 - Chapter Twelve

THE SWORD OF GOD

Intro: We took a broad look at Hebrews 4 in our last study and it is our intention to finish the chapter as we take a closer look at what the Bible says about itself, the Word of God.

Remember the big picture. We are discussing the superiority of Christ. We have shown Him to be superior over the prophets, over the angels, over Moses. Before we are through with this chapter, we will begin the presentation of Jesus Christ as our great high priest. In this regard, we will see Him superior to Aaron. That is the big picture. Now, narrow your focus a bit.

Looking a little more closely at chapter 4, however, our author has paused to provide us with a stern warning. We dare not pass the discussion of Moses and the children of Israel without pointing out Israel's horrendous failure. What was that failure? In a word, she failed to enter into her rest spoken of in 3:19. We learned that the promises of God demand a response. Then in 4:2 we learned that the promises of God demand a correct response. They must be appropriated by faith:

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.

It is not enough to believe in the promises of God. They must be appropriated by faith. We also learned that there is a promise of God to which we must respond. There is a rest which we must appropriate. And, most importantly, according to verse 11, we are to labor to enter into that rest.

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

There is a touch of irony in the fact that we would have to strive or labor in order to enter into rest. That is because we are spiritual workaholics, bent on providing our own solutions. We are bent on offering our own morality to God. We prefer to trade on our own name. We do not like charity. It goes against the very grain of our nature to think that we are obeying when we are resting and that we are disobeying when we are striving to gain our spiritual inheritance. That is unnatural.

Like combing the back of our heads in the mirror, it is hard to learn how to think backwards. But that is exactly what God expects of us. The hardest work we can ever do is resting in the promises of God instead of resting in our own labors, be that resting in the finished work of Christ for our salvation or resting on the promises of God for victory in the Christian walk. Our flesh is always applying for the job.

We cannot emphasize this enough: We do not *labor* to enter into our salvation in the way in which the Lordship salvation people teach. They teach us that we must strive and agonize in order to enter into heaven. One Lordship author tells us that our striving to enter the kingdom of heaven can become as violent as though we were in physical warfare. There is not much rest in that. There is no rest in the Sermon on the Mount. There is no salvation there, though the Lordship people tell us that it is the pure expression of the gospel. No, we strive to find the narrow gate and that gate is opened by faith, by resting in the sure promises of the Word of God.

Nor can we repeat this too often: The fact that what began in faith continues in faith. Paul told the Galatians:

Ga 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

If you are failing in your Christian walk today it is probably not because of your direct disobedience to the scriptures. That is the second failure that occurs in the life. It is preceded by another failure, the failure to lay hold on God's promises. If you are failing in your Christian walk it is because you have failed to lay hold on and appropriate God's promises by faith.

Look at verse 12.

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.

1. When we first read this we may be tempted to think that the subject has changed.

The author has added some sort of parenthetical insertion. That is not the case at all. He is still talking about promises, about claiming the promises of God. The promises of God are the Word of God. That is why we are so accountable to them.

I may chose to make a promise to you and you may chose to ignore it. That is not so with God. His promises are His Word and we are accountable for responding to His promises because they are the Word of God. So, the first thing we want to remember as we look at verse 12 is that the promises of God are the Word of God. Notice another thing:

2. For the word of God is quick.

When we say that God's Word is quick we do not mean that it is fast. We are not talking about speed. Rather, we are talking about the fact that the Word of God is alive. It is animated. It is living. If we do not understand this we have lost everything.

Our words are not living. God's Word is living. Our words have no power to open the eyes of anyone to the gospel. Our logic, our stories, and even our emotional pleas have no real power. Faith cometh by hearing, our Bible says, and hearing comes by the Word of God. This means we should accept no substitutes.

Every Bible teacher will readily agree that sometimes this Word tastes sweeter than honey and the honeycomb while at other times it tastes like manna. Sometimes it calms us like a glass of warm milk before bed. Other times it robs us of our sleep like a glass of iced tea. It cajoles us and convicts us. It thrills us and inspires us. It angers us and embarrasses us. It challenges us and disciplines us. It encourages and warns.

We have, on occasion, repeated Corrie Ten Boom's woodpecker story about the woodpecker who pecked on the side of the tree at the exact time when lightning struck. He declared in amazement, "My what power I have in my beak!" There is no power in our beaks. There are no powerful preachers. There is only a powerful book. Love this book. Feed on this book and you will come alive. Get away from this book and you will shrink up and shrivel up.

3. Not only is the Word of God living, but also according to this verse, it is powerful.

This is the Greek *energhē* – *energes* - *en-er-gace*, the word from which we get energy. God's Word is effectual and powerful. As believers we know what the Bible is speaking of here. We have seen it subtly change our lives. We have seen its presence change our family lines, and we have seen its absence diminish our family lines. In the words of the old song: We've seen it break the power of canceled sin and set the prisoner free. We've seen it make the vilest clean. We've seen it avail for us, ourselves. We know about the power of this Word for it has touched us.

This is a good time point out two errors that we of-

ten notice when people talk about the Word of God.

a. The first is the error of going too far with this thought. There is a potential for a great misunderstanding regarding what we mean when we speak of God's Word. When we talk about the Word of God and its great power we must never slip into idolatry. There is nothing magical or powerful in the words themselves. Christians do not confess some non-reality to be true and find that we have altered reality by using God's Word as some sort of a chant. That is witchcraft, pure and simple. If there were power in the actual words themselves, we would have read verse 12 this way: "For the words of God are quick and powerful...." The words are only the vehicle for communicating the WORD of God. They are canisters, chosen by God, yes, and chosen specifically for conveying the Word of God. But the words are merely the vehicles.

If the words themselves were the objects of the inspiration (and not the vehicles) we would be on the horns of a great dilemma. The phrase, for instance, "God so loved the world..." is inspired. Every word is inspired. Every word is equally inspired. But when I use the same word love and tell my wife I love her, it is not the Word of God. The word love in that case, is not inspired, only inspirational. Do not attribute magical powers to the words of God. Attribute spiritual power to the God of His Word. That is one danger.

b. The other danger is the extreme opposite. Having concluded that the Word of God is what is inspired, some have said that the vehicles do not matter. The physical words which God chose to contain His message do not matter. This is why we have such a proliferation of Bible translations around today. The New International Version, for example, does not hold itself accountable to the vehicles, the actual words themselves, either in the Greek or English. Instead, these translators based their translation on a new theory of translation which holds that the real purpose of a Bible translation is to convey, as much as is possible, the actual thoughts that God intended to be understood. 'Sounds good to me. What do you

think?

In truth, this theory of translation is very dangerous. One reason is that we are now left at the translators' mercy to decide what those thoughts of God really are. In other words, like allegorical interpreters, we are left to the arbitrary opinions of men. But there is another reason why this idea is wrong. The words themselves in the original autographs are inspired. That is, they were specifically selected and chosen by God himself as the Holy Spirit matched up the vocabulary and writing style of the writer with the divine truth He was teaching.

You may not have followed all of these thoughts, but try to remember this, our duty is first, last and always to hear and obey the Word of God. We can only do this by protecting the very words themselves which were chosen and inspired by God. We may not play with them or adjust them to fit our preconceptions or to make them more readable.

So, we have seen the promises of God are the Word of God. The Word of God is quick, or alive. The word of God is powerful. We now come to the fourth concept.

4. "*... and sharper than any two edged sword.*"

What are we to make of this? It is not that the Bible is represented only as a sword. It is a lamp unto our feet. It is a light unto our paths. It is milk and meat. It is honey and bread and water. It is all this and much more, but it is especially a sword.

Jesus Christ, the Word of God in flesh, is never called a sword but He wields a sword. He wields this sword, His Father's Word. When we encounter the very first image of this Savior that we find in Revelation 1 we read in verse 16:

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

The sword is a symbol of victory, of conquest. Ultimately, Jesus Christ will conquer and it will be the result of the Holy Spirit of God applying the Word of the living God.

But we need to bring this a little closer to home for our own hope of victory. Our only hope of spiritual victory is based on that very same Word of God. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:17.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Nor is this Word any old sword. It is a two edged sword. There are no blunt parts to it. It does its task. There is not a lot we can say about the two edges. Augustine, in his inimical allegorical style said they represent the two testaments. Others have other explanations. I do not know. If I were forced to take a position I would have to share Philip Hughes' thoughts:

"...it would be preferable to suggest that the word of God, like a sword with two sharp edges, always cuts with one side or the other, that is to say, either in a saving or in a judging manner. Thus, on the one hand, Christ proclaims, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.) (Jn 6:36) and on the other hand, He says of him who rejects him, "The word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day." (Jn 14:28)"

In any case, this sword of the living God is sharp. It is not as sharp as, but sharper than any two edged sword. Most of us have felt its penetration and all of us eventually will. But consider what this two edged sword does and consider how God uses it.

- a. First, it penetrates. It pierces. It strikes at the innermost depths of our minds and hearts.
- b. Secondly, it separates. It pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow. So, what are the soul and spirit? We shall discuss that issue until the rapture. I understand the soul to be the life force that exists in all of God's creatures,

man and animal. I understand the spirit to be that part which God breathed into us when we became living souls, quite different from the animals. The spirit is the part of us which returns to our creator. I believe that man receives his spirit at conception and not after he has traveled a few inches down a birth canal. But after that, there are few things I can add to the discussion of the essential natures of soul and spirit. I certainly cannot distinguish between them on a practical basis. I do not know where mind and body meet or how they meet. I cannot often even tell whether a man is physically ill, mentally ill, emotionally ill, or spiritually ill. I cannot do these things. I cannot discern these things, but the Word of God can. It goes beyond the dimensions of our natural perceptions, finds us where we truly live, and weighs the true thoughts and intents of the heart.

We human beings are masters at technicalities. We have long since prostituted our courts. They thrive on technicalities and exceptions. Our Supreme Court recently voted to offer our children to the fires of Molech rather than risk curbing an adult issue of free speech. Technicalities! Technicalities! We have come so far that we actually know more criminals who are free on technicalities than we know of those who have been successfully charged. Justice in America is not blind, she is cross-eyed. But not so the Word of God. It can discern through the finest differences, even to the points where souls and spirits, joints and marrows meet. There will be no mistrials declared before this Word of God.

We can deceive others. Others can deceive us. We can deceive ourselves. We cannot hide from this sword. It penetrates and it separates.

- c. Notice, thirdly, it differentiates. It discerns thoughts and intents, specifically the thoughts and intents of the heart. What a day that is going to be when the secrets of all men's hearts are made known. The day when those who have suffered in obscurity are vindicated and those who have chosen the path of compromise and popularity are exposed.

Perhaps this best explains the two edged sword. You

see, if we have been obedient, and if we are in line for vindication, we have no fear of the cutting work of that sword. It is the sword of deliverance. If, on the other hand, we have things that we do not desire to have exposed that sword of the Word does not bode well.

And finally,

5. This sword makes no exceptions. (It separates) Verse 13.

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.

There is something about blind justice holding her scales which has always seemed ironic to me. I know why she is blindfolded. She is blindfolded so that she will not be prejudiced. So that she will make her determinations based upon the facts alone. But, even when I was a child, pondering her image, I thought to myself, why would I trust my fate to a blind woman? How does she know what's on the scale? And, is that not exactly what we are facing in our justice system today? In our effort to be blind to injustice we have blinded ourselves to the facts! The criminal goes free because his rights were not read to him!

It is not so with this God of the Word. All creatures are exposed and naked before Him. It is possible that the author of scripture intended us to picture people standing naked before God. Nakedness speaks of poverty. Job said:

Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

Nakedness also speaks of vulnerability. We are exposed and seen for what we are. Job also said:

Job 26:6 Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath

no covering.

As noted, there is a real possibility that that is what the author of Hebrews intends for us to sense in verse 13. But there is another possibility, especially when we look at his choice of words in the Greek. The idea of being naked and open is the idea of having the throat laid bare before the sword, specifically, the two edged sword which is under discussion here.

We will spare ourselves the Greek discussion and simply read a line or two from Hugh's footnote on this participle "laid bare" (gumnos - gumnos - goom-nos')

"...It has been variously explained as having originally meant to seize someone by the throat (Philo), to hang by the neck (Chrysostom), to lay a victim out supine and powerless (Theodoret), and to bend the neck back to or force the head back so as to expose the throat preparatory to administering the coup de grace (Ecumenius)..."

In other words, this sword is set to strike. It is set to pierce and to penetrate. We are in deep trouble, very deep indeed, when this Word of God exposes us. We need help and we need it quick. We need a priest. A high priest! And He had better be a good one! The day of reckoning is coming and this sword takes no prisoners. Can you stand the heat of that day? If you cannot you had better find a priest now! A good one! The trial date has been set!

Next, we will learn about this marvelous, this great high priest!



MEGA PRIEST

Heb. 4:14-16 - Chapter Thirteen

MEGA PRIEST

Intro: I have sought to make this particular study relevant to the Lord's Table. In our previous chapter, our necks were laid bare by this penetrating, differentiating, separating, convicting Word of God which exposes all of God's creatures and His creation for what we are.

There is nothing which is not manifest before the eyes of this One with whom we have to do. That is the conclusion of Hebrews 4:12-13. The heat of this unbearable indictment would be to reduce us all to ashes if it were not for the refreshing and encouraging words of verse 14.

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.

This high priest alone is our escape from the sword. Concerning the contrast between verses 13 and 14 Luther wrote appropriately:

“After terrifying us, the Apostle now comforts us, after pouring wine into our wound, he now pours oil.”

Truer words could not have been spoken, for of all the images of Christ which the scriptures paint for us it is this image, the image of the high priest, which bears the greatest weight and substance. It is this image which will now hold our focus for some time to come in our study of Hebrews. To begin:

I. CONSIDER SOME OF THE THINGS WE HAVE ALREADY LEARNED ABOUT CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD.

While the priesthood of Christ is intimated in Hebrews 1:3 (where we learned that He had by Himself purged our sins) the first direct discussion of the priesthood of Christ came in 2:17 and 18 where we read:

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.

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

A. The Essential Facts

From these two verses we learn some of the following facts:

1. Christ literally indebted Himself. He took on the obligation to become like His brethren, that is, to take on human flesh when becoming our priest so that,
2. He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, and so that,
3. He might make a reconciliation, or better, become a propitiation, a satisfaction to God for our sins.

B. The Striking Contrast

So, we see a striking contrast arise out of verse 17:

1. He becomes like His brethren so that He may

faithfully fulfill the role of the priest, but unlike His brethren and other priests:

2. He himself becomes the propitiation. This action occurs in the middle voice and we infer directly from it that Christ literally became propitious to Himself. He was the satisfaction. He satisfied the Father, but it is not incorrect to say that He also satisfied Himself. If, I repeat, if Jesus Christ was any other than God Himself this verse would be the absolute height of blasphemy. We would have Jesus Christ being propitious to Himself, a created being. The One who is the satisfaction for our sins is, Himself, satisfied. These principles we have already learned. Now:

II CONSIDER HOW THIS APPLIES TO US.

As we approach 4:14 we will both expand what we have already learned, and add new information about the priesthood of Christ. Continuing on, look at verses 14 and 15:

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

15 For we have not 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.

A. This is no ordinary high priest.

He is the greatest. Literally, the first phrase reads: “Having therefore a high priest great,” or a great high priest.

The Hebrew people used synonyms just as we do. And sometimes, we even use different words to convey the same meaning in a specific context. For example, you may go home on a Sunday night and say, “The preacher ate too much ice cream.” Or you may say, “The pastor ate too much ice cream.” There is a

difference in definitions between the words preacher and pastor but you got your point across.

Sometimes the Jews called their high priests exactly that, high priests. Sometimes the Jews called their high priests great priests. Our author has gone one better. He is calling Jesus Christ the great high priest. That is, He is the greatest of the great. He is the highest of the high priests. He is at the top of the pile. He is not just another high priest.

We see that, not only is His stature greater than an ordinary high priest but we see:

B. This great high priest has a greater access to God.

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens

Of special interest to us is this new information that our great high priest has passed into the heavens.

1. The first thing you must remember is what the text actually says. This is important enough to mark in your Bible. This is no small matter. The text actually reads that He passed through the heavens, not into, the heavens.

2. The second thing you must remember is what the text actually means. Under the Old Covenant the High Priest, once a year, passed from the sight of the people where he took the blood of the atonement into the earthly sanctuary - specifically, what we call the holy of holies. That is the analogy. Both priests passed through from the sight of the people into the presence of God.

But here is the contrast. One of these priests passed through the real sanctuary into the actual presence of the living God. As we will emphasize later in our study of Hebrews, God does not dwell in a temple made with hands. When we get to chapter 8 we will learn that there is a literal temple in, or possibly above, the heavens.

We will not rob ourselves of future pleasures in our study of Hebrews by fully developing this contrast at this point, but try to grasp this key concept which we will need in our study:

What I want you to remember has to do with the ways of God. It has to do with our whole conception of spiritual realities. Here is the principle: God's earthly redemptive plan conforms to heavenly realities, not vice versa. The figures are all on earth. There are no figures in heaven, only realities. There are no types in heaven. Redemptively, what happens in heaven does not conform to what happens on earth. That sounds so deceptively simple, but it is so critical.

Take, for example, the temple. One famous Bible teacher teaches us that the purpose for the shedding of Christ's blood was primarily to fulfill the Old Testament symbolism associated with the shedding of the blood of the sacrificial animals. This way the Jews would recognize Christ. That Bible teacher has it backward. If that were true, the Old Testament sacrifices would be substance, and Jesus Christ would be the type or the figure. The truth is, there is a literal temple in heaven. Jesus Christ became our high priest, propitiated Himself, and offered Himself in a real sanctuary either in or above the heavens. The Old Testament sacrifices were simply figures pointing to the coming day when this great high priest would pass through the heavens.

Remember what has been said for later study in Hebrews: God's earthly redemptive plan conforms to heavenly realities, not vice versa.

We have one more truth to place on the table and it is found in the next phrase of verse 14.

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.

We have seen that we have the greatest of the great

high priests. We have seen that He has greater access. He has passed through the heavens in a real temple to the real throne of the living God. We now see one more thing about His Greatness:

C. This High Priest Has a Greater Capacity To Be Our Minister.

"Where do you see that?" You ask. Why, it's as plain as the noses on our faces. It is locked up in His name, right here in verse 14. This is: Jesus, the Son of God. That is the name of our priest. As Jesus, we see His humanity. As the Son of God, we see His deity. We see how He can offer Himself, how He can be propitiated.

In His humanity we find His capacity for sympathy. Verse 15 revels in this thought:

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.

On the one hand, we may no longer say "I'm only human". On the other hand we may no longer say "But, God, you really don't understand." He understands our weakness, our frailty, our flesh. There is His capacity for sympathy. He shares that capacity with the earthly priests.

But, as the Son of God He has an even greater capacity than the earthly priests. They never could be certain their sacrifice was accepted. The Son of God could be certain, for this One who was satisfied with His own offering, knew full well that the Father was also satisfied.

Jesus, the Son of God!

Do you remember what was just noted when we gave you that important principle? Do you remember that God's earthly redemptive plan conforms to heavenly realities, not vice versa? Well, that applies here as well. There are Bible teachers who tell us that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God in eternity

past. They say that somehow, He became the Son of God, either at His birth, or His baptism, or His resurrection here below! They tell us that, out there in eternity, He was not the Son. They do not understand that God's earthly redemptive plan conforms to heavenly realities! God did not change the name of the Second Person of the Trinity in order to effect redemption's plan. Heaven did not conform to earth! Rather, God constructed redemption's plan to conform to the realities which already existed in heaven. The Son of God came down.

To argue otherwise is to rob this beautiful phrase, Jesus, the Son of God, of its precious meaning. Jesus is our Great, no, the greatest High Priest. He is greater because He is the great High Priest. He is greater because He has greater access. He is greater because He is Jesus, the One who can be touched with our infirmities. He is the Son of God, the One who alone can know that His sacrifice will be accepted! Jesus, the Son of God!

That is why we can join with the admonition of verse 16:

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.

Consider it. You are not now approaching the outer courts of an earthly tabernacle. You are now entering the Holy of Holies where only one priest could go once a year. When you bow your head in prayer at this very moment you too are passing through the heavens. You yourself are coming boldly, openly, and without fear before the throne of grace. And there you will find mercy and grace to help in the time of need!

THIS POSITION IS FILLED

Heb 5:1-5 - Chapter Fourteen

THIS POSITION IS FILLED

Intro: We are not only mining gold in this book of Hebrews, but we have struck the mother lode of the book, the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ. We got our toes in the water in 1:2, our ankles in the water in 2:17 and 18, and our knees in the water as we concluded chapter 4. We are now in for the full swim.

But, scan over verses 14-16 of chapter 4 where we left off, and try to keep at least two significant thoughts in mind while you nurse the overall argument of our author. We have a mega high priest here, a superior priest.

Reality

In verse 14 the key word that comes to my mind is reality. This great high priest of ours does not deal in types and figures as Aaron did, but rather, according to verse 14, He is a priest that is "...passed into (or through) the heavens." Why have the picture when you can have the person? Why have the promise when you can have the fulfillment? That is why He is superior. That is reality.

Empathy

Beginning in verse 15 we have the second key word. We will call it empathy. We do not have a high priest who cannot be touched by our infirmities.

Years ago I had a root canal done, and after three shots of Novocain I was still in agony. The dentist piously announced that there was no way I could feel pain and it had to be all in my head. I felt the urge to bite his hand so that I could announce the

same thing to him. He had no sympathy. The reason he had no sympathy was because he had no empathy. He did not know that an infection in the jaw can completely neutralize the effect of Novocain. More importantly, he had never experienced the pain I was going through.

As a believer there are times when I can sympathize with others, but there are fewer times when I can empathize with them. I can only identify with someone if I have had the same experience. Jesus Christ was tested in all points like as we are. Armed with these two truths, the reality of Christ's priesthood and the empathy that He shares on our behalf, we may now come boldly before the throne of grace and obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need.

Mercy in its purest sense is God withholding from us what we do deserve, and grace is God giving to us what we do not deserve. Mercy and grace are such beautiful words!

We will see this thought re-occur as we look at verses 1-3 of chapter 5, but there is yet another key word which we will introduce as we group these verses into one reading:

- 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:**
- 2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.**
- 3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.**

Quality

The word I favor for describing our great priest in this text is quality. He passes muster as a high priest.

In verse 1 we see that such priests are ordained, and we will cover that when we get to verse 4. But, specifically, these priests are ordained for men in things pertaining to God. Pause right here so that we do not lose our author's intent:

Look one more time at the first sentence in verse 1:

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God

Based on that phrase alone, what is the high priest's role? He is ordained for men on behalf of men in things pertaining to God.

Recently I was humored about a report I read concerning a council on women's affairs in one of our military branches. This council had mostly men on it and was chaired by a man. There were only one or two "token women" on the council. It would seem to me that if we are going to have a council on women's affairs that women should be allowed to represent themselves on that council. Management, for example, has never done very well representing labor at contract meetings.

If Jesus Christ is to be a priest for men in things pertaining to God He needs to be a man. That is not a difficult decision to make. We want our priest to be from among men. Angels will not do. But Jesus Christ is not simply qualified to represent us because He is a man, He is also addressed in things pertaining to God. He knows both sides. This is a very good trait in a priest.

And speaking of quality, we see something else in verse 2 as we think on this great Priest who is one of us:

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 more I look at the role of the Old Testament priest the more convinced I am that I would never have chosen to be one. It is not because the job was a bloody job. It is not because the job was often a lonely job. Rather, it was because so much rested on this priest. He made so many determinations and the outcomes weighed so heavily. He was between God and Earth and accountable to both. And when it comes to applying mercy and grace that is no easy task.

There are traits that get you and me into trouble when we seek to exercise them. Our problem is that we never know how to apply mercy and grace. We never know how much to apply or withdraw in a given situation. This is painfully obvious as we seek to raise our children. Thankfully, one parent is usually a little too restrictive and one is usually a little too permissive and we survive parenthood by working with each other (Or should we say the children survive by working the parents against each other?) But the question will haunt us 'til we die, were we too strict? Were we too permissive? Did we properly apply mercy and grace? Jesus Christ is perfectly qualified to properly administer mercy and grace. And just as importantly He is motivated to do so. We may go boldly, knowing He represents us to His Father.

What happens when we apply too much sympathy? The end result is license and disobedience and anarchy. What happens when we are guilty of too much apathy? Is there anything crueler than self-righteous indignation? When is it time to frown? When is it time to smile? Who is to say?

The key is in that word translated compassion in your Bible. It actually means to be moderate in passion. It carries with it the imagery of someone who knows just how much gentleness to apply. It is a quantitative word. Christ is qualified as a priest because He has the perfect balance of experience and knowledge. He is one of us. He is God.

We know, as we look at verse 3 that there was one

way in which Jesus Christ was not like the earthly priest. While he was compassed about with infirmity, He Himself was tested, and yet without sin. We know that. But we also know that in the gospels we have a Savior who was dogged from the beginning to the end of His ministry with every kind of opposition, every kind of struggle that man can encounter. And His experience did not end there. They extended to the unthinkable, indescribable agonies of Gethsemane, the depth of which no man has ever plumbed. We have an understanding Savior.

Authority

Beginning with verse 4 we are required to add another key word to our list of priestly qualities. I prefer to call it authority.

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

One does not wake up in the morning and decide that he is going to become a priest. This job is by invitation or by declaration only. There is no employment office where one may apply. And we might add that nowhere in scripture did God allow either the church or Israel to choose their own priests. This is a very serious presumption.

In Old Testament times men like Korah and his gang paid a very fearful price for presuming on Aaron's priesthood as recorded in Numbers 16. The zeal of the Lord destroyed them.

In these New Testament times, men who claim to be priests commit a far more grievous sin, for they are not merely presuming on the authority of an earthly priest such as Aaron, they are presuming on the authority of Jesus Christ, our current high priest who is doing quite well with His office. He does not need to be relieved yet! There is only one mediator between God and man! No middlemen are necessary!

No man takes this office on his own. Search your Bible from cover to cover and you will see that Israel did not and could not select her own priests. And

more importantly, the only high priest which was ever selected in the early church was not Peter or Paul. It was Jesus Christ.

So, what about Jesus Christ? Did He take this authority upon Himself? After all, He had a right to. Look at verses 5 and 6 together as a group:

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.

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

Christ did not glorify Himself to be made a high priest. I repeat, He could have, but in so doing, He would have stepped outside of God's plan. Jesus said that if He glorified Himself His glory was nothing; it was His Father who glorified Him. John 8:54.

My diplomas and ordination papers hung on a wall in my office. Now, I am one to tell you, right up front that I have never been one for hanging those things up, but I did so because there are folks who do feel it is our responsibility to do so in order to make our ministries credible. Folks want to know that I did not ordain myself. I did not order my ordination out of a magazine. I was not examined over the telephone or on the Internet. It was not a farce. Godly men examined me and acknowledged what I already knew, that God had ordained me to the ministry. The church that ordained me will always have the right, incidentally, to annul that ordination if it should become necessary.

But, what about our high priest? Does He have any ordination papers? The answer is a resounding yes! His ordination papers are framed in the Old Testament. Specifically, our author says, Jesus Christ was ordained a high priest on the basis of two Old Testament declarations.

A. The first quote is the real surprise:

“Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.”

This quote, taken directly from Psalm 2:7 has already been treated very carefully in our study of Hebrews. It is used as a very critical New Testament argument. It is critical to us in today's study for three reasons:

1. First, it points to Jesus Christ as the Son of God. In that title are found the rights to His deity, as we have taught you so often before.
2. Secondly, this is a Messianic verse. That is, both Jewish and Christian scholars agree that this statement is made to the Messiah. Jesus Christ is clearly being identified with Messiah.
3. Thirdly, if you will read Psalm 2 you will see that it emphasizes the royal aspect of Christ's ministry. Psalm 2 is a picture of Jesus Christ, the coming King!

B. Look at the second quote, found in verse 6:

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

Here, we see the author of Hebrews establishing the priestly credentials using another tack. If you are a priest you must be the member of a priestly order. Christ is a member of the Melchizedekan order, a priestly order which is superior to Aaron's order! We will not develop this now, except to remind you that Melchizedek was a royal priest, a king-priest. He was not just any priest. Abram paid tithes to him.

Here is the conclusion of the matter: Our Savior's priestly ordination papers are found both with respect to His divine qualifications as the Son of God, and as the member of a priestly order. And with respect to His human qualifications He is found as one who was compassed with infirmities such as we experience.

You may have already been exposed to the two-messiah theory of the Jews. History tells us that some rabbis and members of Jewish sects saw two messi-

ahs coming. One was a suffering messiah and one as a reigning messiah. They saw the suffering messiah as one who would be a priest, following in the steps of Aaron. The kingly messiah would follow in the steps of David. They ever dreamed that Jesus Christ would be both messiahs in one person.

I want to end our study with this note: I want to remind you one more time about this gracious priest who is on duty even as we speak. We must stop thinking of this great salvation of ours in terms of the day when we received it, always looking to the pastor for confirmation of our present experience.

Our priest is representing us at this very hour. The grace is available at this very moment. D.L. Moody once said:

A man can no more take in a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough today to last him for the next 6 months, nor can he inhale sufficient air into his lungs with one breath to sustain life for a week to come. We are permitted to draw upon God's store of grace from day to day as we need it.

I would like to add to Moody's words. We are permitted to draw upon God's store of grace from hour to hour, from minute to minute, as we need it! The fountain is flowing. All we need do is step up and drink from it!

I saw a documentary that included the discussion of a Chinese politician. As one might expect, Chinese politicians are greatly feared by the people. One does not just assert his opinions to one without careful preparation. One politician, sensing how far out of touch he was with the people, changed his whole manner of behavior. He changed his dress, his gestures, and his actions so as to purposely befriend those who feared him. When he would go into a home, he would take his shoes off and put them up on the table as the peasants in the home did. He became so much like the people that they were free to tell him their true feelings.

Jesus Christ has done this politician one better. He

became a peasant. He became one of us. And He did it so that we could approach God without fear. He did it so that we could tell Him our true feelings and be our true selves. What kind of God do you picture when you go before this throne of grace? He understands. He really does! He says I know! I know! I know! And, He does know. So, stop imagining this distance between you and Him that Satan wants you to imagine. You have a priest like no other, a priest full of gentle compassion, mercy, and grace!

But for Grace, my soul had perished,
Withered as the desert sand;
Gone to shadows, and tormented,
But for Grace's perfect plan!
But for God's unceasing Mercy,
But for Calvary's sacrifice;
I had wandered, blind and thirsting,
Fell to Satan's grim device.
But the blessed blood of Jesus,
Shed upon that cruel tree;
Called me from the ling'ring shadows,
Saved my soul, and rescued me!
But for Grace, O Grace perfected,
But for love's undying flame;
I had never hoped in Jesus,
Nèer had even known His name!

-- Carlos C. Beam



THIS AMAZING PRIEST

Heb 5:5-9 - Chapter Fifteen

THIS AMAZING PRIEST

Intro: Well over one hundred fifty years ago a London pastor opened his message with the following words. Though I have read them to you before they are certainly worthy of one more reading, especially when you remember that preacher was Charles Haddon Spurgeon and that he was barely 20 years of age when he penned them. Said Spurgeon:

“It has been said by someone that the ‘proper study of mankind is man.’ I will not oppose this idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of the Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of the child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.

“There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned by its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought ‘Behold I am wise.’ But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is a wild ass’s colt; and with solemn exclamation ‘I am but of yesterday, and know nothing.’ No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind than the thoughts of God...”

Nothing is so engrossing, and yet frustrating at the

same time as pondering the nature and the ways of God. We see through the glass so darkly. Even when we get to heaven where we will know all there is to know we will still be stopped short and abruptly at the contemplation of this beautiful godhead.

This passage is no exception. We take up these few verses in Hebrews five and rush headlong into questions so deep, so penetrating, that they have defied the best of the scholars and theologians as we see ourselves as mere children who are trifling and toying with things which are beyond us.

I speak especially concerning this marvelous person of Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who is by all the rules and laws of nature and physics, a contradiction. He is the God-Man, and as such, He claims the full natures, rights, and privileges of both orders. We ask ourselves how could He be tested as a man, and yet remain unable to sin as God is? Or how could He come as God and die as a man? Who or what died at the cross? And, whatever do those words mean “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” when we know that He was God? The secrets, the answers to these questions are locked up in the blending of His divine and human natures, in the miracle that is above all miracles.

Hebrews 5:5 treats our dim eyes to the beauties and the marvels of the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The impeccable logic, the inescapable arguments, which force us to the conclusion that there can be no other salvation and no other Savior, are beckoning us to consider them. So, look again at verse 5.

(Heb 5:5 KJV) 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.

Rehearsing what we have already learned about this

Priest, notice:

1. *This Great High Priest had to be a man.*

He himself had to be compassed by our infirmities if He was to represent us to God.

2. *This Great High Priest had to be appointed.*

Vs. 4 - 6. He could not take this esteemed position upon Himself. In this context we last showed you Christ's ordination papers, found in the Royal Psalm, Psalm 2. There we see His deity, and then, in Psalm 110 we see his priestly order, the Melchizedek priesthood. Again, we emphasize His royalty for Melchizedek was a King-Priest.

For now, remember this Great High Priest was appointed and He is a royal priest after the throne of David, and He is a royal priest after the order of Melchizedek. These are the only two royal priests in the Word of God.

As we move to verse 7 we see another marvelous trait of this Great High Priest:

3. *This Great High Priest had to fulfill the intermediary duties of the high priest.*

(Heb 5:7 KJV) 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;

He was a working priest. What surprises us is where the author of Hebrews places the emphasis. In our thinking the most important duty of our Great High Priest was the offering of Himself as the divine sacrifice for our sins. In other words, it is the cross that holds the lion's share of our focus and attention. After all, the cross is the lightning rod where heaven and earth meet.

But that is not the immediate focus of this verse. This verse, which is emphasizing the priestly work of Christ, begins with Gethsemane. It is in Gethsemane where we see so many of the beautiful priestly

traits of Christ that we dare not leave in obscurity. In some ways, it is as important to us as Calvary itself, though our sins were not atoned for in Gethsemane. Remember, our Savior's great High Priestly prayer that is found in John 17 was offered at this very time and that is just the beginning.

Look carefully at this verse and understand the following:

First, we are talking about Gethsemane. You say, didn't Christ offer up prayers and supplications at other times? The answer is He did. He would oft resort to the wilderness to pray all night. And, did He not cry with tears on occasions? The answer again, is He did. He wept for Lazarus.

Again, look carefully at this verse one more time:

(Heb 5:7 KJV) 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;

Notice that He offers 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 first question we must ask is was Christ afraid? Did His humanity actually make Him fear?

The second question, is our author actually suggesting that Jesus Christ prayed that He would be saved from the death of the cross?

In answer to the first question: A resounding No. Jesus Christ was not afraid. Jesus Christ was the most steadfast and stalwart Man who ever lived. He continuously and repeatedly announced that He had come to earth specifically to die. He was born to die. Our problem here is with the English word fear. Regretfully, it had more than one meaning in 1611. Today, it usually means terror.

Look at this verse and notice it was this fear which caused God to hear Christ's supplications. God did not look down in sympathy and say, "Oh, my Son is afraid, I will hear Him!" Not at all. The Greek word for fear (eulabeia - eulabeia - yoo-lab'-i-ah) means awesome respect for God. It was Christ's great integrity, His absolute worshipful obedience to the Father and His holiness as our high priest that caused God to accept His prayers on our behalf for us as our priest. That is the answer to the first question, was Christ afraid?

In our second question we asked, is our author actually suggesting that Jesus Christ prayed that He would be saved from the death of the cross? We might be tempted to think that. After all, the Lord Jesus did pray: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt," (Matthew 26:39).

He did want us and the entire world to know that there was no other way. And He did suffer as a man. But the cup is not the cup of death, it is the cup of sorrows that our Savior bore right there in Gethsemane and the cup of guilt He would bear on the cross. His agony was so severe that He sweat, as it were, drops of blood. The agony of Gethsemane is one of those mysteries that perplex us. We know Christ took our judgment on the cross but we sense and know that in that Garden something so deep, so profound, occurred that all human and angelic capacity to absorb it at the same time would not be enough.

Notice, He prays unto Him who was able to save Him from death, (watch it, now,) and was heard in that He feared.

Christ's prayer was heard in that He feared. When the Bible says that God heard someone's prayer it means, in plain and simple terms, that He answered it. Your prayer has been heard. It is a common expression. In addition, the word from in this text is the Greek ek - ek, and it means out of. What Jesus Christ knew was that the Father was able to save Him out of death. So, let's put this together in a

common sense statement:

1. *Christ's prayer was heard.*

2. *It was heard because Christ, as our high priest, feared God.* He was absolutely holy with perfect integrity.

3. *He was consequently saved out of death.* Another way to say this is that He was raised from the dead on the third day. Had Christ not feared, had He not been holy, he would not have been raised.

What are we learning about our Great High Priest in verse 7? We are learning that God accepted His intercession on our behalf. God heard Him and the proof is that He was saved out of death. That was a little sticky. Let's go for one more important concept about the priesthood of Christ.

4. *This Great High Priest Had to Learn Obedience.*
Vs. 8.

(Heb 5:8 KJV) **Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;**

The fact that Jesus Christ was obedient comes as a surprise to no Christian. He came to do the Father's will. He came as the perfect servant of Isaiah 40 - 50. Nor does it surprise us that earthly priests had to be obedient. Obedience was no easy task for a priest. His task was difficult and complex. These things do not surprise us. What surprises us is that Jesus Christ had to learn obedience. He went through the maturation process. The Bible is very explicit about the growth of Christ. We learn in Luke 2:52:

52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

The word increase means to be driven forward or to grow. If Christ grew in wisdom it means that He was matured in it just as you and I are.

We need to know that He went through the matura-

tion process even though He did not need to. This is the point that the cultists miss. They look piously at this verse and say, See! He was only a man. He had to grow and develop like any other man. But look carefully at verse 8 and you will see how wrong the cultist is.

Verse 8 says: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience..." Stop and think. Why? Why does the Bible say, though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience? The answer is very simple. Sons do not need to learn obedience. Children need to learn obedience. Children are tutored. Once they receive the adoption they are no longer tutored along with the other slave children. They then become sons. Read Galatians 3:24-29.

Jesus Christ was never a child in Heaven. He was always the Son. He came to earth as the Son. Yet, our Bible says even though He was a son, yet, He learned obedience by the things that He had suffered. The idea behind the Greek word suffered, *pascw* (*pascho* - pas'-kho) is the idea of sensation and is in reference to sensations that are usually negative and related to as suffering.

Christ could have grown to His full manly stature one second after He was born. After all, His childhood didn't save us. His teenage years didn't save us. Or did they? The truth is they did. This is why the Bible also speaks of the saving life of Christ. For it was in His life that He qualified Himself to become our priest by going through the school of human suffering.

Verse 9 is precious:

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

When did our Savior begin His ministry? We all know He began His earthly ministry the same year in His life when an earthly priest would have begun his ministry. He qualified Himself like any other earthly priest. He ministered as a priest for three years, and then He interceded as a priest and sacri-

ficed Himself. In so doing He became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey Him. Have you obeyed the obedient One? Have you obeyed this priest? He has priestly authority over you. In fact He is God's ONLY ordained High Priest. One day a group of folks came alongside the Savior to ask Him a question:

28 Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?

29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

(John 6:28,29)

That is obedience. That is the work of God. To believe on Him whom He hath sent. You understand, don't you, that to reject this Christ is to disobey Him? There is no other, no one else to whom we could turn. And there is no one else to whom we would turn. After all, who ever cared so much for you that He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying on your behalf? Who else subjected Himself to this miserable insufferable human experience so that you could be delivered from death? There is no other.

What have you done with Jesus Christ?

THE CHRISTIANS' GETTYSBURG

Heb 5:10-6:6 - Chapter Sixteen

THE CHRISTIANS' GETTYSBURG

Intro: There has been a civil war, of sorts, raging among God's people since the earliest days of post biblical history. It is the war between Calvinism and Arminianism, whatever those two positions represent. There are manifest shades and varieties of both Calvinism and Arminianism, but in practical terms, the issue between them often boils down to the question of security. Can a believer lose his salvation? The Calvinists are quick to point out that anyone who understands anything about the nature of salvation knows that it is impossible. He knows that over 100 things happen to the believer when he is placed in Christ, not the least of which is that he is a new creation, born into God's family. The Arminian often argues that God has done His part in providing our salvation, but we must do our part in keeping it and securing it.

With respect to this battle, the passage which is before us in this session, beginning with Hebrews 5:10 and extending into Hebrews 6, may well be called the Gettysburg of Scripture. It is the hottest spot in Scripture for waging this debate. For this reason we need to understand it fully and carefully. The closer we look, and the longer we meditate upon it with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the more secrets it will give up to us.

What we actually have in the text before us is a break, a break in the author's argument concerning the wonderful high priesthood of Jesus Christ. We have only touched the surface of truths so rich, so precious, that they literally catch our breath when we peruse them and try to rehearse them. Only Jesus Christ has the qualifications to be our Great High Priest, this Son of God and Son of Man. We have

talked about His access in the heavens to the Holy Place; we have talked about His marvelous intercession. We have talked about His priestly order as a member of the Melchizedekian priesthood, a rich and marvelous truth.

In fact, it is at this very point where our author stops - to insert an admonition and a warning for his readers. Verse 10 reaffirms what we learned in verse 6.

(Heb 5:10 KJV) Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

We are not through with King Melchizedek. But first, we examine the warning. Teaching is a waste of your time and my ink if the end result does not make us accountable to the truth we are learning. With truth comes responsibility.

If you will begin with verse 11 and scan on down into chapter six you will discover that we are actually admonishing two kinds of listeners. Both are in great danger. Both are at great risk. Both kinds typically attend our fellowships. The first group includes the superficial learners. I call them the never learning. They fill out the verses in chapter 5. The second group includes the super rational learners. I call them the ever learning. Consider first:

I. THE SUPERFICIAL. THE NEVER LEARNING.

(Heb 5:11-14 KJV) Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. {12} For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such

as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. {13} For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. {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.

A. Seeing this group in our time.

It is fairly easy to recognize this group in our time because they are everywhere around us and represent most of the body of Christ. This group lives in a world of recycling-basics.

No way is this group prepared to discuss the ramifications of the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ. They can't even spell the word Melchizedek, much less pronounce it, and, furthermore, in their minds, these kinds of esoteric doctrinal discussions are useless. After all, how do they relate to competing in a modern society? Or, how will this study contribute to their worship experience? These superficial seekers are spoiled, childish, fat little babies who think that any message longer than 20 minutes is a waste of time. Home Bible studies to them consist of 20 minutes of caring and sharing, 20 minutes of questions and answers geared to help them relate to a basic Bible passage, and 20 minutes of refreshments and fellowship. And at no point during the one-hour session, should any words longer than two syllables be used. This is strong language. It is not meant to hurt, but it is meant to shock those who are careless in Bible study into considering how far removed they are from what God desires for them.

There's nothing wrong with being a baby. Everyone has to be one sometime. Babies are natural, normal, beautiful, and delightful (especially my grandchildren). Older Christians need to be around spiritual babies. It keeps us young at heart and full of life and, especially, it keeps us relevant. Then again, when 10 year olds, are still acting like one year olds, tragedy has struck. This is what Hebrews is teaching us.

Every ten or fifteen years a new movement comes

into vogue in the body of Christ. Presently, one of those movements in vogue is what we call the seeker movement. These churches focus heavily on baby food, spiritual Pabulum (though there are certainly, some exceptions). The jury is still out on seeker churches, however, because they seem to be creating a whole generation of believers who aren't growing up in Christ! (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Our generation cannot handle things which are "hard to say and hard to be uttered." They can barely grasp the first principle. They still need milk when they should desire the meat of God's Word. They do not know one end of their Bible from the other. They do not know how to interpret the Bible for themselves. They do not feed on it. When they should be teachers they are still in the nursery feeding on baby bottles filled with worship and praise choruses. As good as milk is, it is not enough.

This generation, according to our author, is unskilled in the word of righteousness. Its members cannot discern good and evil because they have not exercised their spiritual senses. They are the superficial, the never learning, and the never growing. Christianity has never carried on its shoulders as many blind, spiritual ignoramuses who are as shallow as a birdbath as we are carrying about now. If you have any doubt go read the top ten bestsellers at your local Christian bookstore. Precious few offer any insight into the Word of God.

Before attending to chapter 6, we must not simply apply this text to our time. We must also consider:

B. This group in early times.

Who represented this group of unskilled babies in the time of Hebrews? To whom is our author referring? The people were the same as we are. Human nature is human nature. Only the issues are different. Some of these people in the time of Hebrews were the people who were spinning their wheels about very basic and elementary matters. The key to identifying them is in the fact that our author says: ...ye have need that one teach you again which be

the first principles of the oracles of God

Judaism had become so bankrupt that the masses of Jews did not even understand the most elementary principles and oracles of God. Specifically, what principles and oracles are we talking about? It appears to me that they are clearly stated for us in chapter six, verses 1 and 2 where these Jews are admonished to leave these discussions behind. Look at them:

(Heb 6:1-2 KJV) Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, {2} Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

If we were to break this out we might talk about:

1.) The principles of the doctrine of Christ. Transliterated, it would be read this way: "...having left the of the beginning of the Christ discourse." School-teachers can especially appreciate this. When you get someone into Greek 201 you should not have to teach him the Greek alphabet. When presenting Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, the debate concerning the beginning of the Messiah should have been settled. Regarding the issue of Christ, the basic facts or *first principles* do not need revisiting.

2.) The same goes with the foundations of repentance from dead works. These Jews were masters at dead works. They were always trying to remedy superficially what they knew to be a spiritual problem. This is so elemental to Christianity. Dead works do not produce live believers. Two Hail Mary's and one candle will not do the job. The heart has to be changed. The basic issue of works does not need revisiting.

3.) Then we encounter the doctrines of washings, not baptisms, (That word is baptizo, not baptismo) and laying on of hands. The Jewish ablutions and washings were spiritual reminders to the Jewish

people that they needed an inward cleansing. The washings did not cleanse anyone. They only spoke of the need for cleansing. The laying on of hands was for the sake of praying God's blessing on people. The practice had created a whole new cultic perception that one could go to an external priest for an external blessing instead of seeking the Lord with all his heart while God could be found. The basic issues of ritual and practice do not need revisiting.

4.) Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. I believe that what our author is saying is this: Why in the world are you still debating issues such as this that are clearly taught in the Word of God? This is ABC stuff! There are to this very day, Bible students who suggest that there is not enough information in the Old Testament about resurrection and eternal punishment to settle the issue. We say nonsense! Conservative, Bible believing Jews always believed in both doctrines. The basic elements of the faith do not need revisiting.

Two groups are being discussed. First, there were the Superficial, never learning. They didn't even care enough to address such issues. They would have nothing of the doctrine of Messiah, much less Melchizedek's role. But there was also a second group. These were:

II. THE SUPER RATIONAL. THE EVER LEARNING.

These were the folks who labored forever over these elementary issues. They loved to pontificate on them. They knew what everyone had to say about them, but sadly, they were, as our Bibles tell us: ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth.

Both of these groups are being addressed here. And what is the ultimate point? Truth demands a response. We may not ignore it like little spiritual babies. We may not play with our food like these Jews who thrived on these issues, but who never went on

in applying the things of Christ.

We have seen the offenders identified. Now, we see the danger identified. It is very serious business, to be either superficial, ignoring truth, or super-rational, toying with truth like a child playing with his food. Both attitudes lead to disaster. We must go on. We must not be like those who trifle with spiritual truth and never commit to it. So we read in verse 3:

(Heb 6:3-6 KJV) **And this will we do, if God permit. {4} For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, {5} And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, {6} If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.**

What have we learned?

1. We have learned that there is a group which cannot be lead again to repentance if they fall away because, their falling away has effectively been crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, putting Him to an open shame.
2. We have learned just exactly who is included in this group:
 - a. They are people who have rejected Christ. That is for sure because otherwise the charge would not be leveled that they are effectively crucifying Christ to themselves afresh.
 - b. They are those who were once (literally once for all) enlightened.
 - c. They have both tasted of the heavenly gift and have been partakers (or companions) of the Holy Spirit.
 - d. They have tasted of the good Word of God and of the powers of the age to come.

What do we debate?

A. Our Arminian brethren say: Sit up and take notice! This warning is for Christians who have been saved and who fall away. And they use as their argument some of the following facts:

1. These offenders could not crucify Christ afresh to themselves if he had not already been crucified unto them.
2. These offenders have fallen away and you cannot fall away from something you have not arrived at.
3. These offenders have been once and for all enlightened.
4. These offenders have been (and this is most important to the charismatic) partakers of the heavenly gift, usually interpreted as having received spiritual gifts and the Holy Spirit.
5. Christians are those who have tasted the Word of God and the powers of the age to come.

Our Calvinist brethren say, Nonsense! There is nothing in the above terminology which suggests that these folks were saved. It only suggests that they had a clear understanding of salvation. They would say:

1. Christ was crucified unto the whole world, and there are many seekers who do not become believers. They, truly, are the most dangerous of all because they have a partial knowledge of Christianity.
2. They could just as easily have fallen away from Salvation's door before they entered it as after. Falling away proves nothing.
3. And with respect to being enlightened once and for all, they were enlightened once and for all with a full view to salvation.
4. Being a partaker and a taster does not mean that one is a member of the body of Christ.

In fact, the Calvinists say the very choice of terms chosen here are the last ones one would use if a author was talking about Christians losing their salvation.

Peter fell away and apostatized and he was renewed to repentance. Judas, on the other hand, was a “partaker” who even experienced the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, performed miracles, (read Matthew 10:1-4) and was a partaker in every way with the other apostles was, according to Jesus, never saved! (John 17:12) So, what are the Calvinists saying? They are saying, on the one hand, we can point to Christians who did fall away and were renewed to repentance, (an experience which Arminians insist is impossible according to this passage.) And, on the other hand we can point to an apostate, Judas, who partook of spiritual powers and the ministry of the Holy Spirit and was never saved! The Calvinist would remind us that, according to the Arminian, if a Christian becomes caught up in a false cult there is no hope of even trying to rescue him. He simply cannot repent.

I believe that anytime we get into this kind of trouble it is probably because we are asking the wrong questions. *When you ask the wrong questions you get the wrong answer.* I do not believe the passage is directed specifically at either of the above groups carte blanch. In fact, that is my whole point. If you will look carefully at verses 5 and 6 you will see they are not talking about individuals, they are talking about a whole group, a whole class of individuals. Let me explain.

I believe, as I have taught many times before, that the answer to difficult passages can usually be found in the context of the passage in question, by going back as far as we can into the mind and thinking of the author and the arguments he has already presented. Then we know what colors he is using on his canvas. What is our background? What has the author been thinking about? Right up to the very moment when the author presented Christ as our great high priest he was making a historical allusion

that his readers knew full well.

Back up a page or so and look at the allusion that our author has already made. Begin with Hebrews 3:7-19. We insert a verse or two:

(Heb 3:7-10 KJV) Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, {8} Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: {9} When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. {10} Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

What are we dealing with here? We are dealing with a whole group that came out of Egypt and did not enter the Canaan rest because of unbelief. This has been the author’s major historical point from square one. Israel had tasted of all the power and blessings of God through and beyond the Exodus, and still, she turned away from taking the big step of faith. She failed to enter Canaan. (Scan all the way down to verse 19 at this time.)

Continue with 4:1-10. Once again, what has our author been talking about just prior to his presentation of Christ as our Priest? He has been warning the modern Hebrews that they too, are at great risk.

Do you remember the touch of irony we pointed out earlier? Forty years elapsed between Kadesh-Barnea, the tasting of the fruits of the land, and the final death of that generation. Do you remember how we explained that Hebrews was written roughly forty years after Pentecost, where the Jews have, (according to Hebrews) been offered that opportunity to enter into Christ’s rest?

So then, who are these folks that our author is addressing? It is as plain as the nose on their Jewish faces. These are the folks who saw and knew of the crucifixion. These are the folks who had both seen and heard of the miracles of Pentecost. They had

witnessed this whole transition to Christ. They had seen and heard it all, and still, 40 years later, they are either superficial or super-rational about these facts. The large body of Jews had not committed to Christ! What shall we do for these superficial and super-rational Jews? Shall we have another crucifixion? Shall we have another Pentecost? Shall we bring down more signs and wonders from heaven? Nothing else can be done to bring them to repentance, individually or as a nation. It is either this or nothing. This whole generation will be lost.

There is also an interpretive lesson. There is only one interpretation to a passage of scripture, though there may be many applications. When it appears that we cannot decide between two interpretations, always look first at the context. In this case, we have the biblical right and justification to paint this passage on the backdrop of Kadesh-Barnea, because our author has been doing exactly this. Clearly, he is warning a whole group of folks, Jews who have been either ignoring or toying with the gospel. There will be no more. There will be no future washings, “repentance’s”, crucifixions, or anything else.

There is a spiritual lesson. We must not presume on the light which God has already given us. We must not expect more when He has already revealed His will. We must act now. Act today on what we know to be right, be it acting on the gospel or on some other issue of obedience.

And after all, isn't that exactly what the author of Hebrews has been trying to do all along?

A PRIMER ON PROMISES

Heb 6:4-19 - Chapter Seventeen

A PRIMER ON PROMISES

Intro: Someone has said that there are really only three answers available for any question, “Yes,” “No,” and “Maybe.” I am not sure about that, but I am sure about this. There are three possible responses to the Word of God every time it is preached. There are those whose hearts are soft who say “Yes” to God. There are those whose hearts are hard who say “No” to God. There are those whose hearts are sluggish or dull of hearing. They are the ones who say “Maybe.”

In Hebrews 6 our author has been focusing especially on this third group. He has been warning them that when a man says “Maybe” to God it is tantamount to saying “No” to God! Those who are sluggish in their response to the gospel are at the same great risk as those Jews who failed to enter into the Promised Land. And so, we have in verses 4-6 one of the most fearful warnings we find in all of the Word of God:

(Heb 6:4-6 KJV) For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, {5} And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, {6} If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

These Hebrews have been enlightened concerning the gospel and have seen all of the signs and wonders produced by the Spirit of God. These Hebrews have tasted of the Word of God and had the Old Testament scriptures expounded unto them, pointing always to Christ. These Hebrews who have even

tasted of the powers of the age to come, the day of the Lord, will be hopelessly lost if they dare to hope for one more shred of authentication or if they dare to look anywhere else for another Savior. And what a terrible loss that will be. There comes a time to either fish or cut bait.

But we have a problem. The author of Hebrews had it, and every gospel preaching man of God has it. While we spend half of our time instilling fear on the hearts of the “No”s and the “Maybe”s around us we must be careful about the soft hearts. These are the men and women and boys and girls who have already said “yes” to the gospel. You see, if there is anything which this gospel teaches us it is this: Once we are in Christ we are secure in Him. Without this wonderful assurance, without this security, or to use the proper biblical terms, without this wonderful confidence and hope, we have been shortchanged of our rightful inheritance, our heritage. This heritage is the natural joy that belongs to us in Christ.

This is why I am not a Pentecostal. This is why I am not a charismatic, though I dearly love these brethren. Those systems of theology rob me of my heritage in Christ and the full joy that comes from my full confidence that I am in Christ, the safest place in the entire universe. This is why I am not a Reformed Calvinist who extends the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints to the place where one cannot know for sure if he is one of God’s elect. Such a system robs me of the full joy that comes from my full confidence that I am in Christ, the safest place in the entire universe. This kind of Reformed Calvinist, (not all teach this) would have you always wondering if you are truly saved. This is why Lordship salvation must be rejected. Without the absolute assurance that you are in Christ you will never rise to the place of claiming the promises associated with your position. The Arminian would have you always working in order to keep your salvation. (Galatians

3:3) Some Calvinists would have you wondering if you are going to persevere.

And so, to avoid this difficulty, our author offers some comfort and hope to the true believers who have also had to listen to this fearful message of warning that he has just written. In other words, it is time to focus on the soft hearts, those who truly want to say yes to God. It is time to encourage those who, knowing their own sinfulness, do desire to obey God. How do we comfort such people? How do we build up their confidence, their full assurance, and their hope? That is what our author is about to do.

The answer, concerning assurance, in a word is: *promise*. The answer in a sentence is: We find our full assurance of who we are in Christ when we understand the biblical dynamics of God's promises.

The subject of God and His promises is not new in Hebrews. We have already had a big dose of it beginning in 4:1 where we saw the backdrop set and learned that Israel's true failure in entering the "promised land" was a failure to claim God's promise. But, while the subject is not new, what we find here in Hebrews 6 is the biblical foundation for the doctrine of promises. We understand what promises are and exactly why God deals with men through His promises. So, consider some great truths about God's promises. First, we will see the Greatest Parable which illustrates God's promises. Secondly, we will see the Greatest Biblical Precedent for Applying God's promises. Finally, we will see the Greatest Proof that God's promises are sure. And, as a result of all this, we will find the greatest peace that God's promises provide. Let's examine:

I. THE GREATEST PARABLE WHICH ILLUSTRATES GOD'S PROMISES.

No, this parable is not found in the gospels, though it is alluded to there, and in the epistles. Let's see if we can discover it by reading verses 7 - 8. Remember, it will help if you can make yourself a Jew, and

read this through Jewish eyes:

(Heb 6:7-8 KJV) For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: {8} But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

While it is generally true that we associate parables with stories, the Bible does not require this. A parable is simply an earthly truth that is brought alongside to help teach a heavenly meaning. And the very first picture that we have of man is in the garden. Hughes comments:

"The affinities of this parable with the account of creation and the fall would not have been missed by the Hebrew readers of this letter. God's creation mandate for the earth was 'Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to his kind, upon the earth' (Gen. 1:11); and this beneficent productivity of the soil followed the sending of rain upon the earth (Gen. 2:5,9). But with the entry of sin into the world and the fall of man into apostasy from God, a curse is pronounced which extends beyond Satan and man to the whole created order, including the ground and its productivity: "Cursed is the ground because of you ... thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you..." (Gen 3:17f).

A. Let's talk about interpretation for a moment.

These Hebrew readers would pick up on this passage instantly. The very first spiritual information we have in the Bible after the creation of man himself relates to the garden which was originally paradise, and came under the curse. These Jewish readers would also remember Isaiah 5 where the Lord accused Israel herself of being a well-tended vineyard which produced wild grapes instead of sweet grapes and, consequently had a curse pronounced upon it. So, what are we gleaning?

1. *Originally, man's duty was to tend to the garden, a garden that was unfettered by the curse.* From the time of Adam's fall the global ecosystem took on a reverse dynamic. It took on the consequences of the curse. The natural state of nature is now the thorns and thistles state.

A preacher walked up to a farmer one day and said "My what a beautiful field that you and God have there." The farmer replied "You should have seen it when God just had it!" That's not sacrilegious. That is the way it is. Leave any field, any building, any creation of man, and it will revert. It is neither correct nor fair to say that everything reverts to nature. Everything reverts to its cursed condition as a result of the fall.

We have learned that the natural state of creation is the cursed state. Secondly,

2. *We want to ask ourselves what does the farmer do when he tills the earth?* What is he actually doing? In fact, in actuality, he is laying hold on the promise of God. He may not know that he is doing that but he is. That promise is also associated with the curse. The ground will bear fruit, but that fruit will be borne by the sweat of our brows. Gen. 3:19. James 5:7-8 uses the farmer's faith as an example of the patience we should exercise while waiting for Christ's return:

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

You see, when the arrogant man sits at his table and says "There is no need to thank God. I worked to produce this food," such a man is a fool. He is benefiting from the promises of God. That is why there is a harvest.

But here is the point. The earth rotates for all. The

sun shines for all. The rain falls upon all. But the same rain that produces thorns and thistles (bad fruit) for the wilderness produces good fruit in the cultivated field. Why? because the promise of God has been appropriated. The farmer's works then are evidence of the farmer's faith. To repeat - the farmer does not produce the corn. God produces the corn. The farmer simply lays hold on the promises of God.

B. The Application.

We will not linger for long on the interpretation. But let's go to the application which Hebrews make. We find it in verses 9 and 10.

(Heb 6:9-10 KJV) But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. {10} For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Unlike the more general term brethren, the word beloved is a family word for God's people only. It is never once used of the unsaved in your Bible. God loves the unsaved, but only those who are in the Beloved One are called the beloved in our Bibles. We have already noted that have the hard hearts who say no to God, and the sluggish hearts who say maybe, and the soft hearts who say, yes. Dear Christian, if you are one of those tender hearts who have said yes to Christ, then stop worrying! Take comfort and learn to rest in the promises of God instead of resting on your own feelings about salvation.

I am persuaded of better things concerning you. But, you say, "How can I know in my experience that I am saved? I know in my head I am. I know the promises of God. I know the Bible verses which promise me salvation. I have claimed those verses, but how can I know in my experience?" The answer is deceptively simple, but so very helpful:

1. *First, the evidence will come in the fruit that God begins to produce in your life.* There will be fruit if

you, like the farmer, are living and walking by faith. And you will notice right here in this verse that this is exactly what our author points to. He told these believers that the things that accompany salvation were beginning to appear in their lives. Specifically, in their case, it was their labor, their service to fellow Christians. But, notice secondly:

2. You need to be patient with yourself and with God. You have begun your walk in Christ by claiming the promise of God that He would save you. You must now continue claiming the promises of God. But you must always remember, that the seed which is planted in one season takes time to sprout, and time to grow, and even more time to produce fruit. That is what verses 11 and 12 are all about:

(Heb 6:11-12 KJV) And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: {12} That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Do you remember when you received Christ? Do you remember how desirous you were to apply the promise of God in your life? Well, just continue with that same diligence – applying the promises of God to your life and your full assurance in your experience will come. The issue is not whether or not you feel you are saved or not. The question is are you resting on the promise of God to save you? If you are, sooner or later God will produce the things which accompany salvation in your life.

You say, if you really knew me! I have such a hard time reading and praying. I have such a hard time avoiding temptation. How can I possibly be saved? You are no different than any other Christian who has ever come to Christ. But some Christians have learned the secret and they are walking in joy. Others, sadly, are still living in fear because they have not learned to rest on the promises of God. Our assurance is based on His promises, not our performance.

That is the great parable. Move to the next set of

verses as we see:

II. THE GREATEST BIBLICAL PRECEDENT FOR APPLYING GOD'S PROMISES.

Look at verses 13-15:

(Heb 6:13-15 KJV) For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, {14} Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. {15} And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Abraham, of course, is the Bible's greatest precedent when it comes to the walk of faith. We will learn more of him later in Hebrews. The Bible tells us that Abraham believed God and it was credited unto him for righteousness. The whole doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone is firmly founded on the Old Testament bedrock in general, and on the life of Abraham in particular. Give yourself a real treat and re-read Romans 4:1 through Romans 5:1 and immerse yourself once again in this marvelous truth: Men are not justified by their works, but by claiming the promises of God. We know these things are all true. But notice specifically the argument that unfolds in these next few verses, specifically 13-15:

(Heb 6:13-15 KJV) For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, {14} Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. {15} And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Notice that with the appropriation of a promise, blessing is also multiplied, just as natural fruit is multiplied when it is cultivated. God always uses the

“times table” when he calculates His blessings.

Before proceeding, I want to correct a misunderstanding here which is created by the wording in our English Bibles. It surrounds verse 15:

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

There are two elements of Abraham’s faith that grab us. The first is that he believed God. He did not believe in God, he believed God. But the second element is found in the words, “...after he patiently endured, he obtained the promise.”

We are led to conclude, that after a period of patient endurance Abraham saw God’s promise completely fulfilled in his life. But that is not the idea at all in the Greek. Wuest says it very well:

“The word ‘obtained’ is the translation of epitugchano which means “to light or hit upon a person or thing, to attain to, to obtain.” The word here indicates that Abraham did not personally receive the entire fulfillment of the promise, but only the germ of that fulfillment. The promise was that Abraham was to become a great nation, and that the earth was to be blessed through Abraham. Isaac, born miraculously, was a partial fulfillment of the promise, and the Lord Jesus as Savior and coming Messiah fulfills all that God promised Abraham. The fruit of the promise had begun to multiply but it had not finished multiplying.”

Why should we stress that? We stress it because in this age of instant gratification we think we can lay hold on God one day for an answer to prayer and have it delivered by UPS, barring the strike, on the second business day. Go read the great roll call of faith found in Hebrews 11. Peruse that great list of giants and then read the most shocking fact of all in verse 13:

(Heb 11:13 KJV) 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.

Sometimes, claiming the promises of God requires viewing them from afar off, and, afar off can really mean a far way off! That brings us to the third and final point of our consideration. For, while we have pointed out that Abraham is the great precedent for claiming God’s promises, a closer look at the verses we just read reveals they really do not focus on Abraham per se, they focus on Abraham’s God.

III. THE GREATEST PROOF THAT GOD’S PROMISES ARE SURE

Read verses 13-18 in one final reading:

(Heb 6:13-18 KJV) For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, {14} Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. {15} And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. {16} For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. {17} Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: {18} That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

The real subject of these verses is God. The real proof that the promises of God will come true is based upon His person. Never, never, let the world play games with you on this subject. Never let the world paint you as someone who gets your ideas from the Bible, period. The greatness of this Bible is rooted in the greatness of the God it portrays! He is a God like no other god.

A number of years ago there was a lot of fuss going on about Elvis Presley and Graceland. One woman who was interviewed made a comment like this. She said: "While no one can know for sure that there is a supreme being we can be sure of one thing. If there is one, he is just like Elvis". What a babbling fool! What a simpleton! What a trifling child! What a way to blaspheme the only true God!

How do we know the promises of God are good? They are good because God's promises are based on God's character. And for our benefit, (I repeat for our benefit, not His) He condescends to swear by an oath.

There is one final twist in our study as we consider this idea that God Himself is His own Proof that His Promises are sure.

There is a fundamental question that deserves our redress. It is the question, Why? Why does God deal in this manner with men? Why does God's economy require that men come to Him based upon His promises? Why does God use promises as the vehicle for working out His plan and program?

I suppose, if fifty pastors were represented, there would be at least fifty variations on the full answer to that question. But I offer to you only one curious thought, snuggled away in verse 17.

(Heb 6:17 KJV) Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

By requiring men to claim the promises of God, and by requiring men to patiently hope for the fulfillment of those promises God is teaching us a lesson about Himself, and a remarkable lesson it is! Verse 17 says, specifically, that God is showing the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel.

Something that is immutable is something that cannot change. Speaking of Himself, God says "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob

are not consumed," Malachi 3:6. The Bible says that, unlike the universe, there is no variation or shadow of turning in God. He is absolutely changeless.

Consider the irony in this. From our point of view the longer the interval between a promise made and a promise fulfilled the more evidence it is that the promise cannot be kept. From heaven's point of view the longer the interval between the promise made and the promise fulfilled the greater testimony there is to the consistency and the unchangeableness of God. The long intervals, between the presentation of God's promises and their completion will one day stand as a testimony to the absolute sureness, the absolute resolve, the absolute integrity of our God who forgets no promise He has ever made.

Here's a promise to cling to!

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

Christ Himself is the hope we have and He is the anchor of our soul. And where is that anchor fastened? It is fastened within the veil at the mercy seat in heaven! Not on the earth! Your hope is not based on your own works or your own goodness. It is based on the promises of God and it is anchored in the finished work of Christ! No soul can ever drift who is anchored to that Rock!

"We have an anchor that keeps the soul, steadfast and sure, while the billows roll; fastened to the rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love!"

THE MELCHIZEDEKEN ORDER

Heb. 6:20-7:3 - Chapter Eighteen

THE MELCHIZEDEKEN ORDER

Intro: In Hebrews 5:5-10, the Holy Spirit has begun introducing one of the most pervasive and important truths we find in all of Hebrews. He has initiated us into the truths concerning the priesthood of Jesus Christ. He has begun the process of revealing to us some of the most shocking truths concerning Jesus Christ revealed anywhere in the Word of God. He is about to take us to the top of a mountain where we will peruse a truth so wide and so expansive that it will forever change our world view. The problem is, are these Hebrews ready for this? Will they be like little children riding in the back seat on vacation who really do not appreciate the wonderful beauties which are passing by, or will they truly drink in this whole new experience? Are they ready? Are you ready? Are you one of the dull of hearing in Hebrews 5:11 or are you one of those who by reason of use have exercised your senses to discern these things? Well, we are back in class. The warnings of chapter 6 are behind us. It is time to separate the men from the boys. It is time to stand on the top of this mountain. The very words of chapter 6 point the way.

(Heb 6:20 KJV) Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. We have a priest. A priest forever. A priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.

The unthinking and dull of hearing pass by this verse, hardly noticing it. The mature student of God's Word knows that he has just happened upon the Grand Canyon of Biblical scenery. He has walked into a gold mine. Consider some of the facts which astound and amaze us:

The first amazing fact is that Melchizedek should play such an important role! When we go back to Genesis, we find only three verses relating to him. They are in chapter 14, beginning with verse 18:

(Gen 14:18-20 KJV) And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. {19} And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: {20} And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

Then, one thousand years later we have one more verse in Psalm 110:4.

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

And that's it. Not another word - until we get to Hebrews and find that these verses represent the whole foundation of the doctrine of Christ's priesthood. And what a doctrine it is! Let's take a dip in the ocean of truth which these four Old Testament verses reveal. Begin with chapter 7, verse 1.

(Heb 7:1 KJV) 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;

I. LET'S TALK ABOUT THE PERSON OF MELCHIZEDEK

A. Melchisedek was his name.

Melchisedek simply means "king of right".

B. He was the king of Salem.

Most likely Salem was the city that is now called Jeru-salem. The word Salem means peace. The word Jerusalem probably means founded peaceful. There is a touch of irony in this because Jerusalem has certainly known no peace since she rejected her Prince, her King of Peace, Jesus Christ.

C. Speculation abounds.

There have been numerous and sundry speculations throughout all of history concerning this man and his ministry.

For example, the Qumran cult seems to have associated him with Michael the Archangel at one time (according to the Cave 11 scrolls) and at the same time, associated him with a yet coming priest who returns to those who had not defiled themselves with Belial and would bring justice to all the earth. One popular post apostolic notion, after the introduction of metaphorical interpretation into the church, was that Melchizedek was the priest of the uncircumcision, while Aaron was the priest of the circumcised. We will see our writer put that nonsense to bed very quickly. Later in church history, others focused, as you might expect, on the bread and wine that Melchizedek offered to Abraham suggesting that it was a type of the coming Roman Catholic sacrifice of the mass. I am going to spare you from the discussion of all these historical arguments, though I certainly am willing to point you in the right direction for further study on your own if you so desire. Instead, I have chosen to focus directly on what our text has to say.

II. LET'S TALK ABOUT THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK.

If Jesus Christ is a member of the Melchizedekan order instead of the Aaronic order of priests, we can and should assume that Melchizedek's priesthood was a superior priesthood, and that it is.

A. It was a superior priesthood because it was a kingly priesthood.

Melchizedek was not only priest, he was a king. We have already pointed out the fact that Melchizedek was a king. But consider, under the Jewish Levitical system, this could not have happened. The Levites belonged to the Lord. They were to serve the Lord from age 25 to age 50. Only those Levites who were the sons of Aaron were priests. Observe this apparent contradiction. It would be unthinkable, in the mind of any Jew, for any king to come from anywhere other than the line of David and from the tribe of Judah. It was also unthinkable that any priest would come anywhere but from the line of Aaron and Levi. And yet, take a look at this verse that we find tucked away in the book of Zechariah 6, specifically verse 12 and 13:

12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: 13 Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

Messiah, the Branch, was going to build the temple of the Lord, bear the glory, sit upon His throne (that means He is going to rule as a king) and He is going to be a priest upon His throne. Furthermore, He is going to be a priest of peace. Now, you are a Jew living in Bible times. How are you going to reconcile this? How are you going to have an Aaronic priest and a Judean king? It is going to look to you like a contradiction. We know the secret. We know that it was hidden there all along. We know the contradiction is solved in this man Melchizedek. They did not know this. I stress this because I want you to remember that we do not yet fully understand all of the Word of God. There are anomalies and enigmas that we are not yet prepared to resolve, but we have a

great God, and when He is through knitting the fabric of this marvelous scheme every stitch will come out right. He does not lose count of his knits and purls. So we are dealing with a King Priest. Consider another amazing fact.

B. Melchizedek's Priesthood is Superior Because it is Universal.

According to verse 1, which quotes Genesis 14, Melchizedek is a priest of the Most High God. That is the Hebrew El Elyon, the Lord of Hosts! Jehovah was the name God used for Himself specifically in His covenant relationship with Israel. It was a covenant name. Aaron and his descendents were priests of Jehovah. It was a Jewish priesthood. It began and ended with the Jewish people and it was a part of the administration of the Old Covenant, a Jewish Covenant. The Most High God is the God who, according to Melchizedek, was the possessor of all things, the ruler of heaven and earth. It is a universal term. Jesus Christ is not simply the Messiah of Israel; He is the Messiah of the world. His priesthood is Universal. Consider how limited Christ's priesthood would be if it were simply Levitical. Consider another amazing fact.

C. This Melchizedekan Order is Superior Because of its Precedence.

Verse 1 tells us that Melchizedek meets Abram and blesses him. Be assured that this must have frustrated the greatest thinkers in Judaism. Why in the world would Abram, a man of God already in a covenant relationship with God, submit himself to the priestly office of the king of a pagan city? Why did he do it? How did he know he was supposed to do it? It certainly tells us something about the nature and character of Abram. Remember, he was top dog on this particular day. He was the victor. He was the hero. Melchizedek wasn't the hero. Abram was. Melchizedek ministers to Abram and Abram returns the tithes of his conquest to Melchizedek. It tells us that Abram knew that God was the true source of his blessing. It tells us that Abram was a humble

man. It tells us that somehow Abram knew that Melchizedek was God's man. But it tells us something even more important. According to verse 7 we read:

(Heb 7:7 KJV) *And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. If the less is blessed of the better - than Melchizedek is superior to Abram - the father of the Jewish people and the Levites who will follow.*

It is the principle of precedent, now we add another:

D. This Melchizedekan Priesthood was Superior By Virtue of its Priority.

In verse 2 we learn the identifying nature of the Melchizedekan priesthood. According to verse 2:

(Heb 7:2 KJV) *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;*

This priestly order, this Melchizedekan order is an order of righteousness and peace. Was there ever an example of righteousness and a lover of righteousness such as our Savior? In one of those precious Psalms where we listen in on our Savior talking with His Father, we read in Psalm 40:7-10:

7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, 8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. 9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest. 10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

Aaron could have never written those words about himself. Aaron, as a wonderful man that he was, was

not a champion of righteousness. He had feet of clay just as you and I have. And peace? King of peace! Peace is such a beautiful word! Isaiah said His name would be called wonderful, counselor, the mighty God, the prince (or the king) of peace.

A few years ago, New Yorkers marched in Brooklyn in protest to alleged police torturing of suspects. Someone said, "Crime has gone down everywhere in America except in the New York City Police Department." I don't know how true that is but my coming King is the King of Peace. And what a government will be His. There will be no greedy capitalist exploiters, no mob run unions, and no presidents placed in office through greed and graft. The King of Peace will reign in peace.

Have you ever considered how foolish the Post-millennialist is, the man who teaches that we must bring peace to the world before the coming Prince of Peace will come? There will be no peace until He returns. But we are not speaking simply of political peace. For this priest of ours made peace with God on our behalf. He bought our peace. The best that Aaron and his priests could ever do, as we shall learn, was to wave the white flag of truce. They could negotiate no settlement. They could provide no peace. The yearly Day of Atonement was the pungent, bitter reminder that though Israel had gone another year she had found no solution for her sins, no solitude for her soul, no peace. The Levitical priesthood, in place for centuries with all of its sacrifices, and the ocean of blood it had spilled had, at best, won only a truce with this living God. It took a superior priest to bring a superior peace. Let's involve ourselves with one more thought. I want you to see:

E. The Melchizedekan Priesthood is Superior Because of its Permanence.

It has never been set aside. We see this in verse 3.

(Heb 7:3 KJV) 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.

The Aaronic priesthood was a hereditary priesthood. The Lord Himself appointed Aaron and determined that the priesthood would come from his seed. Much of the motivation behind Israel's obsessive occupation with genealogies was because, in her mind, her very soul, her very salvation lay in the keeping of those genealogies. If there were no sons of Aaron - then there could be no sacrifices. To this day, this issue is a frustration and plague to her. The Lord himself also appointed the priests in the order of Righteousness and Peace, the Melchizedeken order. Psalm 110 says "...thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek". In order to underscore the importance of this truth our author tells us that Melchizedek had no mother or father, no beginning or ending, and notice especially, no descendants.

An Ongoing Discussion:

Some have struggled with this and concluded that because Melchizedek had no mother or father, beginning of days or end of life, that he must be Jesus Christ Himself. That would only seem logical. But I do not believe that is what our Bible intends. I understand the intention of the Bible to illustrate the superior nature of Christ's priesthood, through typology, by making Melchizedek a type or a picture of Christ. It is as though Melchizedek had no predecessors or descendants because there is no record of them. If Melchizedek was Christ then Christ had two lives. Epiphanius had an excellent response to this earlier in Church history when he said, "If Melchizedek resembles the Son of God he cannot at the same time be the Son of God; for how can a servant be the same as his master?"

It seems unlikely that Christ would have become an earthly king in Salem in a theophanic form, executing both kingly and priestly duties, for I believe He offered no sacrifice as a priest before He offered Himself as a sacrifice. And, if Christ had been King of Salem His Kingship would have been so stunning, so shocking and so unique, stories, rumors, and legends would have abounded in ancient literature.

The more one's imagination runs the less likely it is to picture the king of Salem as a theophany. Consider one more thing, the most important thing: If Jesus Christ exercised His priesthood as Melchizedek, then it would seem to me to have been a fraudulent act on the part of Jehovah to establish another priesthood under the auspices of Aaron. We would have had two priesthoods existing, though not functioning, simultaneously.

In short, I just can't see a priesthood established around a theophanic manifestation. And, it surely would have been the longest lasting theophany in history. If, however, you choose to believe that Melchizedek was a Christophany, you have done no harm to the scriptures or the cause of Christ. But what is the real lesson, the point of the verse?

Regardless of our respective views, the salient point is that this is a perpetual, ongoing priesthood. There is no need to track the descent of this priest when his priesthood is forever and eternal. Have you ever had a job where you were in good graces with the boss and then the company changed bosses and you were back to square one? Jesus Christ is the only priest with whom you will ever have to do. There is great security in that, and great comfort. My parents died and took with them their comfort and advice. He will not die. My childhood pastor died and left me seeking another pastor. He will not die.

This puts the Jewish people on the horns of an interesting dilemma now that their eternal priest has assumed his priesthood. I want to close this segment with two small nuggets. I want to beat a dead horse. Was Jesus Christ made like unto Melchizedek or was Melchizedek made like unto Christ? What do you think? If you will read these verses carefully you will discover that Melchizedek was made like unto the Son of God. He was the type. Christ was not the type. Christ was the fulfillment. Christ was not made like Melchizedek. He was made to resemble or represent Christ. If Melchizedek was made like unto the Son of God, then the Son of God must have already been in existence. Jesus Christ is eternally

the Son of God. He did not become the Son of God at His birth, His baptism, His resurrection, or at any other time.

And a final closing thought: You may have guessed that the root of the Roman doctrine of celibacy in the priesthood lies right here in these verses. The early Catholics reasoned this way. If Melchizedek was without genealogy - and that is really the word we have here, it is not descent. It is genealogy. If Melchizedek was without genealogy then he must have been without descendants. Therefore all priests should be childless, and that requires them to be celibate. This was Jerome's case for celibacy.

But Jerome misses two powerful points in this regard. First, if Jerome is to conclude that Melchizedek had no children, he must also conclude on the basis of the same verse that Melchizedek had no father or mother and he is still living somewhere. But it is the second point that erases the whole argument. We do not need any earthly priests anymore because our priest has not died! Whether they are celibates, married with no children or with a hundred children, we do not need earthly priests. For our high priest is alive and well and all who are in the Son become the sons of God and share in His priesthood.

The earthly Levitical priesthood is a vestigial organ. The earthly man and church-made priesthoods are vestigial organs which can do little more than give the body of Christ a good attack of appendicitis.

In our debate over what is non-essential we must not miss the precious fact that our Priest is alive and well and He ever lives to make intercession for us! (Heb. 7:25) We are not alone now and we will not stand alone before our God! Though all on earth desert us and we fail ourselves utterly, we have an Advocate who will never leave us or forsake us!



A PERFECT PRIESTHOOD

Heb. 7:4ff - Chapter Nineteen

A PERFECT PRIESTHOOD

Intro: The scriptures tell us in 1 Timothy 3:6:

(1 Tim 3:16 KJV) **And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.**

The mysteries and marvels of this universe are wonders too great for even our greatest minds. But the mysteries and marvels of Christ make the wonders of creation mere child's play. They will continue to dazzle and amaze us for all eternity.

Our present encounter with this marvelous Savior has been associated with the examination of his priestly order. This will carry us through verse 14. And, even though it is barely distinguishable, we will see the emphasis shift from the superiority of Christ's priestly order to the superiority of Christ, Himself, over Aaron. In fact, however, we have been talking about both the Priest and His order from the very beginning.

Let's review some of the things we have learned about the Melchizedekan order, Christ's priestly order. We have said that, according to these first three verses in chapter 7:

1. It is superior because it is a dual order or a kingly order. It is both sacerdotal and royal. The priests in this order are both priests and kings.

2. It is superior because it is a universal order. The

Aaronic priesthood is Jewish and is limited in its scope to the Jews. No Gentile, for example, could approach the temple. Melchizedek was not a Jew and his priestly ministry extends to all men of every race and color.

3. It is superior because of its precedence.

Melchizedek blessed Abram and therefore, according to verse 7, was better than Abram.

4. It is Superior by virtue of its Priority. What is the priority or focus of the Melchizedekan order? According to verse 2, Peace and Righteousness are the descriptors. The best Aaron could do was offer the white flag of truce between men and God. The Melchizedekan priesthood (through Christ) produced what Aaron could not. It brought about righteousness by imparting Christ's righteousness to us. It brought about peace through the satisfaction of God's wrath in the death of Christ. Aaron's priority was to atone for sin. Christ's priority was to sacrifice Himself for our sin.

5. It is Superior Because of its Permanence. So says verse 3. This priesthood has never been set aside.

So far in chapter 7 we have only seen these truths introduced. In the inimitable style of Paul and other biblical writers, these truths are first introduced and then expanded and strengthened. We will see that as we continue on our journey down through these verses. But, for the sake of ordering our consideration of the text, let's read verses 4-9 in a cluster, and add one more item to our list as we see:

6. It is Superior because of its Power. In this case, when we speak of the power of the Melchizedekan order, we are speaking of its *authority*. Read the verses and pick up on the argument.

(Heb 7:4-9 KJV) Now consider how great this man was,

unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. {5} And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: {6} But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. {7} And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. {8} And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. {9} And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

We have already touched upon the tithe as an argument for the priority of the Melchizedekian priesthood, but our author is not content with simply bettering Aaron. It is not simply an issue of quality. It is an issue of authority. And the argument seems to go as follows:

The word give in verse 4 seems to imply that Abram, out of the free will of his own heart simply chose to give of his spoils to Melchizedek, and that he did. But, if it were only to be seen as a gift it would not have been associated with the tithe. The fact that Abram consciously chose to give a tithe argues to us that Abram saw Melchizedek as a priest. A priest has the power to accept a tithe. He may take the tithe, as verse 5 notes. The Greek word for take, *apodekateuō* (*apodekatoo* - ap-od-ek-at-o'-o) represents a creditor who would accept what is rightfully due to him.

Note: Those of us who do believe that tithing is a biblical principle for all ages, (and not all of us do) should view that tithe as a tithe to our Great Melchizedekian priest. Not a tithe to our church or pastor. And if you believe in tithing, you believe that Christ has a right to it as surely as any other creditor you owe has a right to the money you have committed to him.

But stay with the logic of verse 5. Here is how tithing worked under the Aaronic priesthood. The tribe of

Levi all received tithes from the other tribes. That was their sustenance. In return, they could not own property and served the Lord from age 25 to 50 in the ministry of the temple. But the Levites also paid tithes. They paid their tithes to the priests, the sons of Aaron. The priests of Aaron, on the other hand, did not tithe.

Translated into modern times, this means that pastors do not have to tithe as long as they do not own property. The minute they buy a house they must begin tithing, however, because they then have an inheritance. I hope you know I am only giving you an example of poor hermeneutics, though you may have guessed that some pastors have used this and similar arguments to excuse themselves from giving.

Now, staying with our point, the argument goes this way. The priests had the authority to take the tithes from their brethren who were, first, the Levites, and ultimately the children of Israel. They had this power or authority over their brethren. The very fact that they had this power was evidence that they were accepted as priests.

If our author had stopped here he would only have proven one thing. He would only have proven that Melchizedek was truly acknowledged by Abram as a rightful priest receiving a rightful tithe.

But, the author could not leave well enough alone! He now argues for us, in a most remarkable way – that Melchizedek's priesthood has more authority than Aaron's, just as surely as the Aaronic priests had more authority than the Levites, (remember, they paid no tithes) and the Levites had more authority than the people, because they took the tithes of their brethren.

And so, the Holy Spirit writes in verses 9 and 10:

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

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

This masterful argument would have struck the Jew like a stun gun because the Jew knew and understood the idea of federal headship. In fact, the Jew was immersed in federalism. But you need to understand federalism too, because your whole salvation is based upon the doctrine. The doctrine of federalism is what allowed Christ into court in order to present the sacrifice of His blood for us.

Let me explain. Without one stitch of “scientific information” from which to work, and relying only on their backward, non-scientific Bibles, these Jews were seminalists. That is, they believed that life was passed on through seed. And while they recognized that both men and women have seed (and they do), they saw and understood that their respective persons came down through their genealogies from Adam. In the Jewish mind, the whole human race had been in Adam, the whole Jewish race had been in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham had another son. Isaac had another son. But all of the sons of Jacob were the ones in whom Abraham’s *seed* would be called. Interestingly, to this day, I think it is fair to say that Israel as a nation reflects the traits of Jacob, her immediate father. In fact, the name Israel is used interchangeably with Jacob, not Abraham.

This doctrine of federalism argues two things which are beyond the scope of the present study, but which cannot go unmentioned:

A. We were actually and literally in Adam.

Based upon the above reasoning, the Bible says that you and I, (every one of us) were in Adam. We call this doctrine federal headship. And therefore, we committed Adam’s sin with him and we bear the penalty of Adam’s sin. Cultists are repulsed at this doctrine. They despise it. But it is true. So much for little spirit babies floating around on another planet waiting us to get our reproductive act together. Those babies are already in our body. I would be the first to tell you that I do not understand the mechanics. I know the children are in the loins before birth and their reality is argued at conception, not

at birth. That is the seminal reality. The male contributes the life force. Even though Christ traces His genealogy to Adam, He was not in Adam because he was born of a virgin.

Based upon this reasoning the Bible says that, just as we were in Adam when he sinned we may be placed into Christ, the second Adam. And so, the Bible reads:

(1 Cor 15:22 KJV) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

Just as I died in Adam, I may be placed into Christ and be seen as having done everything that Christ did. That is what saves me. So, that is one important lesson I have learned from this argument about Abraham being in Levi’s loins.

B. Federal headship eliminates the idea that babies in the womb are mere fetuses.

The other important fact to remember, a fact that can never be overlooked, is the fact that, if we carry our children in our loins, as the Bible says, then there is no such thing as a fetus in the womb. There are only unborn babies. Real people with real souls and we have no right to arbitrarily take their lives at our whim and for our convenience. What a demonic thought! What a hellish thing it is to murder innocent, unborn children who were made in the image of God. Thankfully, though we are all murderers and sinners at heart God, in His love, stands ready to cleanse us from any sin through the blood of His Son. This, however, does not make the sin any less heinous.

C. What federal headship means.

Let us conclude the logic of Hebrews in this regard. Paying tithes is a confession power or authority. Paying tithes to someone acknowledges their authority over you. Levi, in the loins of Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedek. Aaron paid those tithes. Melchizedek has a higher authority.

We will conclude with a thought which we will not be able to finish in this lesson:

7. The Melchizedekan Priesthood Is Superior By Its Performance.

This is the whole argument of verses 11 – 22, though we will not cover them in this chapter. In a word it is results. The new, which was really the old, has replaced the old because it is superior.

We cite 2 verses in order to get our toes into the water and we will leave it with that for this lesson. Look at verses 11 and 12:

(Heb 7:11-12 KJV) If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? {12} For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

Elections inevitably come upon us again. We will hear the same arguments we heard at the last election and the one before that. At the base of it all will be the campaign plea: “Elect my candidate for a change.”

I have long since learned that is the only thing Americans as a group vote for. They do not vote for Democrats. They do not vote for Republicans. They vote for change. Good or bad, moral or immoral, liberal or conservative, who cares? What we really need is change. The argument in front of us is an argument for change. And the argument goes this way. If the Levitical priesthood had been able to do the job, there would have been no necessity to raise up a priest after Melchizedek.

We will see in our next study that change was necessary. I do want you to look closely at verse 12:

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

The priesthood was changed. And, as we shall see, it was changed because it failed to produce adequate results. Focus in two closing thoughts:

A. Consider what it means to be changed.

In this case the word means replaced. It is the Greek word *metatqhmi* (*metatithemi* - met-at-ith'-ay-mee) which means to put one thing in the place of another. The Melchizedekan priesthood was put in the place of the Aaronic priesthood. The Aaronic priesthood was not modified. It was replaced. Furthermore, as we will see, it was replaced because it was inferior or inadequate.

For reasons that are supposedly known only to God and Joseph Smith, John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith in 1829 and re-established the Aaronic priesthood! This leads us to some very interesting questions such as, why would John the Baptist be selected to do the job when he wasn't even a priest? (Could it be that Smith was trying to steal the thunder of those who thought they got their authority through the baptism of John just as many Baptists falsely think they are doing today?)

More importantly, why would God go back on His Word? If the Aaronic priesthood was imperfect and therefore, changed at the beginning of the church age, why would God revive it?

Not without coincidence, Smith and Cowdry received yet another revelation only a short time later. This time, Peter, James and John appeared to him and re-established the Melchizedekan priesthood. And this puts the LDS on the horns of another dilemma, for according to Hebrews, priests of this order must be without father or mother, without genealogy, and without ending of days. And why would Peter, James and John pass along this order? Would it not be proper for the only existing priest in the order, Jesus Christ Himself to be the one?

And so today young Mormon boys are usually Aaronic priests and Mormons older than 12 are

Melchizedekan priests. We will soon learn that Melchizedekan priests have a great task to perform if they are going to live up to their priesthood.

As noted, there are two things to notice about this change. The first is that the Melchizedekan order replaced the Aaronic order. It did not come along in addition to it. The second fact that this verse teaches is equally important:

B. Consider what all was changed.

The priesthood *and* its order of law go hand in hand. They were both replaced. Our verse says:

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

Because the priesthood has been replaced it also necessitated replacing the law. What law? The Law of Moses! The Law of Moses was also replaced!

So we see, once again, if we are going to restore the Aaronic priesthood, as the LDS allege, we must, of necessity restore the law of Moses! And yet, their Aaronic priesthood has no temple where sacrifices are made according to Moses' law! And they have no genealogy tracing their lineage to Aaron!

What is our point? Hebrews says the priesthood and the laws establishing it come and go together. They are to be treated as one.

Every now and then we find some well meaning person who informs us that the ceremonial part of Moses' law was done away with but not the moral part of the law. Our Bible says it was all replaced. Our Bible makes no distinction.

And what law are we under now? It is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the perfect law of liberty. Its morality is far superior to the morality of Moses law!

You say, what a terrible thing! God wrote Moses' law. It was perfect! It was perfect! It was perfect in its cre-

ation and purpose. But its purpose was to show us a better way. Its morality was inferior to Christ's. Let me give you an example:

According to Moses law, any man who was of the seed of Aaron was to be a priest. He could not be physically blemished or he would be disqualified. There were scores and scores of physical blemishes that would have disqualified him. And yet his heart could be black as sin. He could be mean and ornery and selfish and cruel. He could be a liar and a cheat. He could break any number of the Ten Commandments and still be a priest! The fact is, the priest had no choice. Even if he was angry with God he was expected to be a priest! Now, there is not very much morality in that! That is not a very moral law is it? After all, does not that same Old Testament teach us that man looks on the outside, but God looks on the heart??

Why did God not require his priests to be godly? The answer is very clear. Because the whole purpose of this law was to show men that external and outward obedience cannot bring men to God. That salvation is a matter of the heart!

Jeremiah 33 speaks of the coming day when God will restore Israel:

(Jer 31:33 KJV) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

God's law, the law of Christ, written in our hearts! That is the new law that comes with our new priest Jesus Christ! When one comes to know Christ as Savior these are the dynamics that begin to occur in the heart. This is why there is hope! This is why there is help! And, as we will learn in our next session, this is why we can grow and mature, because God starts with the inside! He gives new life and new power over sin.

Is Jesus Christ your priest?



IMPERTINENT PRIESTLY PRETENDERS

Heb. 7:11-8:1 - Chapter Twenty

IMPERTINENT PRIESTLY PRETENDERS

Intro: I like to view the last half of chapter seven as an expansion of the first half of the chapter because the truths we encounter here build on what has already been introduced as our author strengthens and reinforces the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ. For this reason, I propose a different approach to the last half of the chapter. [Note: Verses 13-18 are not covered directly in these notes.]

I would like to name some of the chief characteristics of our Divine Priest and His order. Then we will use those traits to expose those impertinent pretenders who, during the time of Christ, and since have sought to rob Christ of the glory which belongs to Him by virtue of His sole possession of the Melchizedekan priesthood and its order. We begin:

I. THE PERFECTIONS OF OUR PRIEST

Verse 11 began the argument that perfection cannot come from the Aaronic priesthood and therefore the Melchizedekan priesthood has been put in place, replacing both the Levitical priests and their law.

Look at verses 19-22:

(Heb 7:19-22 KJV) For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. {20} And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: {21} (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec:) {22} By so much was Jesus made a surety of a

better testament.

Verses 19-22 argue that there is a better hope associated with the Melchizedekan order by which we can draw near to God. The certainty of this hope is in the oath of God that supports it. Because it is based on an oath which gives us absolute hope, we will say that this priesthood is *provable*. Through it, we are guaranteed that we can draw nigh to God.

In verses 23 and 24 we have the argument of permanence restated. Levi needed many priests; the Melchizedekan order needs only one because He continues forever.

(Heb 7:23-24 KJV) And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: {24} But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

This means that this priesthood is nontransferable. There is no need for it to be transferred because Christ's office is permanent.

Nor, should we miss the power of verse 25, a verse which every Christian should have on the top of his or her scripture memory list:

(Heb 7:25 KJV) 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.

This is the argument of power. He is able to save them completely, to the uttermost. Our fathers used to love to declare, "He took us from the guttermost to the uttermost!"

And also, please note, if He ever lives to make intercession this means His intercession is perpetual in its practice. I have a Savior who is pleading my cause

even as I write.

Verse 26 brings up, once again, the argument of integrity or propriety.

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

And as a part of this argument which extends through verse 28 we continue to learn in verse 27 that this sacrifice was perpetual not only in its practice, but in its privilege or its license. The verse will explain:

(Heb 7:27 KJV) 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.

I believe our author intends to make this point because Christ was sinless, separated, and undefiled His access to God remains open and perpetual. If the Levitical priest had been and continued to remain perfect when entering the Holy Place he would not have had to go in year after year. It was his infirmity and sinfulness that required his continual sacrifices.

That is why we read, in verse 28 these powerful words:

(Heb 7:28 KJV) 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.

The consecrated priest who does not become unconsecrated (through defilement) does not require an additional sacrifice in order to maintain his privilege as an intercessor.

Finally, I want to steal from our next lesson long enough to point out one more fact from 8:1:

(Heb 8:1 KJV) 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;

This, as we will see, is the argument of privilege or posture. Our priest is seated, an argument which speaks once again to the completeness of His work. He is not standing in the Holy of Holies, as some dreamers would have us imagine. Thus, those beautiful words of Hebrews 1:3:

“...when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”

So, let's organize our words in a list. Concerning our Priest, His order, His sacrifice, and His intercession, we have learned it is:

1. Provable; guaranteed by an oath. - 7:20
2. Permanent; non transferable because Christ never dies. 7:23,24
3. Powerful; saving completely. 7:25
4. Proper; performed by a perfect Priest who has no infirmities. 7:26
5. Perpetual in practice; it intercedes continually. 7:25
6. Perpetual in privilege; because its Priest is sinless re- approach is not necessary. 7:27
7. Privileged; He is now seated. His work is complete. 8:1

We are dealing with, more or less, 7 traits of the Priest, His priesthood, and His priestly offering.

We are now moving to the second part of our study. As we depart slightly from our usual style, consider:

II. THE IMPERTINENT PRIESTLY PRE-TENDERS

A. Consider the Levitical Priesthood.

Those who argue that these privileges still belong to the sons of Aaron fail on all counts.

1. It is no longer provable because the second oath, the double oath, supersedes the first oath, the Abrahamic oath. We will see this fact later.
2. It is not permanent because Levites have a habit of dying.
3. It cannot save completely and to the uttermost and never promised it would.
4. It is not proper in the sense that its priests have infirmities.
5. It is not perpetual in practice because its priests cannot intercede continually.
6. It is not perpetual in privilege, again, because its weak priests must reconnect through continual sacrifices, due to their own sinfulness.
7. It is not privileged. They could never sit down. Their work was never finished.

B. Consider the Mormon Priesthood

Again, we could make them guilty on all counts but where do they stand out? The whole Mormon perception of priesthood is so foreign to God's Word that it is almost impossible to make the comparison. Their priesthood is for one purpose and one purpose only. It is to establish their imagined authority to be Christ's church. There is no blood sacrifice involved in it. There is no assurance offered by it. No intercession is available through it. Its only purpose is to bind men to the LDS system. It was ill thought, childish (in making little boys priests), it lacks any sensible definition, even in their own writings, while

robbing Jesus Christ of the privilege He keeps only for Himself. His priesthood is nontransferable and is therefore stolen by the LDS.

There are those who reject Mormonism because of the incompatibility of their added revelations with the Word of God, and this is a powerful argument. There are those who reject Mormonism because they worship a different God than we do, and surely they do. But Mormonism must also be flatly rejected because of its presumptuous priesthood which robs Christ of His glory.

C. Consider the Romish Priesthood.

1. It also fails on all seven counts. But consider the horror of this priesthood that demands, in direct contradiction to verse 27, that Christ continually be offered over and over and over. For at the very heart of Roman sacramental theology is the doctrine that every mass is a re-crucifixion, a re-establishment of access to God through the re-sacrifice of Christ. Rome cannot say this is a bloodless sacrifice on the one hand and still claim to turn the wine into the actual blood of Christ. And how does Rome get its hands on Christ in order to sacrifice Him again? Through incantation they pronounce the wafer to be His body, which they idolatrously store in their little arks until the mass is completed and Christ has been re-sacrificed.

This does not say much about the Roman Christ. For clearly, if He must die again, He must have sinned again because Hebrews has clearly argued that perfect priests do not have to re-offer perfect sacrifices.

2. But Rome's conscience is not burdened in this point only. For, she has not only encroached on Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, she has encroached on His privileged position as intercessor.

She now toys with another defiling doctrine. She is moving toward the declaration of Mary as Co-Redemptrix with Christ. Millions of letters and petitions have flowed into the Vatican begging Pope

John Paul, the most Marian pope in the history of the Catholic Church, to make it so. The late pope, on several occasions, called his beloved Mary the Co-Redemptrix. He has fallen short only of declaring this doctrine *ex cathedra*. And before we declare that this cannot happen we need to look closer at the Babylonian system and the eastern religions which it has spawned, and understand that a world religion will never ensue which does not elevate femininity with masculinity in its pantheon.

This immaculately conceived and immaculately assumed Mary cannot be equated with the mother of Jesus that we find in our Bibles. And, now seen as Co-Redemptrix, she will be elevated to equality with Christ. Every prayer directed toward Mary (who cannot answer prayer) is a prayer diverted from Christ our Lord who can and does answer prayer. Rome's Mary is to share quality in intercessory access and equality in all the priestly traits and privileges. Is it not enough that Rome has paraded all of her priests before us who have robbed Christ of all His priestly privileges? Must Christ now also share His priesthood with Mary? Oh to God that our catholic friends, especially those who love Christ and cannot see these ancient false teachings, will have their eyes opened and flee from this system which has captured so many of our friends and loved ones. May they flee to Jesus Christ as their one and only and perfect High Priest who saves those to the uttermost who come to God by Him.

D. Consider also the Arminian System, (though it has no priesthood).

We cannot examine the priesthood of Christ and not mention our Arminian friends who struggle from day to day, wondering if they are going to lose their salvation. They have a failing priest.

He cannot save to the uttermost. He cannot save completely, only partially, and in increments. Nor can he intercede continually and successfully. For there comes a point when the prayers of their priest fail. Their priest cannot save us from ourselves and from our own sinfulness. He can only save us from

sin initially. We are on our own, fighting against the damnable sinfulness of our own souls, hoping to God that we will not fall away, secretly knowing that we have always been our own worst enemies.

Arminian doctrine deserts me *when I need it the most*. The Arminian Savior leaves me when I need Him the most. The Arminian priest fails me when I most need His prayers, when my own soul would betray Him with Peter and the disciples, and when my own heart would reject Him. When my own coldness would turn me down the path toward sin this Savior, this Arminian Savior, does me no good. I do not need such a Savior, for frankly my worst enemy has always been my own flesh and my own soul. I have always been my own worst enemy. I need a priest whose intercession goes to the uttermost. I do not need one who is limited by my own "Adamised", perverted, self-centered fleshly nature.

Finally, we must:

E. Consider the Adventist Priest.

He is not my priest. He is in the wrong place. Adventism is an Arminian sect and falls under all which we have said above. But Adventism is offensive because its false revelations have absolutely altered the Word of the Living God, and Ellen White takes upon her that curse and anathema to her grave.

Look at 8: 1 once more:

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

According to this verse, where is our high priest and what is He doing? We already know He is interceding. We learned that in 7:25. But where is He and why is He there? He is seated on the right hand of the Majesty. Why is He seated? He is seated because His work is completed. He is seated because the

application of His work is completed.

The Adventist says this is not true. He says that Jesus Christ is not seated at Christ's right hand. Adventists say that He is standing. And nor is He standing at the right hand of the Majesty. He is, rather, standing in the Holy of Holies at the mercy seat. And, guess what He is doing while He stands there. He is examining your works in order to determine whether or not He should continue to apply His blood on your behalf! Supposedly, the blood that He applied initially when you were saved must be reapplied. This is the doctrine of investigative judgment.

Not one word can be found anywhere in this Bible which suggests such a thing. Rather, our Bible contradicts this, here and in other places. Jesus Christ is seated. His work is completed. The blood was applied on your behalf the day you were placed in Christ. And when were you placed in Christ? The day you were converted? Of course not. Romans 6 tells us that you were in Christ on the day He was crucified. You died with Him and rose with Him. And the day He presented His blood to the Father you were represented.

Whoever that Adventist Christ is in the Holy Place investigating my works He is not my Christ. Mine is seated on the right hand of the Father. And He is not investigating. He is ever interceding.

What a priest! What rest this gives to our sin weary souls! What great hope this inspires within us! We have a Savior, a Savior who is pleading in Glory. We have a Savior who came not to condemn us as the Adventist savior does, as the Arminian savior does, as the Romish savior does, and as the Mormon savior does. We have a Savior who came to save us and intercede for us. What a priest! What a savior!

You may not feel that this segment of our study has projected a lot of love. You need to know that it always loving to confront the issues and to confront the lie wherever it occurs. The person who loves the alcoholic confronts him. Most of his friends do not. If you have been offended because of some lie that I

have told or some truth I have misrepresented, I not only apologize, I ask you to correct me.

If you have been offended because of the truth you have heard, your argument is with God, not with me. And He loves you more than I. He loved us both so much that He sent His son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (See John 3:17). But He is the way and He boldly declared that no man can come to God except by Him, and that is because He is the only priest who is authorized to come into the presence of the Living God. If you would come to God you cannot get to Him through me or through any human priest.

You must do business with Jesus Christ, yourself. And the beauty of it can be found in what our Savior said in Revelation 3:20:

(Rev 3:20 KJV) Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

He is waiting. He is ready. He has been there all along. If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Jehovah God and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, raised Him to become your priest, you can be saved this very moment.



THE CHIEF POINT

Heb. 8:1-5 - Chapter Twenty One

THE CHIEF POINT

Intro: Beginning where we left off in our last study we occupy ourselves with the words of Hebrews 8:1:

(Heb 8:1 KJV) 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 suppose, if one were to read a bunch of my sermon manuscripts he would quickly come up with a good long list of clichés and idioms that I use over and over. One of those clichés that I find hard to resist is the phrase “Now, my point is this.” When I say that I intend the audience to understand that I am focusing on the one important thing which I want them to take away from a particular discussion.

The author of Hebrews is doing the same thing with us. When we read these words: “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum,” he is not telling us, as we would imagine in the English, that he is summing up what has gone on before. Rather, he is telling us that he is about to make his chief point, specifically, his chief point concerning the priesthood of Christ. And what is the chief point? What is the one thing which we want to take with us, no matter how far we dig into the passage? What is the chief point we want to remember concerning this marvelous Priest of ours?

The chief point is made in the remainder of the verse:

(Heb 8:1 KJV) Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: [or the chief point,] We have such an

high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

That is, we have the kind of high priest which, in contrast to earthly priests, is seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. We will label this as the first point of our consideration:

I. CONSIDER THE KIND OF PRIEST THAT WE HAVE.

You understand that we could make an entire study out of this single verse, and you already know a few facts because we dipped our toes into this priestly water in our last study. But consider a little more:

1. Remember the respectful mention of God in this verse. He is called the Majesty in the heavens. When we address earthly kings we call them “His majesty” but we know that their earthly majesty is a mere sham of His heavenly majesty. When we acknowledge someone’s majesty we do so with awesome respect. This respect was so intense in the minds of the Jewish people that they preferred to refer to their God indirectly so as not to bring His name into any sort of disuse. We have come a long way in making reference to our God today. Even Christians take His name in vain, calling upon Him to damn whatever thing or person gets in their way. Calling Him the man upstairs, and uttering Lord! or God! as quickly and as freely as any other exclamation of surprise.

We do well to refer to Him more often and more directly as the Majesty on High, and in so doing, we may find ourselves using His name and entering His presence with less impunity. So, that is one good lesson.

2. Remember the location of this throne. It is in the heavens. You will see the importance of this in a few verses. This throne where Christ is seated is not on earth; it is in the heavens. This is the argument of location. Keep it in mind.

3. Remember His posture. We have already pointed out in another lesson that Christ is seated, not standing. As our priest, His work is finished and it is just as much an insult to the work of Christ to suggest that His work is not finished as it is to take the Father's name in vain. It is still blasphemy, just in a different form. He is seated.

4. Remember His Consort. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty. This denotes the position of greatest honor and respect to the oriental mind.

We must always think of our Savior in this context. Does He dwell in our hearts? Of course? Is He everywhere? Of course. But, especially, we want to remember that He has received the glory and honor in Heaven that is due to Him. An embarrassed and shamed world will one day stand before Him. There they will be reminded of what a sham and farce they made out of this exalted One who has endured their art, their musicals, their foul speech, their wicked poetry and prose, their hateful diatribes, and their constant depiction of this Savior as some sort of weak anomaly. What a shock it will be to their system as they see this exalted Christ seated at the Father's right hand. We must go a step further than this, however when we talk about Christ's seating at the right hand of the Majesty:

5. Remember His work is finished. He is not only seated because His work is completed, He is seated because the Father's work has not been completed. This is the essence of Psalm 110:1.

(Psa 110:1 KJV) A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

There is a divine process going on. The Majesty on

High is working out His plan and program. This Savior who is now seated in a position of honor and glory in the heavens is the Savior who has yet to be glorified on earth. His enemies have not been made His footstool. This is why we read in Philippians 2:9-11:

(Phil 2:9-11 KJV) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: {10} That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; {11} And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

6. Remember His work is a fulfillment. We note with enthusiasm that this same prophecy, this prophecy in which David declared that Christ's enemies would be made His footstool, is the very same argument which the Savior uses to declare his divinity, His Sonship in Matthew 22:41-45:

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,
42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?
They say unto him, The son of David.
43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,
44 The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?
45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?

In a word, the fact that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Majesty is a biblical argument for His Sonship, His deity.

We are still not finished with this little verse. Not only does it argue the perfection of His finished work, the privilege of His high position (at the right hand), the promise of His final vindication, and the proof of His deity, it may even argue another point:

7. Remember the judicial setting. In oriental times,

there were two personages who sat on either side of the judge in a court of law. The individual on the left hand had the duty of recording and pronouncing the sentence of guilt and the corresponding penalty. The individual seated on the right hand had the duty of recording and pronouncing the sentence of innocence. In terms of the oriental courtroom, though it is only a metaphor, we do have a beautiful picture of a Savior who, because of His finished work on Calvary, Has declared our innocence before all of creation. Because of His work we are now in Christ and His righteousness has been imputed to us.

So, there are many beautiful truths we can ponder, just from meditating on verse 1. And the chief point is that we have the kind of high priest which is seated in the heavens at the right hand of the Majesty. That is the kind of priest we have.

We will read verses 2-5 and group them into the second heading:

II. CONSIDER THE KIND OF TABERNACLE HE POSSESSES

(Heb 8:2-5 KJV) **A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. {3} For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. {4} For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: {5} Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.**

The deeper we get into chapters 8 and 9 the more difficult it is going to be to separate the themes. Our author is only introducing an idea here which he will expand immeasurably before we are finished. We want to get the skeleton so that we can add more flesh to it as we go.

Here is the basis of the argument, and it is no small matter that can be easily ignored. For now, focus only on the tabernacle and notice what is being said.

1. He is a minister of the true tabernacle. Vs. 2.
2. This tabernacle is pitched by the Lord, not man. Vs. 2.
3. The earthly tabernacle and its services are a shadow of the heavenly realities. Vs. 5.

There are many things that we *do not* understand about the heavenly tabernacle and we must be very quick to make that point clear. We know it was pitched, or pegged, or set up as a man would set up a tent. The Bible is very emphatic about the fact that God Himself pitched it. It is also a curious thing to note that, while the Old Testament tabernacle and the Old Testament temples contained virtually the same furniture and services, the heavenly tabernacle is a tent of some kind or other. I do not speculate very long on this point because the book of Revelation does refer to the temple that is in heaven and, Revelation 15:5 calls it the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony. There are scores of things that we simply do not know and understand about this heavenly tabernacle.

There are things that we *do know* and these must not be ignored:

It is the true tabernacle. That is not to suggest that the earthly tabernacle is false. That is not what the Bible means. Rather, the Bible intends us to understand two incontrovertible truths. First, the heavenly tabernacle is a real one. It does not exist in our imaginations. It is really there. Secondly, that the earthly tabernacle is a copy of the heavenly tabernacle.

- a. We must never surrender the idea that the heavenly tabernacle is some kind of a type, or figment, or metaphor.

The church fathers, down through the ages, have had great struggles with this tabernacle and we would be surprised if it were any other way. Very early in church history it became popular to spiritualize away the literal truths of God's Word, to take literal statements and generalize them away. This leaven was introduced into the meal of the doctrine of Christ and His Word and we have suffered its consequence ever since. We call it allegorism.

The very introduction of the word allegorism into this text rightfully calls for a full blown discussion of the history of its infusion into Bible interpretation and the gross damage it has inflicted in dividing the body of Christ and corrupting the doctrine of Christ. Serious Bible students will not neglect this area of their growth. This author highly recommends Mal Couch's succinct work entitled *Classical Evangelical Hermeneutics* as a good starting point for study. Chapters 3 and 8 will only take a short time to read and will be immensely valuable in protecting the reader from inadvertently falling into allegorical interpretive styles.

As you may expect, some have taught that this heavenly tabernacle is nothing other than the physical body of Christ. After all, He did call His body a temple, did He not? The problem with this is that the text would have said so, and equally as important, verse 5 tells us that Moses was building from a pattern that was shown to him. This is the same word that occurs in Exodus and it clearly implies that Moses not only received physical directions, but he saw the heavenly tabernacle. He did not see the plans, he saw the tabernacle, and was told to see to it that he built it accordingly. Exodus 25:40.

Others have suggested that it is the church, the body of Christ. This logic fails for the same reasons. And not to be outdone, the Roman Catholic scholar Catharinus suggested that this "greater and more perfect tent" is none other than, you guessed it, the Virgin Mary, through whom Christ appeared as our high priest in this world. Philip Hughes notes this in his remarkable work on Hebrews, a book that should be in everyone's library.

All of the theories fail for the same reason, and that is found in the paraphrase of Alva McClain, "When the plain sense of the Bible makes common sense, to seek any other sense is nonsense." There is a tabernacle in the heavens.

b. There are doctrinal reasons why we believe in the necessity of a heavenly temple. Is it necessary to argue for a literal tabernacle eternal in the heavens, made without hands?

If it does not exist the mechanics of our salvation cannot be witnessed. It is interesting to me that the Bible calls this tabernacle the tabernacle of testimony. It is the tabernacle of the witness. As already noted, it plays a very great role in the book of Revelation. After all, the whole purpose and intent of the breaking of the seven seals is to consummate the redemptive plan and satisfy the contract of the Kinsman Redeemer. In the outpouring of God's redemptive program this temple is a centerpiece. Read Revelation for yourself and discover it to be so.

I personally believe that this heavenly tabernacle will stand eternally as a testimony, or a witness, to God's entire redemptive program. It will be living proof for all eternity that God's holiness was satisfied by the offering which was made there of His own Son's blood. More will come in chapter 9.

III. CONSIDER THE KIND OF GIFT WHICH HE OFFERS

Earthly priests bring earthly offerings and gifts. Christ did not offer any such offerings as a priest and could not. He was not qualified to do so, according to verse 4. But it was necessary for Christ to offer a gift according to verse 3. Take one final look at verse 3:

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

We know what our author is doing here. He is planting the seed in the mind of his readers so that he can harvest it as we move into the next chapter. It won't be long before we will see and truly understand how superior His priestly gift was compared to the gifts of Aaron's priests.

While we may not be too rigid in our conclusions, it is generally concluded by Bible teachers that there is a difference between gifts and sacrifices. This was pointed out earlier. While we often group them together, they seem to have had separate purposes. The sacrifices or offerings were required reminding us that without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins. The gifts, on the other hand, were given out of love, dedication, and personal commitment to Christ. We might say they were above and beyond the call of duty. They represented the voluntary side of worship and service for God.

We end with an interesting consideration. We will soon learn that Jesus Christ offered one and only one sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. If you would ever approach God you must come to God by being placed in Christ and God will accept you because of the sacrifice of His Son. There can be only one sacrifice for sin but there can be many gifts.

You and I, as believer priests, sharing in the priesthood of Christ, are not high priests, only believer priests. We bring no blood sacrifices of our own. But we can still, in the presence of this great Majesty, present our bodies as living sacrifices, our prayers as sweet incense going up before Him, our praises as a sweet savor, and even the gifts of our substance as priestly offerings of firstfruits. The Bible depicts all of these activities as our priestly offerings. Could it be that somehow, in the context of this heavenly tabernacle our heavenly Father is accepting our priestly gifts? I not only think it is possible, I think it is likely.

We may not share in the provision for our salvation. But, we may, according to Paul, share in and make up that which is still lacking in the sufferings of Christ. We may, as believer priests who are in Christ,

offer up our priestly gifts. This is a precious and beautiful thought.

Let me ask, from heaven's point of view, are there any offerings coming up before Him? Is there any sweet incense? Any priestly acts of worship? I suggest that, rather than practicing random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty, we consider offering worshipful and meaningful priestly acts of service to the living God!



NEW AND IMPROVED

Heb. 8:6-13 - Chapter Twenty Two

NEW AND IMPROVED

Intro: A while back the Steel family went into the car-buying mode again for one of our family members. As usual, the area which interested me the most was not what color the hood was painted. It was not the style of the car. I was concerned with what kind of engine technology was under the hood. This is not to suggest that I am an expert. This is not to suggest that I am a mechanic. You would not want to trust me with a set of wrenches around your car. This is not to suggest that I am an expert in any way. It is only to say that anyone who can ask even the most elementary questions about an automobile can make intelligent choices. There are some wonderful automobile engines being built today, and there are engines being produced which are essentially no better than the ones built 30 years ago. The cars look the same on the outside, but the engines are not.

We see the analogy. We are, once again, looking under the hood of our salvation. That is what the whole book of Hebrews is about, a good look under the hood. But here, in chapter 8 we have the block upon which the engine of salvation is built and it is called the New Covenant. And no, you do not have to be a mechanic. You do not have to be a theological engineer, to appreciate the beauties of this wonderful salvation. The dynamics and the precision is awe-inspiring.

A. The New Ministry Introduced

Let's open the hood and take a look at this new model which was just coming into the showroom:

(Heb 8:6 KJV) **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.

1. *Consider the basis of this claim.* This is so obvious that people often skip right past it to their own detriment. The basis of the claim is this: Ministries must be based upon covenants. One simply cannot establish a priesthood that is not based upon a covenant.

What is a covenant? In a word we may say it is a promise. In its most generic sense we may say that a covenant is the expression of the terms of a relationship. There are numerous covenants identified in the Bible. They are the pillars, the foundations of all of God's dealings with men.

The two most significant covenants to Israel were the Abrahamic Covenant, and the Mosaic Covenant. In the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised a seed, a land, a throne, and blessing to Israel. Not only would she be blessed, but also, she would be a blessing to all of the earth. (Genesis 12:1-3 and other passages.) The Palestinian Covenant (Deuteronomy 30:1-10) expanded the land aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. Later, the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:12-16, Ps 89:1-2) expanded the throne aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. So, the Abrahamic Covenant, and its supporting covenants were very important to Israel as a nation.

The Mosaic Covenant, unlike the Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic Covenants was a temporary covenant, given by God through angels to Israel. It was never declared to be permanent or unconditional. In other words, it expressed the terms of a relationship between God and His people Israel promising blessing upon compliance to God's laws. We call this Mosaic Covenant the Old Covenant. It is expressed in the Ten Commandments and expanded in the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy. These were

the covenants that were very important to Israel. The Jewish people commonly called the Old Covenant the Law of Moses, or the Law.

What you want to remember from all of this is that God has established His relationship with both Jews and Gentiles upon the basis of His covenants. No man can approach God, except upon the basis of a covenant. Covenants require mediators to minister them.

2. Consider the claim itself. The argument is simple. But now (at this very moment) Christ has obtained (He has brought it to pass, He has effected it) an action continuing into the present, a more excellent ministry (in contrast to the ministry of the earth-bound Levitical priests). That is the claim. Christ has a superior ministry.

3. Consider the proof for the claim.

The ministry is superior because it is based upon a better (a more serviceable, more advantageous) covenant. And why is the covenant better? The better covenant is based upon better promises.

We have already noted, we call this better covenant the New Covenant. The Bible contrasts it with the Old Covenant, a term which everyone understands to be in reference to the covenant the Lord made with Israel through the mediation of Moses and the angels at Mt. Sinai.

B. The Old Covenant Compared.

Verse 7 tells us why the new model was necessary and frankly, it seems to surprise us each time we read it.

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

This bothers us because we cannot understand how God could make something that was flawed. We

may well ask, why didn't He do it right the first time? Did He need to practice a bit like He did when he made man first, before the woman? Was He learning by experience?

The answer to this question is very important because if we do not answer it correctly we will fall into the trap that the cultists fall. The word faultless is best understood by our word blameless. It is an issue of adequacy, not morality.

When we talk about the law having faults we must identify those faults explicitly or we can fall into great trouble. Verse 8 helps us in this respect:

(Heb 8:8 KJV) 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:

1. Remember the problem was not with the law. The problem was with those who tried to keep the law. That is why we read those words "For finding fault with them..."

Assuming I am blind, a car is going to do me no good. The car is useless and impractical to me even though it may run well.

When I was a little boy I used to wish that I could fly. I somehow hoped that, if I believed enough and tried hard enough, I could fly. Fortunately, I was spared from jumping off any roofs while trying. At least I grew out of my fantasy. Society has not grown out of the fantasy of thinking that we can fly if we so will it. Every child can be president if he so desires. If one believes his fantasy enough, one can have it and one can do it.

The law was given for the purpose of destroying our fantasy. Not the fantasy that we could fly, but the fantasy that, with a little education properly given, we could order our own lives properly. But the law failed. The law failed because Israel failed. In that sense, the law failed.

2. *Remember another reason why the law failed.* Not only did God find fault with Israel, (not only did she fail) but the law itself failed because it was intended to fail. It was created to fail. It was based on lesser promises. It was a temporary covenant from the beginning.

The Old Covenant was never intended to be the solution for man's sin. It was only intended to point the way to the solution. Galatians 2:16 tells us that "...by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." No flesh, period. The law did not justify one single person. Galatians 3:24 says:

(Gal 3:24 KJV) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

We had to learn that we could not justify ourselves and that we had to be justified by faith. We had to learn that the answer for our sins is found in the work of Christ.

So, the old covenant was not adequate. It was not adequate because it could not justify anyone. God found fault with those who obeyed it.

That is the negative side of the coin. Now we look at the positive side:

C. The New Covenant Described.

Look once again at verse 8:

(Heb 8:8 KJV) 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:

1. *This New Covenant is scriptural.* It was prophesied. Our author used the term "he saith" many times when quoting Old Testament passages. This was, the focus is put on the Lord, the true author of scriptures, rather than the human author. But, the im-

portant point to note is that the New Covenant was prophesied. If you have a Bible with marginal notes, you are already aware that we are quoting Jeremiah 31:31 and following.

2. *This covenant is made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.* This covenant will unite divided brothers once and for all. It will bring unity to Israel, something she does not have, even to this day.

3. *This covenant is made with Israel, not the Gentiles.* This bothers some folks so much that they insist there must be two New Covenants, one for Israel and one for us. These folks glory in the fact that Israel is the earthly people and the church (which is made up mostly of Gentiles) is the heavenly people. Voilà, our New Covenant is now supposed to be different than Israel's! There are good reasons to reject this teaching; the most important being that the Bible nowhere indicates that there are two New Covenants. The New Covenant simply expands God's promise made to Abraham in the Abrahamic Covenant, especially with respect to the fact that Israel will be a blessing to all the earth. Our blessed Savior, a Jew, is the source of our blessing. We owe our spiritual birthright to the people of Israel. They have always been the instruments of God's blessing and will one day literally suckle the nations. Thankfully, for us, Israel will have received her new heart by then!

The question is rightfully asked, if this covenant is made with Israel, how can we share in its blessings? The answer is always the same. Our covenant connection comes from our position in Christ. That is our connection. It is important to make a distinction here. We are not the inheritors of Israel's promises as so many teach today. Israel will still inherit her promises. God will still make good on His covenants. We are not the inheritors of Israel's promises. We are the inheritors of Israel's blessings, spiritual blessings through Christ. Eventually, we will also reign with Him, sharing, once again, another aspect of the fulfillment of Israel's promises. But even then, we will be benefiting from the promises made specifically to her and not us.

4. *The New Covenant will be unlike the original Mosaic covenant.*

(Heb 8:9 KJV) 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.

Why? Because they continued not in His covenant and He did not regard them. He ignored them and viewed their trifling religiosity lightly.

But look at verse 10. It is the most surprising verse yet.

5. *God Himself bears the responsibility for its execution.*

(Heb 8:10 KJV) 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:

Let me ask, what is the one lesson we learned from the Old Covenant? Was it not that we could not continue in it? Is not that its purpose? Can you imagine a television preacher getting up and announcing to his glassed-in congregation that he has not broken any of the 10 commandments? How foolish!

What good is a New Covenant going to do if it still depends upon you or me for its success? When teachers find that a whole class has failed the test, they are sometimes tempted to lower the standards and grade on a curve. Is that what God did? Did He give us a New Covenant so that He could lower the standards?

Nonsense! The standards have not changed. But let me tell you what did change. When God gave the Old Covenant He said, “if ye will” (Exodus 19:5).

If you will obey and keep my covenant you will be blessed. Those were the terms of the Old Covenant, summed up in the word if.

There are no if's in the New Covenant. Instead of if we find *I will, I will, I will.*

“...I will put my laws into their minds. I will write them in their hearts. I will be to them a God and they shall be to me a people.”

Consider what one will never find with the New Covenant. One will never find a single if, a single standard which one must reach and attain in order to share in it. One will never find a condition. Scofield's notes say in this regard: “It is absolutely unconditional and, since no responsibility is by it committed to men, it is final and irreversible.”

[Technical note:] This is the kind of quote which prompts some Bible teachers to accuse Scofield of being Antinomian. Scofield is not suggesting that obedience will not be a result of salvation, he is only saying it is not a requirement for salvation.

I need a covenant like this. I do not need another covenant that will show me what I cannot do. I already know that. I need the kind of covenant that will begin working in me and begin changing the way I think and behave, from the inside out. I need a covenant, which, when it comes into its full application, will perfect me in every way. That is the kind of covenant that I need. That is the kind of covenant I have.

Just look at these promises continuing in verse 11.

(Heb 8:11-13 KJV) And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. {12} For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. {13} In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

6. *The New Covenant is Personal.* Every man will know the Lord from the least to the greatest.

7. *The New Covenant is Merciful.* It forgives what the Old Covenant could not forgive.

8. *The New Covenant is Permanent.* It will not decay or wax old.

Have we answered all of the questions regarding the New Covenant in this lesson? Hardly, but we have made the point. This Priest of ours has a superior ministry.

- The Old Covenant was replaced because it was faulted.
- The Old Covenant was replaced because it was finished. It had accomplished its purpose.
- The Old Covenant was replaced because it was temporary.

Consider the horrible dilemma the Mormon church will face when its leaders stand before Jesus Christ and explain why they have replaced the New Covenant with another covenant, a third covenant called the Book of Mormon (Notice the cover on the Book of Mormon). This Mormon Covenant, which centers around temple marriage, has some distressing characteristics:

1. The LDS Testament is flawed. Men cannot reach perfection through it no matter how hard they try. Sounds familiar, doesn't it!

2. The LDS Testament is false; it is a counterfeit. It calls itself the everlasting gospel, but it is another gospel. There already is an everlasting gospel, based upon an everlasting covenant, in place.

Keep in mind that this New Covenant is personal. You do not come under it by becoming an Israelite. You do not come under it by joining a church. You do not come under it through a ritual or a rite such as circumcision or baptism. You come under this covenant by being placed into Jesus Christ. By receiving Him as your Lord and Savior. By under-

standing that your sins have separated you and God and that Christ died, shed His blood, to take away your sins. When the Father raised Him from the dead that was proof positive that He was Christ and that His offer is good!

You can, by faith, come under this New Covenant today!



BY HIS OWN BLOOD - PART I

Heb. 9:1-10 - Chapter Twenty Three

BY HIS OWN BLOOD

I want you to try to take a broad view of Hebrews 9 before we involve ourselves with the details of the chapter. Specifically, I want you to notice the three general areas that we will classify:

- We will call verses 1-10 The Type

In the next lessons:

- We will call verses 11-14 The Truths. We are referring to the truths that we will apply to the type.
- We will call 15-28 The Testament.

I. THE TYPE.

Verses. 1-10

Verse 1

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

You may notice that your Bible has the word covenant in italics. That is because it does not occur in the original. We do believe, however, that the Holy Spirit was talking about the first covenant, because we are right in the middle of the discussion we left off in chapter 8 where we were comparing the covenants.

We are now going to be treated to a brief, but specific, history lesson about the ordinances of divine service and the way the worldly or earthly sanctuary functioned.

A. The Physical Description of the Tabernacle Paraphernalia is Found in Verses 2-5.

(Heb 9:2-5 KJV) {2} For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary. {3} And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; {4} Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; {5} And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

1. *Observe the pieces of the tabernacle.* We are referring to the Old Testament tabernacle and its contents. If I may coin the author's words here, we cannot now speak particularly about all of these items.

Verse 2: First, we have the candlestick (or lampstand), the table and the showbread in the sanctuary. Jesus Christ is our glory and He is the bread of life. These items are included in the sanctuary, the place commonly called the holy place. The word sanctuary is a form of the word holy. We could say that the holy place is the place between the curtains. The first curtain is the outer court, the second curtain leads to the second chamber of the tabernacle.

Verse 3: When we go through the second curtain, that is to say, the veil, we go into the place called the holiest of all, or the Holy of Holies. What do we find here?

Verse 4: We find the golden censer. That is one item. Then we find the Ark of the Covenant. That is the second item. Inside the Ark of the Covenant we find manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant. That is, the first covenant, or the law. Over this ark we find the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy seat.

That was a short course on the pieces of tabernacle furniture.

2. *Observe the puzzle surrounding this.* You may have noticed that there is one matter of concern to us. It is a puzzle that we have tried to piece together down through the centuries. Its secret may well remain hidden from us until the Millennium.

What puzzles us is the fact that the golden censer is here located in the Holy of Holies instead of the Holy Place where the books of Moses record its placement. Men of God have wrestled with this. The early allegorists did what we may well have expected them to do. They simply spiritualized it away. They are always blessed with the luxury of offloading anything into fantasy that does not agree with them. Luther toyed with the problem and half-heartedly suggested that there must have been a third altar in there, besides the brazen altar and the altar of incense. But even Luther himself was not about to stake his credibility on it.

Some Bible students lean with Keil and Delitzsch who suggest (and I am quoting Hiebert's reference to them now,) "...As Keil and Delitzsch point out, 'its place was to be in front of the curtain, which concealed the ark of the covenant (xxvi.31), 'before the capporeth' (xl.5), so that, although it really stood in the holy place between the candlestick on the south side and the table on the north (xxvi.35, xl.22,24), it was placed in the closest relation to the kapporeth, and for this reason is not only connected with the most holy place in 1 Kings 6:22, but is reckoned in Heb. 9:4 as part of the furniture of the most holy place."

In other words, if a straight line was drawn from the brazen altar directly to the mercy seat the only other item in the line would be the altar of incense. These are the three most important fixtures of the tabernacle. The incense, though emanating from man's side of the tabernacle, was recognized by God as part of His side. That is the best I can do.

Other more important matters entertain our attention. Consider the next group of verses where we see:

3. *Observe the work of the priest on the Day of Atonement.* Verses 6-10.

(Heb 9:6-10 KJV) Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. {7} But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: {8} The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: {9} Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; {10} Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

We want to do two things here. We want to get a feel for the steps the priest actually went through on the Day of Atonement. Secondly, we remind ourselves of the important conclusion which these verses make.

B. Get a feel for the order of events on the Day of Atonement.

[See Appendix 5 - On the Day of Atonement]

C. Get a feel for the important conclusions that our author makes in these verses.

These verses are very straightforward. The priests went in first; the high priest alone went into the Holy of Holies. Unlike Christ, he had to make an offering first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people.

In this way, the Holy Spirit signifies that the way into

the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing. We know that because this process had to be repeated year after year.

Verse 9 contains a critical point which we dare not miss. We read it once more:

(Heb 9:9 KJV) 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;

This whole collection, (the tabernacle, its pieces and its service) was given as a figure, a “parabole” - a simile, a metaphor. In our words, it was a picture.

When I first encountered this word I was quite surprised. I expected to find the Greek word for antitype. Because, after all, we are really in the discussion of types, the figures, and antitypes, and the realities they convey. Instead, we find the word parabole (parabole - par-ab-ol-ay’).

We are already comfortable with this word because we encounter it so often in our English Bibles. It is usually translated parable. This provides a very important forum. I want to hammer down one important truth about parables that everyone seems to miss.

When we ask someone what a parable is the usual response is that it is “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” But, we have a problem with that.

First, we have a problem because not all parables are stories. Sometimes, they are figures. The tabernacle is the earthly parable, or figure, of the heavenly reality. So, if we would wisely define the word parable we want to define it as “An earthly truth that represents a heavenly reality.”

The second problem we have with our old definition is even worse. We fall victim to the cultists and the allegorists all of the time because we let this slip

past us. These folks say that the earthly stories that make up parables are not true! They would like us to believe that Jesus made up stories in his head in order to teach us spiritual truths. That is one of those foolish myths that follow us around.

Parables are earthly truths! They are earthly facts that represent heavenly meanings. Was this tabernacle literal? Did these priests really do these things? Yet the Bible says they were a parable.

Was there really a man named Abraham? Did he really have a son named Isaac whom he offered up unto God? Yet the Bible says concerning Isaac in Hebrews 11:19, He received him in a figure. It was an earthly truth representing a heavenly reality.

When the cultist comes to you and says that Jesus only spoke in parables, so he doesn’t have to believe in a real place of suffering and torment you need to say to him, “So what? Since when is a parable a fairy tale? Since when is a parable a fantasy? Parables are earthly truths that signify heavenly realities.”

When we turn our attention toward the Lord’s Table in our assemblies we need to know that this table, too, is a parable. Like the sacrifices of those Old Testament priests, the elements on this table cannot take one sin away.

To teach that this wine or this bread can take someone’s sins away is pure idolatry. Can you believe that the blood of bulls and goats could take sin away? Of course not. Then why would we believe that the blood of grapes could do it? We will only believe that if we believe some spiritual force has entered the grape. We will only believe that if we try, through incantation, to turn that element into Christ’s blood.

Consider the hard work of those priests and the great effort that they made to do everything according to the letter of the law. John Macarthur says that the high priest probably slaughtered some twenty animals on the Day of Atonement before he ever got to the atoning sacrifice we learned about. It took

work, sweat, blood, and fastidious care to do the job right.

These priests which stood only in meats and drinks and various washings and carnal ordinances that were imposed upon them according to verse 10, these priests ACCORDING TO verse 14, had taken up nothing more than dead works!

(Heb 9:14 KJV) 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?

Religious works and ceremonies, no matter how well intended, no matter how devout the participants, are, dead works in God's eyes. And if we come to the Lord's Table thinking there is one spec of grace to be had in these elements we are not only robbing Christ of His glory, we are offering Him dead works. Communion can do nothing to make you perfect concerning the conscience. Jesus Christ can purge your conscience from dead works.

Please spend time with the chart entitled On The Day of Atonement, Appendix 5 in the Appendices at the end of the book.

BY HIS OWN BLOOD - PART II

Heb. 9:11-14 - Chapter Twenty Four

BY HIS OWN BLOOD. PART II

Intro: In our overview of Hebrews 9 we have called:

- Verses 1-10 The Type
 - Verses 11-14 The Truths
- We are referring to the truths that we will apply to the type.
- Verses 15-28 The Testament.

I. THE TYPE (REVIEWED)

We finished studying verses 1-10 where we discussed (A.) the furniture of the earthly tabernacle, and (B.) the work of the earthly priest on the Day of Atonement.

Our author begins to make some important comparisons between the heavenly ministry of Christ and the earthly ministry of these priestly servants of Jehovah. We will call verses 11-14:

II. THE TRUTHS

(Heb 9:11 KJV) 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;

I love this little description that the Holy Spirit has given us, “Christ being come an high priest of good things to come...” possibly “good things which have come,” but that is irrelevant. He is the priest of good things and those things have come about as a result

of His greater priesthood. We might say, then, for purposes of outlining, that He is the High Priest of Good Things

A. By virtue of a greater tabernacle, verse 11;

B. By virtue of a greater offering, Vs. 12;

C. By virtue of a greater redemption, verse 12b through 14; and;

Let's begin with verse 11 where we find He is the High Priest of Good Things to Come:

A. By Virtue of a Greater Tabernacle.

(Heb 9:11 KJV) 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;

If the reader has been continuing with us in this study of Hebrews he does not need any background concerning this issue. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, there *is* a tabernacle in the heavens. We read all about this tabernacle in Hebrews 8:1-5.

1. It is not made with hands. Our first temptation is to spiritualize this temple away. After all Jesus said that if the temple that was made with hands was destroyed, in three days He would raise up a temple not made with hands (Mark 14:58). The Apostles also taught us in Acts 17:24 that the Most High dwells in not in temples made with hands.

We cannot spiritualize this truth away, however, because the Bible states, very explicitly, that the earthly temple was patterned exactly after the heavenly temple which was shown to Moses. Moses saw the pattern with his own eyes.

2. There comes a point where we must stop trying to imagine what the heavenly temple is like, however, for even though Moses was shown the pattern it is a *heavenly* tabernacle. It is not of this building or this creation. See 2 Corinthians 5:1. We must underscore the fact that there really, really is a literal temple in the heavens and that the High Priest of Good Things is the priest of that temple.

Now, verse 12:

(Heb 9:12 KJV) 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.

He is the High Priest of Good Things:

B. By Virtue of A Greater Offering.

1. This offering is not of goats and calves, but it is His own blood. That is the first thing we want to remember. We will learn the value of this in verse 13. Sacrificial blood comes from the slaying of the sacrifice. Jesus Christ, by offering His own blood, has presented His own self as a sacrifice for our sin. 1 Peter 1:18 tells us:

(1 Pet 1:18 KJV) Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Was the blood of Christ precious while it flowed in His veins? Of course it was. But the preciousness (if I may coin a word) of His blood to us, to you and me, came as a result of Christ giving it for a sacrifice for our sins. From our point, that is what gave it its value.

So, we see it was His own blood which provided for our redemption. But this verse also teaches us:

2. He entered into the Holy Place by this blood. The

word by is the Greek word *dia* (dia.) It may be translated *through*. It carries a causal idea with it.

Folks have gone to some extremes on this verse and it has caused Christ's church no end of heartache. I would like to suggest that there are three groups of people who view this text.

There are the literalists, the hyper literalists, and the allegorists.

a. The Literalist. Literalism is something which must be embraced at the very beginning of our journey into good Bible study habits. It is the fundamental position of Bible interpretation. When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, to seek any other sense is nonsense. (Often attributed to Alva MaClain). We try not to add to or take away from the sense of God's Word. We may make many applications from a passage, but each passage has, effectively, only one interpretation.

The literalist looks at this passage and says simply, there was an earthly tabernacle and there is a heavenly tabernacle. The earthly priest sprinkled the real blood of real bulls and goats on the altar. The Heavenly Priest, on the other hand, entered a real Holy Place in the heavens by virtue of His own blood. We assume there really is a Holy Place, that Christ really entered it, and that He really presented His blood there. That is what a literalist says. He says, in effect, if there really is a heavenly temple, and if Christ really entered it, then He really entered it with His own blood.

"End discussion," says the literalist. To teach anything else is either to add to or take away from the scriptures. Do not misunderstand the literalist. He is not simplistic. He does not believe he has all the answers. He simply chooses to believe only what he reads in God's Word, whether he understands it or not. Literalism is a rather boring position. Its high regard for the Word of God allows for no imagination, no personality, no coloring of the scriptures.

b. The Hyper Literalist. The hyper literalist is a horse

of another color. He is the man who takes a literal statement, and then begins extending his assumptions. He is like the fellow who says if one pill is good, then two pills are even better. If orange juice fights cancer, then we should all drink ten gallons a day. That would kill us.

There are whole systems of hyper literalism thriving today and worthy of our examination. The Grace Gospel Fellowship with its hyper dispensationalism is a classic example. But we are chasing other game today, much more important game, so we will set that theology aside and stay with our text.

1). *Bengel's Position*

Concerning the blood of Christ, the most famous hyper literalist has to be an eighteenth century Bible scholar named J.A. Bengel. Now, there was a hyper literalist. Mr. Bengel certainly believed in the blood of Christ. He believed it was precious and incorruptible (as we read a moment ago in 1 Peter.) But Bengel took these simple, direct statements from the Word of God and began building some indefensible conclusions. He said, for example, that if the blood of Christ was incorruptible then every drop of it must be incorruptible. Every drop of Christ's blood, from the drops of blood that Christ perspired in the Garden all the way to the blood remaining in His body at the crucifixion, was all collected as the sacrificial offering.

Additionally, Bengel would have us believing that Christ's resurrected body was proof of his position and that even the whiteness of His hair was due to the bloodlessness of His resurrected body. After all, do you remember the words that Jesus spoke to Thomas? He told Thomas that a spirit has not flesh and bones, not flesh and blood.

2). *Bengel's Error.*

Now, perhaps you say, but, where do you stand on Bengel's position. You may be surprised. There are three things that I think we should keep in mind.

2a.) First, we do not know what glorified bodies are like. We do not know if they have blood in them, or what color that blood is, and we have no business deciding that issue. All we do know about glorified bodies is that they will not be spirit bodies (a fantastic invention of the Mormon church). They will be bodies of a different sort. The Bible clearly argues that we will not have the kind of flesh that we have now. Bengel has no biblical right to argue that the resurrected Christ is bloodless, or was temporarily bloodless at the presentation of His blood in heaven. Crucifixions do not drain all of the blood from the body.

2b.) Secondly, there is nothing in the Bible that requires us to believe that *all* of Christ's blood was presented in the Sanctuary.

I believe the blood that was presented in heaven is the blood to which Peter is referring when He says that Christ's blood was precious and incorruptible. I repeat what was noted:

Was the blood of Christ precious while it flowed in His veins? Of course it was. But the preciousness (if I may coin a word) of His blood to us, to you and me, came as a result of Christ giving it for a sacrifice for our sins. From our point, that is what gave it its value.

Consider those sacrificial animals, if you will: We know that most of the blood was drained off and not respected in any way. There was no particular value in the blood that was drained off. It was not respected in any special way. The blood that carried the meaning was the blood that was placed on the horns of the altar and sprinkled on the mercy seat. It is true that the residual blood could not be used in cooking, but that is because the Bible teaches us that the life is in the blood. The blood that drained away from the altar was *not*, I repeat, was *not* sacrificial blood. The sacrificial blood was the blood that was applied.

We indicated there were three things. The third is this:

2c.) It is just as sinful to go beyond the Word of God as it is to take away from it. There is always a price to pay. We have no business adding to the scriptures, period. When they stop, we must stop and leave the rest with heaven.

Bengel, in his extreme views, caused others to draw back in horror. Because they could not accept what he taught - they reacted. They went to the other extreme. We call them the allegorists.

c. The Allegorist. The allegorists represent horses "of many colors." The allegorists represent the other extreme. Because a typical allegorist is convinced that a greater spiritual truth lies behind every scriptural statement, he often affords himself the luxury of twisting or denying the literal statements of scripture in order to fit the allegorical fantasy he has imagined in his mind. I am not being unfair, but I may seem abrupt when I say that. He mixes and matches Bible verses with reckless abandon because he may, at will, make any of them mean anything he wants. In general, allegorists are Reformed theologians.

In general, Reformed theologians take another view of this verse. Look at verse 12 once again:

(Heb 9:12 KJV) 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.

John Calvin is an exception, (as he is to a surprising amount of popular Reformed teaching.) Calvin taught clearly and emphatically that Christ presented His own blood in that sanctuary. He could not resolve all the issues. He just believed it. The seventeenth century Puritan, John Owen however, set the pace for modern Reformed theology by rejecting it.

Owen taught that God the Father viewed the blood which Christ shed on earth as "having been presented" to Him.

In conclusion, consider the simple logic of this ques-

tion:

- We take the Bible literally when it tells us there is a real heavenly temple. 8:1
- We take the Bible literally when it tells us that it had real furniture. 8:5
- We take the Bible literally when it says that Jesus Christ entered once into this Holy place. 9:12.

Then, why would we insist that He did not present His blood?

- It was not too hard for God to raise Christ from the dead.
- It was not too hard for God to keep His body from corruption.
- It was not too hard for God to give Christ a new glorified body.
- It was not too hard for God to receive Christ back into heaven.
- It was not too hard for God to build a heavenly tabernacle.

It was not too hard for Christ to present His own blood in that temple!

One may ask if it really matters. Did Bengel love the Lord? Yes, he did. Didn't Calvin love the Lord? Surely he did. Didn't Owen love the Lord? He was a great man of God. Don't the reformed people love the Lord? They surely do. They why can't we join with King David and say that we are companions of all those who fear God and keep His commandments? (A famous quote by Harry Ironside, based on Psalm 119:63). We surely can. But it is important to consider the God we worship. He has a personality just as you do. He seems to be more sensitive about some things than He is about others.

If I may humanize God, for a moment, He has one very sore spot. He is very sensitive about this matter of offerings. He is much more focused on it than we are. He has always demanded offerings, and those offerings have always had to be according to His terms.

Those who tell us that the blood of Christ is not present in heaven and was not literally presented there are, in their own words, trying to avoid idolatry. They are afraid that we will somehow worship the blood instead of worshipping the Christ who sacrificed His blood. So, to protect us from that, they have decided that His blood never got to the heavenly sanctuary. They would have us believe that, in order to avoid the risk of idolatry, God did everything else literally, but He left the blood on earth because it was only symbolic anyway. I wonder what Christ looked like standing at that altar in the Heavenly temple empty handed.

As I went over the material for this study my mind kept going back to Cain and Abel. Cain and Abel both worshipped God. Cain and Abel both brought an offering. Cain and Abel probably brought offerings of equal worth before God. But God did not respect Cain's offering.

Some say that God did not respect Cain's offering because it was a bloodless offering, and I partly think that is true. But the Bible does not say that directly. The bottom line is this Cain changed the rules of worship. That is something man can never do, no matter how well meaning he is. Man never determines how he approaches God. God always makes that determination. And God has determined that no man may approach Him except through the offering of the blood of His Son.

I don't know how the blood of Christ got to heaven, but what I know of the story of Cain and Abel is enough to convince me that it is not wise to mess with God's offerings.

Let this serve as the most important reminder of the moment: You and I cannot approach God in any other way except through the blood of Christ. Your works will not do. The incantations of an earthly priest will not do. Only Christ's blood will do.

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The material below these lines are for in depth study. Otherwise, drop down to the next set of double lines.

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At this point we have chosen to include a special insertion of the charts that address the issue of limited atonement specifically. For the reader's ease of use they are included in the Appendix. These charts are entitled The Blood of the Covenant, Wrong Thinking About the Blood of the Covenant, and The Blood of Christ.

[The Blood of the Covenant - See Appendix 7]

- 1.) Notice that the top half of the chart is entitled Old Testament Truth and the bottom half of the chart is entitled New Testament Truth.
- 2.) Old Testament truth. The Atonement was consummated by two key activities, not one. Reading from left to right, the first aspect relates to the provision of Christ's blood. The second aspect relates to the application of Christ's blood, ultimately sprinkled on the mercy seat.
- 3.) When interpreting this truth it is very important to remember that the tabernacle was the figure of the heavenly reality.
- 4.) The New Testament Truth. The New Covenant was also consummated by two key activities. The blood sacrifice was provided outside the Holy Place (on the cross.) The second aspect, the application of the blood was on and through the "new and living way" of our High Priest in the Tabernacle of Testimony in heaven.
- 5.) Christ's offering was made in the real heavenly tabernacle.

[Wrong Thinking About the Blood of the Covenant - See Appendix 6]

- 1.) The error of combining these two aspects into one event (lumping all aspects of the atonement into one point in time) leads inevitably to either the Limited Atonement theory or the Universalist theory.

2.) The error of making either of these two aspects occur on multiple occasions allows for the Romish doctrine of perpetual sacrifice and/or the Arminian error of perpetual application. Both are argued against in Hebrews.

[The Blood of Christ - See Appendix 8]

This final chart provides a simply summary of what our attitude toward the blood of Christ should be, reminding us of the four mistakes we can make while considering the blood of Christ.

In a word, the reader may be unprepared to appreciate all the nuances in the above discussion. They are placed here as to assist believers who are struggling with these issues. The greatest danger into which one can fall, is the danger of despising or profaning Christ's blood by refusing to accept what Christ did for you when He shed His blood on Calvary's cross. Have you thanked Him for His precious blood?

[Advanced readers only: Much of the modern debate over the meaning of the word blood in scripture can be traced to a lecture with the same title by A.M. Stibbs, published in 1954 by The Tyndale Press, London. In it, Stibbs, in order to avoid Bengel's extreme view, fabricates the framework for denying the literality of the application of the blood in the heavenly temple as a radical response to the softening of Anglicanism toward Romanism and its doctrine of perpetual sacrifice. Much of John MacArthur's argumentation is clearly derived from Stibbs's. Regretfully, it represents nothing more than jumping from the frying pan into the fire. The Book of Hebrews staunchly argues for one sacrifice and one application of Christ's blood.]

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End of in-depth section of this lesson.
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He is the High Priest of Good Things:

C. By Virtue of A Greater Redemption

We are looking at verses 12b through 14:

(Heb 9:12b-14 KJV) ...having obtained eternal redemption for us. {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:) 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?

Our Priest obtained an eternal redemption.

What are we to learn by that? What is He intending us to understand? Does the Holy Spirit want us to know that our salvation will last forever and ever and ever? Yes. We can be sure of that. But is that the point He is making?

The redemption that those sacrifices secured was not an eternal redemption. Christ entered once into the Holy Place. That was all that was needed. Christ offered His own blood, not the blood of bulls and goats. Christ's sacrifice purged the conscience, of those who practiced it.

So, what about our consciences? Are we resting in the finished work of Christ, or are we wondering, wondering, wondering how it will all end up? I defend the doctrine of the blood of Christ completely. I don't just take it as far as it makes me comfortable. I would defend it if I were the last man standing on earth to do so. I defend the doctrine of the blood of Christ for many reasons, both biblical and practical. You will observe some more of them as we take a final look at Hebrews 9. But let me point out one additional thought.

I pass down a truth that was passed down to me from my own spiritual leaders and pastors, and especially my father-in-law, who brought to me the fruit of their many years of experience they shared in the ministry. It is also a truth that I have personally observed as a result of my years in the ministry.

It is a simple observation and a simple truth:

To paraphrase Paul in Romans 7, I find then a law working in my members, and by that I mean the members of my congregation. I find a law that says: The more clearly and forcefully the doctrines of the blood of Christ are taught among a congregation, the freer and happier and more vibrant my people are. And conversely, the less a congregation hears about the wonderful truths surrounding the blood of Christ, the more guilty, the more depressed, and the more in bondage that same congregation feels. It is a matter of conscience.

This blood is our only hope. Until one understands the full impact of the blood of Christ he will be perpetually dogged with fears that he is not good enough. I can pump you full of assurance and forgiveness verses till I'm blue in the face, but only the doctrine of the blood of Christ can purge your conscience and mine from dead works and replace those dead works with good works motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God.

Has your conscience been purged?



ARE YOU EMBARRASSED BY THE BLOOD?

Heb. 9:15-28 - Chapter Twenty Five

ARE YOU EMBARRASSED BY THE BLOOD?

Intro: By now you should be comfortable with the simple outline that we have used in order to understand Hebrews 9:

In our overview we have called:

- Verses 1-10 The Type
- Verses 11-14 The Truths (relating to this type).
- Verses 15-28 The Testament

III. THE TESTAMENT

A. The Testament Introduced.

Looking at the Testament, we begin with verse 15, where the discussion is introduced:

(Heb 9:15 KJV) 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.

What does this verse teach? Follow the author.

Christ, by means of His shed blood, is the mediator of the New Covenant.

This position as mediator is obtained by means of death.

This mediation covers those who were the called or the elect under the first testament.

The purpose is that they might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance.

There are two matters that strike us as being very important.

1. There is an answer here, concerning our questions about Old Testament saints. One of the first things that occur in the minds of new believers is to ask how folks were saved before the death of Christ, or better, how could folks have been saved.

According to the verse before us, at least part of the secret is revealed, though not all of it. According to our verse, those regenerated ones (not all of Israel, just the children of Abraham by faith) who were under the first covenant are covered by the terms of the New Covenant. This franchise was established by means of death, specifically the death of Christ. Effectively, then, those who were under the first covenant are covered by the second covenant. Truth be known, they were covered by the New Covenant, grounded in Abraham before they were placed under the authority of the Old Covenant!

We will leave the more difficult part of the question for another time. The verse indicates that this redemption is provided for the elect, the called, who were under the first covenant. Not all Israelites were God's elect. The redemptive aspects of the Old Covenant did not apply to all Israelites because they participated in the blood sacrifices any more than all Christians are redeemed because they partake of the Lord's Table. But the emphasis of the moment is on the fact that the elect under the first covenant enjoyed redemption because of the death of the One who gave us the New Covenant. That is the first truth we want to stress in this verse. Consider the second interesting fact:

2. Our translation has switched words on us. We have

been talking about covenants. We are now using the word testament. The Greek word for covenant is *diathēkē* (diatheke - dee-ath-ay'-kay). You may notice that, for example, in the last word of verse 4. The Greek word for testament is also *diatheke*. The question naturally arises, why the switch? I believe it is because certain covenants between men and women do not require death for their enforcement. In order to better help the English readers the translators used a more restrictive word. Perhaps they would have done better to use the word testament in any case when the Old and New Testaments are cited, but they did not.

So, we see the Testament introduced. Let's observe:

B. Its Principles Expressed.

We want read verses 16-22 as a single argument. I want us to get a handle on the big picture that is in front of us.

(Heb 9:16-22 KJV) For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. {17} For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. {18} Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. {19} For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, {20} Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. {21} Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. {22} And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

What do these verses teach?

There is the matter of strength or enforcement. Testaments require the death of the testator in order to be in force. That fact is very clear. There is the matter

of legality or certification. Wills require witnesses. They require certification. Furthermore, they must be administered or executed. The old covenant was inaugurated with blood. We might say it was properly witnessed and certified. The old covenant was executed on an ongoing basis by blood. Now, I do want to point out the fact that the Bible says almost all things are purged by blood. Under the Old Covenant, there were exceptions made in the case of poverty, but even when those exceptions were made the offerers knew full well that blood was being required. The blood of bulls and goats did not save however, and because that blood was only a symbol, no one was kept out of fellowship because he was unable to provide the blood sacrifice. Had the blood of bulls and goats actually saved those ancient believers, no substitution would have been allowed. Where symbols were involved, then, substitution was allowed, but only under God's direction. But, why? Why is blood the instrument of both certification and execution? Why blood? Why not water, as the Mormons prefer? The answer is in verse 22.

Without the shedding of blood there is no remission, no sending away, and no forgiveness. And please notice, this is a universal principle, not a local principle. The verse does not say without the shedding of blood there was no forgiveness. It says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. That is a universal principle.

In a nutshell we have learned two divine principles that never change. First: A testament demands death for its enforcement. Secondly: There is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. Those are the principles expressed. Look at the third point of our outline:

C. Its Pattern Explained.

We must read all six verses in order to gain the greater picture.

(Heb 9:23-28 KJV) It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified

with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. {24} For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: {25} Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; {26} For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. {27} And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: {28} So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

What do these verses teach?

There must be a heavenly reality that corresponds with the earthly figure. Christ did not enter an earthly holy place. If He had, His offering would have been figurative or symbolic. He entered the real tabernacle in the heavenlies. This logic is so simple, so plain, but so important. If Christ had entered an earthly sanctuary His offering would have only been figurative or symbolic. He had to enter the real sanctuary.

When Christ presented Himself in the heavenly sanctuary He actually appeared in the presence of the Father. It was an actual event that occurred in reality. In our earthly terms, it was a real event which occurred in real time. He actually did it. God did not see Him “as having done it”. He actually did it according to verse 24.

Because Christ appeared in the actual temple, offering an actual sacrifice of His own blood, it was only necessary to do it once. The author of Hebrews makes a critical point here. He tells us in verse 26 that if Christ had to offer Himself often, and not just once, those offerings would have had to begin at the very foundation of the world and continue on from

that time. Clearly, this point has never occurred to Roman Catholic theologians who insist that, since Calvary Christ has had to be sacrificed again and again and again through their mass. According to popery, Christ is being crucified 24 hours a day, every day, through the mass. What has *not* occurred to them is that if multiple offerings were required these would have to have been offered from the foundation of the world, not just from the time of the cross, and not just from the time of Moses, but from the very foundation of the world. Such foolish games these impertinent priests play with our Savior’s great sacrifice!

You have seen the Principles Expressed. You have seen the Pattern Explained. We have an overview of the chapter. We want to add a final element to our study - which relates to a modern misunderstanding of these verses. I have struggled to do it in the simplest of terms. I like to call it:

D. The Peril Exposed

Satan has always hated the doctrine of the blood of Christ and tried to paint those who teach it as some kind of masochists at best and idol worshippers at the least. Influenced by the teachings of some nineteenth and twentieth century Bible teachers, Dr. John MacArthur, a dear brother in Christ who loves the Lord and loves the blood of Christ, has, nevertheless, confused the teachings of God’s Word on this passage and, so doing, has led tens of thousands of others astray with his reasoning. It is no small issue. It is pervasive.

1. The Error Expressed. Here is MacArthur’s contention: In his fear of what he calls a morbid preoccupation with Christ’s suffering and the shedding of blood, he offers the following comment on verses 18-22. In his Hebrews commentary in this passage he says: “It is possible to become morbid about Christ’s sacrificial death and preoccupied with His suffering and shedding of blood. It is especially possible to become unbiblically preoccupied with the physical aspects of His death. It was not Jesus’ physical blood that saves us, but His dying on our

behalf, which is symbolized by the shedding of His physical blood.”

First, he says that it was not Jesus’ physical blood that saves us. Secondly, he states that it was His dying on our behalf which saves us. Thirdly, this dying on our behalf is symbolized by His physical blood.

Historically, God’s people have said that both the blood of Christ and the death of Christ are seen and viewed by God as saving. No effort to distinguish between them has been acceptable. Both the blood and death of Christ save us. MacArthur says, no, it is just the death of Christ, not His blood which saves us. In his words, the blood is only a symbol, pointing to His death.

2. *The Error Exposed.* We want to see why this is wrong in terms of the immediate text. That is as far as we will get in this study; In the next lesson we will examine what the rest of the Word of God has to say about the blood of Christ, and why this departure is so dangerous. For the present:

We want to see why this is wrong in terms of the immediate text. Look again at the reasoning of verses 22 and 23 and pay attention to what the author of Hebrews is saying:

(Heb 9:22-23 KJV) And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. {23} It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

Here is the argument which Hebrews lays out. Blood was the instrument for the certification and administration of the covenant. Without the shedding of that blood there is no remission or forgiveness.

Based on that fact, look at the first four words of verse 23: it was therefore necessary. The question on the floor is this: Exactly what is necessary? Based

on the fact that there is no remission of sins without shedding blood, exactly what is required? Be careful now, don’t be trapped. Exactly what is necessary? Actually two things were determined to be necessary:

First, it was therefore necessary that the patterns be purified with these. Specifically, the patterns of things in the heavens; the earthly figures had to be purified with blood because there is no remission without it.

The imitations, the figures of the heavenly had to be purified with these things, the earthly blood and its rites. That was the first necessity. The first necessity was that there had to be an earthly purification using the earthly symbols, patterns, or imitations.

Secondly, while this is the first necessity, is not the only necessity. The writer goes on:

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

The heavenly things required a better sacrifice. Better than what? Better than what purified the earthly things. Better than the blood of bulls and goats. Earthly symbols carry *no heavenly weight*. There can be no mixing of earthly and heavenly symbols. Heaven and earth operate on different currency.

One may ask, of what does the heavenly offering consist? Verse 26 is not encrypted. There is no puzzle here. Christ offered Himself as the sacrifice in the heavens, in the holy place, in the presence of the Father.

But don’t forget the question, why? Why was it necessary for Christ to do this? Because, without the shedding of blood there is no remission. If there were no requirement for the shedding of blood, according to verse 22, Christ would not have had to present Himself as a sacrifice.

Try not to lose this thought. The reasoning is so very simple, so basic. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission, therefore it was necessary for Christ to sacrifice Himself. There was earthly shedding of blood that was symbolic, or figurative, or an imitation, but the heavenly things required more than the earthly blood of bulls and goats. They required better. They required the real sacrifice.

There is an earthly practice that is the figure...
There is a heavenly practice that is the reality...

John MacArthur has read these verses. He is a brilliant man and a godly man. He does understand this logic. So, the question that comes to our mind is this, how does he reason his way through (I prefer to say around) these verses? How does he get around the fact that the Bible says without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness? It is so amazing that it will stun you. Here is how he does it. You won't believe your ears (or your eyes if you look at page 237 of his book on Hebrews). I am quoting now:

“The purpose of the blood was to symbolize sacrifice for sin, which brought cleansing from sin. Therefore without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”
{Underline, mine}

According to MacArthur, why was the shedding of blood necessary? It was necessary only to symbolize sacrifice for sin.

So, here's the scenario. The Old Testament blood sacrifices were required to point us to the blood shed on the cross. The only reason Christ shed His blood on the cross was to point to the death of Christ. His blood carries no meaning for heaven. It only carries meaning for us, not for God. His blood does not save us. It only points to the death of Christ. According to MacArthur, the only purpose of the blood is to establish the symbolism.

Stop and think about it. If this is true the purpose of the blood is not to forgive sin. It is only to symbolize the sacrifice for sin. It only symbolizes our forgiveness. Consequently, the symbolism had to be

established or there would be no forgiveness. This is classic circular logic.

That is like saying that a dollar bill represents an ounce of silver. The silver however has no value. It is only a symbol of the dollar bill that represents it. Where is the real value? In the symbol or the object? In the economic world this is called Fabianism. In the interpretive world it is unabashed allegorism. A symbol must represent an object. MacArthur says that this is not necessarily so. I provide one more quote so that there is no misunderstanding Dr. MacArthur's intent:

“Again, however, we need to keep in mind that the blood was a symbol. If Christ's own physical blood, in itself, does not cleanse from sin, how much less did the physical blood of animals. It is not surprising then, that the Old Covenant allowed a symbol for a symbol.”

Let there be no misunderstanding. The blood of Christ alone cannot save a Christian. Both the shed blood and the death of Christ are required. They are inseparable. MacArthur suggests:

“If we could have been saved by blood without death, the animals would have been bled, not killed, and it would have been the same with Jesus.” That makes sense. We agree with that. But the reverse of that statement stands just as strong.

If we could have been saved by death without blood, the animals would have been killed, and not necessarily bled. Or, one animal a day could have been bled, just to make the point, and the rest, simply killed. It sure would have been a big improvement on the fly problem around that sacrificial altar. Surely, the deaths of the animals themselves would have been sufficient evidence that a coming redeemer had to die. Certainly all this emphasis on the blood in those Old Testament sacrifices must have made this whole sacrificial scene morbid, to quote MacArthur. It certainly must have caused those Israelites to become “unbiblically preoccupied with the physical aspects of Messiah's coming death.” Do you un-

derstand my point? If the blood carries such little value why is it the center and focus of the whole Old Testament liturgy?

We conclude with this one simple question. If we are in danger of being morbid and focusing unnecessarily on the physical aspect of Christ's death, why in the world did He give us the Lord's Table and tell us to drink this cup because it is His blood? Why did our Savior say, "This blood is the new testament in my blood"? Why did He not say, "this cup represents my death?" Why this morbid fascination with the blood of Christ?

Satan hates the doctrine of the blood of Christ. His demons despise it. In fact, it is almost as though the demon world hates the discussion of the blood of Christ more than it hates the discussion of His death. A dead Christ hanging on a tree can be construed as a fool, or as a martyr, or even as a loving example. But a Christ who shed His blood on Calvary's tree as a sacrifice for our sin cannot be denied or ignored. When Hollywood does its number on Christ again this Easter there will be no fear in portraying His life and death, no matter how twisted their accounts may be. But let me ask, has Hollywood ever portrayed the sacrificial nature of Christ's sacrifice? Has it ever focused on the blood of Christ? I want you to know it gets off that subject as fast as it can.

We are right back where we have started so many of our discussions lately. In the final analysis, the more embarrassing a doctrine is to us, be that the doctrine of election, the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, the doctrine of the wrath of God, the doctrine of Hell, or the doctrine of the blood of Christ, the more embarrassing a doctrine is to us the more important it is to proclaim it. Thank God, we are saved by the blood of the Crucified One, saved by the blood of the Lamb.

A BODY HAST THOU PREPARED

Heb. 10:1-10 - Chapter Twenty Six

A BODY HAST THOU PREPARED

Intro: Outlining is a wonderful and important tool and every expositor of the Word of God should use outlining to his personal and teaching advantage, especially as he ministers among the nations, the Gentiles. The Jews seem to me to be the mirror opposite of the Gentiles in this respect. Concerning Jewish writings, I am convinced that the Jewish mind, (much more in keeping with the structure of divine revelation) is concerned far more with the mood, the passion, and the flow of a theme, than it is in the structure that conveys that theme. In other words, one may be able to outline a Jewish book of the Bible, but in so doing he may actually detract from the flow of the author's thoughts.

To state it another way, Jewish scriptures flow like a river flows in hilly country. Little streams join together to form great rivers, and at times these rivers are wide and meandering and shallow. At other times, they run narrow, and fast and deep. I do not say that the Jewish mind is disorganized because it flows like a river. It follows a prescribed set of laws, just as surely as the river does as it bends to the rules of gravity, hydraulics, and soil composition and deposition. But like a river, these laws are not easily observed on the surface. All we see is the river and the river seems to have a mind of its own. Biblical themes, like rivers, are always there. Though it is a thought for another day I might add that most of these great rivers come crashing together in a great crescendo in the Victorian Falls that we call the book of Revelation.

Our present cases in point is the Jewish scripture in front of us as we round off chapter nine and move into the first half of chapter 10. Instead of trying to

outline these chapters, we want to isolate the repeating themes. They are in the form of arguments, arguments that carry great weight and force.

A. One theme has to do with comparing things figurative with things real.

The intent of our author in making one point is unmistakable. Look at Hebrews 9:9

(Heb 9:9 KJV) 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;

According to this passage and a number of other nearby verses all of the earthly tabernacle, paraphernalia, liturgy, and trappings were figures. They were all parables, types, shadows, metaphors, and symbols which were not intended to be seen as real. But rather, according to verse 11:

(Heb 9:11 KJV) 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;

Jesus Christ is the real priest who presented Himself as the real sacrifice in a real temple in the real heavens with, I might add, real blood. The blood of bulls and goats purified the earthly pattern. The heavenly reality was purified by the blood of Christ, (Verse 23.)

So we understand that theme. Secondly, observe:

B. Another theme has to do with comparing once with often.

1. *The claim is made in 9:7, 12, 25 and 26.*

Look at Hebrews 9:7:

(Heb 9:7 KJV) 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:

The earthly priest entered once a year. In other words he entered year after year after year. Now, look at 9:12:

(Heb 9:12 KJV) 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.

Because Christ entered through His own blood, He entered in once. Put a circle around that word once. Now, look at 9:25 and 26:

(Heb 9:25-26 KJV) Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; {26} For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

Again, put a circle around the word once, and follow the logic. Because Christ entered into the true Holy place and made the true offering in the presence of God it was only necessary to do it once.

2. *The proof is offered in verses 27 and 28.*

(Heb 9:27-28 KJV) And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: {28} So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Again, put a circle around the word once. It occurs 2 more times. The logic goes this way.

a. Sin brings many consequences, but it brings one penalty.

(Rom 6:23 KJV) For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

b. Because sin brings one penalty men die once. After this, they experience the judgment. In other words, they will experience what Revelation calls, the second death.

1) This immediately puts a bushel of cockamamie notions to rest. Included in those notions is the idea of reincarnation. We do not quote this verse out of context in any way when we declare that man dies only once and after that he faces the judgment. You have not lived any past lives. You will have no future lives. You ask, but what about my memories of my past life? The answer is very simple. Any time a man is not in full submission to the Spirit of the living God he can be misled and deceived, especially in his senses, by the spirits of hell and what the Bible calls seducing spirits and the doctrines of demons, (1 Timothy 4:1). You, friend, though you may feel you are innocent of wrong doing, have been misled by the seductive doctrines of demons who desire to divert you from the truth. It is a fair thing to say that "altered states" will generally result in altered memories.

Here is the point. Here is the argument in front of us according to verse 27: If a man could die more than once, there would be a need for more than one sacrifice. Do not miss that argument.

You will not impress me much with your discussions about your death trips. Imagine, if you insist, that you had an out of body experience, but you did not die. If you died and came back to life the first offering that Christ made is not sufficient for you. One offering is available for one death for every man, only one. If men were to die more than once then Christ would have to die more than once because the penalty of sin is death.

2). When followed to its logical extent, this also puts away, once for all, the idea that one can lose his salvation. It is not logical or rational on the basis of these rules. Sin brings many consequences, but one penalty, death. Christ died one time for each death that man will experience. You only die once. Hence, you only need to be saved once, period. When you understand the dynamics of redemption you will understand that the Christian life was not meant to be Mr. Toad's wild ride on the stock market. Your shares are not in gold; they are in the currency of incorruptible blood.

c. And please do not forget verse 28. Review it one final time.

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.

The imagery here is so vivid it leaves us breathless. Our Priest of Good Things to Come first offered Himself outside the heavenly tabernacle in the presence of the people. He did that at Calvary. Like the priests of old, He then entered the Holy of Holies (away from the view of the people) and presented the blood of that sacrifice. He did this, according to Hebrews when He passed through the heavenlies.

As in times of old, there is one priestly act remaining to complete the events of the Day of Atonement. Our priest must return a second time, having borne our sins. He will return without sin unto salvation. I do not believe that means that Christ will return sinless. I believe when we read those words that He will return *without sin unto salvation* the Bible is indicating that He no longer bears the sins of His people. God accepted the sacrifice. The sins have been atoned for, or better, remitted. They are no longer on our Priest's shoulders. The very moment that blood was sprinkled one time on that altar Christ stopped bearing our sins.

Christ must return, however, in order to complete the picture.

Do not lose the big picture. We have been comparing the term once with often. We showed you that the claim was made throughout chapter 9. Christ only needed to make one offering. We showed you the proof that was offered in verses 26-28. One death requires one offering. Now, we move into chapter 10, still following the theme of one versus many.

3. The benefit of one offering is announced in verses 1-3

(Heb 10:1-3 KJV) For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. {2} For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. {3} But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Conscious guilt is a terrible thing. The more men try to "get shed of it" the more it clings to them. They blame Christians in general and God in particular for forcing it upon them, while they know that every culture on the face of the earth struggles with it. It is Satan's most powerful tool in manipulating men. The older men get the harder they try to cope with it. The meanest industrialists become the greatest philanthropists. We feel this sinfulness from our childhood. We even try to take on guilt we do not deserve. Children blame themselves for splitting up their parents. Wives tolerate abuse because they feel that they somehow deserve it.

For the Jew, the resolution of guilt was only temporary. He could only know and feel true forgiveness once a year. Though offerings were offered throughout the year, his sins were borne before God only once on the Day of Atonement. The further into the year he went the more the weight of his sins burned in his consciousness.

We must not fall into any of these traps. We must understand the power of this sacrifice that we commemorate around Christ's Table. This vaccine need be taken only once. It is the miracle cure of miracle cures. It is the one absolute and final solution. You need no further injections. When you come to Christ for cleansing from sin, that cleansing is once and for all in God's eyes. Why? Again, because there is one penalty for sin, not many. One death paid one penalty for you.

What is the end result? No guilt! Satan does not want that. He wants you cowering and kowtowing with the rest of the human race. He wants you doing your acts of penance. He cannot manipulate you without guilt and fear. Those are his tools.

The world handles sin and guilt much as it handles AIDS and social diseases. Instead of arguing for purity and abstinence, it argues for tolerance and understanding. Instead of providing a simple moral solution that is available to all, it spends billions and billions on a medical solution, a Band-Aid solution. It is a matter of denial. It does this simply because the facts are too painful to face, especially when we know and love someone who has AIDS.

We have done the same thing with sin. Instead of acknowledging its reality and consequences, and instead of seeking God's solution, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, men seek to atone for their own sins. How is your conscience? Has it been freed by the blood of Christ? Have you been washed in the blood of the Lamb?

We have visited two themes. We compared things figurative with things real. We compared once with often, one real sacrifice with many symbols.

C. Our last theme has to do with comparing the word body with the word will.

Until now, we have talked about the blood of Christ and the death of Christ, but we really haven't had a lot to say about the body of Christ. When we celebrate the Lord's Table we place equal emphasis on

both the body and the blood of Christ. Our Savior instituted this and He was explicit in His instructions.

Concerning the bread He said: "This is my body which is for broken you," 1 Corinthians 11:24.

What role does the body of Christ play? Is it the mere vehicle for the sacrificial blood? Is it simply a testimony to the fact that Christ was truly a man, a requirement to effect our redemption? Or is there more? We need to finish by reading verses 5 through 10:

(Heb 10:5-10 KJV) Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me: {6} In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. {7} Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. {8} Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; {9} Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. {10} By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

We learn from verse 5 it was prophesied that Christ would come into the world with a body specially prepared by God.

The prophecy is found in Psalm 40, a messianic Psalm. It is absolutely necessary that we read verses 6 through 8 of Psalm 40. As we read them please remember that these verses were written roughly a thousand years before Christ at a time when the Levitical sacrifices were functioning at their very peak. It would be hard to find any more paradoxical verses anywhere for the contemporary Jew:

(Psa 40:6-8 KJV) Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and

sin offering hast thou not required. {7} Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, {8} I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Please note the words, "...mine ears hast thou opened." We have two problems with this. To begin, if we were rendering it from the Hebrew we would render it literally mine ear hast thou dug, not opened. Then, there is another matter. By the time Hebrews quotes this we seem to have a manuscript problem. Hebrews, quoting the Septuagint, renders the very same phrase with an entirely different slant: "a body hast thou prepared for me" and nothing is said about ears or listening at all. Space precludes our discussion of the manuscript issues relating to it. You may wish to begin your own study by starting with the Scofield Bible notes.

If we will look at this Psalm and then look at it being quoted in Hebrews we will get the big picture. You will see that both passages effectively carry the same argument. This argument is this:

1. The Old Testament sacrifices did not please God. They were permitted by Him and even directed by Him, but they were never what He wanted. They were only allowed as figures. God's will was not satisfied in them.

2. Then, along came Christ, Who is the perfect servant. We must never forget the servant nature of Messiah. It is as important as His kingly role. Chapters 40-50 of Isaiah provide a good overview of this marvelous Messiah servant who is shown to us in contrast to the failed servant Jacob, or Israel.

This is where the idea of the dug ear comes in. The ear was dug with an awl and a ring was put through it when a servant became a bond slave, a love slave in Old Testament times. Jesus Christ was the bond slave of God. A perfect servant does God's perfect will. Messiah, knowing that sacrifices did not truly please God, came to do His perfect will.

When Jesus Christ presented Himself to the Father to do His will He presented His body. Metaphorically, His master dug through His ear with an awl. He is God's permanent bond slave.

But there is more. Those lambs that were led to the slaughter had no choice in the matter. They did not sign up for the event. Those bulls had no say. Christ did. He chose, in eternity, to accept this destiny. He chose to become a man. He chose to become a sacrifice. He chose to do the Father's will.

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

So, doing the will of God involves the presentation of the body. This is why Romans 12:1 fits so beautifully:

(Rom 12:1 KJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

We hear a lot about giving our hearts to Christ and that is good. We even hear a lot about surrendering our wills to the Lord, and that is even better. But, the thing we hear least about is the thing we need to hear most about. The proof of the surrendered heart, the proof of the surrendered will, is always the surrendered body. That is where the war has been all along. The war is with our flesh. The spirit is willing; it is the flesh that is weak. That is why we read the following in verses 8 - 10:

(Heb 10:8-10 KJV) Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; {9} Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. {10} By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Did you follow the argument? The first, the Old Covenant, was taken away in order to establish the second, the New Covenant. And, that New Covenant sanctifies us through the offering of the body of Jesus.

In a nutshell, what have we learned? We have learned that Christ's blood as it relates to His death stresses the propitiation for our sin and the satisfaction of the righteousness of God. We have learned that the aspect of Christ's body relates to the matter of obedience. The matter of doing God's will:

Our Servant Christ came to do God's will and gave Himself as a sacrifice. God recognized that and replaced the Old Covenant with the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, God has written His laws in our hearts. The New Covenant is the covenant of the will. Because we are members of Christ's body we too, may assume the servant role. We may present our own bodies as living sacrifices, Holy and acceptable unto God.

Verses 11-13 provide a wonderful concluding summary:

11And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Heb. 10:14-20 - Chapter Twenty Seven

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

Intro: When Robert Frost wrote his famous poem regarding the two roads which diverged in the yellow wood, he was faced with only one dilemma. Should he opt for the safety of the well-worn path, or opt for the challenge and delight of the road less traveled? One traveler cannot take two roads. Before we conclude this study of Hebrews ten, we will see that our author is challenging us with the same dilemma. He is offering us a choice of roads, the old road or the new highway. But before that decision is placed upon us we are provided with some final remarks about this Priest of Good Things and His remarkable sacrifice.

As we take up where we left off it is easy to notice that our author is making his grand conclusion, a conclusion which will be followed by a glorious invitation to unsaved and saved alike. First, let's look at:

I. THE GRAND CONCLUSION.

A. Observe the declaration.

In the biblical trophy case of wonderful Bible verses, few stand taller and carry more meaning than this precious reminder:

(Heb 10:14 KJV) For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

John 3:16 may provide a better testimony of God's love in providing the way of salvation for us through the gift of His son, but dear reader or listener, there

is no verse in all of the word of God, when properly understood, can provide more hope and assurance than this simple verse.

When we learn that it is one offering we know it is sufficient for the sins of the whole race. When we learn that it perfects forever we can rest, and sleep easy at night knowing that the marvelous work of Christ is finished. We are not in a process, hoping fearfully that we will be found worthy of eternal life. We were made worthy by one offering. When we look at the objects of this offering, those who are sanctified, we know that this offering has literally made us holy in the eyes of God.

That is a powerful declaration. If it is true, the Eucharist of Catholicism is a bold-faced lie that is designed to keep poor struggling sinners in bondage to an ecclesiastical system that will damn them. If this verse is true, the salvation-by-works doctrine of Mormonism is an offense to Jesus Christ because LDS theology would limit and relegate this marvelous sacrifice as merely the solution for Adam's sin only. We would still be accountable, to atone for our own sins. And what a fearful atonement that is for any Bible student who knows that there are many consequences for our sin, but only one penalty, eternal death. If this verse is true, the lie of the doctrine of investigative judgment taught by Seventh Day Adventists is a sham and a mockery because this offering perfected forever the ones made holy by it. The thought of reapplying the blood on our behalf assumes that it did not perfect us forever.

If this verse is true every false theological system of mankind and every system of salvation by works comes crumbling and crushing to the ground. Every Christian should know this verse. Every Christian should memorize this verse. Every Christian should adorn himself with this verse as a jewel around his neck, hanging over his heart:

(Heb 10:14 KJV) For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.

That is the declaration. Now observe:

B. The Certification.

(Heb 10:15-16 KJV) Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, {16} This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

I read the marvelous story about a piece of furniture that has been found which contains drops of the virgin Mary's blood. This blood has been analyzed and found not to be of human origin, that is, no human father participated in Mary's conception. I marveled at this wonderful truth and it changed my whole conception of history. Don't you believe it for a minute! The story contained all of the usual pieces of another legend in the making - wild assertions with no verifiable way to certify the facts. When I read this story I was reminded again of the words of P.T. Barnum, "There's a sucker born every minute." It is in our nature to want to believe the myth and reject the lie.

The Holy Spirit of God today has certified the information in front of us. The Holy Spirit is a witness through the prophet Jeremiah, for that is the book He is citing. This tells us several things. It tells us that our author believed in biblical inspiration. He attributed Jeremiah's words to the Holy Spirit.

This sheds light on how the Holy Spirit works. He sheds light on the Word of God. This tells us what the Holy Spirit does. He bears witness to the truth, the truth of Christ. We do not have to rely, as some folks do, on a burning in our bosom. That is a poor substitute. Bosom burning can come from a wide variety of sources. We have a better certification. The Holy Spirit, using the Word of God, confirms the

truths concerning Christ to our minds and hearts. When you get a burning in your bosom take an antacid. When you get into the Word of God and everywhere you turn you find more light being shed on our glorious Savior, and you are dazzled more and more by His beauties, you may rightfully blame that on the Holy Spirit. That is how He works. He shows us Christ. So, we see the certification. We have not finished with the author's intent. We are curious to know just exactly how the Holy Spirit certifies this work of Christ. We are curious, but not surprised when we find our answer in these two verses:

(Heb 10:15-16 KJV) Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, {16} This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;

C. Here we see the evidence or the documentation.

This sacrifice of Christ provided the method of moving from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. Under the domain of the New Covenant, even the Holy Spirit can do freely what He could not do under the laws governing the Old Covenant. He may now write the laws of God into both our hearts and our minds.

In a typical week in a Bible teaching congregation someone, at one time or another, bears witness to the moving and working of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. We are so accustomed to these testimonies we think it has always been this way. We cannot project ourselves into Old Testament times when God's elect did not enjoy the benefit of the indwelling Holy Spirit applying the dynamics of the New Covenant to the life. Because we have been born into this wealth, we cannot project ourselves into the daily walk of God's people who lived only with their consciences on the inside, and God's Word on the outside. They never tasted of this Holy Spirit and this New Covenant. This brings us to another big noticeable difference between the Old Testament believer and ourselves. Look at verse 18:

(Heb 10:18 KJV) Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Finally, we see,

D. The Implication.

Here is the point we believe the author of Hebrews is making. What prompted those Jews to go back time after time, offering sacrifice after sacrifice? Was it obedience to the Word of God? Of course it was. But why was it necessary in terms of the Jews? From the point of the Jews the whole issue had to do with the matter of guilt. They did not have the Holy Spirit working within them. Now, if the guilt is dealt with there no longer remains the necessity for the sacrifice. If the conscience is purged, the memory may reassert itself, but the guilt will not enslave the offender.

I remember one time when we were first married that we had an unusual expense come up and a woman who lived near us happened to find out about it. She could not give me the money I needed, but she called me up and said, “Jim, I will loan you the money you need without interest. Pay me back when you can.” Initially, I was grateful. The problem was that every day I would drive past her house in order to get to my office. Every day I was reminded of two things. I was reminded of her kindness to me. I was reminded of my obligation to her. I took no pleasure in driving past her house until the day came when I could pay her back the money I owed her. After that, I was reminded only of her kindness. I did not have a problem any longer with my debt or my conscience. And note, I never tried to pay that debt off again. There was no need. My conscience was satisfied.

Those Jews faced the same dilemma under the law. They saw God’s kindness on the one hand, but they were painfully reminded of their debt on the other hand. This debt was being deferred annually, but it was not being paid.

Our debt has been paid once and for all. But old habits die hard. When we are not careful, we still tend to behave as though we are in bondage. We wonder if our sin has been fully paid for. We wonder if God has truly stamped “paid in full” on our debt. The point that our author is making is this: When we fully understand the sacrifice of Christ our consciences are forever purged. We do not even feel the need for another offering. Do not let ecclesiastical tyrants try to put you in debt again. You are freed from your slavery and bondage.

That is the Grand Conclusion, the declaration that we have been perfected forever, by one offering. This was certified by the Holy Spirit and documented through the activation of the New Covenant. The results are implemented in our hearts and minds and consciences. Let’s move to the second half of the lesson:

II. THE GLORIOUS INVITATION.

There is no reason to teach theology and Bible doctrine if it does not prompt us to action, if it does not change the way we live. We have not studied Hebrews to satisfy our intellectual curiosity. Read verses 19 and 20 together.

(Heb 10:19-20 KJV) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, {20} By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

First, we see the invitation presented, the directions provided, and the transportation supplied.

A. The Invitation Presented.

(Heb. 10:19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

You may enter the holiest, that is, the Holy of Holies in the heavenlies. You may go there yourself. The

blood of Christ opened the way into the presence of God.

You know, it just “chaps my hide” when I hear folks begin to debate on this passage. The subject is always reduced to the same question. Is this invitation extended to the saved or the unsaved? To whom is the author if Hebrews speaking? I want to say to these folks, where have you been? Have you missed the whole point of the argument? If there is one offering that perfects forever those who are sanctified, then the invitation is for both groups. That is, it is both a positional and a practical invitation because both invitations are based on the same offering.

Unbeliever, you may approach God for salvation. Believer, you may approach Him in fellowship. The only request is that you do not cower! When a man or woman enters the presence of God like a puppy dog with his tail between his legs he disobeys the Word of God and casts dispersion on what Christ has done! Come boldly! Come humbly, come honestly, but come boldly!

Notice your authorization! It is by the blood of Christ! the precious blood of Christ. You must carry this invitation with you when you enter. A man cannot crash the salvation party. He may not attend along with his invited friends. He must come with his own signed invitation, signed with the blood of Christ.

But there is a remaining question. We see the invitation. It is to enter boldly into the Holy of Holies. We see our authorization. It is by the blood of Jesus. But the question remains, the question of location. How do we get there? Consider:

B. The Directions Provided.

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

The few times in my life when I have received a formal invitation I have been impressed with its beauty.

That is how I view this verse. It is inscribed with a beautiful gothic font that gives it a marvelous combination of dignity and beauty. Let me explain.

Do you see the word new? It is not the word we would expect here in the Greek. It is the Greek *prosfato*” (*prospatos* - *pros*’-*fat*-*os*) which means newly or freshly slain. You can easily confirm this in your Strong’s concordance.

Do you see the word way? Interestingly, it means just that, a road or a highway. So, what are we to make of this?

Turn to the book of Leviticus and find chapter 16:14:

(Lev 16:14 KJV) And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.

Our first impression is that the priest stood in one place as he sprinkled this blood on the ground. But he did not stand in one place. Wuest states it well:

“Here the contrast is between the ‘old-slain road’ of the earthly tabernacle where the high priest would sprinkle the blood of the sacrificial animal seven times on the ground as he approached the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies (Lev. 16:14) and the freshly-slain road into the Holy of Holies of heaven, sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb of God. Over this latter road is the Jewish recipient of this letter urged to come. The old road to the mercy seat of the tabernacle was a dead road. There was no life there. It was all symbolism, an index-finger pointing to the reality with which this first-century Jew was then faced. In the new road was life.”

The new and living way! Do you remember the words of Thomas when our Lord told Him He was going away and that the disciples could come?

(John 14:5-6 KJV) Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the

way? {6} Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

There is no doubt in my mind, even for a second, that the Lord Jesus was referring to Himself not simply as the living, truthful, highway to God. He was presenting Himself as the new and living way. He is not only the sacrifice. He is not only the mercy seat. He is not only the altar of incense. This Savior of ours is the way between those items. He is the newly slain highway to our God.

There is one more sweet morsel from which we should not turn:

C. The Transportation Supplied.

He is not only the new way. Look at the rest of the verse.

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

The first rule of Bible interpretation is to take God's Word literally. We know that. But we could make a mistake here. We could picture the heavenly sanctuary in our minds and imagine that it had no other veil. This would be logical because we are told in this verse that Christ is the veil. I do not believe that is what the Holy Spirit intended. I do not think so because Hebrews has already referenced this veil in Hebrews 6:19 and it seems there as though it is the actual veil in the heavenlies. In any case, there is a lesson to be learned about veils.

We have already seen the invitation presented in verse 19. We are to enter into the holiest of holies. I have given you the directions, the way, the highway. Jesus Christ is the newly slain way into the holies. A way sprinkled seven times by His blood. But we still have the problem of locomotion. How do we get there? That is where this veil symbolism comes in.

We come through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.

The tabernacle veil symbolized the separation that was between God and ourselves, just as it is our sin-sick flesh that separates us from our God. In this flesh dwells no good thing. It is not that flesh is bad. It is that our sinful natures have corrupted it. As an Old Testament saint, we would not have survived 10 seconds in the tabernacle's Holy of Holies. We would have been consumed by the glory of God before the wrath of God could even reach us. Our flesh could not abide His presence.

But, we must not think that, as New Testament saints, our flesh could abide that Presence any more than the saints of old. Intensifying matters is the continual awareness that this flesh will, when it can, oppose our every move toward God. It hinders our prayer life. It hinders our ministry. It is the ultimate impediment. It is our nemesis, our Achilles' heel. But not so, this flesh of Christ. And we may enter the presence of the living God through the veil of His flesh. I do not want to swing too far out into left field in this study, but I want you to know that I believe my right to a glorified body in the resurrection will be directly connected to my position in Christ's body. I see myself in Him.

Let's make it practical, because the task that is in front of us is gargantuan. This is what this Bible expects of us.

By faith, as we will soon learn in Hebrews, we are asked and expected to act on a reality which we cannot see. That reality is that there is a heaven; there is a heavenly tabernacle where there is a Christ whom we cannot see. By faith we are to enter boldly into the presence of the living God, walking on the way consecrated by blood, through the veil of His flesh before an altar already sprinkled by the blood of the lamb.

And, to make matters worse, the same Bible that expects me to believe all of that by faith is the Bible that tells me I must deny all the things that I perceive to be reality. It is not that I must deny their

reality or their existence. It is that I must understand they are only shadows. I must worship the living God in spirit and in truth.

Perhaps, you have visited a denominational church or a Catholic church a time or two. If you have had this experience you know that much attention is given to what the ear can hear and what the eye can behold. Much attention is given to stimulating the senses, the flesh. And then you are exposed to the stark extreme when you enter a Baptist church or a Bible church where nary a vestment is tolerated, much less a candle or an altar.

When you encounter this spartan and bland atmosphere of worship try to understand that we too want to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. But there is an example to set. There is a lesson to teach. Our citizenship is not here. Our home is not here. Our worship is not here. It is in the heavenlies where God sees us dwelling. By faith, we lay hold on the reality of the heavenly truths.

So, have you traveled the blood sprinkled highway in the heavenlies? Have you entered the Holy of Holies through the body of Christ, that is to say, His veil? Have you laid hold on the heavenly reality that there is one offering which was made on Calvary's cross for your sin, and that you may be perfected forever through that sacrifice? Have you boldly entered in? Have you, by faith, appropriated what Jesus Christ has done for you? Or, is your conscience still reminding you that your sin problem has not been resolved?

NEW POSITION! NEW DUTIES!

Heb. 10:21-25 - Chapter Twenty Eight

NEW POSITION! NEW DUTIES!

Intro: There is something to be said for Heraclitus's eternal flux. Nothing stays the same for very long. And that has never been truer than in our society and culture where we have undergone a phenomenal revolution in most areas. The workplace, for example, with its ethics and values, has done an about face. Loyalty to our employers is neither demanded nor desired, and their loyalties to us no longer exist. Companies periodically reorganize, just because it is the thing to do. Very few in today's generation will retire from the same company.

Orthodox Jewish culture did not embrace change. In fact, if it prided itself in anything at all, it prided itself in the fact that it did not change. That was particularly true when it came to Jewish religious foundations, God's covenant promises with Israel, and especially with respect to that covenant of covenants, the Law of Moses. This religious world view and way of life had been passed down through so many centuries that we almost believe it had made its way into the Jewish DNA chain. The Jewish race and the Jewish religion were indistinguishable.

It would be the natural response of the Jewish mind to seek to minimize this change and to seek to hold on to as much of the old as possible, while half-heartedly embracing the new. Old habits die hard. Old ways of doing things die hard. I believe that what we are seeing in these remaining verses of Hebrews 10 is a two-fold effort to help the Jews understand the clear distinctions between the old way and the new. The writer clearly focuses on two groups. We will be thinking more about these two groups shortly.

One group consists of those who have embraced the New Covenant. They are just beginning to appreciate its implications. They are still coming out of the fog, so to speak. The other group consists of those who have not embraced this Covenant as their sole hope. They have considered it, sought to reconcile it in some way with the Old Covenant, but they clearly have not crossed the line. We focus heavily upon them in our next session. Our present concern is with this first group and verses 21-25 of Hebrews 10. We laid the foundation for this discussion in our last study. Specifically we read verses 19 and 20.

(Heb 10:19-20 KJV) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, {20} By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

That is the foundation. That is the solid rock upon which all the following verses build their conclusions. We now have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, the newly slain and living pathway to our God. He is the way.

The imagery is beyond us who did not live out the daily life of the Jew. The beauty, the poetry, and the power of this verse must have mesmerized these believers, as the glories of the New Covenant beamed in upon them. They must have been breathless as they contemplated their new position in Messiah, a position that allowed them bold access to the very deity whose very name was so sacred to them they dared not pronounce it. And now, they are invited, no, they are commanded, to enter boldly into the presence of the Holy One. There are no words to describe the rapture this must have brought to their hungry hearts.

But with this ecstasy, with this marvelous privilege, with this glorious new position of being seen in the

very body of Messiah Himself came new duties and new responsibilities. And so, our author writes in verse 21:

(Heb 10:21 KJV) And having an high priest over the house of God;

Please notice the claim that is being made in verse 21. This High Priest of ours is over the house of God. He is now the temple authority. He is now the steward of this temple. He is the one, and the only one with whom we have to do.

Recognizing this fact that we may have bold access to be true, based on what we have just learned in the prior verses, it is time to make some conclusions. No, more than that, it is time to make some decisions, decisions to accept our new responsibilities that have resulted from our new position. Specifically, we will find four new duties associated with our new job description, our new position. The first admonition is found in verse 21:

(Heb 10:22 KJV) 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.

I. WE ARE TO DRAW NEAR.

A. We see in this the privilege of access.

In a previous church we had a new believer in Christ visit us from out of the area. When I was introduced to her I called her my sister. I pointed to all of the folks around us and I said to her, now you are a part of our family. We are all brothers and sisters and we want you to feel as though you are a part of us and we are a part of you. She later reported that she felt so good and so at home among us that she wanted to bring her sleeping bag and sleep right there in the church. She had found acceptance. In previous years she was in a church where she was told she was not good enough to approach the pastor and that she

should let others speak for her.

That is the kind of joy that should overwhelm us when we consider this verse. That is the kind of privilege we have. And what an indictment it is! What a criticism it is, that we have to be admonished to do this! We have to be urged to partake of this glorious and sumptuous banquet of the presence of the living God. We no longer wait to see if we may touch the scepter and live. We no longer linger in the outer hall wondering and waiting if we will be given ingress or egress. We may simply walk into the throne room.

I need to stress something that is missed by some positionalists here. I am a positionalist. When I say that I say that the basis of my whole mindset regarding the Christian life is based on the fact of my position, the fact of where I am. I am in Christ and, therefore, I am victorious. I now seek to make my life down here correspond to my position in heaven. That is positional theology. But there is a warning for positionalists, for I have discovered that they are a spiritually lazy bunch. We positionalists are so quick to appropriate our position in the heavenlies, so ready to recognize that we are in the Beloved, that we miss the intent of this admonition. Even though we are seen to be already in the presence of God through our position in Christ, we are specifically commanded to draw near. We are still commanded to approach the throne. There is still a spiritual exercise through which we must go. There must still be a conscious seeking of the presence of God in our spiritual experience. That is not mysticism. That is a New Covenant reality. We are to draw near. Whether we feel the presence of God or not is irrelevant. We draw near.

B. We also see in this the privilege of the priesthood.

The author of Hebrews does not announce that we are priests here, but he implies it. He implies that our status has been elevated. Only priests enter the presence of God. All we are asked to do is remember that we are here in the person of our great High

Priest who has authority over the house of God. In fact, all of the duties that are placed upon us in these next three verses are priestly duties.

Understand what has occurred before our very eyes. William R. Newell, in his footnote says:

“Since the death of the Son of God, which in its value utterly put away sin before God, there have been no degrees of standing for those who rely on Christ’s shed blood. It is not, as in the old tabernacle, a place into which the people can come, and then the priests, and finally, the high priest, once a year into the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God. Whether believers realize it or not, the full value of the blood of Christ is reckoned to them by God. They are invited to come into God’s immediate presence. All believers are so, here in Hebrews.”

Dear friend, there are no degrees of access anymore.

Concerning this matter of drawing near to our Holy God, notice thirdly:

C. We see the priority of preparation.

No priest would draw near to God unprepared and nor should we. God does not intend that the boldness of verse 19 translate itself into carelessness or presumption.

We are to draw near with a true heart. That is one requirement: A truthful heart. You may remember that this was not specifically required as a criterion for the selection of Old Testament priests. They were born into their priesthood. They were not selected. They had to be free of physical imperfections, but there was no list of spiritual requirements for them. Thank God, it is the opposite for us. There is a difference between a truthful heart and a perfect person. When we approach God He demands honesty from us. He demands from us the willingness to acknowledge openly, not just our sinfulness, but also the sins with which we struggle.

We are to draw near with hearts in full assurance.

This is not a religious experiment. A number of years ago, there was a well-promoted advertising campaign which was based on the theme Try God! It was a kind of “Try-it-you’ll-like-it!” campaign. We understand what was intended. The Psalmist himself invites us to taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8). But tasting is not eating. Trying is not trusting.

We may be surprised in heaven when we discover how often we failed in our prayers and approaches to God, simply because we did not come to God with hearts in full assurance. God expects our absolute confidence in Him, our absolute belief in His promises, our absolute assurance that we have the right to lay our petitions before Him in the person of Jesus Christ.

We are to draw near to Him with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. There are two ways to approach this command and one of them is wrong. The author is not suggesting we need this sprinkling every time we approach God. He is simply reminding us that we need to be aware of the fact that our consciences have already been cleansed.

We all have our quirks and my mother had hers. One thing that drove her off the scale was to see a very tall person who slouched. She just hated it. To make matters worse, she married into a family of semi-slouchers. She got after all of us all the time. I reiterate what I often plead: Leave your guilt at the door when you enter the presence of the living God. He has already dealt with it. You don’t need to keep dragging it in front of Him. I do not wish to hurt or offend you but your unresolved guilt that you are nursing carries no weight with God. It is an offense to Him.

Draw near with bodies washed with pure water. Once again, I do not believe our author is asking us to bathe before we pray. I do not even believe our author, in this passage, is asking us to confess our sins before we pray though judging our sins should be first and foremost on our mind. I believe our author is reminding us that our bodies have been

washed already with pure water and this is what we want to remember when we enter God's presence. This brings to mind the words of the Lord Jesus Christ who said to His disciples "Now ye are clean through the words which I have spoken unto you," (John 15:3.)

The Old Testament priest washed his hands at the laver before entered the holy place. I am not as offended as some at the old phrase "cleanliness is next to godliness," though it surely is not a biblical phrase. It is very hard for me to see a man who loves to be dirty on the outside and imagine him to love to be pure in the inside. But I am willing to admit that is a personal prejudice.

There is one fact about which we may all be sure, however. Our apostle is surely not suggesting that we must be baptized before entering the presence of God. Water never cleansed anyone from sin. Water was never allowed in the holy of holies.

We need to appropriate the cleansing which is ours when we approach the living God because we live in the flesh. We live in bodies that are daily exposed to the contamination and defilement of this earth. That is the lesson God wants us to see.

II. WE ARE TO HOLD FAST OUR CONFESSION.

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

The word for hold here is a very strong and imposing word. Its general usage implies a holding fast against foes. It is a defensive position. This is also true of the word confession. It is better rendered profession. It is in reference to what we preach and proclaim. We must not back off on what we have learned. We must not compromise or accommodate.

Specifically, we are to hold fast the profession of our faith or our hope. And there is good reason for this.

We can be confident and assured in our new hope because our faith is in a Person, not a creed. Faithful is He that promised. A promise is no better than the one who makes it. A faithful God has made our promise.

It is funny how some folks can take a verse and twist the opposite meaning out of it. Some folks look at this verse and say, "See, we must keep the faith!" Our faith must be strong or we will lose our salvation. Effectively, they are saying it all depends on us. Yet, look at the verse. It is saying the very opposite. The verse is saying it all depends on God! Faithful is He that promised! If your hope is based on your own unstable heart and will, you are in very deep water. Place your hope on the rock solid promises of God.

We will reserve our next study to the discussion of apostasy and the slipping away from the truth. It is sufficient for me to say that I do not really believe that is what the author is suggesting here. I believe he is reminding us that we may not compromise our personal confidence and public proclamation of the body of this New Covenant truth. It is based on the promises of the Faithful One. It is not ours to negotiate. It is ours to defend.

Do we need to hold fast to our profession today? Is our faith being diluted? Are not our brothers and sisters in Christ who are all around us suggesting that we are being nitpicky when we defend the doctrine of the blood of Christ? Are we not being pictured by our own friends and relatives as divisive when we oppose the lie of Catholic salvation through the Eucharist? Are we not seen as being the remains of a past, vindictive generation of Christians when we refuse to countenance Adventism as a religious denomination? Are you not aware that most of those who name the name of Christ have no compunctions about these matters? That is what holding fast our profession is all about. The New Covenant is worth defending. Thirdly,

III. WE ARE TO CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER.

(Heb 10:24 KJV) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

There is the matter of our personal sensitivity one to another. It is the source of a great deal of struggle among us as the body of Christ seeks to perform God's will.

There are many things about the ways in which we organize our churches which work toward the very opposite end. Our highest attendances in church are usually in the services that require the least amount of personal involvement and personal accountability. The least attended activities of a typical church are those activities where the highest level of personal interaction can be found. To be fair, we must point out that some folks form little "house churches," for the very same reason. They can have it like the fast-food hamburger, their way!

People do not like personal accountability. We especially do not like personal accountability when it provokes us. And there is no other way to view this word in the Greek. It implies that we will irritate each other with two ends in mind. We will irritate one another to love one another, and we will irritate one another to do good works.

So, if we are to take this verse seriously we are to agree that it is one of our priestly duties to consider (observe and fix our eyes upon) each other with the stated objective of motivating each other to acts of love and good works.

When I started to become familiar with the Spanish culture I learned that there are certain taboos that are respected among them. There are certain words and actions that offend them which do not offend Anglos. And, vice versa, this is true of our culture. Most significantly, our culture, even our Christian culture, resents what we call the intrusion into our privacy. We resent having other people making our spiritual business their business. Interestingly, this does not offend the Spanish to the same degree. It is our problem in our culture.

The question is, are we willing to overcome our cultural habits in order to obey the Word of God? Is it too much for us to ask ourselves, did we confront anyone this week? Did we provoke anyone to love? Did we provoke them to good works? We may not rest in the luxury that we are shy unassuming people who live in a culture which resists personal confrontation and deems religious discussion to be a private matter.

IV. WE ARE TO ASSEMBLE FOR PURPOSE OF EXHORTING ONE ANOTHER.

(Heb 10:25 KJV) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

The fact that we can forsake the assembling of ourselves is a given. The fact that this is a greater problem in our generation than in any past generation of believers is a given. We have raised a generation that does its best to meet the bare minimum of biblical assembly requirements. We refuse to accept our priestly duty.

Again, the fact that we can forsake the exhortation of one another is a given. The fact that this is a greater problem in our generation than in any past generation of believers is a given. We have raised a generation that does its best to meet the bare minimum of biblical requirements to exhort one another. We refuse to accept our priestly duty to exhort. We live in a non-confrontational culture, as already noted.

The Bible never once in the New Testament calls Christians together for the purpose of worship! The Bible never once in the New Testament calls Christians to assemble together for the purpose of evangelism! Not even once!

The only Biblical franchise we find in the Word of

God for New Covenant believers to come together is ostensibly for the purpose of reading the scriptures, explaining the doctrines, and teaching and admonishing one another through songs, hymns, spiritual songs, and personal exhortation (Colossians 3:16). These are the very activities which are now given least attention in many assemblies.

Furthermore, the New Testament never intended that one man stand week after week in front of a group of scores and scores of people, representing the only major source of exhortation in the congregation. We stretch the scriptures about as far as we can stretch them when we say that we need this format in order to perfect the saints for the work of the ministry.

This is not to suggest that we throw away what we have. That would be like chopping off our noses to spite our face. I am only saying that God fully intended that we assemble our own selves. That is where the emphasis is in the Greek, on a regular and ongoing basis for the purpose of exhorting each other. We do not come to Church just to be exhorted. We come to church to encourage and entreat and admonish and consider and provoke one another, and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.

Be that coming day the rapture of the church, as this teacher feels it is, or be that day the day of great affliction, such as what came on the early church, the verse serves notice to each of us. This is our priestly New Covenant duty. It is not something to do when we feel good. It is not something we do if work doesn't leave us too tired. It is not something to do when we have no weddings, birthdays, reunions, out of town guests, and new babies to celebrate. It is not something to do when we don't have homework. It is not something to do when we're not depressed. It is not something to do once a week whether we need it or not.

We already know the pride of the Jewish people. They are quick to announce, "It is not that we have kept the Sabbath, it is that the Sabbath has kept us."

That is Old Covenant pride. It is only the grace of God that keeps us. And yet, there is a sense in which Sabbath keeping helped Israel maintain her traditions and identity.

Do you know what keeps and protects God' people? Doctrinally, it is the grace of God. In practice, it is the regular and faithful assembly of ourselves together for the purpose of provoking one another to love and good works. Traditionally, we have guarded the Lord's Day in order to help us observe these duties one toward another. Now that we have disposed of so many of the traditions surrounding this day we have placed ourselves in even greater jeopardy of being disobedient in our priestly services.

The duties of the believer priest as recorded in this chapter:

- We are to draw near.
- We are to hold fast our profession.
- We are to consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.
- We are to assemble ourselves for the purpose of exhorting one another.

These, of course, do not preclude the rest of the New Testament scriptures regarding the exercise of our priesthood. Dave Suprbeck notes:

"As a member of the priesthood, the believer is involved in many areas of priestly living... There are two primary areas of priestly duties that God expects of the grace believer priest: sacrifice and service. Special words are used in the Greek language to describe religious service and temple type service. The believer must be living in Christ in order to serve in the heavenly temple. He may enter the doors of the church building on Second and Main three times a week and every week of the year, teach a Sunday School class and serve on the board and never be involved in priestly service."

Let us covenant before God to perform real spiritual ministries as a part of our personal priesthood in Christ.

THERE IS NO PLAN B

Heb. 10:26-31 - Chapter Twenty Nine

THERE IS NO PLAN B

Intro: We have come upon one of the most controversial passages in the Word of God. Like Hebrews 6, it is another Gettysburg in the civil war of the faith. We approach it humbly, knowing that we are simply a few more in the long line of Arminian and Calvinistic brethren in Christ who have truly sought to understand these words. We approach it with respect for those who differ with us. But, in our efforts to sort out our differences, both Arminian and Calvinist alike, must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water. We must approach this passage truly desiring to know what the Holy Spirit intends for each of us to take away from it regardless of the predispositions we bring to the passage.

The very words strike fear into our hearts, and they were written for that intent. These words were written to stop and make us think. They have, over the years, been used by the Holy Spirit of God to cause many careless souls to ponder their eternal welfare. We thank God that these verses are here. It is not our purpose to mitigate anything that is said here, but rather to understand the mind of Christ.

There are many Christians who are modified Calvinists (if such an anomaly can exist). They teach eternal security in general, but modify their doctrine to make one exception, that exception being apostasy. That exception is based squarely on this passage. It is vital that we truly grasp what the Holy Spirit is saying here. It is not fair to call these folks Arminians in the general sense because they do not, in any way, see themselves as relying on their works to maintain their salvation. But they are no less in error.

Please remember, our goal is not to get so caught up in the issue of conditional versus eternal security

that we lose the intensity of this warning, or worse, fail to take it to ourselves.

Our study is in two segments: First, we'll think on our mindset, then, our message.

I. OUR MINDSET.

(Heb 10:26-31 KJV) For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, {27} But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. {28} He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: {29} Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? {30} For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. {31} It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

I would like to suggest that there are three things which are required in order to properly understand these verses.

- A. It is required that we understand the Jewish mind.
- B. It is required that we understand the Jews to whom Hebrews is written.
- C. It is required that we understand the argument that our author has been making (to this point).

A. It is required that we understand the Jewish mind.

Over the years I have worked very hard to help folks think like Jews. As I have studied the Word of God I have discovered that there are two great separating factors between the Gentile mind and the Jewish mind. There are two characteristics of the Jewish mindset that cannot be ignored.

1. *First, the Jews require a sign while the Gentiles seek after wisdom.* The Jew thinks thematically. He is concerned with dynamics first, and detail secondly. Mood, pathos, passion, sorrow, travail, and joy, all of these things come first. The Jewish prophet sometimes freely mixes local and distant prophecies, tribulation and millennial truth, in one batch, organizing his thoughts according to mood. He may speak of resurrection and requires us to decide the order of resurrection events. He speaks of the coming of Christ and leaves us to decide what phase of Christ's coming he is talking about. He speaks of the day of the Lord and let's us decide what aspect of the day of the Lord, past, present, or future, he is talking about, and whether he is talking about the gloomy aspect of the Lord's Day or the glorious aspect.

2. *Secondly, there is the matter of identity.* In oriental cultures, the group often comes first and the individual comes second. In an oriental community the individual gains his identity from the community. In an occidental culture, the community takes on its identity from the individuals that make it up. This is why Marxism (the contrivance of a Jew) is so much more successful in oriental cultures. An illustration of the importance of this truth is found in the writings of the very Jewish book of Hebrews that is written to a group, a particular group of Jews. The "we's" in Hebrews relate to this large group to whom the author writes. Interestingly, confrontation in an oriental culture always takes place on the group level and only after that effort is exhausted, does the Jew confront on the personal level. The Jewish mind thinks group first, and individual second. The Jew, in his mind, is Jacob. He is Jacob. That is how intensely he is identified with his race. Messiah, of course, is

Israel, as Matthew teaches us so well.

When I ask you to understand the Jewish mind I ask you first to think in themes and then to think in terms of identity, that is, think first in terms of the community you are in as a Jew.

B. It is required that we understand the Jewish people to whom Hebrews is written.

Here are some things we know. We are addressing a mixed company of Jews, both of believers and unbelievers. We know that we have come some thirty years or so from the crucifixion and that these Jews understand the gospel. Another fact which we know, (a fact I believe they were beginning to sense) is that Rome and her hoards will soon be coming down upon Judea to wreak total havoc and destruction on Jerusalem. It is as though God has finally pulled the plug on Judaism's disobedience in general, and rejection of Christ, in particular.

This means that we have a large group of Jews in front of us who have been lazy and careless about embracing the New Covenant. Like Israel of old, they were at great risk of not entering into the Promised Land, of not claiming the promise of the New Covenant. They had afforded themselves the luxury of riding the fence. Just like those Israelites of old, they had tasted of the fruits of the Promised Land, but had not committed to appropriating salvation by faith. Thirdly:

C. It is required that we understand the argument that our author has been making.

He has been talking about Jesus Christ, our High Priest. More specifically, he has been talking about the offering of the high priest.

Begin scanning chapter 10 and notice in verse 10 that we are sanctified through the offering of this Messiah, once for all. One application of the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. We learned in verse 18 that where the forgiveness of sin is, there is no requirement for offering. No additional offer-

ing is required. The penalty of one sin or a billion is death. Christ paid the penalty. There was one penalty, one satisfaction, one sacrifice. In verse 19, we may now enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus - that is, by the offering of His blood. In verse 22, we draw near because our hearts have been sprinkled (clearly, by the blood of Christ). Now we are properly prepared to understand verse 26 and the following verses. Let's move to:

II. OUR MESSAGE.

A. The Danger Announced.

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

The hazard is in sinning willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth. The horror is in the fact that if we do so, there remains no more sacrifice for sins.

What about the hazard? When have we sinned willfully? Let's point out what it cannot mean.

1. *Our author cannot mean that any Christian who sins willfully will find no more forgiveness available from Christ's offering.* How do we know that? If such were the case, there would be no Christians, for there has never been a Christian who has ever continued living who has not sinned willfully after his conversion. Here's the problem. The person who says that this verse teaches us that willful sinning will annul our salvation, must also answer how much? Yet, this very book has already taught us according to Hebrews 9:26-28, that one sacrifice is required, not for one sin, but for one penalty. If this were not the case, verse 26 teaches us that Christ would have had to have been sacrificed over and over. There is another thing our author cannot mean:

2. *Our author cannot mean that unsaved people who sin willfully cannot be saved.* The verse says there remains no more sacrifice. The sacrifice of Christ was

made for them but it was never applied to them in the first place. It would be ridiculous to assume that anyone who has sinned willfully cannot be saved. You are living proof that that is not true. Finally, there is one more thing this verse cannot mean:

3. *Our author cannot mean that apostates cannot be saved.* Apostates can be saved. Apostates have been saved. If apostates cannot be saved then we must remove John 3:16 from our Bibles, or at least correct it. We must reword it to say:

(John 3:16 KJV) For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever, (excluding certain apostates) believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The offer of salvation is open to all apostates. An apostate is anyone who has heard the gospel and fallen away from it before receiving it. Many of these Judean Jews to whom this epistle is written were apostate. If an apostate cannot be saved, there is no need to warn him. A well-known Bible teacher (to whom I have already drawn too much attention) erringly reports:

“When the gospel of Jesus Christ is presented to an unbeliever, only two responses are possible. After he has heard the basic truths and claims of Jesus Christ, he either believes and is saved or he disbelieves and becomes apostate. Apostasy, as we will see, is sin of rejecting the gospel for which there is no forgiveness...”

This is not acceptable. Most of us were apostates before we were saved. You heard the message before you believed the message. There are not three states, a state of belief, a state of limbo, and a state of unbelief. If you are not in belief, you are in unbelief. You are an apostate. There still is forgiveness for the man that has heard the gospel and rejected it in unbelief. Thank God there is forgiveness.

So, what exactly is this willful sin? Who is this person who (literally) goes on sinning willfully?

Remember who our author is talking to, remember what their problem was, and remember what the subject has been all along.

Our author has been arguing the superiority of the High Priest of Good Things to Come, Jesus Christ. Specifically he has been arguing the superior efficacy of our Priest's blood offering, His sacrifice. The man who sins willfully in this context is the man who chooses to continue in his sins without the blood offering of Christ.

He sees the option of the New Covenant, but reverts, probably to the Old Covenant. Can he ever be saved? Absolutely. The day he places his confidence in the New Covenant - but not one second sooner.

That moves us to the second consideration:

B. The Damage Exposed.

Try to understand these self-assured Jews. They have no sense of urgency. They are operating under the illusion that they can mix and match and take their time considering the claims of this New Covenant. They have no real idea of the risk they are taking when they consider Christ simply as one more option.

I can imagine that a lot of these Jews are a lot like me. When a multi-level marketing person approaches me and offers me a business opportunity, I usually say to him: Show me your pay stubs. Make your first million, or even your first \$50K a year and prove that it works for you. Then I will listen. I don't want to waste my time on someone else's pipe dream. If only 1 in 500 earns a living at it I don't want to be in the 499 helping that 1 accrue his wealth!

These Jews are probably thinking, "Well, if Christ is the Messiah, He will probably return soon and then I will embrace Him. No rush." This was a bad mistake; very bad. They needed to know why their careless rejection was so serious.

1. *When we reject this truth, according to 26b, there*

remains no more sacrifice for sins. The old system will no longer cover them in God's eyes. The old system has been invalidated by the new. Every now and then I get a new bankcard in the mail, a new phone number to use, a new address to send my mail to. The new invalidates the old.

We are not talking about Christ's sacrifice being no longer available to them, once rejected. That is nonsense. We are learning that no other sacrifice is available. The past sacrifices do not atone. There will be no future sacrifices to atone, no future Messiahs. No alternative plans. This is a one-of-a-kind offer. It is not a one-time offer.

The old gospel song goes, "Where could I go, but to the Lord?" Peter said:

(John 6:68 KJV) Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

Christ alone is the answer. All roads lead to Rome because Rome is the seat of Babylon. Only one Road leads to heaven. We must deal with Jesus Christ.

2. *When we reject this truth we reject the authority of God's Priest.*

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

Clearly, we know the Holy Spirit is conjuring up some imagery for His Jewish readers. There is only one context where we can fit such descriptive imagery of judgment and fiery indignation that devours the adversaries.

Clearly we are talking about those who despised Aaron's authority, Aaron the priest! We speak of his sons, Nadab and Abihu and the hellish assembly of Korah and company who took the express route into the fires of hell. What a fearful example of those who rejected God's priest! Jesus Christ is God's priest after a greater order than Aaron's order. How much

more fearful is to reject the authority of this Priest. Do you understand that when we reject this Christ we are rejecting the authority of God's priest?

3. *When we reject this truth we reject the authority of God's New Covenant.*

(Heb 10:28-29 KJV) He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: {29} Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Do you remember the first man to die under the Old Covenant? His memory is not even graced with his name. He willfully despised God's covenant and the Sabbath sign of that covenant by picking up sticks on the Sabbath. It was an act of apostasy. It was an open, willful, rejection of God's covenant law. See Numbers 15:32-36.

The man who rejects Christ rejects God's New Covenant. Consider how much more worthy he is of punishment! This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. And why would this sin be so much more grievous, we ask?

We despise the Son of God and trod Him under foot. We walk on things that have no value to us. We walk on despicable things. That is the sin of impugning Christ. We despise the blood of the covenant. According to verse 29 we count it an unholy thing, an ordinary thing. We treat it as though it were simply the blood of bulls and goats.

Observe that it is Christ who is sanctified in this verse, not the Christ rejecter. Christ was sanctified or set apart for His priestly ministry, just as was any other priest, through the shedding of blood. The offense in this case, is because it is the precious blood of Christ, not the blood of bulls and goats that was profaned. That is the sin of profanity. When we reject Christ we profane His blood by valuing it as com-

mon and we despise the work of the Holy Spirit. We do despise, (treat as having no value) unto the Spirit of grace. Effectively, this is the sin of blasphemy. It is blasphemy because we have rejected as commonplace or valueless the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the One who has presented the gift of grace to us. We also impugn His integrity, testimony, and magnanimity.

Effectively, we insult every member of the Godhead when we reject this wonderful sacrifice of Christ This moves us to the closing point of this consideration:

C. The Damnation Expected.

(Heb 10:30-31 KJV) For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. {31} It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

This is a compilation of other scripture references. Combined, they carry great weight. Vengeance belongs to God. God has never overlooked one sin. God will never allow one sin to go unjudged. Every sin deserves and gets a just recompense. The unbeliever may enjoy the sacrifice of Christ or he may pay the penalty of his own sins. For those who do not obey this New Covenant, remember, God will recompense. The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

This is a no nonsense warning. We are not here to coddle. We are not here simply to help folks balance their checkbooks and learn how to raise their kids. We are here to help snatch folks from falling, not into the hands of Satan, as horrible as that thought may be, but from falling into the hands of a holy, righteous, indignantly righteous God who demands payment for sin.

There is no other hope, no other recourse, and no other sacrifice available, except for the blood of Christ who died to take away our sins. Christ, who was raised by the Father in order to give us eternal life, is our only hope. There is no plan B. See Appendix 9.



PROMISES! PROMISES!

Heb. 10:32-39 - Chapter Thirty

PROMISES! PROMISES!

Intro: Someone once said there are two good reasons why it is always good to walk a mile in another man's moccasins before criticizing him. First, you will have his moccasins, and secondly, you will already be a mile away!

In reality we know there is great wisdom in the old saying. We also know that the Christian doctrine of the dynamics of suffering goes far deeper than the moccasin philosophy. Paul noted in 2 Corinthians 1:4 concerning Christ:

(2 Cor 1:4 KJV) Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

In other words, our God uses the tribulation process in us as a means of encouraging and admonishing us (parakaleo) so that we, in turn, may "parakaleo", (comfort and encourage and admonish) others who are in trouble, with the same comfort wherewith God has encouraged us.

That is a beautiful dynamic. It is the dynamic that is in front of us as we finish the tenth chapter of Hebrews in this study. We will read verses 32-39 in one group in order to get the feeling for what our author intends. Remember, as we read these words, that we have just come down off of one of the sternest warnings against apostasy that we find anywhere in the Word of God.

(Heb 10:32-39 KJV) But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye

endured a great fight of afflictions; {33} Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. {34} For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. {35} Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. {36} For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. {37} For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. {38} Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. {39} But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

I see three directions in our author's admonitions. One points to the readers' past, one points to their present circumstances, and one points toward their future. Let's look first, at:

I. THE ADMONITION WITH RESPECT TO THE PAST IN VERSES 32-34.

A. Notice that this is a directive.

They were to call to remembrance the former days. Any seasoned Bible student knows that God makes a big deal of this. He expects, no, He commands, us to rehearse in our own memories the ways and works of God in the lives of our people and in our own personal lives. The scriptures are replete with such commands. The word for remember in this passage is a very strong word. It means more than simply to recollect an event. It is a command to meditate

on those events, to seek to reconstruct them in our minds. It implies that we are to benefit from them.

There are certain advantages that the young have over the old, and there are advantages that the old have over the young. Our children do not yet have a rich store of memories of the dealings of God in our lives. They depend upon us to teach them about His works and His ways.

I believe that God has put a love for stories in all of us, and this is not simply to provide an escape from our present realities while we stoke our evening campfires. He has put the love of the story in us so that we may recount the goodness and workings and blessings of our God.

God does not intend that we should live in our past, as some old folks tend to do, who cannot find the hand of God working in their present lives. That is not God's intent for having us recall the past. His intent is that we may fortify ourselves in the here and now when it does not appear to us that God is working. The fact is, we can only rarely see the working of God in our immediate present. It is usually when we look back that we can see what God has done. Christians often set aside a special time at New Years for the very purpose of recalling the mighty workings of God in our lives.

B. Notice exactly what they were to recall.

1. They were to recall the days when they were illuminated. We know that our author addresses the group first and then the individual. Any thinking person knows that he addresses both the saved and the unsaved, sometimes in the same breath! On the one hand he admonishes his readers to accept the New Covenant, and at another time he affirms their salvation. The author of Hebrews is no different than any modern preacher who addresses a mixed congregation on a Sunday morning.

It may be that our author was addressing unsaved folks here, as he was in verse 26, but it makes much more sense to believe that he has turned his atten-

tion toward those believers who had placed their hope in Christ and who needed his encouragement to continue on.

This one thing we do know. When we come to know Christ as Savior we certainly are illuminated. The lights certainly do come on! And many of our sweetest memories are of those first days of salvation, just as some of our sweetest life memories come from our early childhood, when we had our mothers all to ourselves, or so we thought. The whole world revolved around us and responded to our every beck and call.

But we must not be deluded. The young man who thinks his new wife is going to behave like his dear old mother is in for quite a shock. Life demands more of us. And we hastily add the knowledge that as we grow in Christ, He too, demands more from us. He often expects that we will get along with fewer affirmations of His will. He expects that we will grow in our walk of faith.

In our adult days, however, we still have those memories of how God has dealt with us in our respective pasts. They are like money in a bank account to tide us over on rainy days when we get these terrible feelings that He has gone off and left us because we are no longer worthy enough to be used by Him.

2. They were to recall the afflictions of those days. Personally, I suspect that our author wanted them to remember more than simply the trials through which they came. I believe he wanted them to remember their fresh new zeal that they had when they came to Christ. The new car smell was still there. The paint hadn't faded in their Christian experience. They were on fire and they gladly welcomed the sacrifice!

This sold out spirit is a virtue of youth, not old age. I remember how boldly I stepped out in order to go to Bible school with hardly a nickel in my pocket. I remember living on cans of peaches and crackers when there was no money for meals. The only thing that mattered was that my bills were paid at the moment. I remember working full time, going to school

full time, and caring for a family full time and still seeking to preach and serve Christ with any spare hours left over.

But times change and we are no longer so willing to give up all that we have. We do not relish meals of peaches and crackers. We do not look on the opportunity to suffer for Christ with the same vigor. That is when we need to be reminded that it can be the same way again! The path that leads us on the journey of faith is still under our feet!

3. *They were to recall the effect that this affliction had on them.* In verse 33 he reminds them how they were made a spectacle (a theatrical mockery, if you will) by the enemies of the gospel. And what effect did his have on them? It made them comrades! It made them fellowshippers of others who were in the same boat.

When we suffer for Christ we become a part of a great fellowship, a great society, a great camaraderie with a great cloud of witnesses who have gone on before us. It will be tragic to have gone through life, not having had to pay the price for truth and not having the gospel cost us anything! It will be sad to have missed the privilege to suffer for Christ.

These who had their goods spoiled were the ones who were truly enriched. You and I who are rich and have need of nothing; we are God's poor. We are empty, shallow and unfulfilled because we put our security and our safety and our financial well being ahead of God's will. We put our need for acceptance ahead of our need to stand for Christ and His gospel.

Notice another product of affliction:

4. *They were to recall how this affliction nurtured compassion in them.*

(Heb 10:34 KJV) 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.

Some folks suggest that this provides good evidence that Paul wrote this because of the reference to his bonds. Others argue very strongly that these words were originally intended to be read, "for ye had compassion on those in bonds." This author does not agree with that reconstruction. Regardless of our personal views on authorship, we are not required to believe that because the writer had been in bonds he must be Paul. This is a circumstantial argument.

The lesson is what is important. Affliction produces compassion on others who are going through the same. And it produces something else in all of us. It helps us keep our heavenly focus. In our hearts, none of us would trade the temporary substance of earth for the enduring substance of heaven. Yet, we do it every day. We get caught up in it. Affliction helps break this terrible bonding we have in our souls with earthly substances. God is good to us when He allows us to so suffer. We now turn to:

II. AN ADMONITION WITH RESPECT TO THE PRESENT.

We draw this from verses 35 and 36.

The battle cry of the civil rights movement often centers on those words of Mr. King who said, "I have a dream." It is not our purpose to address the political overtones of that aspiration, but it is simply to remind ourselves that we who are in Christ have more than a dream. We have the sure guarantee of the promises of God. This whole book is written around those promises. Every Jew knew that the pillars of his faith (unlike Islam) were sunk down directly upon the promises of God. Allah is not such a God of promises. That is one way in which he may be clearly distinguished from Jehovah God.

I look on that command of verse 35 a little differently than some folks do. Some folks think our author is admonishing these believers not to walk away

from their faith, not to give up on their salvation. They would have us living in fear that we must keep in mind the promises of salvation or we will lose it.

I do not see that at all. I do not see that because I am sensitive to the nature of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant, you will remember, was written in stone. We think that is quite durable. Something written in stone is pretty permanent. Yet, Moses broke those tables before they were even put into use. So much for durability. The New Covenant is not written in stone. It is written in the flesh of our hearts. Therefore, we should not have to work to keep in mind what has already been engraved in the heart.

What then is Hebrews suggesting in this particular command that we cast not away our confidence? The key is in that word confidence. The word confidence is not faith, as though we could discard our faith like a candy wrapper. The word confidence is a word that speaks to boldness and spontaneity in speaking.

Do you remember how bold you were and how freely you spoke the gospel when you were first saved? And then, do you remember how it offended your relatives when you told them they were all going to hell? As the weeks turn into months and months to years, we go to the other extreme. In our efforts not to offend we often say far too little, too late. Cast not away your bold spontaneity! Even when you know it will bring affliction, speak freely about this gospel! Speak openly even when you know it will offend! Don't be discouraged because you have only received criticism for your fanaticism! Keep on keeping on! God will bring fruit to your witness.

The last words of the verse read: "...that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." I don't like the word after one bit. I want to receive the promise, while I am doing the will of God! I want the affirmation now! I want the proof of God's promises in my life right now!

What a shock it is to our souls, when we bury ourselves in Hebrews 11 and, while admiring this great

cloud of witnesses, we discover that they all, every one of them, died, not having received the promise! What a blow! When we receive the promise there is no more need for faith. Faith is what we exercise while we are waiting to receive the promise. That brings us to the last admonition in this triad:

III. AN ADMONITION WITH RESPECT TO THE FUTURE.

We find this in verses 37-39.

Some have sadly misunderstood verse 37. Some folks think that the author of Hebrews was suggesting that Christ would return within a very short period of time and that He was, effectively, promising these Hebrews that their struggle would be over in a very short period.

To understand this verse we must look at the passage where it is originally found in our Bibles. Then, by understanding the context we may understand the verse. We will find it in Habakkuk 2:2-4. Turn to Habakkuk 2.

Habakkuk has just registered a protest with the Lord, a rather overstated protest. You may read about it in chapter one. It has to do primarily with why a holy God tolerates sin. You must not think that God is offended when we protest to Him about His ways. He admires folks who tell Him their true feelings about what is on their hearts. But neither does He hide His true feelings. He also tells us what is on His heart.

In Habakkuk 2:1 we find him bracing for an answer from the Lord, and, (if we may smile at the part of us we see in him) he is bracing himself for a rebuke from the Lord!

It is then that the Lord responds in verse 2 and commands our prophet to write these things down so that all may benefit.

(Hab 2:2-4 KJV) And the LORD answered me, and said,

Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. {3} For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. {4} Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

In a word, the vision will come. God will judge men. God will make good His word. When God finally shows His hand, it will be at the exact appointed time. Though it tarries and it may be a long time coming, it will surely come! It will happen.

Those who lift up their souls against God because He has not consummated their plan need to understand that God takes no pleasure in them.

Peter speaks of these same folks who think that the silence of God is proof that He will not keep His promise to judge the world (2 Peter 3). Peter tells us that these folks interpret the silence of God to be weakness.

But the point is God will keep His Word. The man who has been justified will walk by faith. He will hold on to the promise of God. And so have God's people. Calvinists and Arminians, Pentecostal Reformed, Baptists and Lutherans, Methodists and Presbyterians. We all walk by faith.

This one thing we know. When that hour comes, it will happen suddenly and without remedy for those who have drawn back without saving faith. Those who have not claimed the promises of this covenant will be doomed to destruction or perdition. You and I who know Christ are not included in that group according to verse 39. We are among those who have saving faith or belief unto the saving of the soul.

It is not enough to believe in Christ. There is a faith in Christ that does not result in the saving of the soul. Some believe in the goodness of Christ and are not saved. Some even believe in the death of Christ but they remain unsaved. They are not saved

because they have not laid hold of the promise of eternal life for themselves. They are not resting in the finished work of Christ on Calvary for their redemption. They are resting in their works. Some are even trusting in their faith believing that they must keep their faith strong as though it is their faith that saves them.

Faith has never saved anyone by itself. Our faith must be in the promises of God. The books of Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews all stress these same words "the just shall live by faith." Romans stresses *the just* and Galatians stresses *shall live* and Hebrews stresses *by faith*.

So, the question is, do you have faith to the saving of the soul or, do you have a childish fantasizing faith, blind faith, existential faith? One can have the faith of a child without having childish faith. One fantasizes, the other simply takes God at His Word. Is your faith based upon the promises of God's Word? You can know beyond a doubt and with absolute certainty that you have this kind of faith. You can know you have eternal life!



BIBLICAL FAITH

Heb. 11:1-3 - Chapter Thirty One

BIBLICAL FAITH

Before using this study, consider writing your definition of faith on a scrap of paper. After you have read this, see if you need to adjust your definition.

Intro: In the most general sense, there are really only three divisions in the book of Hebrews. The first third of the book stresses the **Person of Christ**, stressing His superiority over every other possible standard of comparison. The second third of the book stresses the **Priesthood of Christ**, laying claim to His absolute right to administer the New Covenant.

The third portion of the book begins around Hebrews 10:23, and it relates to the **Practical Application** of these truths. While practical admonitions can be found earlier in the book, it is clearly our author's intent to bring all of these truths down home, to where we are living, and to admonish us to realize that we are not toying with mere intellectual issues, we are grappling with the issues of heaven and hell.

As we begin our study of Hebrews 11 we are well aware that the urgent invitation to lay claim to the promises of God has been asserted in no uncertain terms. We are not of those who draw back (like the stubborn yoke of oxen) unto perdition. We are of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

I want to reaffirm one of the most important truths that the Christian can remember, a truth which the world and false religionists always forget. From the very beginning of time, our God has only dealt with men on the basis of promises. God's Word is important to Him, just as your word should be important to you.

I have been offended many times over the years as a servant of Christ and I can provide a list of some of the criticisms which people have provided for my hurt. I have benefited by some and shrugged off others. Most have passed without response. But there is one criticism which I have never left unanswered. There is one button that you can push with me which will always guarantee a response. That relates to the issue of my word. I associate my integrity with my word. I do not believe in my heart that I am self-righteous when I defend my word. I believe I am righteous in doing so and that God requires it of me.

At the same time, while I work hard to keep my word and to protect my integrity I know, that in comparison to God and His Word, my words still come forth from a vessel of dust and clay. I know that my deceitful heart is capable of twisting facts to my advantage and even to twist them without my conscious knowledge. I know I must be in continual dependence upon the Holy Spirit to put a guard on my lips lest I misrepresent, pervert, or put a spin on truth. God experiences no such struggle. God's Word is perfect, enduring forever. It is unfailing. God does not lie, or encourage men to lie, as deuterocanonical writings suggest. His Word is everything. I cannot underscore enough how important God's Word is to Him. There is no way to overstate it.

God created this world by His Word. Jesus Christ is the Word that became flesh. When a man is saved, it is because God's Word says He is saved. When a man prays, he is relying on the Word of God.

Looking at Hebrews 11, we discover it is that process of applying the Word of God or the promises of God to our lives, which the Bible calls faith.

Let's read these first three verses in a group.

(Heb 11:1-3 KJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. {2} For by it the elders obtained a good report. {3} Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

We have one specified goal in this lesson. We want to understand what faith is about. More specifically, we want to understand what biblical faith is about. And, we have come to the right place, the right passage of scripture. We have in front of us the sweetest, the purest, and the best description of faith we can find anywhere.

Hebrews 11 does not provide a definition of faith. It is not exhaustive. It does not include all that the Bible has to say about faith, but it is, as I have noted, the sweetest, the purest, and the best description of faith we can find anywhere. Let's learn from it.

Notice what we see in these first three verses. Verse 1 speaks of its essence, its substance. Verse 1 also speaks of its evidence, or its provability. Verse 2 continues in that vein and speaks of the witness of faith. Verse 3 speaks of its transcendence. All three are powerful ideas. In each case, the important thing to notice is that biblical faith is the exact opposite of worldly faith. God's faith is the mirror image reverse of worldly faith. Consider each of these:

I. THE ESSENCE OF FAITH.

(Heb 11:1 KJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

A. The key word in this first phrase is substance.

Trust me when I say that the scholars have labored long and hard over this word in order to bring out all of its nuances. Essentially, they use key words to help us understand its inflections. When we speak of this substance, we are speaking of something that

is essential. It has reality. It is tangible. The idea can also imply foundation. This substance is something that can have weight and argument placed upon it. In the same vein, it is equated with confident assurance. Finally, it carries with it the idea of guarantee or attestation. That is really the heart of it.

However, faith is not, in and of itself, a substance. Kenneth Copeland has taught that faith is a substance and "has the ability to effect natural substance." In response to this, Normal Geisler says:

"This verse does not indicate that faith is an actual substance. The Greek word translated 'substance' in the King James Version is hypostasis, and literally means 'assurance,' 'confidence,' 'confident expectation,' or 'being sure.' Hence, Hebrews 11:1 teaches that faith is the certainty or assurance that God will do as he promises."

If we had to substitute another word for substance in this verse, I would have to agree with those who tell us that the very best word would be title deed. Faith is the title deed. It is the guarantee of a fact transacted. If you would like to work harder on this, consider reading Hughes.

B. But the word substance (or title deed) does not stand alone.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for. When we ask, "What does the title deed give us title to?" the answer is, the things that are hoped for, or the things that we confidently expect. Specifically, we are talking about the things that God has promised us. Can we summarize this in a sentence? Yes. Faith gives substance and reality to the things which God has promised us. Faith makes them real to us. Faith is what puts the promises of God in our grasp.

Do you see how different this kind of faith is to the world's kind of faith? The world's view of faith is foolish optimism, a crutch for the weak. The world's faith is not based on fact or substance. It is only foolish and naive hope that things will somehow get better in some unexplained way. There is no substance

to worldly faith. This fanciful, finger-crossing faith is nothing more than passive resignation to fate.

The second half of verse 1 amplifies the first half. We will call it:

II. THE EVIDENCE OF FAITH.

(Heb 11:1 KJV) Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. Evidence is conviction. It is proof. Faith is the evidence that what we cannot see really is real. It really does exist.

Now, that statement is an anomaly, or a paradox. Normally, if something cannot be seen in some manner, there is no evidence to prove its existence. Something cannot be proven unless it is verified by the senses. That is at the very heart of the religion of empiricism. That is Genesis 1:1 in the Bible of the scientist. In the beginning were ears, eyes, hands, nose, and mouth. He restricts his data input to evidence, to proof certified by his senses. God says, no, Mr. Scientist. That is not completely sensible. There is an additional sense. There is an additional medium for verifying data. It is faith. It goes beyond the physical; it is metaphysical (above the physical).

Once again, we must not be confused with the world's view of faith. Many worldlings believe in the metaphysical.

One group, typical of new-agers for example, thinks their faith can change reality. Like little children playing "pretend," they think that if they concentrate hard enough their faith can alter reality. That is not biblical faith. That is alchemy. Biblical faith does not change reality. Biblical faith reveals reality. It helps us lay hold on the truths that really are. It lays hold on the promises of God that have already been made and applies them to the life. We repeat, faith does not change reality, it lays hold on it. It is extremely important to make this point to the post modernist thinker who has lost his ability to discern between

truth and fantasy.

We have learned that faith is our title deed to the things that we confidently expect. It is living proof to us of the reality of those things. Faith is not the blind leap of the existentialist; it is the confident leap of a realist. Verse 2 reveals another interesting characteristic of our faith:

(Heb 11:2 KJV) For by it the elders obtained a good report.

III. THE WITNESS OF FAITH.

Through the application of this faith the elders (the fathers of our faith) obtained a good report, or a good witness.

Remember what we have been talking about or this won't make any sense. The world says faith is not provable. God says it is. God says it is substantive. It provides and offers evidence. These are very legal, very factual words. We now add the word witness.

Something that is witnessed is something which is verified. Fundamentally, a witness does two things. He verifies what he has seen and heard, and he holds others accountable to the fact that he has seen and heard them.

A witness cannot verify what he has not seen and heard. He must use his senses. Do you understand what we are experiencing here? Do you understand that this flies in the face of everything you ever hear about faith? In our minds, faith is applied when things can no longer be verified. Faith does not produce any evidence. It does not produce anything that is provable. God says the opposite. God says faith provides the evidence. It provides the witness. It produces the goods, the proof.

This whole chapter is going to roll out as one great indictment, one great witness against the world of unbelief. Biblical faith is based upon facts, not fantasy. Look at verse 4, for an example:

(Heb 11:4 KJV) 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.

Abel's actions, performed by faith, witnessed his righteousness. And all of those who followed Abel received the witness by faith, and died, not fully receiving the promises, verse 39 tells us.

The other day I was in a store. And there, directly in front of me was a witness. It was a three-sided warning cone which warned me that the floor in front of me was slippery. As soon as I read that, I became accountable to that witness and Wal-Mart fulfilled their moral obligation to warn me about an unsafe condition.

This great cloud of witnesses (as Hebrews calls them) who claimed the promises of God are star exhibits in God's courtroom. These living evidences will be used to make those accountable who have denied the faith. God has placed the evidence before their very eyes, many times in their very homes and schools and churches.

And Christian, do not think that this marvelous roll call of faith is here simply to encourage us. This roll call of faithful women and men is strategically listed with names from every era of history, lest any generation think they are not accountable to claim the promises of God, by faith.

Finally, let's notice:

IV. THE TRANSCENDENCE OF FAITH.

(Heb 11:3 KJV) 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.

The most important words of this verse are the first

four: through faith we understand. To understand is to exercise the mind in order to perceive or conceptualize.

Faith exercises the mind to knowledge. Once again we see a view of faith totally unlike the world's. The world thinks that you leave your mind behind when you exercise faith. The Christian says the opposite is true. The exercise of faith exercises the mind. It puts the brain in gear. It does not take it out of gear.

It would be the substance of an entirely different study, but I throw out the claim for you to consider. Christian brother or sister, it is my contention that the man who receives Christ by faith and the man who walks by faith will find that a faith-full walk will even increase a man's intelligence. True Christianity, biblical Christianity, improves every part of the man. The evidence of this can be found everywhere in history.

Through faith we understand, we exercise the mind. But what is it specifically? What fundamental truth does faith cause us to grasp and understand according to this verse? What essential truth does faith cause us to lay hold on? Through faith we understand that the worlds, or the ages, were framed or ordered. That is the first thing we learn.

We must not limit this to the discussion of creation. Certainly, our author is including creation in this verse, but he is painting with a much broader brush. Through faith we understand that the whole course of the ages has been set, from creation to the very end. All of the materials and activities and events of history have been ordered and are marching relentlessly, inexorably, to their ultimate consummation.

Faith opens our eyes to the plan, and what a marvelous plan it is, carefully, and intricately woven, working itself out in masterful detail as it builds to that awesome climax. We are not the chance happenings of some evolutionary accident in the laboratory of nature. We are participants in the great march of history. Faith causes us to understand that. Those who deny faith are left to their own imaginations

and devices and educated guesses, at best.

Look at the verse again:

(Heb 11:3 KJV) 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.

By the Word of God. By the Word of God. Are you getting the picture? Do you remember how we introduced our study? God's Word is everything to Him. God spoke the creation into existence. God spoke the ages into existence.

Once we understand this, we understand that what is seen has not come into being from things which appear. What is seen has come into existence through the Word of God.

The secular world can only offer two theories of creation. One is called the solid state theory and one is called the big bang theory.

The solid state theory presupposes that matter is eternal and that it has always existed. It holds that matter has been eternally organizing itself. The scientist who cannot abide the thought of an eternal God, nonetheless, entertains the idea that eternal matter could exist. This makes a fool of him because he must ascribe intelligence and design and organization to inanimate matter. It really makes him look foolish.

Or, the scientist may choose, if he wishes, to hold the other secular theory of creation. It is called the big bang theory. In the big bang, all of matter, energy, space, and time existed in one phenomenally small piece of matter that instantaneously erupted into the entire organized universe, as we know it. This makes the big bang scientist look even more like a fool than his solid state predecessor.

The Christian comes along and simply says that an eternal God spoke the creation and the ages

into being, in a word. He solves the issue of eternal existence for the solid state people. He provides the basis of the bang for the big bang folks. He provides an intelligent answer to the facts that have existed all along. And for this, he is deemed a fool.

Someone has illustrated it this way. Two men are standing on a ship peering into the dark, foggy distance. One man sees nothing but sky and clouds. The other man sees the outline of an approaching ship. The ship is there, whether the first man sees it or not. The second man does not have better eyes than the first man. He is simply equipped with a telescope. That is what faith is to the believer. It is our telescope that allows us to lay hold on truth that we cannot otherwise see.

And why have they not all obeyed the gospel? Why do they not all see? Paul tells us about Isaiah's warning that they will not all believe and he reminds us:

(Rom 10:17 KJV) So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

What is the faith connection? It is the Word of God, the Word of God. Every time you lay hold on to a promise of God and claim it, believing it is true, even though you have no evidence to substantiate it, the Bible says your faith itself becomes the evidence and the witness and the guarantee that the Word of God will be true. God is very sensitive about His Word. God wants us to obey His Word and to live by it. God has given us the gift of faith so that we may understand His word and obtain the promises which are available to us.

As you step into your world today, every deed you do, every word you speak, every action of your life, will reflect either your faith in the promises of God or your reliance on your own instincts and your own flesh instead. The choice is ours. We may lay hold by faith on the Word of God. We may, ourselves, become God's evidence that His Word is true.

Whose evidence are you? You can begin by accepting the free gift of salvation, a gift that is received by

simple faith in the promise of God:

(Rom 5:1 KJV) Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

You can continue on in your walk of faith, by immersing yourself in the scriptures and coming to know the Word of God.

And one day, when you lay down for the last time, you can join this great group of men and women who walked and lived and died, by faith, living proof to all of us that the Word of God is true.

THE EXPRESSION OF FAITH

Heb. 11:4-10 - Chapter Thirty Two

THE EXPRESSION OF FAITH

Intro: In my personal view, Hebrews 11 is very much like 1 Corinthians 13. It is a beautiful poetic flower. It makes its point simply by being read. Is there any theology in Hebrews 11? Absolutely. It is permeated with theology. Is there a need for careful exegesis when studying these rich verses? Of course. But there is a great danger that we can reduce the poetry, the flow, and the beauty to a mere theological discussion if we are not careful. Essentially, we can strip the blossom of its petals in order to study it in the laboratory, and deprive ourselves of its essential beauty. We must understand both aspects.

In order to keep our commitment of devoting only two or three studies to a chapter, we are going to settle for an overview instead of choosing the path of careful exegesis. There will be one additional study on chapter 11. If you are one of those hungry bears who want a bigger bite, you may choose to continue with more in-depth study on your own. I recommend Pink's work on Hebrews, (Volume III) which is devoted almost entirely to this chapter. The Reformed teacher A.W. Pink will speak to your heart and soul. I also recommend Hughes' work on Hebrews for an excellent exegetical approach. Both are readable and will be a blessing to your heart. *Neither author is dispensational, however, so be careful in your reading.*

It has been our purpose to place an essential emphasis on two important aspects of faith while looking over these verses. In our first session, we stressed the first when we talked about the essence of faith. We showed you how totally opposite God's view of faith is to the world's view. God sees faith as empirical evidence, a solid, substantive witness to real things

that really exist, though the human eye cannot see them. In very strong legal terms, this chapter stands as an indictment to men of all ages concerning their willing ignorance of the proofs which God has placed all around them.

Our present goal has been to stress the expression of faith. We are going to see the product of faith in our lives, the evidence of faith in our experience. It is not enough to say, "I have faith" as so many do in our times. If we share biblical faith, the evidence of it will be available for all to see. That is the argument of this chapter. Faith changes the experience. As we step into God's courtroom where the evidence is being gathered for that great judgment day, consider:

A. Exhibit A.

We will label it faith and righteousness.

(Heb 11:4 KJV) 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.

A friend in Christ came up to me and told me a story about how someone had used a home computer to forge her bank account numbers on bank checks. Her purpose was not to tell me what happened, but to testify about how God had changed her life during the past year. I quote her as best as I can repeat it: "A year ago, this is how I would have responded. I would have been all upset; I would have been full of anxiety. It would have dominated my thoughts. Instead, it was as though nothing had happened. I was determined that Satan was not going to rob me of my joy through this attack." She then went on to explain how she sought the prayer support of a friend or two and went on obeying the Lord. It appears that God has since worked the

whole thing out.

What is our point? This gal, who has been growing in the faith, is experiencing the results of that faith in her daily walk. It is producing fruit.

For Abel, it first produced the fruits of salvation. No, it does not say that in this verse, but we know enough of our Bibles to understand that is exactly what happened. You see, salvation comes as a result of receiving God's righteousness by faith, instead of relying upon our own righteousness.

In a former church we had a set of twins that rode the bus. The other bus children would often say, "This twin is good and this twin is the evil twin." Those are their words, not my words. We try as best as we can to put an end to that kind of talk, but we do recognize that the Bible tells us even a child is known by his doings. (Proverbs 20:11) I do not think Abel was a good brother and Cain was an evil brother. I do not personally picture little Abel as the guy who always carried out the garbage while Cain never made his bed. Abel was not godly and Cain ungodly.

I see something far simpler. I see in Abel a man who was justified by faith. That is where his righteousness came from. It did not come from within. God gave it to him. And how does that relate to us? It is very important that we notice.

In our last study we asserted that no man can approach God, except through a promise. No man has ever approached God except through a promise that God has made. The promises of God are the Word of God. Now, we add to that concept and remind you that no man has ever approached God, except through a sacrifice. You will not get to heaven, except on the basis of a sacrifice. That sacrifice is, of course, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. When we approach God on the basis of that sacrifice, the Bible teaches us that we receive God's righteousness. We will no longer go about seeking to establish our own righteousness.

B. Exhibit B.

I think we will call this faith and fellowship.

(Heb 11:5-6 KJV) By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. {6} But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

We, of course, know the story. As the little girl said it, "Enoch and God were out walking one day and it started to get dark, and God said, Enoch, it's closer to my house than yours, so, let's go home to my house tonight."

She may not have had her facts straight, but she had the simplicity of it straight. This was a man of God whose faith led him into deep fellowship with God. This pleased God, and God transposed, or transferred him. That is the simplicity of it. That is the simplicity of death. That is the simplicity of the rapture.

One day I saw a little 3-year-old girl acting up in total joyful abandon. She appeared to be a good little girl, but at that moment in time, she was just full of it. As I looked on her it came to my mind how little she knew of the dangers that lurked around her, and of how vulnerable she really was. But, that was not in her eyes. She was safe. She was in the protection of those who loved her. That is the beauty of Christianity. We may move about with a reckless abandon of sorts, because our Father manages our little world. He has the answers to all of life's questions. It is the simplicity of it all that strikes us.

Enoch believed God. He sought God by faith. God rewarded Him. It was so simple, so childish, and so elementary. Can we assume some things about Enoch? Of course we can. Can we assume he was a godly man? Of course. God does not fellowship

with those who nurture sin in their hearts. Nor did Enoch keep his righteous living to himself. The Bible tells us in Jude 14 and 15:

(Jude 1:14-15 KJV) And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, {15} To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

Young people, it doesn't matter how many ungodly men are around you. It doesn't matter how many ungodly deeds are committed. It doesn't matter how many hard speeches the ungodly sinners have spoken against your God, you can stand alone, just as Enoch did. You cannot stand in your strength. But you can stand in God's strength.

C. Exhibit C.

We'll call this faith and obedience.

(Heb 11:7 KJV) 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.

The lesson is very obvious. Noah's faith causes him to lay hold on truths that cannot be seen or verified. To the best of our knowledge, no one had even seen it rain before this time. There was no need for weather forecasting. Every day's forecast was the same. Where was all this supposed water going to come from?

Faith opened Noah's eyes. He laid hold on the Word of God. Like Elijah of old who said, concerning the great contest with the prophets of Baal, "...I have done these things at thy word," 1 Kings 18:36.

Are we to commend Moses for his righteousness?

No, we commend him because he became heir of another kind of righteousness, the righteousness which is by faith.

Do not be confused. We do not add our righteousness to Christ's salvation as some imply when they insist that obedience is implicit in receiving salvation. Obedience is the result of salvation, never its source. But, faith does produce obedience. Obedience is the witness to our salvation. Obedience is a two-sided coin. It assures us that faith is working in our lives. That is one side. And, even while it is doing that, it condemns the world.

Faith always does that. First, it produces obedience. Secondly, by that very obedience it assures the one who exercises it, and it condemns those who reject it.

D. Exhibit D.

We'll call it faith and the future.

(Heb 11:8-10 KJV) By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. {9} By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: {10} For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Christians can be very glib about this test, and yet more of us fail here than in many other areas. Abraham was called to go to a place that he had never seen, far away from friends and family, an absolutely foreign country, not knowing where he was going.

The Bible says it was required of him in order to receive his inheritance. His living conditions went from civilized city dwelling to living in substandard conditions in tents with his children.

He did it because he looked for another city. A city

far better than Ur of the Chaldees, as opulent as that city was. He looked for a city that had foundations, the city whose builder and maker is God.

When I said that Christians can be very glib about this test I spoke from experience. With the possible exception of my first church, I do not believe I have ever pastored a church where I have not had the same experience. A man or a woman comes to me and announces that they are feeling the call of God on their lives to serve Him. My immediate response is not, "Praise God!" My immediate response is, are you willing to move? Then comes the answer. If the young man or woman says, I am willing to move "if" and "when" and "only if," I know that they are either not called of God or they will fail the test. Keep in mind that this is only one of the questions which I ask.

Am I being hard? When a young man joins the military he does not go to the recruiter and say, I will go as long as I do not have to leave my girlfriend behind. I'll go after I have paid off the Bronco. He sells the Bronco and he tells his darling good bye. He knows that if God has called him into the military these sacrifices are necessary. He leaves all and follows Uncle Sam. He will go, and he will go wherever in the world the military puts him. He may complain, but he will go.

No servant of Christ is worth is salt who is not willing to forsake all and go when God calls Him to. God does not require it of all of us, but, implicit in Christian service is the willingness to go.

Nor does this relate only to those who are going into full time Christian service. Every one of us must be where God wants us to be. We know if we are. We know if we are not. If we are NOT where we should be, it is usually because we do not believe God can provide for us among strangers in a foreign place without the shelter and protection of family. If God calls you to leave all of those crutches you will be in for a wonderful treat. God will provide and He will protect. But please keep in mind, you may have to live in a tent or a cottage instead of owning your

own home. But, it will be a fine tent, a royal tent, and a happy tent indeed. And property taxes on tents are very low.

In conclusion we ask ourselves. What about you? What about me?

From Abel we were reminded about faith and righteousness and the fact that God will one day testify or witness concerning our own response to faith. Do we have the righteousness of Christ or are we going about seeking to establish our own?

From Enoch we learned that there can be no fellowship without faith, and that fellowship with God thrives only in the atmosphere of purity and righteousness.

From Noah we learned about faith and obedience. Obedience to God, even when He expects unreasonable things from us, even when His will is not logical to us.

And from Abraham we learned that faith lays hold of the future and embraces it, sight unseen, knowing that God is there.

I do not know where you are being tested in your walk at this time, but I can be sure that, in some way or another, it relates to your walk of faith. Let us pray that, wherever God is dealing with us, He will give us the wisdom and grace to approach that issue through the eyes of faith, and not of sight. Then we will be assured of success, even if it does not appear so to the world around us.

THE EFFECTUAL WORKING OF FAITH

Heb. 11:11-40 - Chapter Thirty Three

THE EFFECTUAL WORKING OF FAITH

Intro: As a result of our previous two studies on Hebrews 11 we should be comfortable with two ideas that run heavily through these 40 verses.

I. THE PROOF OF BIBLICAL FAITH.

The first is summed up in the word evidence, or proof. It is our writer's contention to argue that biblical faith itself is empirical evidence which supports the existence of God (Vs. 6), His activity in the creation and in the forward march of the ages (Vs. 3), and His direct personal involvement with men. That is the first key word, evidence. I stress the term biblical faith, because, unlike the world's perception which believe that faith is something which Christians latch onto when empirical evidence fails, the Bible argues that faith literally expands the amount of evidence which is available to us by allowing us to lay hold on information which we would not otherwise have.

II. THE POWER OF BIBLICAL FAITH.

The next key idea is locked up in the word power or enablement. Biblical faith is not merely evidence for the intellectual courtroom, its outworking may be traced throughout the ages. It provides the kind of evidence that works itself out in the life. For example,

From Abel (Vs. 4) we were reminded about faith and righteousness and the fact that God will one day

testify or witness concerning our own response to faith. Do we have the righteousness of Christ or are we going about seeking to establish our own?

From Enoch (Vss. 5 and 6) we learned that there can be no fellowship without faith, and that fellowship with God thrives only in the atmosphere of purity and righteousness.

From Noah (Vs. 7) we learned about faith and obedience. Obedience to God is required, even when He expects unreasonable things from us, even when His will is not logical to us.

And from Abraham (Vs. 8 and following) we learned that faith lays hold of the future and embraces it, sight unseen, knowing that God is there.

We want to shift gears a little bit as we prepare to move forward through the text. Instead of stressing the enablement which faith provides we want to stress the change which faith produces in the life of the one who exercises it. Faith not only expands our outward usefulness to God and man, it actually transforms us, essentially changing us right down at the essence of our very natures. It is the effectiveness of faith in terms of its ability to change us that captures our imagination. The author referred to this dynamic as God's effectual working. Notice it as we scan these characters:

A. Faith changes fearful doubt into bold confidence.

(Heb 11:11-12 KJV) 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. {12} Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is

by the sea shore innumerable.

Clearly, faith has provided enablement for Sara. No one can deny that. She received the strength or the energy to conceive. Someone may say that she conceived as a result of Abraham's faith, but that is not fair, because this verse specifically states that the conception and subsequent delivery was because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Clearly, the Holy Spirit wants us to know that Sara also ran this race, in spite of her false start when the gun went off.

And that is exactly the point. The exercise of faith not only enabled Sarah, it essentially changed her. It turned the doubter into a believer. This serves as a great encouragement to us. This means there is hope for all of us who say, "Lord, I believe; Help thou my unbelief!" Now we know there is hope for you and I who truly want to believe but who fail so miserably at taking God at His Word. When we truly want to exercise our faith God will help us grow it.

Look at verse 13:

(Heb 11:13 KJV) 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.

B. Faith replaces our need for instant gratification with deferment.

The world is very foolish in this respect. They apply the principle of gratification deferment in every area but the spiritual. Economists tell us to lay up our money for a future, unseen day and not to satisfy our every desire in the here and now. They remind us that we invest for the long-term gain, not the short-term pleasure. But the world does not go far enough. It was the Lord Jesus who taught us the ultimate investment principle when He said:

(Mat 6:19-21 KJV) Lay not up for yourselves treasures

upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: {20} But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: {21} For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

If you look closely at these verses, you will see that this faith not only caused them to lay hold of the future in preference to the present, it went even further as it caused them to reject the present.

C. Faith changes our attachments from earthly things to heavenly things.

In verse 13 they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. And look at verses 14-16:

(Heb 11:14-16 KJV) For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. {15} And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. {16} But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Years ago the comet Hale Bop cult took its victims as another group of sadly misled followers took their lives because, by faith, they laid hold on another country. The tragedy lies in the fact that their faith was a misguided faith. It was not a biblical faith. It was not the faith of Hebrews 11. And yet, there is something in the story of these cultists that still serves as a rebuke to you and me. For these men, twisted as they were, gave up everything for their hope; their homes, their loved ones, their careers, and even their lives because they sought another country. Imagine the shock and horror as they went to sleep under a purple blanket and woke up in the fires of hell.

But, let's accept the rebuke. If we say we are seeking

another country and another city and if we plainly declare that we are pilgrims and strangers on this earth, then why are we so caught up in the affairs of this life?

How do we know that we are faith walkers? We see it in our eyes. We hear it in our conversations. We observe it in our life investments. We even see it in the careers we choose. Those who declare plainly that they are looking for another country should not be too heavily involved with the Planning Commission for the City of Sodom. Notice also:

D. Faith will even make us willing to give our dearest loved ones to God.

(Heb 11:17 KJV) **By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. (See also verses 18,19).**

Sacrificing the object of our human affections is always the ultimate evidence that faith is working in the life.

For Abraham, it was the willingness to give up Isaac. For young people, it may be the need to give up a sweetheart, or the loving surroundings of home. For parents, it may be the willingness to let their children go to the farthest corners of the earth, or to go themselves and leave their children. When it comes to giving up such relationships as these it can be every bit as painful as what Abraham went through that day.

Only one thing can prompt that kind of action in me, the call of God. And only one thing could ever enable me to do it, and that is the faith that God gives.

Do you realize that what is hindering you at this very moment in your forward movement with Christ, boils down to the issue of faith? We say we believe, but we do not or we would have been obedient.

Some of us have never been too confident in Abraham's relationship with Sarah. Some, (not myself) even suggest that they may have been separated in the end of their days. In any case, we know that Abraham was willing on more than one occasion to risk Sarah for his own skin. God did not test Abraham with Sarah. God tested him with the apple of his eye, his only son Isaac. If God requires it, how far am I willing to go? How much will I give before I draw the line? What is my pressure point? Will I allow God to take me to it for His glory?

Don't miss the focal point as we move on. Faith changes us. Faith changed Abraham from a man who was dependent upon his father to a man who was willing to give up his son. Faith changes a scoffing Sarah into the mother of Israel.

We find the patriarchs Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph in verses 20-23.

(Heb 11:20-23 KJV) **By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. {21} By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff. {22} By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. {23} By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. (See also verses 24-29).**

Each are commended for the exercise of faith in different contexts. Isaac, who blesses Jacob and Esau, (not Esau and Jacob) has managed to lay hold on the future promises of God concerning them. Jacob, the man who always leaned on his own resources is now found leaning on his staff, has also learned to lean on the promises of God.

Now comes that exemplar of faith, Moses himself. Moses is the man whose faith caused him to refuse to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, preferring

to suffer the reproach of Christ (interestingly), and while bringing down the wrath of Egypt upon him, brought down the blessing of God. What caused this man to take this kind of risk and pay this price? It was biblical faith. It was the faith which first stripped him, again, of his own self-sufficiency, and then endowed him with a sense of great efficiency.

The list goes on with mighty deeds, courageous victories and unspeakable suffering. Verses 30-38 continue this list.

So, what have we seen? We have seen the proof of faith, and the power of faith. Now we make a final, but very familiar observation. It was intimated already in verse 13. Its full expression is in verses 39 and 40.

(Heb 11:39-40 KJV) And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: {40} God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

This final reminder is what I like to call:

III. THE PARADOX OF BIBLICAL FAITH.

We must not leave with any starry eyed illusions concerning faith. When called through fiery trials, more than one dear saint of God has missed the critical point that these of whom the world was so unworthy all died, without exception, without having received the promises. Even our Messiah, hanging on the cross was denied, at least at that point, the fulfillment of the promises His Father had made to Him. The paradox, simply stated, is this: Very often, the stronger one grows in faith, the less obvious it may be that God is honoring His promises to that person. Are there times when the walls of Jericho do come tumbling down for us? There certainly are. But, more often than not, we wait for a final day of confirmation, a final day of vindication.

Why must this be so? It must be this way so that all of God's people, in every generation, may share in

God's plan, so that none may have any advantage over any others. From the earliest believers until that final believer is called in the last day, each is brought onto the same playing field. Each is gifted with the same opportunity. Each is put on the same starting line. And what may that opportunity be? What is this race that is set before us? It is the privilege we have learned over and over again throughout our study of Hebrews. It is the privilege to lay hold on the promises of God by faith.

Whatever it is at this very moment that is hindering you in your forward movement with Christ, boils down to the issue of faith. This is the hour, this is the moment, to pack your mule and carry Isaac up onto that altar and offer him to God, believing that God will accomplish His purpose, and He will not harm you if you will just let go and let God do what He wants to do with you.

THE EXERCISE OF FAITH

Heb. 12:1-2 - Chapter Thirty Four

THE EXERCISE OF FAITH

Intro: It doesn't take a degree in biblical languages in order to come to the conclusion that the chapter break between Hebrews 11 and 12 is not to our advantage.

What we already know is that whenever we see the word wherefore, we always want to look and see what it's "there for". In the case of verse 1, the original word for wherefore means consequently.

Consequently, as a result of what we have already learned, it is time to come to some conclusions. And what exactly have we learned about faith during the last few sessions? We have learned that biblical faith is the act of laying hold on the promises of God in a way that enables us to obey God. We have shown you how God sees biblical faith as empirical evidence, as proof that His plan is in effect and working. We have shown you how biblical faith has changed the lives of those who have rested in it. We have warned you that none of us will fully benefit from the employment of our faith until we have all finished our walk of faith. None of us will, according to 11:40, be made perfect or mature ahead of anyone else.

So, what are we to do with all this knowledge we have gained about faith? How are we to respond to the last few studies on biblical faith? How may we apply these truths to our personal lives? That is what we are about to learn in chapter 12 as we learn how the exercise of biblical faith always exercises the believer. Let's revert to the old habit of using key words. We will only cover one of those words in this session, the word *look*.

I. REMEMBER OUR LEADER.

(Heb 12:1-2 KJV) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, {2} Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

A. The first fact we learn is that a great cloud of witnesses surrounds us.

There is no doubt in any serious student's mind that our author is going to make an analogy by using the metaphor of the Roman arena. The cloud of witnesses is the collection of spectators in this divine Olympic. The question is who are the witnesses? Are they the athletes of faith who have already run the race? Are they the hosts of all who are living, believers, unbelievers, and angelic onlookers?

The immediate context would seem to argue that they are those who have gone on ahead of us, who, themselves, will not experience full redemption one second ahead of us or behind us. I have always been of the conviction that those who have gone on before us in Christ are not observing this earthly scenario. I have been of the conviction that their race has been run and their suffering is over. But I may be wrong. And, if there is any verse in the Word of God that would argue for the idea that the dead in Christ are observing this race, it would have to be this verse. You feel free to make up your own mind. For the moment, I rest my admittedly shaky position with Kenneth Wuest who said:

"Vincent and Alford see those saints looking down

from heaven observing the lives of those on earth. The present writer cannot bring himself to go that far. Rather than seeing the witnesses as spectators looking at this earthly scene from heaven, it would seem nearer the correct interpretation here to think of these first century readers running their Christian race, not having in mind the witnesses of 11:4-40 as spectators, but rather their testimony as examples urging them on to faith in Messiah as High Priest.”

This one fact we all know. We know that whether or not they see us now, the day will come when the secrets of all men’s hearts will be revealed. That is a great comfort to the faithful, and a great embarrassment to the disobedient. You and I may have committed secret sins this week. We may have even confessed them. We may be forgiven, thank God, for committing them. They will still be known.

There is a second fact we learn from these verses:

B. We are now the ones who are to be running.

This is our hour. One of my children said to me, “Dad, if you could do anything you wanted to do, anything at all, what would it be?” I answered, “Find a nice aluminum fishing boat and disappear into the sunset.” She asked, I answered. But we all know that we who know Christ do not have that option, not at least until we are put out to pasture. We may go into the desert place and rest-a-while, but only to regain our strength for the race. We were not called to fishing boats. We were called to the arena. We were called to be soldiers, farmers, boxers, and runners, according to Paul. Life is not a rose bed. It is a race. The third fact we learn is:

C. We must turn from the past. We are required to set aside all hindrances to that race.

The author specifically mentions two, the weight, and the sin. Both easily beset us. There is some debate about what the weight is; there is no debate about what sin is. The argument is that victory is determined by small margins, not by great margins. The slightest extra ounce of fat on the runner will

likely cost him the race. The slightest breaking of training, or indiscretions, can cost him the race. Like excess fat, these exceptions and indiscretions attach themselves to us slowly and they are hard to shed!

During a recent Olympiad one of the contestants was a young man who had gotten out of shape. He had started smoking; he had gained weight, and had generally lost his cutting edge. He put the cigarettes away, shed the weight, put himself back under discipline, and ultimately came out as a winning competitor. That should be very encouraging to all of us. Our author assumes we will start this race in less than perfect condition. He assumes we will need to set aside some careless habits and attitudes. And it is never too late to run in this race. You can decide to do it today. The fourth fact:

D. We must focus on the present. We must run this race with patience.

Young people have a tendency to put off until tomorrow what must be done today. They would rather focus on the future. They can easily see themselves driving the Beemer. They just can’t see doing tonight’s homework. That is the sin of youth.

Old folks have a tendency to withdraw from yesterday instead of banking on today. They want to revert to how it was and, perhaps even what great champions they once were. They are easily tempted to shirk from their duties, usually, as we will see later, out of bitterness.

None of us, neither the young nor the old can, afford the luxury of focusing anywhere but on the present, and that requires running with patience. We are to be aggressively seeking, by God’s grace, to overcome the obstacles that lie in front of us. We already know that this wonderful word for patience is both passive and active. Passively, it helps us endure the storm. Actively, it is the picture of the man who is determined to make progress in the storm.

So, have you lost your focus? Are you tired? Do the sidelines look more appealing to you than ever

before? The solution is very simple. Get your eyes off the sidelines. Your hour to rest will be here soon enough. This is your hour to run! And that brings us to the next idea. We ask ourselves, how do we keep our eyes off the sidelines? The answer is in the next fact:

E. We forsake all for the future. We must fix our eyes on the Leader.

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith...”
(Heb. 12:2a)

If we had the proverbial nickel for every word that has been written on these two words, author and finisher, I believe we could build a new church building somewhere. Let me provide you only with what I believe to be the most honest representation of what the language represents and the Holy Spirit intended.

Behind the original word for author, is the idea of a leader. Behind the original word for finisher is the idea of completion or perfection. Knowing that we are speaking here of the race of faith, I can come to only one reasonable conclusion. It is the Holy Spirit's intention that we, the runners, look ahead to the One who has run the race before us. He is the leader of the race, for none have run it as well as He. He has also completed it. He is our example, our model, and our hero! He set the pace for this marathon. We will never run as fast as He did, but we are a part of His team.

I heard a runner interviewed who was speaking about her strategy. The correspondent asked her if she realized how far ahead she was of the competition. She said, “I never glance back. I never look to the side. I keep my eyes ahead at all times.” It would spare us a great deal of difficulty if we would learn from her. In another place in God's Word, Paul said:

(Phil 3:13-14 KJV) Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those

things which are before, {14} I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

And we understand what Paul said. We understand that he had his eye on the prize, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. We understand that. We agree with that. But sometimes that prize seems to be just too far away. We need something closer to focus our eyes on. We need to focus on the lead runner in the race, the pace setter, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

And how do we keep our eyes set upon Him? Do we do it by conjuring up images of Christ in our minds? I don't think so. We do it by mimicking His ways, by following in His steps. As Peter stated it so beautifully:

(1 Pet 2:20-21 KJV) For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. {21} For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

I am told that the greatest risk of having an accident occurs within the first two weeks of owning your new car. The reason is obvious. The driver is too easily tempted to take his eyes off the road while getting familiar with what's inside the car. Our greatest risk of failure in the race of faith comes when we take our eyes off Christ.

But we still have not fully answered our question, what does it mean to look unto Jesus? What is it about Christ, specifically, that we are to keep on our minds during our time trials. Hebrews says:

“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.” (Heb. 12:2)

He had a motive. He exchanged present suffering for

future joy. That is the ultimate in deferred gratification. We have received the same invitation. We may invest in future joy for present suffering.

In another Olympic competition, spectators for a ski competition were not only treated to record breaking performances, they were treated to a spectacle of joy, the likes of which have probably never been seen in Olympic history, as the Japanese team came from way behind to steal all the honors. And you have never seen such uninhibited joy in all your life. The athletes were like little kids, jumping and running and hugging and piling on top of each other and falling on their backs on the snow and kicking their legs and then doing the whole thing over again as the crowds screamed with ecstasy. And what joy it was, with tears flowing down their cheeks, as this come-from-behind nation saw their flag raised to the highest position.

But that was no joy at all, in comparison to the uncontained joy that will enrapture us all, at the end of our race. Imagine the ecstasy, the exuberance, and the wild abandon, which will belong to those who have faithfully run the race. We do not think enough of that future hour. We do not invest wisely enough in it. We do not picture ourselves at that grand and glorious day!

It is that joy which helps us “despise” this present struggle. For our Savior, it was enduring the cross. For us, we are still making up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions. But it is the same race.

When the King James Version uses the term despise it usually means something different than what we assign to us. Despise does not mean to hate. It means, to count something as having no value, no significance, no meaning. In this respect, Esau despised his birthright (Gen. 25:34). He counted it of no value and no significance. He profaned it.

The King of Glory who had known nothing but honor, and glory and power and might and majesty submitted Himself to the lowest form of indignity known to man. And He thought of it as of little sig-

nificance. He thought nothing of the shame because He saw the joy that was set before Him at the end of the race.

We understand that this is our whole problem with the Christian life - learning how to place the right value on the right things. I heard the testimony of a man who was living a pretty fast-tracked life as a successful executive when he was saved. The thought of becoming a pastor was the most unappealing, boring career choice that could come to his mind. One day, he was traveling from a meeting with a man who had become a pastor, a man who, like himself, had been very successful in the business world. He was puzzled at the man’s willingness to make the change and asked him why he did it. The pastor replied effectively how that he had come to realize that in the final analysis, we can only take one thing with us when we leave this earth - and that is the fruit of our ministry with the Word of God in the lives of others. He stated that he knew of no better way to invest eternity than to invest in the lives of people. He said, “If there are folks who are willing to support me while I do it, so much the better!”

That man had placed the right value on the right things. He knew what to despise. He knew what to value. You and I, each of us, will be in the business of buying and selling all week. We will be in the business of making that choice over and over and over. What really matters? What is really of value? What are we really investing our lives in? Our time? Our hopes and our dreams? Our money?

One misplaced step, only one, can dash a skater’s dream for gold, a skier’s hope for the record, and a sledder’s intent for the prize. We do not have to look very far back on the week behind us to know that we do not count our misplaced steps by ones and twos but by dozens. Paul said:

(Phil 3:7-8 KJV) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. {8} Yea doubtless, and I count

**all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of
Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss
of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win
Christ,**

Is your eye on the prize?

Note: Our outline continues in the next chapter.

STAY IN TRAINING

Heb. 12:3-13 - Chapter Thirty Five

STAY IN TRAINING

Intro: A clichéd joke has a man walking up to his friend and asking, “What do you think of the race?” His friend replies, “What race?” The man replies, “The human race. Don’t you wish you were in it?” There is another kind of race, however, which is reserved only for those who are in Christ. It is the race that we are running in light of that great cloud of witnesses which we spoke about in our last study of Hebrews.

This race is not an option for us, but it should be our choice. It is the race we run joyfully, and yet, to some extent, fearfully, lest we should become castaways or disqualified.

We will not return to the first two verses which we have already examined, except to rename them in this outline. There we learned that we are to:

I. REMEMBER OUR LEADER.

(Heb 12:1-2 KJV) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, {2} Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

This great example, Jesus Christ, is the One upon whom we glue our eyes, never even looking to the sidelines, much less looking back. We saw His example as He set aside present gratification in exchange

for future joy. Enduring the cross, He despised (or counted as worthless) the shame for the joy that was set before Him. That is why we are to look to Jesus and keep our eyes upon Him.

But we are to do more than look, as verse 3 admonishes us:

(Heb 12:3 KJV) For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

We are to consider Him. That is the Greek analogizomai (analogizomai - an-al-og-id'-zom-ahee). You may recognize our English word analyze as being akin to this word. It means to consider and ponder something. It is from an old word that means to reckon, to compare, and to weigh.

When we are counting the personal cost of this race we must have a standard against which to compare. Whatever example or purpose could ever be sufficient enough to motivate me to run this painful marathon? Only my prayerful, careful consideration of my Captain, Jesus Christ, who leads me by His example, is sufficient.

He is not asking you to pay any price He was not willing to pay. This is the one who endured such great contradiction of sinners. We have not yet suffered in life what our Leader suffered. Nor have we yet suffered what He suffered in death. Vs. 4:

(Heb 12:4 KJV) Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

What is our author saying to us? And how is this going to help me? It has been said that, when everything is considered, track is the most physically demanding and painful of all sports. It is certainly

not the most entertaining, but it is, ultimately, the most demanding on the human body. In addition, in this sport, the runner competes against himself, more than in any other sport. He battles his body and he battles his mind. You may not see his lips move, but you may be sure that he is carrying on a great argument with himself as he pushes himself to the very edge of his capabilities. Is it worth it? Can I endure?

The modern runner is at a great disadvantage at this point. He can only look within himself for the strength and motivation to carry on. The spiritual runner, on the other hand, finds the answer to those questions in Christ. When we consider Christ, it gives value and meaning to the price we pay for running this race. When we analyze Christ and His example, we see how little we have really paid, how carelessly we have really trained. We learn to place the right value on the struggle.

Now we look at those words, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood striving against sin” and we ask ourselves, what is the Holy Spirit’s intent? We know that Christ did resist against blood and that is the great contrast that is being pointed out. Most of us have not. That is the important lesson. Sometimes we need a gentle rebuke. We get to feeling sorry for ourselves.

That is not to say that we do not endure persecution. But it is a more subtle kind of persecution. It is the persecution that suggests we are intellectually backward, superstitious believers in myths. It is the persecution that calls us goody two-shoes when we try to maintain basic standards of righteousness. Whether we are called legalists or Pharisees or hateful, we know and understand that these forms of criticism, consistently applied, work on us, and they hurt.

When I was a little child, it didn’t take much of an imaginary wound before my parents would supply one of those coveted Band Aids. As I grew older, I had to supply more evidence for the wound. If there was no blood there was no need for a Band Aid.

Now, our Heavenly Father sympathizes with us, but if we keep nurturing our little hurts, how are we ever going to be tough enough to be a real contender in this great struggle against sin in all of its presentations? There is a time to coddle the babies. There is a time to say, “I am sorry son, it is going to get even worse before you die. The first 100 years are the hardest.”

There is so much more to say but we are absolutely committed to finishing these first 12 verses in this study. First, then, we are to remember our Leader. We will now group verses 5-11 under the heading:

II. RECONSIDER THE REQUIREMENTS.

(Heb 12:5 KJV) 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:

Have we forgotten? Have we forgotten what is required when running the race?

A. Understand Who it Is Who Trains Us.

What is the most important ingredient for athletic success? In a word, it is discipline. In the athletic world no one disputes the fact that certain bodies are more readily adapted to certain sports. A swimmer and a football player will train differently. But every now and then, just when we have really established our stereotypes, the fellow or girl with a most unlikely body excels in the most unlikely sport. Their discipline has more than compensated for their physical disadvantages. The power of sports is in the discipline. The disciplined runner wins the race.

1. Some of that discipline in the Christian race must come from within us. It must be the result of our own determination. Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27:

(1 Cor 9:24-27 KJV) Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. {25} And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. {26} I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: {27} But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

2. *Discipline from within is not enough.* In this eternal race of ours, some of that discipline must come from our Heavenly Father. We must understand that He is our trainer. He is our coach. He is our athletic instructor. That is why the instruction is here for us:

(Heb. 2:5b KJV) "...My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:

We already know that we despise something when we refuse to attach the proper value to it. I once had a friend who was in a jovial mood. His wife had served us all coffee in fancy cups while we stood on the balcony of his mountain cabin. Someone commented that he had a very beautiful cup. He said, "Oh, this is nothing!" And he heaved the cup, coffee and all off the balcony against a tree. He despised that bone china cup. And I might add, for at least a few minutes, his wife despised him. It was not a wise thing to do.

You and I look at our training, our chastening, and our discipline with all the wrong attitudes. We are tempted to despise it with Esau, to fear it, to run from it, and worse, to ignore the lesson we are to learn from it.

But, here is the most beautiful part of all: Our coach is our Father! He is not some uncaring stranger. He is the One who, more than anyone else in the world, wants what is best for us. The writer is going to pick up on the picture of the race again in just a

few verses, but for the moment, he wants us to see that our training is better pictured by the father who disciplines his son.

B. Understand the Process.

(Heb 12:6-8 KJV) For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. {7} If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? {8} But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

1. Chastening and scourging are reserved for those whom the Father loves.
2. We are all chastened and scourged. Every son. None of us are exempt from the process.
3. When we undergo chastening it is evidence that our Father is dealing with us.
4. God does not chasten and scourge those who are not His sons.

This tells us that the disciplining process is loving and it is performed by our Father. The process is evidence of our family relationship to Him.

C. Understand the Nature of this Process.

This process consists of two things. It consists of chastening and scourging. They are not synonymous. Chastening is performed in order to motivate us to do well. Scourging is performed in order to help us abstain from doing wrong. One is to correct us and bring us back in line. One is to direct us and move us forward. Both are required.

The teachers who are most disliked while we are in school are often the ones who are most loved and appreciated after we leave school. The ones who were the most demanding now hold the most of our respect.

We sometimes put the wrong spin on this whole

matter. We think that anytime chastening comes into our lives it is for the purpose of correcting something we have done wrong. We do not seek to avoid the chastening hand of God. We do not despise it. We value it. We welcome it. And, at times, we even ask God to increase it, so that we may not run this race in vain.

Many of us do not recognize the disciplining process when it comes upon us.

During the days that Knute Rockne was coaching Notre Dame, a sports columnist in a South Bend newspaper earned the reputation of being the meanest, most cutting writer in the country. The anonymous writer, who knew Notre Dame well, wrote about the team's weaknesses. He pointed out the mistakes of individual players. He told about those who were lazy, about those who broke training and didn't discipline themselves. This column made the players roaring mad. The truth hurt and players complained to Rockne. He listened with sympathy but said he could not stop the writer. He advised that the only way the players could do so was to go out and play the game so well that they would prove him wrong. Later it became known that the writer of the column was Knute Rockne himself!

Many of us do not recognize the hand of our Father in the events of life. We do not take enough time to realize that some of the trials and struggles which come upon us are from our divine Coach who desires nothing more than that we learn by our own exposure to ourselves and our weaknesses. Have you recognized any of your faults lately? Have you been exercised by God's disciplining hand, or has it been in vain?

D. Understand what your attitude must be in this process.

(Heb 12:9-10 KJV) Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? {10} For they verily for a few

days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

You respected your earthly father when he disciplined you. In fact, it was his discipline that commanded your respect. Do not be angry with your Heavenly Father. His motives are even higher and purer than your earthly father's motives were.

Vince Lombardi, the legendary coaching genius who was the only man to ever coach three consecutive world championship football teams once said, "I've never known a man worth his salt who, in the long run, deep down in his heart, did not appreciate the grind and the discipline. There is something in good men that truly yearns for and needs discipline."

Do you want to be better? Have you drawn on everything in yourself to be better for Christ? Are you ready to abide by the Father's training schedule? Do you understand the nature of this process of discipline?

E. Understand the Product of Discipline.

Did you notice what our writer tells us? We are disciplined for our profit, in order that we might be partakers, participators or recipients of His holiness. The Father's discipline produces the fruit of godliness in the life. Verse 11, builds on that thought:

(Heb 12:11 KJV) 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.

Godly discipline produces fruit in the life. We are all reaping the benefits of disciplines that were forced on us earlier in our lives. Some of it was even required of us when we did not see its value. Thankfully, we submitted to it and we have reaped the results ever since.

But there is a quiet warning in this verse. This peaceable fruit of righteousness comes only to those

who are exercised by this discipline. Some of us go to school and flunk. Some of us are in God's school-house, just to get by. Some of us cheat on our laps, our sit-ups, and our pushups. We put in the time, but we do not reap the benefit. We have wasted our time and the time of those who would lead and instruct us.

So, we have seen the mechanics of this thing we call chastening and scourging. We must reconsider the requirements and not forget the exhortation that reminds us that God disciplines all those whom He loves.

We close with the third point and the final thought of the hour. In this hour when we are called upon to run the race, we are to remember our Leader, the Lord Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. We are to reconsider the requirements: good old-fashioned discipline, the kind of discipline which leads to godliness. Finally, we must:

apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, {14} I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

III. RENEW OUR COMMITMENT TO RUN.

(Heb 12:12-13 KJV) Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; {13} And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Take heart, weary runner! Let the divine adrenaline flow through your veins. Pick up your pace! Send the orders down to those faltering knees. Fix your eyes on the goal. There is still time for healing. There is still time for confession. There is still time for reconciliation. There is still time for making things right. There is still hope. There is still a crown to be won - a prize to be cherished - the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!

If you are alive, there is hope! Fix your eyes on the finish line, and with the Apostle Paul, announce:

(Phil 3:13-14 KJV) Brethren, I count not myself to have

MOUNT ZION

Heb. 12:15-29 - Chapter Thirty Six

MOUNT ZION

Intro: When we turn on our televisions and come across television preachers and teachers, we often find some clues that reveal the stripe and color of the producers. For instance, if there are no instruments in the service, we are viewing the Church of Christ. When we see a lot of wild clothes, hairstyles, and a proliferation of jewelry on the participants, we are probably viewing charismatics. And when we see clean-cut preachers, speaking mainly on prophetic themes, using brilliant and dynamic graphics, we can almost be sure that we are watching the Seventh Day Adventists.

Just prior to writing these notes I encountered such a speaker who, while concluding his prophetic series, was unusually outspoken for an Adventist on the airwaves. He produced a list of eight offenses that, if indicated, proved that we were “of Babylon.” One of those offenses obviously included Sunday worship. One of those offenses was to be assigned if we, in any way, disobey the role of the Mosaic Law, which, (according to this speaker), is our authority to this very hour!

It is our intention to argue that if that is true, the author of Hebrews was, himself, “of Babylon”, and confused about the role of Moses’ law. You will observe, in our study of the last portion of Hebrews 12, one of the strongest, most emotional pleas to leave the Old Covenant behind, that you will find anywhere in the Word of God. The scriptures that we now examine were intended for Jews who were carelessly putting off their need to come under the New Covenant. The train was leaving the station. Jerusalem, the city of David was soon to be destroyed. Opportunity to receive Christ for many of them would soon be past.

As you approach verses 15 through 17, try to picture in your mind an author who knew that his warnings would likely be the last warnings these folks received. Sense the urgency with which he speaks. Push has come to shove. There are three things he wants his readers to do.

Verses 15 -17 Acknowledge the Danger.

Verses 18-24 Approach the Right Mountain.

Verses 25-29 Accept the Final Offer.

The time has come to act. Notice first, he wants us to:

I. ACKNOWLEDGE THE DANGER.

(Heb 12:15-17 KJV) Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; {16} Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. {17} For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

We have churches full of folks who have failed of the grace of God. They are full of folks who truly think they are Christians, but they have come short of the grace of God. They believe in Jesus. They may even call Him the Master of their lives. They may live good lives and abstain from the deadly sins. But they are just as lost as these Hebrews who believed generally in Jesus and loved Him. They have failed to come into the grace relationship. They have fallen behind, because, while they believed in all of the above, they are worshiping, as we will see, at the wrong mountain.

So, the question persists, what about us? Have we “looked diligently?” Have we taken stock of our souls to determine our true spiritual condition?

And just what is it, we ask, that we are to fear? What is the great danger these Hebrews faced? The danger is fornication. Not the kind of fornication that occurs between a man and a woman, but the kind of fornication that occurs between men and false gods. James struck on this same note when he said:

(James 4:4 KJV) Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

This is the adultery of which we speak. The fornication about which Hebrews speaks is the fornication of warming to and welcoming all that is good in all religions. The Bible teaches us that when we accept such an inclusive path, when we become ecumenists and syncretists and pluralists, we are despising the gospel. We are reckoning it of little value and importance.

When one turns his back on the gospel of Christ he has despised it, treated it as though it had little or no value. And that is the ultimate sin. The birthright, in this case, was the opportunity to inherit the promises of the New Covenant that were offered first to these folks who, by birth were Jews.

That is the tragedy. That is the danger. One of the greatest surprises we will receive when we get to heaven is to discover how many folks had been around us, who though acting and behaving as good godly Christians, were not truly saved by grace. If we do not acknowledge this great danger we cannot heed the warning. Many of these Hebrews who probably did not mind being called Christians had failed the grace test.

This leads us to the question, how do I know that I have truly availed myself of the grace of God? How may I be absolutely sure that I have not despised my

birthright? And so, our author unfolds one of the most beautiful analogies that we find anywhere in the Word of God. He wants us to be sure that we:

II. APPROACH THE RIGHT MOUNTAIN.

Verses 18-24.

A. The Wrong Mountain.

In verses 18-21 we see the wrong mountain, the old mountain, specifically, Mt. Sinai. That is the mountain where the Law, the Old Covenant was delivered. Note its description:

(Heb 12:18-22 KJV) For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, {19} And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: {20} (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: {21} And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) {22} But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

Read the descriptors of this event slowly and envision this indescribable experience. When we read these stories of Israel and Moses approaching this mount we always leave with the same taste in our mouth. It was an awesome and fearful experience. You may read about this experience in Exodus 19 and 20 and in Deuteronomy 4 and 5. Bible students have been to the foot of Sinai and trembled with Moses and Israel on more than one occasion.

While we will not go into a separate description of each of the elements present, we can readily con-

clude, there has never been a phenomenal occurrence before or after this event that has made such an indelible impression on the history of mankind.

It was just not the phenomena that struck fear into the hearts of the Israelites that day. It was their nearness to the Living and Holy God. It was His voice in the thunder that melted them like Jell-O. And, according to verse 19, when they heard that voice, the voice of God Himself, they entreated Moses that it should not be spoken to them anymore. Curiosity turned to nervousness. Nervousness turned to fear. Fear, finally turned to sheer terror.

And this is what happens to each of us who would approach the living God at the base of Mt. Sinai. It has always been so with men, that our sin has separated us from the presence of the living God. And it should be added that it is that very sin which causes us to prefer that our priests and our leaders, our Moseses, would enter the presence of God as proxies and substitutes on our behalf. The Bible tells us that even Moses' very being trembles in this Presence, for as good a man as Moses was, he was still a man such as we, a man of sin.

There was no joy imbued to the hearts of Israel as a result of this experience, only fear and a new sense of the reality of the great distance that lay between them and God. And nor, is there any joy for those who would seek to worship at Mt. Sinai today.

Some of us find a touch of irony in all of this. To this very day no one really knows where Mt. Sinai is! We have some guesses, but they are barely educated guesses. The location of this hill, the most important geographic location in the history of Israel, has been lost! The location of Sinai is of more historical importance than the locations where the Red Sea and Jordan were crossed. It is almost as though God wanted us to see that Sinai's purpose and her usefulness would fade away. Sinai's importance, as significant as it was, has paled in contrast to another great mountain, a new and better place of worship. Consider now:

B. The Right Mountain.

(Heb 12:22-24 KJV) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, {23} To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, {24} And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

During one of the worst slumps the Sacramento Kings endured there was a newspaper article in the Sacramento Bee which led off with words to this effect: "All the Kings need now is a blindfold and a cigarette." If we took that statement literally it would have made no sense at all. Furthermore, if we did not understand that blindfolds and cigarettes are associated with executions, that statement would have made no sense. You had to understand that the statement was a metaphor and you had to understand what the metaphor intended.

That is exactly what we are experiencing in verse 22. There is an earthly Mount Zion. I have stood on it. And years ago, Israel's second king, King David, went to the location of that Mountain and he built the city of David, the city we know as Jerusalem. And there, the earthly temple, the place where Israelites worshiped God after they entered the Promised Land, was built right on Mount Zion. So, in the day when Hebrews was written Israel was still approaching God from the location of a mountain.

But now we see a twist. The Mount Zion that our author speaks of cannot be touched with the human hand. The city of Jerusalem concerning which he speaks is a heavenly city. Additionally, an innumerable company of angels is with the general assembly, literally the festal gathering of saints who are there. And God is there, and the spirits of just men made perfect do not tremble there. They do not tremble because they have been made perfect through the

sprinkling of the blood of the Lord Jesus whose LAST blood sacrifice was superior to Abel's FIRST blood sacrifice. And, this is the mountain of salvation to which we are called, the mountain of the New Covenant.

Just men, made just by the blood of Christ! That which the law could not do, the blood of Christ accomplished. The Mosaic Law could only make me tremble. The blood of Christ joins me with the festal gathering of the saints of all ages.

It should not take a thinking person long to choose his worship mountain. And yet, that is exactly what was happening. These procrastinating, deliberating Jews, bound and steeped in the traditions of their fathers, were still entering Jerusalem's temple on the temple mount. They were still under the bondage of Sinai.

The apostle Paul saw and taught this very same thing in Galatians 4 where he used yet another metaphor to teach this same truth. He said, beginning in verse 22:

(Gal 4:22-26 KJV) For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. {23} But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. {24} Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. {25} For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. {26} But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

The Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is the mother of all who are the children of promise. We cannot see our Mt. Zion, our heavenly Jerusalem, or our Savior. But we know and believe it is all true, by faith.

And so our author has admonished us to acknowl-

edge the danger that we could despise (or count as worthless) this invitation. He has urged us to approach the right mountain - Mt. Zion, not Mt. Sinai. Finally, in a grand invitational plea he urges us to:

III. ACCEPT THE FINAL OFFER.

(Heb 12:25-29 KJV) See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: {26} Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. {27} And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. {28} Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: {29} For our God is a consuming fire.

Notice why this warning is so serious. It is serious because of what we are doing when we neglect this offer. Do you see the word refuse? It is the exact same Greek word we found in verse 19 when the children of Israel entreated that the Word should not be spoken to them. They were refusing the Word.

This gospel is a fearful gospel, not because of the joy it produces in the heart of those who accept it, but because of the responsibility it places on those who reject it. There is no neutral position with God. Those who have not accepted Christ have refused Him by default.

It is serious because there is no escape for those who reject this offer. No escape!

(Heb 12:25 KJV) 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:

It is serious because the consequences are even graver than the consequences of rejecting the old law.

{26} Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. {27} And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Admittedly, we do not know exactly what future shaking this author is talking about for sure. But we are sure that men will once again tremble before this God who will once again shake heaven and earth. In the great coming hour of God's vengeance, they will literally call upon the quaking mountains to fall upon them.

These warnings are so foreign to our age. The god of our culture is not such a God, but the God of the Bible is such a God. There will be vengeance. There will be retribution. There will be accountability. And in that hour, when men would have inherited the blessing, there will be no place of repentance, no hope of forgiveness.

And is there a lesson for God's elect?

(Heb 12:28-29 KJV) Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: {29} For our God is a consuming fire.

We have left some verses untouched and some issues unanswered as we have moved down through the passage, and we may not have all of the threads in place for properly understanding and relating to every phrase of this passage. But we have learned enough, read enough, seen enough, and heard enough to know that this gospel invitation that we have just experienced stands in stark contrast to our modern "Won't you let Jesus be the Master of your

life" invitation that we usually hear today.

As already indicated, these Hebrews would have probably gladly opted for such an easy presentation of the gospel, but the true gospel consisted of far more than a superficial presentation with an emotional invitation. He wanted these believers to know and understand exactly what the gospel was in light of their culture. He wanted them to know and understand that their agreement to the facts was not sufficient to save them. They had either received the New Covenant by faith or they were still worshipping at the foot of the wrong mountain and under the cloud of Judgment.

Do you really know that you are saved? Do you really know and understand why and how men are saved? At the foot of which mountain do you worship?



LAST MINUTE REMINDERS

Hebrews 13:1-7 - Chapter Thirty Seven

LAST MINUTE REMINDERS

Intro: While it is true that every passage in the Word of God is worthy of careful explanation and exegesis, we must also concede that there are times when it is equally important just to read the verses and let them stand simply as written, so that we do not “clutter them up” with too many of our own ideas. It is our intention to cover this final chapter of Hebrews in this manner.

The chapter does lend itself to outlining, as the instructions fall into easily recognizable groupings. Guthrie notes that verses 1-3 include exhortations regarding the social life, verses 4-6 are exhortations regarding the private life, and verses 7-9 include directions regarding religious life. While those certainly are reasonable groupings, however, I have chosen to set the organization aside. We'll simply walk on down through these verses, one or two at a time, hopefully, not saying too much about any specific statement.

As we approach verse 1 you may remember what we noted at the very beginning when we said that Hebrews begins as a thesis and ends as a letter, (or we should say, it ends like a love letter!)

We will leave the scholars to their musings regarding this abrupt change in style, a change, which has prompted all sorts of suggestions concerning whether an additional author is involved, or whether this material was added to the book at a later time. This author's simplistic response is that chapter 13 is the dead give away to the human authorship of Paul. His inimitable style pervades, his vocabulary abounds, and his loving way with people permeates the fabric of these closing, parting words and final instructions.

Verse 1.

(Heb 13:1 KJV) **Let brotherly love continue.**

So commonplace is this admonition that we are almost tempted to skip over it. And yet it is commonplace in so many of the New Testament epistles for the very reason that this command requires so much of our attention.

The spirit of love, once achieved in the assembly, does not continue on indefinitely, unless we all tend to it and nurture it. We cannot presume on this fragile flower of love. It requires all of our attention. Young people have to interpret it into their actions and responses to parents, teachers, and adults. The young married in congregations are often far more exclusive and cliquish than they ever imagine themselves to be - especially willing to forsake the traditions of the family and faith. Older folks, with their tendencies toward cynicism and isolation, must also nurture this gentle flower of love.

You already know and understand that brotherly love is philedelphian love. It is the dynamic which works in all of us, compelling us to accept and love fellow Christians who are in Christ, as though they were part of our own families, and in a real, spiritual sense, they are.

We shall not stick the thermometer in our spiritual mouths in order to ask ourselves, Are we loving enough yet? Is the pastor or teacher loving enough? Is the congregation or student body loving enough? Rather, we will just recommit to the task at hand, to seek at every juncture to let love reign among us.

Verse 2.

**(Heb 13:2 KJV) Be not forgetful to entertain strangers:
for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.**

When we speak of entertaining strangers we are neither speaking of entertainment as we know it, nor of strangers as we know them. The two words are actually from only one in the Greek, specifically: 5381. philonexia, fil-on-ex-ee'-ah; from G5382; hospitableness:—entertain strangers, hospitality.

When we break this compound word apart we come up with the two words love and stranger. Hospitality is “stranger love.” The biblical requirement to be hospitable carries far greater weight than many people realize. You are aware, for example, that bishops and elders are required to be given to stranger love and all of the congregation, regardless of their other responsibilities, are required to demonstrate it according to Romans 12:13 and 1 Timothy 3:2.

In general, the Christian church has taken the position down through the centuries that this hospitality is to be directed particularly to our brethren who are in Christ. There is nothing in the Greek, however, which limits this, only such verses as, Galatians 6:10:

(Gal 6:10 KJV) As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

History tells us that this practice was abused in the early church. Various groups finally had to set limits on the obligations of God's people because fast talking, lazy freeloaders managed to squeeze this generous spirit of early Christians for all it was worth.

But even so, the command remains, and frankly, I think we will one day have to admit to ourselves that the advent of the easy availability of motels has impoverished us from a wonderful source of fellowship and friendship with brethren in Christ. If you will pause to think about it, we may even be hindering God's working by this attitude in us which would rather pay someone's motel bill than put them up in

our spare room.

And how may we be so sure we are likely hindering the working of God? The rest of the verse suggests it:

**(Heb 13:2 KJV) Be not forgetful to entertain strangers:
for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.**

That is a very romantic thought, the thought that angels may be traveling through and we may well entertain one. I, for one, will not dash any cold water on the possibility, though I clearly do not see the role and functions of angels in the same light as the Old Testament Jews saw them.

I do think, however, that it was not our author's intent to necessarily suggest that we may be likely to entertain angels if we open our homes up to strangers. It is more likely that the point he is making is that we can never know how important or significant a simple act of love can be! Abraham, through a simple act of kindness, initiates a string of events that ultimately changes the whole course of history. His simple act of hospitality ended up as a history-making event.

In our dreams we imagine ourselves doing great things for God. The truth is that the great things we do for God are often the results of the little things we do, almost out of habit. A simple act of kindness may have more eternal consequence than a great feat demanding much energy and effort. Practice the little graces. You never know when one of those little kindnesses may have great eternal import and consequence. We want to determine in our hearts not to let little deeds and little opportunities slip through our fingers. Many a humble Sunday School teacher, country preacher, and backward rural Christian have spawned, by their faithfulness in little things, great forward movements for God.

But, as we move along to verse 3, keep the admonition in mind: be not forgetful. It is easy to forget this obligation. It is easy to get out of the habit. It is easy to let someone else practice this little grace. Don't

forget!

Now, we see another area where we tend to forget:

Verse 3.

(Heb 13:3 KJV) Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

Out of sight is out of mind. A number of years ago a group of New Tribes missionaries were captured and placed in bondage. As months turned into years, prayer support dropped off. The problem is, it was so easy to forget them. It is not natural to keep those who are suffering outside of our view in the forefront of our prayers.

How do we keep our prayers for these missionaries fresh? We do our best to identify with them in their adversity. We put ourselves behind bars with them.

The problem is there are hundreds; no, there are thousands just like them, quietly suffering around the world for the cause of Christ. Our hearts are not tender enough toward them. Out of sight is out of mind. And so we need to be reminded to remember.

And here is another command we need to keep in mind:

Verse 4.

(Heb 13:4 KJV) Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

It would probably help us to understand this a little better if we worded this as the Greek does, in the form of a command, rather than as a statement. In other words, it would be better to read it: Let marriage be held in honour by all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled.

These are two wonderful commands which cover all

the extreme views which were prevalent both then and now concerning marriage. If marriage is holy and to be held in high honor, then certainly any church or group which forbids it is unholy. To forbid marriage is to despise it, not to honor it. The very thought of celibacy as a Christian practice should be repulsive to holy men, unless they have been specifically led of God to do so. Why would holy men of God put themselves in the place of temptation? The fruit of this ungodly practice of forced celibacy has been very evident in those churches which endorse it, both among the men and the women, who dishonor marriage. Let marriage be held in honor.

The second command deals with the other extreme, let the marriage bed be undefiled. How is the marriage bed defiled? It makes sense to conclude that the last half of verse 4 explains how this defilement can take place.

...but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Do not think that you can cross these lines, then quickly ask for forgiveness, and be freed from the consequences. God may forgive, but God will judge, both fornication and adultery. The word whoremonger comes from the Greek pornos. Its use in ancient times clearly includes illicit sexual acts with persons of the same and with the opposite gender. It is any illicit sexual conduct. Adultery is a narrower word that has to do with any act which breaks the marriage vows themselves.

Don't do it. Don't even think about it! In fact, it is especially dangerous to think about it.

(1 Cor 6:18 KJV) Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.

And what is the overall lesson of the verse? Avoid either extreme. Do not demean marriage. It is clean and holy and wonderful, and intimacy can even be playful and joyful. Do not defile marriage by participation in sexual sin.

Open your eyes and look at the worldlings who promise liberty in the name of open mindedness. Watch their end. Watch the ultimate results of their ways. Then turn your eyes on God's people who have been quietly, respectfully, and pleurably enjoying all that marriage has to offer - year after year after year. And ask yourself - who really has the liberty? Which ones are really the open minded ones? He who laughs last, laughs best!

Verse 5.

(Heb 13:5 KJV) 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 does not have to do so much with our speech as it has to do with the way we present ourselves as citizens, the way we are viewed in society.

Are we known for covetousness (desiring what should not be ours)? Are we content with such things as we have? A good indicator can be found when the bills come in at the beginning of the month. None of us are free from the temptation to covet and desire what we should not have, but there is a little nugget which can help us in this struggle. Again, it is found in the second part of the verse:

(Heb 13:5 KJV) 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 need to surround ourselves with material things may, in itself, reveal a greater problem in our hearts. Covetousness is to the heart what physical lust is to the body. Both promise more than they deliver.

We really think we will be satisfied if only we can have something. The newness wears off and we want to have something else. When we look really close at these tendencies and get brave enough to examine ourselves we ask, why? Why do we fall into this

trap? Why does this need to be satisfied with things exist?

The answer is, you have a vitamin deficiency that is exacerbating these cravings. In a word, you are not enjoying the presence of Christ, the one who will never leave nor forsake you.

I have never, in my life, seen a man fall into an illicit affair with another woman who was enjoying his inner relationship with Christ at the time he fell! I have never seen a man who heaped up great credit card debts who was being satisfied with His relationship with Christ.

The ultimate answer to temptation in any form is in keeping the presence of Christ foremost in one's thinking and experience. When we are absorbed with the presence of Christ we are not unduly attracted by the temptations of this world.

We all know this. We simply forget these things. The flesh militates against this truth. We need to be reminded, and reminded, and reminded. And then, we need to be reminded again.

Verse 6.

(Heb 13:6 KJV) So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

How does this verse fit in with what has gone on before? Let me tell you what I believe Hebrews has been saying. Our author has been talking about citizenship, our conduct as citizens of God's kingdom in this world. This conduct demands that we treat marriage honorably and that we do not fornicate. The world has a big problem with that. They can't help themselves. They are victims of their own lusts. Satan has his way with them at his whim. This citizenship of ours demands that we not be caught up with material things. The world is obsessed with material things.

How is the world going to see the power of God in us if we are caught up in those very things? We abstain from these sins so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

We are self-contained in Christ. We do not need to be caught up with the desires or the fears with which the world is occupied. We have the living Christ abiding in us.

Verse 7.

I have already hinted at what I feel to be the interpretation of verse 7. Let's finish by looking at it:

(Heb 13:7 KJV) 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.

The word remember in this verse is slightly different than the pleas which we have already read, (concerning remembering and not forgetting these practical truths). When we are told here to remember our spiritual leaders, we are being told to be mindful of their own lives and examples, their own citizenship, the fruits of their own obedience to Christ. Those who were saved before us have had the benefit of applying these principles.

True spiritual leaders will be enjoying the benefits of godly living in their own homes, in their own marriages, with their own self control, right here and now. Take a long look at the outcome of godly living among the examples God has placed around you. When we consider the end and the results of Christian living, we understand the importance of doing things God's way.

God has given the body of Christ many godly examples of biblical principles that have been applied to homes and families over the years so that we may value and apply these truths to our own lives. Are all leaders perfect in all areas? No. If they were, they

would be in glory. They too, are growing.

But in spite of the frailty of human flesh we have living trophy cases all around us of men and women who have lived like citizens of heaven and not citizens of earth. As a result, they have reaped just a little bit of heaven right here and now.

Mark the perfect man. Mark the godly woman. Each of you, in your heritage and in your history, have the memories of godly men and women who set the pace for you. Thank God for them. Treasure them. Remember them, and by God's grace, follow them as they have followed Christ.

Our present generation is the first generation in the life of our nation which has no legacy of living heroes, no great spiritual giants, no larger-than-life models of what God can do in a heart wholly sold out to Him. Covet, by God's grace that you will stand in the gap and become one of those who, even in your youth, can be an example in word, in spiritual citizenship, in love, in faith, and in purity.

In so doing, heaven only knows how many angels you may entertain unawares. Heaven only knows how many little faithful deeds will end up paying unbelievable eternal dividends and all of them, tax-free.

We are of course, speaking primarily to believers. If one does not know Christ, if one does not hold to the values taught in this book, the exhortations of Hebrews 13 will make very little sense at all.

Our invitation to you is taste and see that the Lord is good! And please be on your guard! For you see, until the day comes when you enjoy the presence of the indwelling Christ you will continually be susceptible to the whims of lust and covetousness, putting out one fire over here just in time to see another one rise somewhere else in your life. We invite you to come to know this Christ, the Christ who will never leave nor forsake you. He is the Christ who will be your helper and take away your fear.



HOLY GROUND

13:8-9 - Chapter Thirty Eight

HOLY GROUND

Intro: We have pointed out that Hebrews 13 is a collection of practical commands and last minute reminders very reminiscent of the writing style of the Apostle Paul. Additionally, we have noticed that Hebrews 13 does break itself easily into three divisions. We have instructions regarding our social life, our private life, and our religious life. Instead of outlining the chapter we simply choose to end the study of this marvelous book by browsing down through the verses one at a time. We now approach verse 8.

A. An Unchangeable Savior.

To address verse 8 properly we want to include verses 5 through 7 in our reading: I am going to emphasize a few words in order to aid us in our upcoming discussion:

(Heb 13:5-8 KJV) Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. {6} So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. {7} Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. {8} Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

We have already grappled with verse 7 and believe we have the mind of the Lord in understanding the intent of this command. Simply understood, we are to take special note of our spiritual leaders, those who have spoken the Word of God to us. As we follow their faith and observe the outcome of its working in their lives, we will benefit and be able to

better order our own lives.

We mention that, because we are now confronted with an interpretive question regarding verse 8:

(Heb 13:8 KJV) Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

The question is this: why does this verse appear here at this exact location? What was the author's intent? What connection does it have with what came before? I think the proper approach is as follows:

Why are we to be content with such things as we have? The answer is, He will never leave us nor forsake us. Why do we not need to fear what man can do unto us? The answer is the Lord is our helper. Why can we benefit by watching the examples of our godly leaders? The answer is Jesus Christ is the same.

Two thousand years have elapsed and still the principles remain. The principles remain true and the dynamics still work in our lives because Jesus Christ remains true. He remains the same, yesterday, today, and forever. He is the only constant in an ever-changing world.

An old philosopher was once asked if there was any statement which could be made which would always be true at all times. He responded with only one: This too, will pass. That is the one true statement. This too, shall pass. But the philosopher was wrong. There is one entity that does not change. It is Jesus Christ. He will not pass; He will not change. Therefore, we may rely on His promises that He will never leave us or forsake us. We may be as sure today that He is our helper as the author of Hebrews was that Christ was his helper.

Both the Americans and the British have standards in their respective bureaus of weights and measures. The thing that amazes us is that these bars must be measured every few years in order to determine if they have changed in length! When they change, they have to be re-manufactured. Not even a bar, sitting all by itself in an environmentally protected room is changeless. We set our clocks by the atom, and we still know the atom is not perfectly accurate. There is nothing known to man that is not subject to change, except God Himself!

That means we now take the opposite view to this book than taken by the world. The world says, why study a 2,000-year-old book? We say, why pin your hopes to a shooting star and the flux of men's opinions? Jesus Christ alone is the unchanging standard.

I think there is another reason why our author is pointing out this fact of the changelessness of Christ to these Hebrew readers. When we look at these Jews in Jesus' time, we find an interesting group of men, men who held to a wide range of foolish myths and doctrines. Jewish mythology is both horrendous and hilarious. Jews were suckers for everything that came along, except in one area. You did not mess with Jewish temple traditions. You did not mess with their law given at Mt. Sinai. So, the Jews were a bit of an anomaly. One the one hand, there was always a following for any rabbi with a little facial hair and the gift of speech holding any, off the wall, Johnny-come lately notion. On the other hand, the institution, the temple practices and the Law must never change.

And yet, this is exactly what Jesus Christ expects them to do. To follow Christ, these Jews must walk away from the Old Covenant, the law, and surrender to the New Covenant, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. And how shall we manage this? The Jew must know that while God's economies change, God does not. The Jew must know that while the covenant has changed, the Christ of the covenant has not changed.

I may be correct in that assumption or I may be

reading too much into the verse. Of this we are sure: we contend with change from the moment of our birth to the moment of our death. What little security we can find in stability is soon torn away from all of us. Nothing stays the same. No one stays the same, no one, except Jesus Christ. That is how we may be sure that these biblical principles, written thousands of years ago are as relevant to us as they were then. Now, look at:

B. An Unchanging Believer.

(Heb 13:9 KJV) 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.

To be "carried about" is to be transported about. Jude 12 makes reference to the apostates who are like clouds carried about with the winds. The words represent the same verb.

Paul encouraged the Ephesians and reminded them that God has given pastor teachers, among others, in order to protect God's people from being driven about.

(Eph 4:14 KJV) That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Regretfully, like hireling shepherds, most pastors no longer protect their sheep from every wind of doctrine, but rather they infect their sheep with all sorts of nonsense. But sadly, the sheep love to have it this way. Jeremiah 5:31 says:

(Jer 5:31 KJV) The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Divers (what we would call diverse) means various. Strange, means foreign and novel. Jews, in partic-

ular, as I have already noted, seemed to be gullible and vulnerable to every little twist of thought that blew through town. If we are behind them, it isn't by much.

In the next chapter we'll dig a little further into the last half of this verse. We will deal with the matter of establishing our hearts with grace and not with foods.

But first, we want to ask ourselves two simple questions. First, we will ask, "Why do folks get carried off with foolish doctrines?" Then, we will ask, "How can we recognize false religionists when we see them?"

Why do folks get carried off with foolish doctrines?

Consider just a few contributing elements: Boredom and frustration with the status quo; novelty; flattery from someone who recognizes we have a "deeper" understanding than most; special attention, personality and charisma; the need for security and self acceptance, self righteousness, lack of grounding which leads to gullibility; anger, resentment, and the need for personal freedom or gratification. This author sadly notes that he can attach real names and faces to each of these tendencies.

How can we recognize false religionists when we see them?

The following 20 traits are very common among the cults. Not all cults share all traits, but all share some. [Note: This is a collection from numerous informal sources. Feel free to distribute.]

1. Rejection or alteration of the doctrine of Biblical Inspiration. 2 Tim. 3:16
2. Additional "inspired" books, adding to God's Word. Rev. 22:18,19
3. Special Discovery. This often includes claims of "apostolic commissioning," commands from God to start new groups. 2 Peter. 1:20

4. Special in-depth Knowledge. False cultists often claim they have the truth that has been suppressed by apostate Christianity. 2 Peter 1:20 (It is important for cultists to "set themselves apart" from other religions.)

5. False Basis of Salvation. Human works always supplement or replace work of Christ among false cultists. Gal 1:6-9, Heb. 2:3,4

6. False understanding of Redemption. The Blood atonement is usually always rejected. Heb. 9:14

7. False understanding of Sin. Sin is denied, viewed as weakness, lack of education, etc., and always weakened. Rom. 3:23, 6:23

8. False understanding of Retribution. False cultists often reject hell, eternal punishment, and the conscious state of the dead. Luke. 16:23,24

9. False understanding of Resurrection. It is either denied completely or physical resurrection is denied. John 20:24-29

10. False understanding of the Trinity. This includes the doctrines of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Heb 1:8, Acts. 5:3,4, Mat. 28:19,20

11. An Allegorical System of Interpretation. Sometimes cultists do this while claiming they are literal interpreters of the Bible. Mat. 5:18, John 10: 35, Luke. 21:32

12. Inconsistency. False cults usually contain a mixture of doctrines which contradict each other. Isa. 8:20

13. No Assurance. False cultists manipulate persons by keeping them in fear of eternal loss. John. 3:36, 1 John 5:11-13

14. Pseudo-Messianic Leadership. Many false cultists have their own messiahs or divinely chosen leaders. Luke. 21:8

15. Organizational Loyalty. Enslavement to a person or organization is demanded. Col. 2:20-23

16. Conditional Love and Acceptance. Acceptance is based upon performance and quickly withdrawn upon departure from group. 1 John 2:19

17. Financial Participation. It is usually required as part of the “salvation process” Rom. 4:6-8 rejects works of an sort as a requirement for salvation.

18. Denunciation of Others. Blacklisting of those who don't agree, and forbidden contact with any challengers.) Tit 1:12

19. Re-definition of generally accepted Christian Terms. Cultists do this in order to hide the true nature of their teaching. 1 Tim 6:3-5, Rom 16:17,18, 2 Tim. 2:14

20. Ancient Heresies. Heresies such as Gnosticism and Jewish legalism are commonly observed in cults, and it is not uncommon to encounter racism in general and antisemitism in particular (Remember, most cults assume they the are inheritors of Israel's promises in one way or another). 1 Tim. 6:20, 2 Tim. 3:13

Are you prepared to protect your family, loved ones and brothers and sisters in Christ from false teachers?

FISH OR CUT BAIT

Heb. 13:9-16 - Chapter Thirty Nine

FISH OR CUT BAIT

Intro: We have pointed out that Hebrews 13 is a collection of practical commands and last minute reminders, very reminiscent of the writing style of the Apostle Paul. Additionally we have noticed that Hebrews 13 does break itself easily into three divisions. We have instructions regarding our social life, our private life, and our religious life. It is this third section that now occupies our attention.

A few years ago I was out walking in the yard with one of the men in the church who was collecting a few Lady Bugs for his garden. While we are both looking for the bugs, I am seeing one yard and he is seeing another. I saw grass. He immediately saw a rat run. I saw grass. He pointed out a large lizard that was staring at us. I saw grass. He pointed out the identifying colors of a Box Elder bug that was at our feet. We both had trained eyes. Mine was trained to see the grass. His was trained to see all the life that was surrounding us.

The verses that are in front of us, particularly verses 9 through 16, are very similar in nature to that experience. Some of us will only see the grass. Some of us will begin to connect with the powerful truths and the crowning argument of the book of Hebrews. Clearly, this book does not simply “trail off” with a few personal exhortations. When once understood, this stunning climax leaves us breathless with wonder. Do not let this treasure slip through your fingers.

Our first task is to read these verses together as a group. That will help us to gain the big picture and establish our proposition. Begin reading at verse 9 and continue through verse 16.

(Heb 13:9-16 KJV) Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

{10} We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. {11} For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

{12} Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

{13} Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. {14} For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. {15} By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. {16} But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

We have dealt with verse 9 in a general sense, a Gentile sense, as we considered our own responsibility not to be caught up in all the winds of doctrine that plague us. But, we have not really put our Jewish glasses on. We have not really looked at these verses with Jewish eyes. And, even more pointedly, we have not looked at these verses in terms of these Jews in Hebrews who are being admonished to leave the old traditions and the old ways in order to come under the benefits of the New Covenant.

And, specifically what are the old traditions and ways? The Jewish faith was grounded on the Ten Commandments and the Law; it was grounded on the temple sacrifices. It was centered on the holy city, the city of Jerusalem. Like a great fountain, all else flowed from this source. While, on the one hand, these Jews were blown about with every wind of doctrine, they anchored to these foundations: the

law and the temple sacrifices. We might say that the holy law, the holy sacrifices, and the holy city represented a three-fold cord that could not easily be broken. However, our author will break that cord. We'll entitle verse 9:

I. JUDAISM IS OCCUPIED WITH THE WRONG FOOD.

Notice especially the second half of the verse as we read again:

(Heb 13:9 KJV) 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.

Clearly the divers and strange doctrines, in this case, had to do with promoting the idea that the heart could be established with certain meats or foods, and that there was a profit in ingesting certain foods over other foods. The question that comes to our mind is what kind of meats or foods could possibly be construed to provide spiritual benefit to the partaker?

We must be quick to eliminate the notion that it is the abstinence from certain foods that is under consideration here. There is no doubt that some Jews as well as other “enlightened” sects taught that there was value in abstinence from certain meats and foods. There is also no doubt that Paul warns us that this teaching is part of the doctrine of demons which we will encounter in the last days. We are instructed in 1 Timothy 4:3 that these latter day seducers will come:

(1 Tim 4:3 KJV) Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

You also remember the words of 1 Corinthians 8:8:

(1 Cor 8:8 KJV) But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.

Concerning the matter of food, there are two ways by which we try to commend ourselves to God. Both ways place confidence in the flesh. Sometimes these Jews tried to commend themselves to God by abstaining from certain foods (such as ham, as was forbidden under Moses' law). Other times, these same Jews tried to commend themselves by eating certain foods. That is what we are talking about here.

Remember the question on our minds, what foods, in the mind of a Jew, could possibly commend him to God? A bit of a clue is found in Hebrews 9:8 –10, though we only touched upon it briefly when we covered that passage. Look at Hebrews 9:8

(Heb 9:8-10 KJV) The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: {9} Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; {10} Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

It seems so strange to us that anyone would prefer the regimented life of a legalist, but it gave occasion for boasting and religious pride, a sort of “Can you top this?” mentality. Endless rules about meats and drinks and washings, and rabbinical ordinances imposed on men. All the while, their souls could be black as coal and their hearts as hard as stone. That is why the Jew loved the security of his rules and regulations.

However, the question remains on our minds, what foods, (in the mind of a Jew) could possibly commend him to God? The answer is not so far away as we might imagine. Let me read a quote from

Edmond Hughes who, in turn, is quoting from the puritan John Owen:

“Owen explains it of ‘the religious distinction of meats among the Jews,’ a distinction, he points out, which ‘arose from the altar.’ ‘And hence,’ he says, ‘we may see the reason why the Jews laid so much weight on these meats, namely because the taking of them away, the distinction about them, and the privilege of them, did declare their altar, which was the life and centre of their religion, was of no more use.’”

In other words, there was both physical and spiritual merit in eating foods that had been offered.

These Jews, living among the idol worshipers around them who offered their own meats at their own idol temples, had been slowly slipping into idolatry themselves, assigning spiritual merit and mystical qualities to sacramental offerings.

Good eating habits promote good care for our bodies which belong to the Lord, but, the abstinence of food, such as is taught in Adventist theology cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper. (1 Timothy 4:4-5) And, the ingesting of certain food which has been sacrificially offered, as in the case of Romanism and its idolatrous mass, simply cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper.

Food strengthens the body and is then cast out into the draught. Grace strengthens the soul.

But the plot thickens. Look at verses 10 and 11 where we see:

II. JUDAISM IS EATING AT THE WRONG TABLE.

(Heb 13:10-11 KJV) We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. {11} For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.

Let's list some facts:

1. Under the Law of Moses you are aware that the priests were allowed to take the flesh of certain animal sacrifices and meal offerings for their own food.
2. By eating these sacrifices they were identified as joint participants of the altar, 1 Corinthians 10:18. We are reminded that, practically, the early Christians had every right and privilege to eat the meat offered to idols. No idolatrous incantation could change the nature of the food. However, while Christians could do this in a practical sense, spiritual Christians avoided this in order not to be identified as participants in the idol's altar.
3. Other sacrifices, particularly the sin offerings, were forbidden as a source for food. You may read about this in Leviticus. The sin offering on the Day of Atonement was not to be eaten. But there is more concerning this Day of Atonement:
4. On this day, and this day alone, the blood of the sacrifice was brought into the Holy of Holies by the high priest. And, instead of allowing the meat to be eaten, it was taken outside the gate and burned. No blood was drunk; no meat was eaten.

If we can see ourselves as Jews who knew and understood this practice, we can begin to get a feel for what the Holy Spirit is doing. He is telling us that the ceremonial event of the Day of Atonement has its literal fulfillment in the sin offering of Jesus Christ who died only once, (instead of year after year) on the cross the propitiation for our sin. Where did this sacrifice take place? It took place outside the gate, outside the camp. Hebrews 13:12:

Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.

We who are in Christ have an altar. We have a sacrifice. And herein lies its superiority. Those who partook of Moses' sacrifice could not eat of that altar. Those who partake of the sacrifice of Christ are

of the holy priesthood that can both eat and drink of His altar. And even that amazes us, for we have long since learned that the blood of the altar was never drunk under any circumstances. The life was in the blood. That means that, essentially, no priest ever benefited fully and completely from the sacrifice. Only you and I who are in Christ have eaten the flesh of that sacrifice and drunk that blood. John reports:

(John 6:53-54 KJV) Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. {54} Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

That is the wonder and glory of the sacrifice of Christ. We are full partakers at the table that was denied (in symbol and actuality) even to the Levitical priests. The Levitical priests in the time of the writing of Hebrews had no privilege at this altar, for, while relying on the now defunct Old Covenant, they were trampling underfoot the blood of this altar. Furthermore, the unregenerate Jew at any time had none of the New Covenant privileges which are ours.

The Holy Spirit is making it very clear to these readers that they should not be intimidated because they have no system of sacrifices, and no differentiation of foods. We celebrate the greatest sacrifice of all, the sacrifice that was made outside the camp. And then we read those wonderful invitational words in verse 13:

(Heb 13:13 KJV) Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

If you would partake of this sacrifice you must go to where it is, and it is outside the camp. This is the same reproach of Christ that Moses esteemed in preference to the honors of Egypt. This is the same reproach which all of God's children have borne down through the years.

Christian, in your evangelistic efforts to win the lost, do not seek to remove this reproach. Do not seek to create such a pleasing and warm environment in your effort to win men to Christ that you hide the reproach and ugliness of this message. It simply cannot be hidden. This gospel is offensive to the natural man. It is a hell fire and brimstone, blood and gore message. It rises out of the ashes of a great sacrifice. It is and always will be a reproach.

Consider another fatal mistake of the Jews alluded to in verse 10:

III. JUDAISM IS SEEKING THE WRONG CITY.

(Heb 13:14 KJV) For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” They sing!
The city of a thousand dreams.
“If I forget you,” the Jewish people sing,
“May my right hand forget its cunning.”

And there is no sin in loving Jerusalem. The heart of every believer should beat for this city. The lips of every believer should pray for the peace of Jerusalem. But this city is not eternal. This city will ultimately be destroyed, and in the final analysis, our holy city has yet to appear. It may well be heading this way, but the New Jerusalem has not yet come.

Why would you long for an earthly city when a heavenly one awaits? Why would we seek the old Jerusalem and miss the new? Notice finally:

IV. JUDAISM IS ESPOUSING THE WRONG SACRIFICES.

(Heb 13:15 KJV) 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.

Understand what the Lord intends here. Lambs and goats and pigeons or doves and meal offerings had all served their purpose. Now, the new priest who is in Christ has another liturgy, another priestly service. His sacrifices begin with the offering of praise to God. Our fruit is of the lips instead of fruit of the hands, because our confidence is not in the flesh but in the sacrifice of our Savior. This is a much higher order.

And then there is the sacrifice of good works, in verse 16:

(Heb 13:16 KJV) But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

The word, communicate, is the Greek *koinonia* (*koinonia*), the precious fellowship word, the partnership word of the New Testament. The idea is that we do good in fellowship and partnership with the rest of God's priests. And there are other sacrifices for our offering. There is the sacrifice of the Gentiles. That is another way to say that God sees our efforts at soul winning as a priestly ministry. And Romans 12:1 tells us that we are to present our bodies as living sacrifices and acceptable offerings to him.

These are the wonderful and joyous privileges of those who go outside the gate of the city, away from the old temple and its offerings, and choose rather, to suffer the reproach of Christ.

But we close with a warning. All around us are those who would rob us of this wonder of grace, those who prefer confidence in the flesh, a list of rules, and a priestly hierarchy in preference to new life in Christ.

Some would take the simple elements of the Lord's Table and turn them, once again, into sacrificial elements, returning us to the old idolatrous system of imagining that such physical things can establish the heart in grace and benefit us. Though we use only bread and juice, so pervasive is this idolatry that they would have us imagining it to be the body and blood of Christ. They want our altar to be the

altars of their priests alone. They would rob us of our priesthood and institute their own.

They would tell us that Christ's sacrifice is being made over and over again ten thousand times or more a day. Others would suggest that these elements mystically dispense grace and that we are impoverished without that grace. But we are privy to such deception, for we have already learned that the heart established by grace needs no physical table, altar, or food. Nor dare we be partakers of their table, for the stench of idolatry and superstition rises from any table which supposes that God needs or requires any physical thing or liturgical act to dispense the grace which flows freely from Calvary.

Do these things seem innocent to you? Have you no fear or loathing of the Eucharist and the mass? Or, have you no disdain for those semi-priests in their allegorical systems of the Reformation who vainly imagine they dispense grace to you by passing the elements through their hands to yours?

Perhaps you are the very type of soul to whom the author of Hebrews wrote as he admonished those who took no offense at the liturgy of Judaism and saw it only as another means of approaching God. Perhaps you would have been more comfortable among these undecided Hebrews whose priests were trampling underfoot the blood of Christ than you could possibly imagine yourself.

The invitation stands. Come outside the gate and eat of the sacrifice and drink of the blood of this Christ, and His eternal life will flow through your veins. Come share the reproach of Christ, the hope of a continuing city, and the joys of pouring out your life as a living sacrifice!



PARTING REMINDERS

Heb. 13:17-25 - Chapter Forty

PARTING REMINDERS

Intro: The beauty of these last few verses is found in the fact that they are so personal. It is now clear to us that our author, on the one hand, wanted his letter to be seen as a thesis, so he did not sign it. On the other hand, he knew his readers intimately and they clearly knew who he was. There is an interesting inscription attached by human authors to these early manuscripts. It simply reads: “<Written to the Hebrews from Italy, by Timothy.>” Noticing the reference to both Timothy and Italy in verse 23-24 and combining that information with the great apostolic authority which permeates this book, it seems likely to me that Paul dictated the book to Timothy. But, as we have already noted, that is of little concern to us. Our concern is with understanding and obeying the truths we have uncovered within it.

I think that a quick overview of verses 17 to 25 identify some parting reminders with respect to three aspects. We have reminders concerning our relationship with our local shepherds in verses 17. Next, these Hebrews are reminded about their relationship with these missionary shepherds who wrote the book of Hebrews to them from a distance. We see this in verses 18 and 19, and again in verses 22-25. Finally, we are then reminded concerning our relationship with our Great Shepherd in verses 20 and 21.

I. THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL SHEPHERDS.

(Heb 13:17-19 KJV) Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your

souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. {18} Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. {19} But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Let's single out some key words in these verses in order to establish the tone of the passage.

Obey.

Curiously, this word is colored with the idea of trust. It implies the kind of obedience that arises out of leader trust. It is the same word, interestingly, which the author uses in verse 18 when he says, “pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience....” When we think about it, it is very difficult to obey someone whom we do not trust. This brings to mind the great conflict which so many encounter in the workforce. Tens of thousands of folks work daily for supervisors or employers they cannot trust. This ultimately affects performance, morale, and a host of other things. Trust between spiritual leaders and the flock is absolutely critical. It must always be defended. The leaders, on the one hand, should provide nothing in their lives which casts a shadow on the ability of the sheep to trust. The sheep, on the other hand, must be careful to maintain this special bond, this special respect which is demanded of them in the Word of God.

I have seen many pastors and churches part ways over many issues. The truth is, the careful observer will note that when issues are involved, the issues themselves are usually irrelevant. The issue only presents an excuse for discussion. The truth behind the parting is that the bond of trust between shepherd and sheep has been broken by one side, the other, or both. If that bond cannot be re-established,

it is only wise for the leaders to give place to other leaders. I have never understood pastors who insist on staying on, when they know that a large portion of their congregation have lost confidence in them. The goal is to protect this special bond of trust and obedience which should protect the sacred office of shepherds. Now notice:

Rule.

“Obey them that have the rule over you...” A popular translation inserts the word leaders here, but that is not a strong enough word, especially in our Laodicean (rule of the people) society. The word is the Greek: hgeomai (hegeomai - hayg-eh'-om-ah-ee), and it is in reference to those who carry authority, for one reason or another. The idea of leadership, or going before, is clearly there, and that is what a leader is supposed to do. He is to go before the sheep in setting the pattern and example. But there is more than simple “leading by example”; a term not found in the Word of God. Attached to that example is the idea of authority. The leader is also able to command.

We recently experienced an incident where a national ball player attacked his coach both physically and verbally and threatened his life. As a result he was removed from his place on the team. Not only has he been reinstated, he is now suing for the losses he incurred. That coach is not a leader. That coach carries no authority. Those are the kinds of leaders the public wants.

Please notice also that, wherever spiritual shepherds or leaders are noted in scripture, it is usually in the plural. God wants a church to have numerous spiritual leaders. We have plenty of room for more pastors and more spiritual leaders. We must consistently pray that God will bring us godly men who will take up this wonderful charge among us. The next word is:

Submit.

Submit to them. Literally, it means to yield, to resist

no longer. It is in our natures to submit to ourselves only. But we do not grow when we do not submit. You will remember that we already covered this idea in verse 7 of this chapter, but in that verse, our author wanted us to especially remember the teaching and influence of past leaders. In this case, the Holy Spirit is reminding us to continually submit on an ongoing basis to the spiritual leaders God has raised up for our benefit.

We know that this is no carte blanche authoritarian privilege being handed out to spiritual leaders. This is no command on our part to disobey our own consciences just because a leader has another opinion. Scripture abounds with sufficient examples where the authority of leaders has been properly challenged when it goes awry. We must still do what is right in our hearts. But, there is a spirit of submission that should always be there on our part, a true and genuine desire to follow the examples and guidance of those whom God has placed before us as leaders.

It is sensible to note that if one does not attend church one cannot very well submit to spiritual leadership, can he? The next key word in this verse is:

Watch.

“...for they watch for our souls.” Notice, it does not say they watch you. It says they watch for you. They are on guard, throughout the night, as shepherds do, against the ills that can confront you. As the wolves bring with them their host of false ideas and teachings, and as Satan would cast forth an array of arrows to strike at the soul, the godly leader prays, teaches, and leads the flock into green and safe pastures. There is something beautiful about knowing that God has given us shepherds to watch and care for us. This does not guarantee our safety, but it nevertheless, adds to our confidence and security. And, at the risk of sounding presumptuous, I might add, we need to thank God that we have a godly church to attend with godly leaders who truly do desire to watch for our souls. Thank God for your church. If

you are not now attending a church, you are missing this shelter and this benefit.

Not only must we submit to these leaders because they watch for our souls, but we must also understand that they are required to:

Give account.

The two words function as an accounting term, as you might surmise. The idea behind giving is the idea of discharging or paying off what is due. And notice that spiritual leaders are required to account for the souls of the sheep. It is not enough for the leader to say, "I have preached the Word." Does God hold the leader accountable for the willful rebellion of the sheep? Not in a heartbeat. Does God hold the leader accountable for gross neglect of the sheep? He certainly does. Now, look at verses 18 and 19:

II. THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE MISSIONARY SHEPHERDS.

Verses. 18, 19;

(Heb 13:18-19 KJV) Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. {19} But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

A. First, there is an implied obligation to pray for those who have ministered to us in the past.

There is a terrible tendency in all of us to forget those folks who are out of our sight. We forget to pray for our missionaries, for those in bondage, for those who are away from us. We need to be reminded.

We also need to remember to pray for those godly leaders who helped shape our spiritual lives in the past. Our debt and duty to them has not been discharged. They need our fervent prayers that they will continue to minister in good conscience, living hon-

estly. When I pray, I remember our former churches, especially when they are going through times of trial. And there are folks, in our former churches who also pray for us even though we are no longer their pastor. That is how God intends it.

I like to call it compounding interest. I know that the longer I serve Christ, the greater it benefits my own ministry, because the broader the base is of those who care for me and pray for me. That is how it is supposed to work. But we need to be reminded. When was the last time you prayed for the person who led you to Christ and got you started in your baby steps? When was the last time you prayed for that special person whom God brought into your life at the exact time when you desperately needed him? You owe a debt to him. Don't forget to make payments on it! Ask God to help you remember.

If you will skip verses 20 and 21 for just a minute or so, you will see that there is more about this matter of the Hebrews and their former leaders who are now writing to them. Verses 22-24 carry on the matter of their duties to the missionary shepherds who had cared for them in the past.

B. Secondly, there is an implied obligation to still submit to those who have exhorted us in the past.

(Heb 13:22 KJV) And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

I remember admonishing someone one time and their words effectively were "I don't have to listen to you. You're not my pastor anymore!" They somehow associated my paycheck with my responsibility and authority. But, let me tell you something that is even worse. It is the pastor who says, "I don't have to care for you anymore because I'm not your pastor!" We impoverish ourselves when we surrender to either of these attitudes.

I know pastors whose first goal taking up a new charge, is to remove all vestiges and memories of

former leaders as though any remembrance of the former pastor represent a threat. Any visit by the former pastor represents an unthinkable breach of professional ethics. How foolish. Former pastors make great allies. Former pastors of other churches also make great allies. We impoverish ourselves when we break ties with former leaders and cut ourselves out of some of the richness that God has in store for our lives. Is there potential for abuse? Of course there is. The possibility also exists that someone could poison my food, but I still eat.

C. Thirdly, there is an implied obligation to know the condition of those who have ministered to us in the past.

(Heb 13:23 KJV) Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

Obviously, Timothy had been in prison. He is not released or being released. He needed their prayers while he was in prison, and he now needs their prayers as he makes his new plans. Do you remember what we read in verse 19 where prayer was admonished?

(Heb 13:19 KJV) But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

Heaven alone will reveal how much of the Lord's work has been hindered because we have failed to pray for those godly missionaries and leaders whom God has placed around us.

D. Fourthly, there is an implied obligation to maintain as broad a circle of fellowship and prayer with our brethren in Christ as we can.

Hebrews 13:24-25:

Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. Grace be with you all. Amen. Written to the Hebrews from Italy by Timothy.

There is one holy catholic (universal) faith. We envy the early church. We covet its fire. We long for its unity. We are hindered on every hand from enjoying this unity, not so much because of doctrinal differences, but our unity has been corrupted by disobedience to the Word of God. The winds of false doctrine and compromise that may have blown with less intensity upon the early church are now storming the latter day church with hurricane like force. Watching for the souls of our sheep in these cold and apostate last days is a far greater task than it was for those early leaders. Watch we must, and watch we will, but through it all, we must hang on to our great prayer for unity in the holy catholic church. We must never draw a line that does not have to be drawn. We must ever pray for and love our brothers and sisters in Christ - and seek unity with them whenever and wherever we can without compromising the Word of God. For though we have many under shepherds, we have one great Shepherd. And that leads us to our last point as we share the beautiful benediction of this book found in verses 20 and 21 as we observe:

III. THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE GREAT SHEPHERD.

(Heb 13:20-21 KJV) Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, {21} Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The Person of this Benediction: The God of peace. Isn't it interesting how so many epistles begin or end with reference to peace? And we know that when the Bible talks about peace, it is talking about a peace that goes far beyond the world's understanding. It is a peace that leads to a sense of security and well being in the soul, in spite of the problems that face us. It is a peace based on a legal contract, (the blood of the covenant) yes, but it is a peace based in

a Person, the God of peace. But it is a peace we can forget about. It is a peace we can forget to enjoy. It is a peace we can take for granted. What truly separates the Christian faith from all the world's religions? Only in Christ can we have a living, experiential relationship with our God.

The Proof of this Benediction: To understand this verse we must see that our author is providing the resurrection as proof that our salvation is in tact. But it is not the resurrection that provides our salvation. The resurrection is the proof or the product of our salvation. Notice exactly what our salvation was based upon: This great shepherd of the sheep was raised “through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

Remember the rules. God only deals with men on the basis of promises. All of the promises in scripture find their way ultimately to one promise called the New Covenant, or the everlasting covenant. This covenant, like the ones that preceded it, was confirmed by blood. But the blood of Christ confirmed this covenant. Without the blood, this covenant could not have been confirmed. The death of Christ could not have saved us alone.

This benediction is based on the ultimate proof. The resurrection of Christ is the absolute guarantee that God accepted the blood of that New Covenant. These Hebrews who were dallying between two covenants, had to fish or cut bait. The Old Covenant was not everlasting. The blood of the Old Covenant was the blood of bulls and goats.

Men may be saved only through the blood of Christ, through the New Covenant, the everlasting covenant. No mortgage, no insurance policy, no promise has ever been based on such collateral as this. Now, notice:

The Purpose of this Benediction: The prayer is that God will: “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight”, Literally, God wants to perfect you to perfection. He wants to mature you to maturity.

He wants to conform our will to His will. He wants to work in us that which is well pleasing in His sight.

Ephesians 2:10 says it so beautifully:

(Eph 2:10 KJV) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Metaphorically, we are God's poems, created in Christ Jesus unto God works. That is God's will. That is what God has before ordained that we should walk in them. We must be believers who walk our talk just as surely as we talk our walk. That is how we bring glory to God. We cannot pray that God will be glorified when we do not seek to glorify Him in our lives and in our work. We cannot long for His kingdom when we do not submit to it in our hearts. We cannot pray this benediction on others when we do not, by God's grace, and by that resurrection power, seek to experience it in our lives, even now.

(Heb 13:20-21 KJV) Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, {21} Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



Appendices

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INSTRUCTOR'S GOALS FOR THIS STUDY IN HEBREWS

PRINCIPLES WE WANT TO GRASP WHILE STUDYING HEBREWS

1. The Principle of Sonship	<p>Understand all that sonship implies.</p> <p>Understand the doctrines which we derive from this truth.</p>
2. The Principle of Promise	<p>Understand that God's entire relationship with men is based upon promises.</p> <p>Understand the doctrines which we derive from understanding promises.</p>
3. The Principle of Participation	<p>Understand that participation or identification is a core theme which runs throughout God's Word. Seeing this will help the Bible student understand the role of Messiah, and his position in Messiah. Seeing this will help the Bible student grasp the doctrine of federalism and its neglected implications.</p>

Do not be concerned if these goals seem a little hard to grasp at the beginning.

DOCTRINES WE WANT TO GRASP WHILE STUDYING HEBREWS

1. Messiah's Preeminence	<p>Forms the basis of the entire book.</p> <p>Argued from "lesser to greater."</p> <p>Argued from "many to one."</p>
2. Messiah's Covenant	<p>The culmination of all covenants.</p> <p>The only covenant which is a Person.</p> <p>The covenant which is presently under attack.</p>
3. Messiah's Priesthood	<p>The sacrificial priest precedes the reigning King (Zechariah 6:12-13).</p> <p>He is the Great Priest who has absolute and final authority.</p> <p>He is fully revealed and fully installed as priest</p>

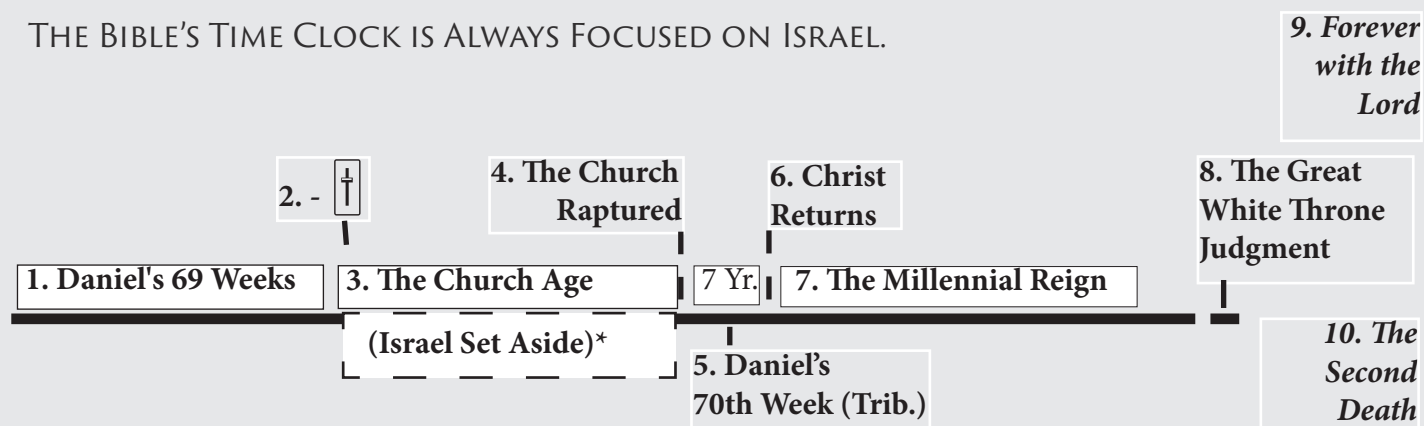
HEBREWS - A QUICK OVERVIEW

Person	The Thesis is a Person! 1:1-3	
Privileged	The Person is a Privileged Son! 1:1-14	
Purpose	The Son Has a Purpose! 2:1-18	<i>Warning! 2:1-5</i>
Position	His Purpose is Revealed in His Priestly Position.. 3:1-10,37	
	He is a Faithful Priest 3:1-4:13	<i>Warning! 3:7-19</i>
	He is a Proven Priest 4:14-5:3	<i>Warning! 4:1-13</i>
	He is a Melchizedekan Priest 5:4-7:28	
	He Has been Anointed Priest	
	Has the Proper Papers	
	His Position is Permanent	<i>Warning! 6:1-6</i>
	He Administers a Greater Covenant 8:1-13	
	He Serves in a Greater Sanctuary 9:1-10	
He Offers a Greater Sacrifice 9:11-10:18		
He Produces a Greater Result 10:19-28		
Promise	His Ministry Enjoyed through Promises. 10:3-12:29	<i>Warning! 10:26-31</i> <i>Warning! 12:15-19</i>
Practice	His Promises Applied in our Practice 13:1-25	

A BASIC PROPHETIC TIMELINE FOR DISPENSATIONALISTS

Those who interpret the scriptures literally teach that the KEY to understanding Bible prophecy is to always understand the distinctions which God has made between Israel and the Church in His program. This position is often called the dispensational position.

THE BIBLE'S TIME CLOCK IS ALWAYS FOCUSED ON ISRAEL.



1. Daniel's 69 Weeks. An important key for understanding Biblical prophecy is found in Daniel 9:24-27. It is referred to as Daniel's 70 weeks. (A prophetic week is a period of seven years.) Daniel indicated exactly when the 70 week period would begin, how we would recognize the first seven weeks, the next sixty two weeks, and finally, the 70th week. The sixty ninth week ended exactly at the time of Christ's crucifixion - when Messiah was cut off -just exactly as Daniel said He would. This represents only a brief summary of what Daniel had to say.

2. The Cross. The death and resurrection of Christ occurred in 31 A.D., (depending on your calendar view.)

Note: There are scores of other prophetic events which can be added to this chart.

3. The Church. The age in which we now live is called the Age of Grace, or the Church Age. The amazing fact about our age is that its existence was kept pretty much as a secret from the Old Testament prophets who knew that something unusual would occur, but could not understand it. See 1 Peter 1:10-12; Romans 16:25,26; Ephesians 3:3-6.

4. The Blessed Hope. The Church Age will end with the rapture of the church to be with the Lord. This was another mystery kept secret from earlier believers. See 1 Corinthians 15:51, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17. Believers' works will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ at this time, 2 Corinthians 5:7.

5. The Tribulation. Daniel's yet unfulfilled seventieth week is what we commonly call the tribulation period. It consists of two 3 and ½ year periods or 7 years. This period, often referred to as the Day of the Lord in our Bibles is the subject of much of the book of Revelation. Dan. 9:24-27, Joel 2, Rev. 5 - 19.

6. The Second Coming. The Tribulation Period will end with the return or Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. See Revelation 19 and 20.

7. The Millennium. The Millennium, or the thousand year reign of Christ on Israel's throne is the subject of many Bible prophecies. A good place to begin reading about it is in Revelation 20.

8-10. The Great White Throne Judgment and the Eternal State. The judgment of the unbelieving dead will occur after the reign of Christ. At that time, all unbelieving dead will be resurrected and judged. Read Revelation 20:11-15. Already resurrected believers will be forever with the Lord. Unbelievers will be forever with the devil and his angels in the Lake of Fire.

** To understand what God is doing with Israel during our time, start by reading Romans 9, 10, and 11.*

SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT QUOTES THAT DISTANCE CHRIST FROM THE ANGELS - 1:4-14

<p>Heb 1:4-14 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. (5) For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?</p>	<p>Psalm 2:7-8 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. (8) Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.</p>	<p>1. A better name by inheritance... This embodies the whole sonship discussion and argues that Christ is a higher genre than angels.</p>
<p>And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?</p>	<p>2 Samuel 7:14 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:</p>	<p>2. Jews saw a double reference (i.e. Solomon & Messiah) as noted in the Dead Sea Scrolls.</p>
<p>(6) And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.</p>	<p>Deut. 32:43 SEPTUAGINT</p>	<p>Note: firstbegotten (protokos) does not mean first created. [That word would have been prototiskos.] Same in Colossians 1:15.</p>
<p>(7) And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.</p>	<p>Psalms 104:4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:</p>	<p>4. Angels do not carry out God's program in bodies of flesh.</p>
<p>(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. (9) Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.</p>	<p>Psalms 45:6-7 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. (7) Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.</p>	<p>5. Christ is clearly identified as Elohim. Watchtower intentionally perverts its translation here.</p>
<p>(10) And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: (11) They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; (12) And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.</p>	<p>Psalms 102:24-27 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. (25) Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. (26) They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: (27) But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.</p>	<p>6. In Psalm 102 the Psalmist is addressing GOD directly, thus Hebrews equates Christ with God. Note: He is also equated with Jehovah in verse 21.</p>
<p>(13) But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? (14) Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?</p>	<p>Psalms 110:1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.</p>	<p>7. This Old Testament verse is heavily quoted in the New Testament and clearly separates Christ from the spirit world.</p>

THE ORDER OF EVENTS ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT	
1. The High priest cleanses himself ritually and dons his normal (elaborate) robes with breastplate.	These robes depict the glories of our Saviour who intercedes for us as our Priest. The breastplate symbolized the priest holding up all of the tribes of Israel before God in prayer.
2. After finishing the daily sacrifices he takes off his priestly robe, bathes himself once again, and puts on a plain white linen garment.	When Christ was sacrificed for us He humbled Himself and became obedient to the death and indignity of the cross.
3. He takes coals off the altar where the sacrifice would be made, puts them in a censer, and takes them into the Holy of Holies.	This is the first time the priest enters the Holy of Holies. His priestly activity for himself and his people is preceded symbolically by prayer.
4. He offers for himself by taking a bullock which he has personally purchased, slaughtering it, draining some blood into a bowl, and carrying it into the Holy of Holies where he sprinkles it on the mercy seat, and leaves.	The second time the priest enters the Holy of Holies it is for himself. The ringing of the bells on his robe signified that he was still living. If God did not accept the priests sacrifice for his own sins, he would not have survived.
5. He then comes out to the two goats, selects one for sacrifice and one to be sent off into the wilderness (by lot) and its blood is carried into the Holy of Holies, where it too is sprinkled on the mercy seat.	The third time he entered, he presented the blood for the sins of the people.
6. The priest leaves, places his hand on the remaining goat, and sends it into the wilderness.	The goat sent away symbolically bearing their sins was a reminder that, temporarily, their sins had been covered, and that God would overlook them.
7. He then leaves his plain robe behind and redresses himself in the beautiful priestly robes of the priest.	Jesus Christ, once having completed His sacrificial work, has rightfully claimed the glory which was His.

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

THE TWO PHASES OF THE BLOOD-WORK OF CHRIST

The Old Testament Truth

The atonement was consummated by two key steps.

The First Aspect - The Blood Provided.

The blood sacrifice was provided outside the Holy Place.

This was done many times over the years by many priests.

The Second Aspect - the Blood Sprinkled.

The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled along the way inside the tabernacle and on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies.

Again, this sprinkling was done many times over the years by many priests.

The Importance of this Event.

This tabernacle was a figure or a symbol of the heavenly reality.

1. Moses was instructed to build the tabernacle after the pattern of the real Tabernacle of Testimony in the heavens. Hebrews 8:1-5

2. This practice was to be temporary, and had been given under a temporary covenant. Hebrews 8:9-13

The New Testament Truth

The New Covenant was consummated by two key steps, not just one.

The First Aspect - The Blood Provided

The blood sacrifice was provided outside the Holy Place.

Unlike the Old Covenant, this was done once and for all by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Second Aspect - The Blood Sprinkled

The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled inside on the mercy seat in the Tabernacle of Testimony in heaven.

Unlike the Old Covenant, this application was once and for all by the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Importance of this Event.

“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: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 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. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 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.” (Heb 9:24-28 AV)

WRONG THINKING ABOUT THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

1. What happens when we combine the sacrifice of Christ and the blood sprinkling into one event?

When we see both aspects of our salvation treated as one at the cross, we inevitably ask the question, for whom did Christ die? If the blood was supplied and applied at the cross, we must conclude either:

1. Christ died for the elect only (The Reformed doctrine of Limited Atonement), or,
2. Christ's death and His blood was applied on behalf of all mankind (Universalism).

2. What happens when we make either or both of these once for all events *recur*?

Rome's View

The sacrifice (albeit bloodless) recurs *at every* Mass.

The blood is sprinkled on our behalf *at every* mass

The Biblical Response - Hebrews 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.

This nullifies the "once for all" sacrifice for Christ and places the welfare of our souls and eternal destiny in the hands of a priesthood.

Adventism's View

Christ died once for all, but the application of Christ's blood began in 1844 and *continues to do so*. This is called the doctrine of Investigative Judgment. It is what makes Adventists adventist.

The Biblical Response - Hebrews 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 has already appeared for us and the blood of sprinkling has already been applied. If Christ applies His blood after investigating our works there are multiple recurring applications, we would be saved by grace *and* by our works. (Romans 11:6).

Arminian View

Those who believe we can lose our salvation if we fall back into sin cannot believe that the sacrifice of Christ and the application of His blood were once and for all.

The Biblical Response - Hebrews 10:14

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

If one offering and its one application is not sufficient, the very first sin a believer commits after receiving Christ would be sufficient to send him to hell, and no further sacrifice would be available. Re-application of the blood requires re-sacrifice (Hebrews 9:26).

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST



How to avoid doctrinal misunderstanding when considering Christ's blood.

*** Colossians 1:14, 1:20 ***

The death of Christ, the offering of His body as a sacrifice, the provision of His blood at the cross, and the application of that blood by the risen Christ in the heavenly tabernacle all combine to provide a full and rich view of our salvation. The once for all offering and its once for all application are foundational to our salvation.

Fact: We must never believe there is any mystical or magical power associated with Christ's blood.

Some believe they can change the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood through incantation.

Some believe the bread and the wine change into Christ's body and blood when ingested.

*See Hebrews
10:12-14, and
9:23-16*

Fact: We must never reduce the value of Christ's blood to a mere symbol. In combination with His death it was uniquely efficacious.

Some believe the only value associated with Christ's blood was:

To fulfill Old Testament prophecies. (Note: As such, it would be a symbol of a symbol.)

To point to the violent nature of Christ's death.

*See Colossians
1:14, 1:20, and
Hebrews 9:11-15*

These folks try to prove this by arguing that there could be no salvation had Christ not died, so His death is what is important. However, there would have been no remission of sin without the shedding of His blood (Matthew 26:28, Hebrews 9:22).

Fact: We must never believe that the blood work of Christ ended at the cross. He also entered the real heavenly tabernacle through His blood.

To place both the provision of Christ's blood and the application of that sacrifice at a single point in time is to force one to hold to either universalism or limited atonement.

The finished work of Christ was supplied for all the world to see and appropriate. The blood of Christ was applied, once for all, on behalf of those who come to God through Christ's priestly work.

Fact: We must never trample underfoot the blood of the Covenant.

All who reject the sacrifice of Christ on their behalf will find certain and fearful judgment.

*See Hebrews
10:29*

HEBREWS 10:26-31 - THE BIBLE'S FIERCEST WARNING!

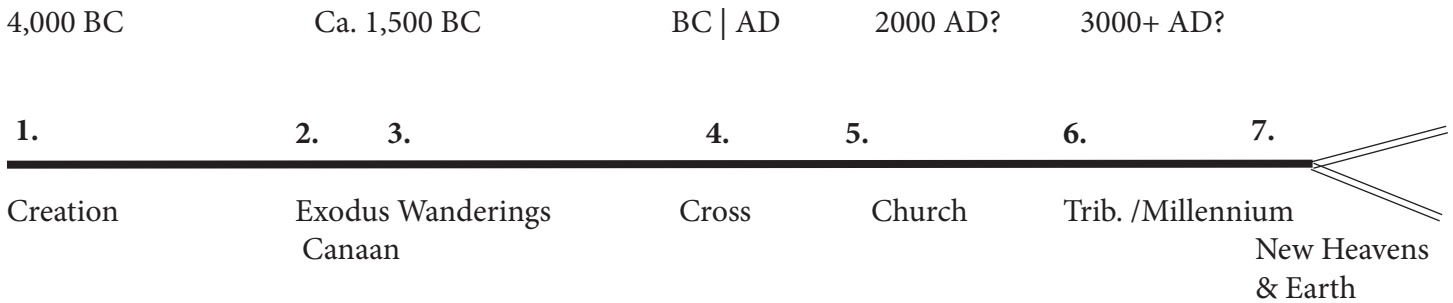
The Verse	The Questions	* Typical Responses (Arm: Arminian, Cal.: Calvinist.)
<p>26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,</p>	<p>Q. #1. Who does the word “we” represent in this passage?</p> <p>Q # 2. Can we assume the sacrifice of Christ covers only so much sin?</p> <p>Q # 3. How much <i>willful</i> sin is allowed before there is no more sacrifice?</p>	<p>Ans. # 1.</p> <p>Arm: Anyone who “apostasizes” - believer or unbeliever.</p> <p>Cal: Unbelievers who draw close to the faith but do not come into saving faith. Many who hold the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints believe it is impossible for a Christian to lose his hope.</p>
<p>27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.</p>	<p>Q # 4. Why does the author use the words <i>fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries</i> in this passage?</p>	<p>Ans. # 2.</p> <p>Arm: Yes. The sacrifice <i>is limited</i>. Even God’s grace can be exhausted by our willful rejection.</p>
<p>28 He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:</p>	<p>Q # 5. Are there any Old Testament examples of this?</p>	<p>Cal: No. The essential nature of Christ’s sacrifice demands that it be infinite and limitless.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Reader: In your words, how and when do we...</p> <p>1. Trod underfoot the Son of God?</p> <p>2. Count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing?</p> <p>3. Do despite unto the Spirit of grace?</p>	<p>Ans. # 3- 5 and Summary</p> <p>It seems most likely that we are talking about the two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the followers of Korah who were so devoured by the fires of hell. Clearly, the sin was in rejecting God’s authority.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>4. Why does our author refer to God’s right to vengeance here?</p> <p><i>Use back of this chart for notes and discussion.</i></p>	<p>Because we cannot presume on the mercy of God, this willful rejection guarantees eternal doom. God may grant one Christ rejector more time to repent than another. Again:</p>
<p>31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.</p>		<p><i>It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!</i></p>

REST EASY

SEVEN BIBLICAL RESTS

(These numbers correspond to the timeline below.)

1. **The Creative Rest - Heb. 4:4.** God rested on the seventh day.
2. **The Sabbath Rest - Exo. 31:15-17.** The Jews were required to rest in commemoration of creation and as a sign between God and Israel.
3. **Canaan Rest - Heb. 3:13-19.** When the Jews ceased from their forty years of wandering and entered the promised land.
4. **Redemptive Rest - Heb. 4:10.** Christ eternally ceases from His labor.
5. **Millennial Rest - Ezekiel 39:25-29.** Final, national rest for Israel.
6. **Creation's Rest - Rev. 21:1.** The New Heavens and the New Earth.
7. **Eternal Rest - Heb. 4:9.** For all who enter into it by faith in God's Word.



Refresher

1. We *can* fall short of the promise of entering into His _____. 4:1

2. We fall short when we do not mix _____. 4:2

3. We fall short when we go beyond the limited _____. 4:7

Are you *resting*?

Session Guides for Thirteen Session Express Study

Instructions

Session or Section guides are particularly helpful for classes which desire to limit the amount of time devoted to a particular area of study.

Those wishing to do a condensed study of Hebrews (lasting 12-14 weeks only) are encouraged to use the Chapter Worksheets. Prior to the study of each chapter, students are encouraged to provide a basic outline of the upcoming chapter in the book of Hebrews without looking at the notes. They can then be assigned extra reading from the notes which will not be covered in the chapter.

Although the book contains forty chapters, ideally, most classes will want to commit to a maximum of 28 weeks of study (assigning non covered chapters for outside reading).

In a perfect world, the study should not go less than three months or more than six months, *based on the respective backgrounds of the group members.*

For a change of pace, consider doing a few of the worksheets during the actual group study.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

To review our goals for this study in Hebrews.

- A. To discuss a major shift in God's program of progressive revelation.
- To underscore the centrality of Christ to all things.
- To clarify what it means for Jesus Christ to be God's Son.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

1:1 To whom and by whom did God speak in times past?

- B. 1:2 How has this manner of revelation changed?

1:4-5 What better name has Jesus Christ received and how did He receive it?

1:8 According to this verse, where in the O.T. is the Son declared to be God? (Use cross-ref.) 1:14
What is the primary function of angels?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

To be a son implies _____, _____, _____, and _____.

Please discuss the importance of the phrase 'by whom also he made the worlds.'

- C. True or False" Christ is the reflection of the Father's glory according to 1:3. 4 What is conveyed in the idea 'upholding all things'? (1:3)

What are some things God has never announced to an angel?

True or False? The sonship which Hebrews is declaring in 1:5 is a clear reference to Christ's position as the eternal son.

1:7 What does 1:8 declare concerning the nature of Christ, and how can we support this from the Old Testament?

- D. PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To grasp the argument of Hebrews' first warning passage and understand its importance.
 2. To fully grasp what we mean when we say the Thesis is a Person.
 3. To gain a greater understanding of why and how it became Christ to provide our salvation.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

2:1-4 Why is there no escape if we neglect this great salvation?

2:5-8 Select one word from the above verses which ties this argument together:

- B.
- 2:9 According to this verse Christ was subjected to death and crowned with glory and honor for exactly what purpose?
- 2:10 Exactly what purpose did suffering fulfill in the life of Christ? 2:14 Why did Christ partake of human flesh?
- 2:17 What office of Messiah is introduced here?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

- C.
1. We are to give the more earnest heed to these things than what?
 2. What is the nature of the danger?
 3. God Himself bore witness to the Apostles' signs. Why should this carry weight with the Jewish readers?
 4. (5-9) How should the phrase a little lower than the angels be properly rendered?
 5. a.) What do we mean when we say the angels now have a diminished role, and b.) what does the term world to come speak of?
 - a.
 - b.

On back: How did Christ elevate manhood and why was it appropriate to do so?

- D.
- PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To establish the superiority of Christ and His dispensation over Moses and his dispensation.
 2. To enable the student to understand the Jewish nature of the author's argument and terminology.
 3. To reaffirm the absolute authority of Christ lest we harden ourselves against God's truth.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

- B.
- 3:1 What four descriptive titles of the Lord Jesus are found here?
- 3:2 For what chief trait (in this passage) was Moses known and in what context did he demonstrate it?
- 3:3-6 List as many contrasts between Moses' administration and Christ's administration as you can.
- 3:7-19 After reading the verses, answer:
What is the recurring word or theme?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES. READ:

- C.
1. Into what two distinct divisions does this chapter fall?
 2. What purpose does the word wherefore serve in verse 1?
 3. Why are the terms Apostle and High Priest associated with Moses?
 4. Please list the separate elements of the warning in 3:7 and 8.
 5. Did Moses' household consist of both believers and unbelievers or just believers?
 6. How do we warn folks in various denominations who already believe they are Christians?
- On Back:
7. According to the Dead Sea Scrolls, how did some of the Qumran sect see themselves?
 8. What is the significance of the author's use of the word TODAY?

- D. PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To continue to underscore the fearful danger of rejecting Christ's authority
 2. To make the matter of entering into Christ's rest absolutely clear.
 3. To help clarify and elevate the role of God's Word as it relates to His program for us

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

- B.
- 4:1. With what great concern or fear should the reader be occupied?
- 4:2 What do we have in common with the Israelites in the wilderness? What should we not have in common?
- 4:3,10: In verses 3 and 10, with what event is God making His analogy? 4:10: If one is resting in the Word of God what has he stopped resting in? 4:11 What causes men to fail in entering into this rest?
- 4:12-13 In your own words, why do these verses appear at this point in the argument?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

- C.
- Read the Rest Easy chart and identify seven biblical sabbaths or rests: a.) _____ b.) _____
c.) _____ d.) _____ e.) _____ f.) _____ g.) _____
- Please explain three ways by which we can fall short:
- True or False: According to verse 11 we must labor in order to be saved.
- What do we mean when we say God's Word is quick? Ans.: It is _____
- True or False: Are the words themselves the objects of inspiration?
- True or False: The important thing in Bible translation is to grasp the concept behind the word.
- Comment on back:
- a.) The Word penetrates b.) The Word separates c.) The Word differentiates

- D. PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To continue to elevate the priesthood of Christ in contrast to all others.
 2. To strengthen our understanding of the importance of the passion of Christ as well as His crucifixion.
 3. To grasp what it meant for Christ to learn obedience even though it was not necessary for Him to do so.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

- B.
4. Read 4:15-16 and Lev. 16:2 What sets apart our Great High Priest from others?
 - 5:1 List some of the qualifications and duties of the high priest. He is _____ for men in things pertaining to _____ that he may offer both _____ and _____ for _____ .
 - 5:3-5 Did Christ glorify Himself in deciding to become a priest?
 - 5:6-10 Every priesthood must pertain to a priestly order or succession. What was Christ's?
 - 5:7 To what event do you suppose the Holy Spirit is referring in this verse?
 - 5:8 What did Christ learn, even though He was a Son?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

- C.
1. According to 5:7 did Christ pray that He would be saved from the death of the cross? Explain your response:
 2. We commonly refer to the sacrificial ministry of our Priest, but the author here is stressing another aspect of His priesthood in verse 7. What is it?
 3. Why was Christ heard in Gethsemane?
 4. Did Christ go through the maturation process just as we do? Did He need to?

- D. PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To embrace our responsibility to aggressively pursue spiritual truth at all costs.
 2. To be certain we understand who those are who fall away and why they fall away.
 3. To learn the secret of spiritual vitality and freedom from spiritual apathy.

Note: This worksheet will take longer than the last sheet. You may want to do it at two sittings.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

5:11-14 What hindered the author's ability to teach the Hebrews?

- B.
- 6:1 Exactly: a.) What are we to leave? _____ b.) What are we to go on to? _____
 c.) What are we not to lay again? _____
 c.) d.) e.)

6:12 How can we avoid being dull or slothful?

6:12-20 On Back: What do you think is the operative argument in these verses. Look carefully for key words.

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

- C.
1. According to the notes, two kinds of listeners or learners are being treated, one at the end of chapter 5 and the other at the beginning of chapter 6. What are they?
 a. The _____ and, b. The _____
 2. On back: According to 5:11-14 exactly why was this generation unskilled in the word of righteousness? Be specific.
 3. In your words, what does it mean to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ?
 4. How does the term washings relate to baptisms?
 5. Exactly who are the people who cannot be led to repentance?
- D.
6. On back: How do 1.) Arminians, 2.) Calvinists, and 3) this instructor view this passage?
 7. On back: What is the greatest 1.) parable, 2.) precedent, and 3.) proof of God's promises?

PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To bring the student to a fresh awareness of the superiority of Christ's priesthood.
 2. To bring the student to a fresh awareness of the critical importance of this priesthood in our daily lives.
 3. To introduce the student to the important doctrine of federalism.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

- B.
- 6:20 Who is the forerunner in this verse and how do we identify him?
- 7:1-3 What is the most important part of this Mechizedekan argument concerning Christ?
- 7:7 Please explain, in your own words, the essence of this argument.
- 7:11 If the Levitical priesthood could have produced perfection what would have been true? 7:12 Because it was necessary to change the priesthood, what also had to be changed?
- 7:25 According to this verse, what is the great advantage of having a Melchizedekan priest?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

- C.
1. Why is it important to us that Melchisedek's priesthood be kingly?
 2. How does the fact that Melchisedek's priesthood was not Jewish figure in to this discussion?
 3. In a sentence, discuss the principle of precedence:
 4. Contrast the longevity of the two priesthoods (Melchisedekan and Aaronic.)
 5. What is the doctrine of federalism about?
 6. On back: Why are Mormons so tragically wrong in their doctrines of their priesthoods?

- D. PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To underscore absolutely the literality of the heavenly sanctuary.
 2. To stress the purposes of the heavenly sanctuary.
 3. To help the student revel in the richness of the New Covenant in contrast to the Old Covenant.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

8:1 What is the sum (chief point) of the things which have been spoken?

8:2 Christ is the minister of the sanctuary and the tabernacle, which the Lord _____.

- B.
- 8:5 Earthly priests were actually serving according to the _____ and _____ of _____ things. This is evidenced by the fact that Moses was shown a _____ in the mount.

8:6 Why is Christ the mediator of a better covenant?

8:8-13 How is Christ's covenant a better covenant than Moses'?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

- C.
1. What does the author mean when he speaks of the sum of things which we have spoken?
 2. List two reasons why Christ is seated in the heavens:
 3. List three facts about the kind of tabernacle which Christ possesses:
 4. Many modern teachers reject the literality of the heavenly tabernacle. If it does not exist, what is true?
 5. What proof does the author provide that Christ is the mediator of a better covenant?
 6. List two good reasons why the first covenant failed:
 7. On back: List five descriptions of the New Covenant (The New Covenant Described).

- D.
- PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- To reaffirm the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.
- A. To affirm that Christ's blood was literally presented in the heavenly sanctuary.
- To protect the student against errant doctrines regarding the blood and "atonement" of Christ.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

- 9:1-10 In these verses the author describes the ordinances of divine service in the earthly tabernacle. According to verse 8 what was the Holy Spirit signifying by this?
- -
- B. According to verses 9 and 10 were these things real or simply a figure of what was to come?
- 9:11 On what basis did Christ come as a high priest of good things to come?
- 9:11-15 Read carefully and answer: What was the key element used to effect our salvation? 9:15-16 When is a testament put in force?
- 9:22 What must occur before there can be remission of sin?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

- Briefly describe the order of events on the Day of Atonement. (Do not use complete sentences.)
 - In what sense did these activities represent a figure?
- C.
- How is Christ's tabernacle superior to Moses'?
 - How is Christ's offering superior to Moses'?
 - On Back: Who was Bengel and what was his error?
 - With respect to Christ's blood how did Owen differ from Calvin?
 - On Back: Differentiate between blood supplied and blood applied.

- D. PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To introduce the role of the body of Christ into our salvation.
 2. To encourage the student to take full advantage of the priestly work of Christ.
 3. To suggest why the warning of 10:26-31 would be so relevant to the Jews to whom Hebrews was written.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

- B.
- 10:1-2 What did the law do for those who offered continually year by year? What did it not do?
- 10:5 We have discussed the blood of Christ in detail. What subject is now introduced in this verse?
- 10:7-10 Read carefully and try to determine the operative word. .
- 10:12-14 Try to boil these three verses down to the most important underlying argument.
- 10:19-25 What is our source of boldness in drawing near to God?
- 10:26-39 On back: In your own words, what is the actual warning here and why is it so severe?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

- C.
1. We have previously compared things figurative with things real. We then discussed the terms once and often. We are now comparing the word _____ with the word _____.
 2. In your own words try to summarize the argument of Psalm 40:6-8.
 3. On back: Regarding 10:14, in a sentence or two for each, discuss the following: a.) The declaration; b.) The certification; c.) The implication.
 4. As we draw near we are to hold fast our _____. We are to _____ one another, and we are to assemble for the purpose of _____ one another.
- Exactly what do we mean when we say there is no Plan B and why is it extremely dangerous to hope for one?

- D.
- PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To provide a proper definition of faith and contrast it with the world's view of faith.
 2. To teach the student how to enjoy the practical benefits of faith - properly exercised.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

11:1 What is faith? After providing a biblical definition can you write it in your own words?

11:3 What does faith teach us concerning the framing of the worlds (ages)?

- B.
- 11:1-4 Notice the words substance, evidence, witness, and testifying. Do these words seem to you to have anything in common?

11:13 True or False According to this verse each of those who exercised faith in a promise of God received an answer before they died.

11:39-40 According to these verses why have those who have gone on before not received the promise?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

1. Please discuss the word substance carefully.
2. How does the argument that faith is evidence appear to be an anomaly?

- C.
- In a sentence or two discuss the witness of faith:

On back: Discuss briefly Exhibits A, B, C, and D.

6. (The Effectual Working of Faith). List four things faith accomplishes. Do not discuss.

- a.)
- b.)
- c.)
- d.)

- D.
- PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To help the student understand the daily aspects of the disciplined faith walk.
 2. To change our attitudes so that we will both seek and welcome discipline from God.
 3. To warn ourselves against profaning what is holy.
 4. To underscore the critical importance of not neglecting the gospel.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

- B.
- 12:1-2 What metaphor does our author use in an effort to help us apply our faith in a practical way?
- 12:3-13 In your own words, summarize the main subject of these verses.
- 12:16-17 What was the actual sin which destroyed Esau's life?
- 12:11-24 On back: Contrast the two mountains mentioned in this passage and their role in Israel's life.
- 12:25-29 What is the basis of the warning found in these verses?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

- C.
1. Discuss an opinion or two on the great cloud of witnesses.
 2. We are now the ones to be _____. We must _____ from _____ and _____ on the _____, while running this race with _____, forsaking all for the _____ we must fix our eyes on the _____.
 3. According to verse 5 who is our trainer?
 4. According to verses 6-8 what four things help us understand this process?
 5. What should our attitude be in this process?
 6. On back: When and how do men and churches fail of the grace of God?
 7. On back: Why is it so dangerous to refuse this final offer?

- D. PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

TEACHING GOALS FOR THIS SESSION:

- A.
1. To take a brief backward look at the arguments of Hebrews.
 2. To close the book with some practical reminders to think upon.
 3. To affirm our responsibility toward our spiritual leaders.

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

- B.
- 13:1-9 List at least ten closing reminders.
- 13:10-14 What is the operative word in these verses and what is the argument the author is presenting?
- 13:15-19 List a few more closing reminders.
- 13:20-21 Can you suggest a reason why these two verses provide such a fitting end to this book?

QUESTIONS FROM THE ASSIGNED NOTES.

- C.
1. Explain the biblical conception regarding 1.) what entertainment is, and 2.) what a stranger is.
 2. In your opinion, what lesson does the author intend to be inferred by his reference to entertaining angels?
 3. From what Greek word is whoremonger derived?
 4. What does the need to surround ourselves with material things reveal?
 5. How does verse 6 seem to relate to what has gone on before?
 6. On back: Can you match some cults with some of the defining traits of false religionists discussed here?
 7. On back: In what way is Judaism a.) occupied with the wrong food, b.) eating at the wrong table, c.) seeking the wrong city, and; d.) espousing the wrong sacrifices?

- D. PERSONAL, NOTES, COMMENTS, OR POINTS FOR FURTHER GROUP DISCUSSION.

All Purpose Student Worksheet - For General Chapter Interaction

For use with any chapter. - Reproduce and distribute as desired.

<p>In your own writing, please outline the Hebrews chapter under consideration to three levels.</p>	
<p>If you are taking this class for credit, please record study questions or notes you will need for exam preparation here.</p> <p>Otherwise, list points you would like to see discussed in class.</p>	
<p>This space is reserved for any assignments or “to dos” your instructor requests.</p>	

BASIC FOOTNOTES

In most cases, when the text cites an author it assumes the reader will use that author's book written on that book, chapter, and verse. In a few cases, we needed a fuller footnote.

i. These notes are designed for basic simplicity and easy reading. A thorough examination of background studies is provided in the required reading materials for the class. Readers who do not have access to the class will benefit from checking out the www.bible.org website for excellent outlines and bibliographic recommendations. (See short annotated bibliography.)

ii. MacDonald, Pg 2155

iii. Students who would like to read an aggressive defense of the opposite position are encouraged to read Charlie Bing's *Interpreting Hebrews: Beginning With the Readers*, in the July/Aug, 2002 issue of *Grace in Focus*, www.faithalone.org. These arguments, though easily answered, are typical arguments in favor of those who hold the recipients to be believers only.

iv. Philip Hughes's commentary on Hebrews (cited throughout this paper) will provide thorough support for this argument.

v.. Daniel B. Wallace's introductory outline to Hebrews provides a thorough address to dating and authorship issues in a few pages. Download it at www.Bible.org.

vi. Student note: Be sure to read Hughes' notes on this point carefully.

vii. Moody, Dwight Lyyman, *Sovereign Grace*, Fleming H. Revell, 1891

viii. Spurbeck, 219, 220

ix. Geisler, p. 285

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTATIONS

A BRIEF ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

This Hebrews study is primarily the result of my meditation in the Word and does not reflect a heavy influence from commentaries. The books listed below are referred to informally in this paper. They represent only a smidgen of titles available under Epistle to the Hebrews classification in the Dewey Decimal System (227.87).

Most biblical quotations are pasted in from the Quick Verse software copy of the King James Version, though numerous references are made to the notes found in the Scofield Reference Bible. The simple Strong's Concordance Greek definitions are also pasted into the text as needed. The goal was to keep all quotes and Greek references as elementary as possible. Except in isolated cases we chose not to use a Greek font due to distribution issues.

CITATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER STUDY

Ainslie, Edgar, Christ the Anchor, Ralph E. Welch Foundation. Valuable as a doctrinally sound, devotional study, this book develops the book of Hebrews under the motif of "Christ our Anchor." It is especially helpful for non technical, devotional meditation.

Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G., Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology, Ariel Ministries, Tustin, CA, © 1989. Life is too short to read poor quality material. Enrich your biblical knowledge with the works of Fruchtenbaum.

MacArthur, John, Jr. Hebrews, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Chicago. Moody Press, 1983. This volume provides an easily understood treatment of Hebrews by a godly, contemporary pastor. It is a valuable addition to anyone's bookshelf. Regretfully, while MacArthur is a premillennialist, he is intensely Reformed in his Soteriology and has done great damage to the cause of dispensationalism by his insistence on blurring the lines between Israel and the Church. Most importantly, with respect to Hebrews, he limits the role of the blood of Christ to symbolically depicting the violent nature of Christ's death in fulfillment of prophecy. For that reason he must be warned against.

Moody, Dwight L., God's Sovereign Grace, Fleming H. Revell, 1891 Moody, was not a theologian, but he knew how to address great biblical truths in simple terms. No one can read Moody without being touched by this man of God who impacted the nineteenth century in America more than any other living person.

The New Scofield Reference Bible, New York, Oxford University Press, 1977. I strongly recommend the Scofield Bible for any serious Bible student because of its succinct, but thorough presentation of dispensational truth. The Scofield notes impacted evangelical history during the 20th Century more than any other notes. They are the non-dispensationalists' most hated notes, and the most loved notes of literal interpreters of the Bible.

Newell, William R. Hebrews Verse By Verse. Chicago. Moody Press. 1949. A basic, well rounded commentary on Hebrews, easily understood by all.

Owen, John. Epistle to the Hebrews. Grand Rapids, Kregal Publications, 1968. Owens, an excellent Reformed teacher, is quoted both negatively and positively in these notes. He is known for his godliness love for the Word,

on the one hand, but must be warned against because of this commitment to allegorical interpretation which corrupts his doctrines of salvation, the church, and future events.

Pink, Arthur W. An Exposition of Hebrews. Swengel, PA, Bible Truth Depot. 1954. A three volume set, again from the Reformed perspective. Those who take the time to read Pink will be greatly enriched, but they are admonished to observe the usual warnings associated with Reformed teaching. There are departures into allegorism and major issues with soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

Ratzlaff, Dale, Sabbath in Christ, Life Assurance Ministries, Glendale, AZ, © 2003, A great overall book to help us think clearly about Christ – written from the vantage of a former cultist.

Robertson, Archibald Thomas, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Broadman and Holman Publishers, Oct. 1, 1980. (Six Volume Set.) Good Greek overall in a mostly easy to understand format.

Wallace, Daniel, B., Hebrews: Introduction, Argument, and Outline, www.Bible.org. Wallace is a teacher's teacher!

Wuest, Kenneth S. Hebrews in the Greek New Testament. Grand Rapids. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1947. For excellent treatment of the Greek in lay terms, no one has ever excelled Wuest. His books are an absolute must.

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Bing, Charles, Interpreting Hebrews: Beginning With the Readers, July/Aug, 2002 issue of *Grace in Focus*, available at www.faithalone.org

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