

# Hebrews

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## Introduction to Hebrews

There is no clear authorship for the Letter to the Hebrews. Many over time have been assigned authorship but none have been confirmed. For many centuries the author was considered to be the Apostle Paul. The language use and style are not in conformity to the other writings of Paul. Paul always identified himself in all of his letters and the author of Hebrews lacks author identification and unlike Paul the letter was not authenticated by his personal signature. In the letters written by Paul he quoted the Old Testament in Hebrew translation where the writer of this letter quotes in the Greek translation.

Others named as possible writers are Barnabas who was the first to be advanced. Barnabas was in the circle of friends with Paul and was also acquainted with Timothy who He mentions in chapter 13:23. Barnabas was a Levite who came from Cyprus where Greek was spoken. It is most likely a coincidence that Barnabas was known as a “Son of Exhortation, (Acts 4:36), while the Letter is known as a “word of exhortation,” (Hebrews 13:22). The facts supporting Barnabas as the author are far from decisive.

Another possibility is Apollos. Apollos was a Jewish Christian from Alexandria who was well versed in the scriptures and spoke and taught accurately of the things concerning Jesus Christ. Other names that have suggested are Luke, Silas, Peter, Clement, Aristion, and Phillip. The truth of the ongoing debate of authorship is that only God knows by whose pen this letter was written.

To whom the letter was written is also an elusive subject that has drawn much debate. The title “To the Hebrews,” might mean the Jews or the Jewish Christians. It is evident that it was written to a particular group or circle of Christian Believers by references made in the last chapter. It then becomes easy to assume that the intended readers were Hebrew Christians. It is clear that the audience was to the Hebrews by reverence in Hebrews 2:16, “For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendants of Abraham.” This clearly shows that the Gentile nations or the Gentile church was in the thought of the author.

It is thought that the Hebrew Christians this letter was written to were the Christians in Jerusalem. This is supported by the language the book was written in which was Aramaic the language of Jerusalem and Palestine. It is also thought that it was written to the church in Rome although little proof has been found to support that. The reason for this assumption is in the final greeting in Hebrews 13:24, “Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.” This may only be an implication that the writer was in company with some Italian Christians who were sending salutations to friends in Rome.

To whomever this letter is addressed to they were Christians of long standing. Their faith in Jesus was inspired by men who were personally acquainted with the Lord but now time had passed. In the early days of the early leaders walk they had endured much pain and suffering, they had been exposed to the violence of the mob, they had lost their property, and they had heard the mockery of those who opposed them. Certain members of their community had been imprisoned. It is believed that this letter was addressed to the present followers of Jesus in a time when their enthusiasm had begun to fail. The trusted leaders of the past had fallen, many as martyrs. They still believed in Jesus Christ and the authority of the scriptures, they were still members in the church, and they still showed their love by ministering to the saints. But they lacked maturity and had become stagnant in their growth. They were neglecting the assemblies for their worship, were feeling the sting of social isolation, they were falling to the seduction of false teaching, they were losing heart, they were becoming weary in their battle against sin, and they were losing their faith in God and turning away from Jesus. It is these characteristics that make this letter a practical value for us in the times of today.

The purpose of the author in this letter is to prevent his readers from abandoning their faith in Jesus Christ. The author expresses a fear of a complete falling away from the living God. (Hebrews 3:12) The author's intention is to show that even their greatest sufferings are abundantly compensated by the spiritual blessings secured by Jesus' followers. He presents Christianity as the perfect religion as it grants a free and unrestricted access to God. He states that this access has been made possible by the atoning work of Christ.

The author demonstrates that the institutions of Moses find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The old institutions were symbols which pointed to greater spiritual realities. The tabernacle and its service did offer the possibility for pardon and a restored fellowship with God. To the ancient Hebrew they were pictures of spiritual realities and to the Christian they are prophecies which have been fulfilled by Christ. Jesus is the High Priest, Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice, Jesus entered the holy place, and Jesus is the divine intercessor who is able to save to the uttermost. (Hebrews 7:25) The Letter to the Hebrews was written prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD.

## Outline

Doctrinal: The Great High Priest and His Atoning Work. Hebrews 1:1-10:18

The Great High Priest Chapters 1 to 7

The Atoning Work Chapters 8:1 to 10:18

Practical: The Life of Believers. Chapters 10:19 to 13:17

The Privileges of the Christian Life Chapter 10:19-25

A Warning Against Willful Sin Chapter 10:26-31

The Principle of the Christian Life Chapters 10:32 TO 12:2

The Trials of the Christian Life Chapter 12:3-13

The Necessity of Peace and Purity Chapter 12:14-17

A Warning Against Refusing God's Voice Chapter 12:18-29

Duties of the Christian Life Chapter 13:1-17

Conclusion Chapter 13:18-25

A Request for Prayer Chapter 13:18-19

The Benediction Chapter 13:20-21

Personal Messages Chapter 13:22-25

## Chapter 1

### *Verses 1-4*

At the open of this letter and chapter is the central theme of this book. The message of this letter is the One whom the author of this letter points to, Jesus Christ. From the beginning God has been active in His relationship towards mankind and His chosen people the Hebrews. God often spoke to the Hebrews in the past in many different ways. God spoke to them in dreams, God sent His angels to deliver messages, and used events to teach His people. God gave them His law and taught them through prophets. God choose all kinds of different people to communicate with His people. He called Moses through a burning bush, (Exodus 3). God called Elijah with a whisper, (1 Kings 19:12). Isaiah heard God's voice when he saw Him sitting high as a King of all, (Isaiah 6:1-8). God did not reveal all of Himself to any one man but through each man He called to lead

the people He revealed different attributes of Himself. All through the Old Testament God was pointing to the revelation of His plan to reconcile man unto Himself and that revelation is Jesus Christ. The last book of the Old Testament was written about four hundred years before the birth of Jesus,

The Hebrews were expecting the coming of the Messiah to be their King and free them from their enemies. The Hebrews did not fully understand the real nature of the Messiah and were expecting a King to rule from an earthly throne. They were looking for a conqueror and not a redeemer. Their Messiah was the Son of God, Jesus, and many of the Jewish leadership rejected Him. Jesus was the Son of God and those who came to know Jesus also knew God as His Father is revealed through Him.

A goal of the author of this letter to the Hebrews is to show the superiority of Jesus to all the other mediators and messengers that God had sent previously. The intent of the author is not to disparage the Old Testament but to show the fuller meaning of the New Testament.

An important point in this first verse is this, “God....Spoke”. Whether God spoke through prophets of the past or through His Son His message is divine. The Christian faith is not a break from Judaism but its completion, its fulfillment, and its goal. God who spoke to the believers in the Old Testament now speaks to us by faith and we are likewise His people. The contrast between the “long ago” and the “in these last days” is that the latter indicates the present age. God’s consummation is not found in ancient prophecy but in the atoning work of Christ, as the “age to come” is a reference to the return of Christ. In the times of “long Ago” God revealed Himself as men were able to understand Him but now God has fully revealed Himself in His Son Jesus Christ. The superiority of Christ is set forth in six striking phrases.

“Whom He appointed heir of all things” Here we are looking forward to the complete sovereignty of Jesus Christ. The sovereignty of Jesus is the ultimate goal of all human history. Jesus Christ will be the Ruler of all by virtue of His Sonship to the Father, God. (Galatians 4:7) Jesus Christ is the heir of the Kingdom of Heaven and this will be revealed once the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord. (Revelations 11:15) This appointment was made in the eternal purpose of God and is spoken of in Psalms 2:7-8 and Psalms 110:1.

“Through whom also He made the world” Jesus is the heir of all things because He is the creator of all things. (John 1:3) As Jesus was the creator of all things as God’s agent He brought all things into being. In some translations the word world is translated as “ages” and is understood by some to time periods. That indication could mean that Christ was the creator of all the universe in all its phases past, present, and future.

“He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature” Christ is further revealed as supreme in His divine person and His redeeming work. In relation to the world He is the heir and creator. In relation to God He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature. There was a time when there was no world but there was never a time when God was without glory. That glory of God was ever being revealed through the Son. Jesus is related to God as the sun’s rays are related to the sun. Jesus is also the exact image of God and is the perfect revelation of God is embodied in Christ. (Ezekiel 10:4)

“Upholds all things by the word of His power” Jesus who was before all things, who created all things, who is the goal and heir of all things, is further declared to be the sustainer of all things. Jesus not only supports all things but He carries forward, He guides, He governs, He brings all things to the right conclusion through the whole course of nature and history. (Nehemiah 9:6)

“When He had made purification of sins” in this is the heart of the message of this author. The author is not only concerned with the fact that Christ is the revealer of God but that He is the redeemer of man. The High Priestly work of Jesus Christ is the theme of this Letter to the Hebrews. By Jesus removing the consciousness of guilt by the removal of sin man can regain access to God and His fellowship. The constant aim of this Letter is the continuous access of man and God. Creating a state of being in which man can live in holiness before an Almighty God. (Psalms 51:2)

“He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” once Jesus finished His earthly ministry and ascended back into Heaven where He has been exalted by the Father. Jesus now sits at the right hand of the Father. The right hand is a picture of the place of greatest honor. Christ is now the spiritual influence and divine mediator between God and man. (Matthew 26:64)

Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father shows His superiority to the prophet of old and to God’s heavenly messengers the angels. Jesus has been given a more excellent name than the angels. Jesus has been given a name, a rank higher than that accorded to the highest of created beings. Jesus is the universal King. We who want to know life in all its fullness and glory must remain loyal to Jesus, the divine, incarnate, redeeming, ascended Lord.

#### *Verses 5-14*

To the Hebrews angels were very important. Angels are powerful agents of God and they were used by Him to speak of Himself in the Old Testament. The Hebrews also believed

that the law came from God by the angels. When Jesus came into the world He came as a man and for a time He was lower than the angels. When Jesus was resurrected God gave Him great honor and once again He became higher than the angels.

The readers of this letter knew that Jesus was the Messiah and He was the one they were expecting to come. It is the purpose of the author to show that Jesus is superior to the angels. Verse five reads, "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You" some believe the word "today means before God made the worlds. This would show that Jesus was always the Son of God. Others understand it to mean the day when John the Baptist baptized Jesus. That would show that Jesus as a man was the Son of God. And others believe it to mean the day that Jesus was raised from the dead. They come to this view by the passage in Romans 1:4, "who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord." The Bible is clear in its teaching that Jesus has always been the Son of God, before He was baptized by John the Baptist and before He was raised from the dead. Jesus was before the beginning and will always be. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (Revelations 22:13)

The comparison of Jesus and the angels as a mediator between God and man is the substance of the first two chapters of this letter. Jesus is the supreme revelation of God in Chapter 1:5-14. Jesus is represented as the true representative of men in chapter 2:5-18. Between the two agents of God for mans salvation, Jesus and the angels, there is a warning to man the peril of neglecting the offer of salvation which came through Jesus Christ in view of the penalties inflicted upon those who disobeyed the message of the angels.

Angels are not to be seen as creatures of fancy, as fairies, gnomes, and elves. Neither are angels a figure of speech personifying the forces of nature. Verse 7 "Who makes His angels winds, And His ministers a flame of fire." Angels are not ones who have survived death and now inhabit the unseen world. In verse 14 the writer of Hebrews gives us the best answer for the purpose and creation of angels. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" Angels are created beings of superior power and intelligence to man who have the special task of serving God by their ministry to the people of God. Angels are distinct from Human beings who are living here in the world and in Heaven. As angels are created creatures as us they are not to be worshiped. Mankind has been created a little lower than angels but in the world to come the redeemed are to judge the angels.

Angels are messengers for God. In the New Testament they are seen at the nativity, during the passion, and the ascension of Jesus. Angels also appear in the early church history. Aside from what is revealed in the scriptures nothing is known about these mysterious beings. The wise will not reject these statements about angels as ancient

superstitions, and it is equally unwise to allow the fancy of play upon them with too much freedom.

Angels were venerated because of their part in giving the law to Israel. (Acts 7:53 Galatians 3:19) The author of Hebrews gives his argument of Christ's superiority to angels because of the esteem people had for angels. The writer of Hebrews is also concerned because of the work of mediating between God and man. A divine mediator may not be a perfect mediator. Jesus as a mediator who was both divine and human would be the perfect mediator. For this purpose the author proceeds to show that Christ is superior as a mediator above all others, namely the angels. Jesus' superiority rest in the fact that He is the Son of God, Jesus is the complete manifestation of God.

The author of Hebrews proves the superiority of Jesus by quoting seven Old Testament scriptures. Six come from the book of Psalms and one comes from the second book of Samuel. Jesus in contrast with the angels, Jesus is the Son of God while the angels are servants of God. Jesus is sovereign while the angels are subjects. Jesus is the creator while the angels are creatures. Jesus is the heir of all things while the angels are ministers to those who are to inherit His salvation and to share His glory.

In accordance with the dignity Jesus had been assigned He was given the title of "Son," a title that God did not apply to the angels. This quotation comes from Psalms 2:7, "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'" The Psalmist has referenced this passage to the coronation of an earthly king but the writer of Hebrews interprets it as a prediction of the Messiah. "This Day" referred to a time when the king entered into his office. In Christ's case, Paul interpreted the "day" as when Jesus was resurrected from the dead. (Acts 13:33)

A second quotation comes from 2 Samuel 7:14. "will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me" These words were spoken by Nathan about the heirs of King David who are assured of divine grace and guidance for their kingly task.

The next two quotations are seen as a prophecy and come from Deuteronomy 32:43, "Rejoice, O nations, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And will render vengeance on His adversaries, And will atone for His land and His people." And Psalms 97:7 "Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, Who boast themselves of idols; Worship Him, all you gods." The prophecy is not of the resurrection or the incarnation of Jesus but of His second coming when He will appear in the glory of the Father and with the holy angels.

In contrast to the Son the angels are servants that are dependant and perishable as the forces of nature. Psalms 104:4 "He makes the winds His messengers, Flaming fire His ministers."

In further contrast to the ministering spirits the Son is declared to be a divine sovereign whose rule is eternal. It is a rule that is exercised with unique joy. (Psalms 45:6-7) “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of joy above Your fellows.”

Jesus is also seen as the eternal creator in this next quotation from Psalms (102:25-27). “Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. “Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed. “But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end.”

The last contrast is linked to verse five in that it references Jesus to sitting at the right hand of the Father. In the former reference the thought was to the name given Jesus but here it is seen a place of power. (Psalms 110:1). “The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” This figure of speech comes from an ancient custom followed by Joshua when he commanded his captains to place their feet on the necks of the conquered kings.

#### Key Verses

1 Kings 19:12, Isaiah 6:1-8, Galatians 4:7, Psalms 2:7-8, John 1:3, Romans 1:4, Revelations 22:13, Acts 7:53, Acts 13:33, 2 Samuel 7:14, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalms 97:7, Psalms 104:4, Psalms 45:6-7, 102:25-27, Psalms 110:1

## Chapter 2

### *Verses 1-4*

The author of Hebrews has just demonstrated the superiority of Jesus Christ to the angels. On this fact he gives a warning that to neglect the salvation offered by Jesus, and attested to by his followers, by miracles, and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, would merit a more severe penalty than those inflicted upon those who disobeyed the law spoken by the angels. This appeal is addressed to the Christians. “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard.” This warning is not a new revelation, a new message, or even a new religion. “God has spoken.” Jesus Christ is the final sufficient message to men. What the Christian needs is a fuller knowledge of Jesus and a more earnest attention to the revelation of Jesus. The author of Hebrews continually pleads for a fuller appreciation of the riches of grace in Jesus.

If the Christian does not grow in the faith and knowledge of Jesus, or if there is indifference and disregard, then the believers stand in imminent peril. “We must pay much closer attention.... so that we do not drift away from it.” That is the real danger, to fall away from faith in Jesus Christ. All Christians are subject to such danger. In the daily walk through the enemy’s camp the currents of adverse thought and action are continuous and strong. Being a Christian requires earnestness, devotion, and resolution so that they are not swept away from their Christian convictions, confession, and hope.

The danger is not only losing what has been given and enjoyed, it is the danger of severe penalties. The argument moves from the less to the greater. “For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” The word spoken through angels is the Law of Moses. The angels were the mediators in the giving of this law as indicated in scriptures. (Acts 7:53 Galatians 3:19 Deuteronomy 33:2 Psalms 68:17) The revelation given by the angels was so sacred that all disobedience to it was severely punished. How much more will the penalty be for those who are indifferent to the clearer and fuller revelation in Jesus Christ, who has been shown to be so much greater than the angels.

There are three particulars that make this final revelation of Jesus Christ greater. First it is an original proclamation. “After it was at the first spoken through the Lord.” It was proclaimed by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. No angel was the messenger, but the Son of God. The supreme exaltation and divine glory of Jesus dictate the truthfulness and the message He delivered. Second is its secure transmission. The message of Jesus has not been corrupted. It has been confirmed “it was confirmed to us by those who heard.” The testimony of the disciples and the experience of their own lives were transmitted to fellow believers and to the writer of this letter the exact content of the saving truth they had received from the Lord.

Third is its divine attestation. This gospel message was attested by God Himself. As the author writes, “God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.” Signs indicate the design of attesting a divine revelation and teaching some spiritual truth. Wonders express their effect upon the observers. Powers denotes the exercise of divine energy and points to God as their source.

Along with the attestation of the gospel message gifts were granted particularly to the Apostolic Church were the gifts of the Holy Spirit. “And by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.” All the spiritual gifts were designed to authenticate the truth revealed in Jesus Christ.

*Verses 5-18*

In the first chapter of Hebrews the author showed the superiority of Jesus to angels as being the perfect manifestation of God. The author now proceeds to show Jesus' superiority in being the ideal representative of man. The author argues the universal sovereignty promised to man has been attained only through Jesus Christ. The incarnation of Jesus and His suffering were necessary in order for man to attain this position in the world to come. The reign of Jesus Christ is yet to become universal. Sovereignty in the coming age has not been promised to the angels, "For He did not subject to angels the world to come, concerning which we are speaking." The promise has been given to Christ and those who follow Him. This promise is written in Psalms 8:4-6, "What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet." Here the weakness and insignificance of man is made clear and also man's inferiority to the angels. Also found in this passage is the assurance of man's dominion and universal rule.

Man is not now exercising any such universal rule. "But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him. " The promise is extended to "all things." "For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him." In Jesus we see both the humiliation and exaltation the Psalmist wrote, the former by His incarnation and death and the latter by His glorification and by His sovereignty in the coming age when His Kingdom is perfected. "But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." It was by God's grace that He allowed His Son to suffer for the redemption of sinful man.

Christ's sufferings were a divine necessity and are in accordance with the nature of God. God's plan of salvation for mankind is and the sacrifice of His Son was part of His gracious purpose and plan. "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things." It is Jesus who is the reason and the cause of all things, "In bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings."

Jesus is not only the author of salvation but He is the leader who goes before the saved, treading the same path. By Jesus walking the same path as men He was made perfect. This does not mean that Jesus was with sin but by suffering as men do He became a perfect Savior through His sufferings. Jesus because of His experience as a man has the ability to sympathize and deliver what could only be possible to one who had experienced temptation, pain, and death as a man.

The followers of Jesus are called "sons" and the sons of "Him, for whom are all things." This does not mean they partake of the divine attributes of Jesus who is unique as the

Son of God. It does mean, however, they will partake in His triumph over sin and death and are to share in His dignity and destiny, even as He shared with them the experiences of suffering. They therefore are called His brethren, sons of one Father, “For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father.” Those who Jesus has sanctified and they that are sanctified are one with the Father.

“For which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” The one whom Jesus has saved have God as their common Father. Jesus addresses them as brothers and sisters in His expression of trust and dependence upon the Father. To demonstrate the willingness of Jesus to place among men as His brothers and sisters the author of Hebrews quotes two passages from the Old Testament as though they had been spoken by Jesus. (Psalms 22:22 Isaiah 8:17-18) “I will tell of Your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.” “And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.”

To experience a brotherhood with man Jesus had to become a man and submit to all the weakness and temptation common to men, even unto death. “Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives”

The Devils power of death does not mean he can determine the prolonging or the termination of life. The Devils power of death refers to his part as the tempter in bringing sin into the world. Not only did this bring physical death but also spiritual death and man lives under the fear of the wages of sin, which is spiritual death and judgment. Jesus by His victory over sin and death has “brought to naught” this enemy of man. This victory is not yet complete, as the Devil is not powerless. A Christian does naturally regard the anguish of the body, the distress and sorrow, which accompany “the last enemy” of mankind. However the victory of Christ is real. Christians can share His triumph in their conflict with the defeated evil one. Christians also view death as a servant in dark livery that ushers them into a larger and a better life. The Christian also has the hope of the Kingdom of Christ and that glory which the sons of God shall have. In that day death will have been destroyed delivering them from the bondage of fear and they will enter into a destiny of universal rule.

Jesus does not give help to the angels but to the seed of Abraham. “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things.” The author of this letter does not describe this as a work of deliverance but of a priestly service. “So that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the

people.” In this the heart of this message is reached, the whole letter to the Hebrews is written to set forth and display the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The office of Jesus is to make atonement between God and man. Jesus removes the obstacles that sin has caused and has made it possible for His people to have free and unrestricted access to God. “For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” For a time Jesus was a little lower than the angels is no evidence against His being superior to the angels. By Jesus’ incarnation, suffering, and death He is qualified to render a ministry to man even higher than the angels. Jesus is able to sympathize and to save, and is destined to be, as the Representative of man, the universal sovereign in the world to come.

#### Key Verse

Deuteronomy 33:2, Psalms 68:17, Psalms 8:4-6, Psalms 22:22, Isaiah 8:17-18

## Chapter 3

### *Verses 1-6*

We have seen in the previous chapter the superiority of Jesus to the angels now the writer shows the superiority of Jesus to Moses. As it is obvious that the angels are superior to Moses such a comparison may seem needless. Angels are supernatural beings with great power and glory. If Jesus is shown to be greater than the angels He would obviously be superior to mortal man. We must remember that this letter is addressed to former believers in Judaism and would have a high reverence towards Moses. Angels may have been the agents in communication of God’s Law but Moses was known as the Law Giver. Moses was the very embodiment of the divine revelation of the old dispensation that Jesus is now being compared to.

The author of this letter is remaining in the context of his practical purpose of this letter to the Hebrews. He is constantly encouraging his readers to be true to Jesus Christ. If Moses being faithful in the entire household of God and worthy to be trusted, then how much more is Jesus to be trusted who holds in the household of God the position of “Son.” There were those who followed Moses into the wilderness and turned back and perished because of their unbelief. The author develops this pitiful fate as a warning to any who may be tempted to forsake Jesus and become apostates from the faith.

The author addresses his readers as, “holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling.” This is another indication that this letter is written to believers in Jesus Christ. The author and his audience are members of the body of Christ. They are “holy” which means they are set aside from this world and serve God in their entire life and conduct. This is a reminder to all of us that the church is the body of Christ, a holy brotherhood closely

related to our Holy God. Our relationship with God should also show up in our relationship with the members of His body the church under every circumstance. A marvelous reality in our experience of grace is that God has called us all to salvation. There have been given many gifts given in the body of Christ, His church. Our gifts are various and all are given to bring to life the gospel message through His light shining within us.

“Consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.” To consider Jesus is a unique challenge. Nowhere else in the bible is there anything that compares precisely to it. To consider Jesus is to look at Him, to center our minds upon Him, observe Him and understand His profound significance, perceive Him in all His fullness, and to concentrate on Him to discern the true meaning of His life and work. As an Apostle Jesus is God’s authoritative spokesman concerning the New Covenant of grace made with his believing people. As the High Priest Jesus is the enabler and mediator of our confession. Jesus as God’s special Apostle He has come to us from God and as High Priest Jesus has gone to God for us. Jesus once and for all has done the work of going between “Judge of all the earth” (Genesis 18:25) and us. The confession that Christians universally make is that Jesus, God’s Apostle and our High Priest, is our Lord and Savior. We confess Christ. With our minds and hearts we believe unto righteousness and with our lives and mouths confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:10)

In considering Jesus we must look at His faithfulness and trustworthiness. The Author of Hebrews likens the faithfulness of Jesus to Moses. “His house” denotes “God’s house,” which is the community of God’s people. Moses was faithful in all his relations to this “house,” God’s house. In Numbers 12:7 speaks of Moses’ faithfulness to God’s house. Indeed Moses was faithful to God and he poured out his life for the chosen people of God, and willingly made every sacrifice. Moses was worthy and was to be trusted.

“For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.” God assigned Jesus to the position of one who organizes and regulates a household, while Moses was given the position of servant of the household. In every household there must be an administrator in charge and so it is in God’s household. Jesus, who built all things and brought His spiritual family into being, assigned each one to their positions and functions. He made Moses a servant, “He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.” Moses was a servant bearing testimony to, “a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later,” that is the truths which were to fully revealed through Jesus. The authority given to Jesus was the authority given to a Son, who was placed in complete control of the household. Jesus was appointed to be over, “His house,” that is over God’s household.

As members of the body of Christ, His spiritual family, all Christians are members, “whose house we are.” The writer goes on to state a condition to this privilege, “if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.” The author’s purpose is to

encourage such loyalty to Christ, a confident expectation of the heavenly inheritance and of perfected fellowship with God. Christians have been prone to sing “Tis done...the great transaction’s done.” (O Happy Day That Fixed My Choice,) by Phillip Doddridge. Christians should not relax in their spiritual discipline, to drift, to grow lukewarm, and to let go of their first love. God’s Word is the antidote for the poison of such carelessness. If we hold fast to Jesus, then He will hold fast to us. We are His chosen people if we cling in confidence to Him as He will cling to us in love. We are in His loving care and protection if we hold onto our hope through Him, remaining steadfast in our walk of faith with Him to the end; as He will surly remain steadfast in His care for us. It is well for us to “consider Him”, who, unlike Moses and all the other servants, is in the place of supreme power, the Creator and Administrator of God’s Family, the unique, the sovereign Son.

#### *Verses7-19*

The author of Hebrews begins this next passage with a quotation from Psalms 95:7-11. The writer of Hebrews was well versed in Old Testament scripture and uses it frequently throughout his letter. He starts with “As the Holy Spirit says.” It was God’s Spirit who warned the Jews in the psalmist’s time and it is His Spirit that warns Christians in our own time not to harden our hearts in rebellion, and not to put God to the test, and not to provoke Him to anger, not to go astray, not to refuse to know His ways, and not to precipitate His righteous wrath. The purpose of the author in using this Psalm was to remind his readers to keep on hearing God’s voice. To keep on walking in God’s ways, and to hold fast in their hope of entering rest which God is preparing for His faithful people. The Psalmist gives two references to the Jewish people’s experience of their Exodus from Egypt. The first is to their murmuring over the lack of water in the wilderness. The second reference is the pessimistic report from the spies who went into the Promise Land which caused the people to draw back from the conquest of the Promised Land. Both illustrate their lack of faith in God’s Word. This passage of Hebrews deals with the same kind of complaining and fearful unbelief in the lives of Christians.

“Take care, brethren” is a warning. In the presence of aggressive evil it is appropriate to use caution. Humility is in order. Let any who think they are standing “take heed that he does not fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12) This warning to take heed is to alert the Christian to beware, to examine the heart, “that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.” This passage is pointed to “you” “brethren,” as opposed to the Hebrew children. As Christians we are warned to avoid the fate of that unhappy company who wandered in the wilderness for forty years and died because they would not put faith to work doing the task that God had laid before them. There was no lack of faith on the part of Moses but entirely a lack of faith on the part of the people that caused them to turn back from the very border of the Promised Land. In their lack of faith the Jewish people perished in the wilderness. It will not be because of any lack of faithfulness or trustworthiness on the part of Jesus but because of an “unbelieving heart

that falls away.” There are two parts to this warning. One is the peril of unbelief and the other is the danger of losing the promised rest.

When a heart harbors unbelief, that unbelief leads to separation from God, (V 12) “the deceitfulness of sin,” (V 13) “hardness of hearts and rebellion,” (V 15) “disobedience,” (V 18) and the final ability to enter into God’s rest. (V 19) Unbelief leads to disobedience, disobedience leads issues in sin, and sin brings punishment. God’s oath of exclusion, “As I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’” (V 11) this is a solemn warning to bear in mind against the great judgment day.

Christians are advised, “But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called today.” As Christians we are to prop each other up as part of our continuing responsibility towards each other. In our church families of obedience and active faith we must have an everlasting concern for each other. We must cultivate our fields and grow each other in spiritual maturity and faith. The entire letter to the Hebrews is characterized by this pastoral care for the members of His church. By continuous encouragement of each other in the church we avoid the deceitfulness of sin. By mutual admonishment of each other church members share the warnings and cautions, the affirmations and encouragements, the edification and nourishment which are required for Christians to be sustained, to grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, and to avoid apostasy, or falling away from the living God. God is “I AM, THAT I AM”, God is present, God is now, God is today. “Today” is the time when opportunity is still knocking, when hope is still beckoning, when God is still speaking, and when the Spirit is still calling.

By God’s mercy we share in Christ, partaking of the abundant life, “if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.” It is no wonder that today some Christians have sought to discount, discredit, or discard the book of Hebrews. The author is relentless in calling Christians to live the Christian life, he simply will not let the Christian relax but calls them to never-ending Bible study and an irresponsible preoccupation with the future rewards and joys of heaven. He does not stop short of calling believers to hold firmly to their original confidence in Christ. “Firm to the end.” The Christian keeps on being delivered from disobedience, rebellion, callousness of spirit, sin, and death as they keep on believing. By perseverance and enduring we maintain the faith and endure to the end assured of entering God’s rest.

This chapter began with a compelling presentation of Jesus’ superiority and ends with a ringing challenge for Christians to endure.

#### Key Verses

Genesis 18:25, Romans 10:10, Numbers 12:7, Psalms 95:7-11, 1 Corinthians 10:12

## Chapter 4

*Verses 1-13*

The ultimate victory is still before the Christian, “while a promise remains of entering His rest.” The Christian must remain morally alert at all times, “any one of you may seem to have come short of it.” “Let us fear” is not a call to live in a spirit of fear or anxiety but is a call for the believer to have a healthy fear of the consequences of failing to reach God’s rest. Christians are not to have a fear of this world but a creative fear of the Lord. We must keep pressing onward towards the mark to avoid the possibility of missing it. Again in this passage the author shows his pastoral concern for the Hebrews and it is coming through loud and clear. It is not only a concern for the author but should be the everlasting concern for the church, God’s family of caring believers. The “promise remains” serves to remind us that more attention is given to the promises of God in this book than in any other book of the New Testament.

Moses brought good news to the Israelites while they were still slaves in Egypt, though Jesus Christ “good news” came to us while we were still in the bondage of sin. The message of good news that Moses delivered to the Israelites did not benefit them because they did not have a personal faith to fulfill the promise of God. The gospel of Jesus Christ benefits us “For we who have believed enter that rest.” Our salvation is an accomplished fact, when we heard the good news proclaimed through the Son we heard God’s clearest word and when we make our commitment of ourselves to Christ, then without delay we enter that rest. (Matthew 11:28)

The Christians salvation is also a present experience too. “For we who have believed enter that rest,” meaning that it is by our faith that is carrying us into the promised rest.

In the context of this entire presentation it is clear that salvation is a future experience for which the Christian should persevere, that which is worked for, and by which hope the Christian endures. This wonderful work of God, “were finished from the foundation of the world.” what God has said is absolute and assures its realization. God’s rest has been ready since the beginning. No works of the creator remains to be done for the works of God are complete and it is good. God Himself “rested on the seventh day from all His works.” God’s rest was denied to the Hebrew children who were filled with unbelief in His word. But, “it remains for some to enter it,” those who chose to turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ, and God has set “Today” as the certain day of salvation. It is interjected that Joshua was not able to deliver rest to the Israelite people of God. “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” The Christian today will receive the blessed repose and perfect peace which God has promised.

The author presents this sketch of the interaction of God and mankind in history. Keeping that in mind the readers of this book are now given another challenge, “Therefore let us

be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.” The Christian need not stumble in disobedience, need not drift in disbelief, need not fall away to apostasy, “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” The Word of God, Jesus, the Son of God, and our Lord is alive and He is active, and He is all discerning. “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”

The world loves darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. (John 3:19) Adam and Eve tried to hide from God after their act of rebellion and disobedience, sinful humans through all the ages have tried to hide from the eyes of God. God sees every act and hears every word of man every day and every moment of their lives. God knows every motive, numbers every heartbeat, and counts every hair. Our lives are open to Him and our obedience to Him must never lessen and our striving to move forward in the Christian faith must never cease.

#### *Verses 14-16*

Verses 14 through 16 is a superb exhortation and encouragement, as the author of Hebrews conclude his comparison of Jesus to Moses. This paragraph also touches on the very heart of his doctrinal discussion of presenting Christ as “a great high priest,” and introduces the next step in the discussion, where Jesus is shown greater than Aaron.

Previously discussed Moses is the great deliverer and leader of Israel, and it was revealed that neither Moses nor his followers entered The Promised Land. Here our Savior is pictured as a high priest as a leader, “who has passed through the heavens” into the very presence of God. There He is able to bring His followers into immediate fellowship with God.

Human priest of the Jewish system involved themselves in complex ceremonies that have special meaning to sinners of those times. Priests were human ministers chosen by God to do sacred things. They performed detailed functions designed to draw the people nearer to God and to keep them there. The Priest represented the people to God and God to the people. The Priest offered sacrifices and made intercession for the people. The Priest spoke the claims of God on the people and made the claims of the people to God. The Priests were the source of religious knowledge and they bridged the gap between a righteous God and stumbling sinners. The work of the Priest was of profound importance in God’s ancient scheme of things.

The Levitical Priesthood required the High Priest to once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, go through the curtain into the holy of holies to make special sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of the people. Sprinkling the blood of the sin offering seven times

before and on the mercy seat, thus he symbolically covered the sins of the people from the eyes of the Lord. Now Jesus is our great High Priest and has passed once for all, not through the inner curtain of a tabernacle made with human hands, but “who has passed through the heavens” to God Himself to make atonement for all sin. His greatness is further indicated by His titles, “Jesus the Son of God.” “Jesus: was his human name, indicating His perfect sympathy with men. “The Son of God” indicated his divine dignity and His qualification to mediate between God and man.

The human sympathy of our great High Priest should encourage the Christian to a special encouragement to loyalty. Our High Priest should ever receive our exhortation, “let us hold fast our confession.” The statement is both positive and negative, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” Christ is able to sympathize with the weaknesses that make it difficult for us to resist evil. Jesus Himself has suffered the full force and bitterness of temptation. Jesus suffered the allurements of sin, its bitterness and pain was real and cruel. Jesus suffered the same temptation as we with one exception; He always overcame and remained without sin.

Some believe that the phrase, “yet without sin,” means that there is a difference and it lays in the fact that Jesus’ temptations never sprang from a sinful nature or was strengthened by the impulses of an evil nature. This is true of His temptation but it is rather beside the point and is an unnecessary refinement. The purpose of the author is to express the victory of Jesus over all temptations, rather than to distinguish between different kinds of temptations. The concept to the readers is to believe that Jesus had always overcome, so He could insure victory to all who would put their trust in Him. The author adds, “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

We came to come to our High Priest in bold confidence because He is sympatric to our trials and through Him we can have victory over our trials. The throne of Jesus is the seat of divine omnipotent power, and it is the source from which boundless grace is bestowed. At His throne we find mercy, by His Spirit we are conscious of our sin, we draw near Him to receive grace, and we confess our weakness. We put our confident trust in our sympatric Savior and never are we disappointed, for He is our victorious and ascended High Priest.

#### Key Verses

Matthew 11:28, John 3:19, Philippians 4:19,

## Chapter 5

### *Verses 1-10*

In the letter to the Hebrews the author has shown Jesus to be superior to angels, the mediators of the law, and superior to Moses, the deliverer, who led the people to the Promised Land. In chapter five Jesus is shown to be superior to Aaron, who as the typical High Priest was the symbol and the embodiment of the ancient system and appointed from among men to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifice for sins. Jesus is like Aaron in the priestly nature of His office and in the qualifications for His task. Jesus is superior to Aaron in that His priesthood is eternal.

In the earlier portions of this letter, the author referred to the saving work of Christ under the figure of Priestly service. Now he has extended it by comparison with Aaron, the first and most famous High Priest of Israel. Thus the letter is brought to its climax in presenting Christ as the great High Priest, and in setting forth the abiding efficacy of His atoning work.

“For every high priest taken from among men is appointed on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.” The office of High Priest is an office held by one who is chosen. He does not take the office on his own initiative, neither is he chosen by the people. The office of High Priest is established by God, and the person who occupies this office “And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was.” To be ordained by God is to be especially entrusted with special responsibilities by the One choosing and ordaining. Aaron is mentioned here because the priestly line began with him. He was “called by God.” Aaron served with prominence and distinction as the first one to be consecrated or set apart for what God called “my Priesthood.” (Exodus 28:1-3)

Only those who are sure they have not called themselves or assumed their roles of religious leadership in obedience to human direction can expect to work in full liberty and love to do God’s will as it is revealed. If anyone assumes the work of ministry upon himself, he may tire and give it up. If he assumes the work in response to the call of others, he may become disappointed or grow disgruntled and drop out. If anyone works directly for God in the conviction of divine call he will have a never failing source of strength and energy, a never failing mandate that wards off disappointment in others or personal despair over failures, large or small.

In God’s special appointment one has to act “on behalf of men in things pertaining to God.” The High Priest offered “gifts and sacrifices for sins.” Sin cannot be taken lightly. Most church congregations may approve a polite condemnation, a well modulated tone of voice, of those sins they are not guilty of and which they are not too refined, too scared, too tired, too old, or too lazy to commit. The Bible is much more concerned about more

serious matters regarding sin. There is a sense in which every Christian begins a pilgrimage of faith with Isaiah's lament, "Woe is me" (Isaiah 6:5) and cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). The work of the High Priest was not just a ritual it was for sins, of rebellion for God, of willful disobedience, of intentional mark missing, of perversity, of transgression, of trespass, of evil, of violence, of injustice, and of unrighteousness. Sin is the awful reality of this world and righteous God dealing with a morally responsible human race requires that sin be taken seriously and that it be dealt with seriously.

In the Levitical system the High Priest could "deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with weakness" and is therefore "and because of it he is obligated to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself."

Jesus Christ, our great High Priest under God's new covenant consummated on the cross, did not call Himself. He was called by the Father. Jesus did not appoint Himself, God appointed Him. Jesus is not only God's Son whom the Father said, "Today I have begotten You," (Psalms 2:7) but has a special ordination from God which is. "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." (Psalms 110:4) This is the first reference to Melchizedek in Hebrews and there are eight other references to him. (Chapter 5:10 Chapter 6:20 Chapter 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21)

Who is Melchizedek? In Genesis Melchizedek is identified as "king of Salem," and is "he was a priest of God Most High." (Genesis 14:18) To Melchizedek Abraham, the father of the faithful gave "tenth of all."

Jesus, our great High Priest "In the days of His flesh," prayed and made earnest supplication to God "with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death." Jesus in His complete identification with humanity prayed as we pray. Jesus petitioned and entreated God as we do. Jesus cried in times of personal crisis, He wept as we sometimes do, and as we who truly trust God Jesus "was heard because of His piety."

Through the sufferings of Jesus "He learned obedience from the things which He suffered." it is the creative plan that teaches Jesus' obedience to the Father and subjection to His will. Ordained by God as a High Priest, Jesus being "made perfect" "became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation Jesus' perfection was achieved and accomplished through His movement from Bethlehem through Galilee and Samaria and Jerusalem to Calvary and the open tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. This was the purpose for which Jesus came into the world. God appointed Him and He responded in absolute faith, complete obedience, and redemptive suffering. Jesus displayed supreme moral character and was absolutely in response to the Father's leadership. Jesus was God's Son but through His humanity, which was so total, He learned obedience through the things He suffered along life's pathway to Calvary. Jesus suffered

pain experiences as the great temptations, Lazarus' death, Jerusalem's refusal to know the things that make for peace, the disciples petty jealousies, Peter's denial, Pilates harsh sentence, and the agony of the crucifixion.

Jesus is the author and source of salvation. Salvation is not indiscriminately poured out on believers and unbelievers, on the obedient and the disobedient. The salvation which Jesus gives is given "to all those who obey Him." The divine imperative is for us to obey Him. Jesus is the only way out of the dark valley of sin and death except the high and narrow way of obedience to Him. Jesus is our apostle and high priest, and as much as He made the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is not appropriated by something we think or by something we say but by something we do. Salvation is laid hold of in the lives actually done by "all those who obey Him."

#### *Verses 11-14*

The author of Hebrews now issues a call to spiritual maturity as he declared, "we have much to say." The author feels that the many things he has to say about Jesus and obedience to Him in the Christian life are "hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing." His Chastisement of the "holy brethren" is done in the context of love but without equivocation. Once they had heard the word of the gospel with keen attentive ears. "By this time" they ought to have so disciplined themselves in the faith and so developed in their own Christian experience that they could be "teachers." They should have been bringing others to the knowledge of Christ and obedience to Him in daily life.

Any church would be in trouble without able teachers and serious teaching. Where there is no real learning there is no committed disciples, and discipleship is at the heart of all authentic church life. The author of Hebrews is addressing all of his readers of his letter when he declared that "by this time you ought to be teachers." It is every member of the body of Christ to do some teaching. Some of that teaching should be done when the church is gathered together and some should be done when the church is scattered out in the community and out in the world. Some of the teaching should be to the lost of the world and the un-churched and some of it should be to one another in the covenant community where Christ is Lord.

The author views that they ought to be teachers and realizes the sad truth that "you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God's Word. To the readers that the author is addressing had not grown in the deeper spiritual things but had allowed even the most basic things to become clouded in their minds. Instead of being steady they were drifting. Instead of being attentive they were drowsy. Instead of being alert teachers they had ever ceased to be responsible learners of Christ and His way.

His chastisement continues, "You need milk, not solid food." They were behaving like babies. Like immature children, "unskilled in the word of righteousness." He reminds his

readers to be challenged and to realize that “solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.” It is by practice that we are able to tell the difference between right and wrong. All teaching has its place but the real test is when what is learned is put into practice. When our faculties, our minds, spirits, hearts, and wills, which demonstrate our personhood, are trained or disciplined to discern between good and evil, then we are able to choose the right and reject what is evil. That is when Christians are moving responsibly toward maturity in Christ.

This passage has a powerful moral meaning. A mature adult is distinguished from the immature child by the commitment to be morally responsible, to be morally discriminating, and to make consistent moral judgment. Christian maturity is related to the development of skill in the use of “the word of righteousness.” Moral truth is the glue that holds civilization together. Without the “word of righteousness” both religious institutions and civil structures would crumble and fall apart. Greek thinkers and teachers who constantly seek moral truth had no reason to deride anyone seeking moral truth. The Hebrews should have understood that ultimate and final moral truth had come to the world from Jesus Christ, the great High Priest of God who was Himself the living “word of righteousness.” They trusted Him and preached Him faithfully as the way, the truth, and the life.

#### Key Verses

Exodus 28:1-3, Isaiah 6:5, Luke 18:13, Psalms 110:4, Psalms 2:7, Genesis 14:18, Genesis 14:20

## Chapter 6

### Verses 1-8

The Christian faith is not a stand still experience but one that requires the Christian to move forward in spiritual growth. The author of Hebrews in Chapter 5:11 to Chapter 6:20 is stating that the lack of spiritual growth or growing in the Christian faith can have severe results and place the soul in imminent peril. This is the solemn concern of the author as he interrupts his argument with an extended warning against apostasy.

This concern of the author may be in part by a fear that the teaching he is about to give may be too difficult for the reader to understand. The author attempts to awaken his readers with a rebuke of their inability to comprehend spiritual truth, and a solemn warning against the danger of falling away from Christ. The author then advises them to hold firm to their Christian hope, encouraged by their past experience and by the unfailing promises of God.

If the Christian does not advance in knowledge of the word it will result in the inability to apprehend truth. If we do not use our faculty of hearing then it will become dull by the lack of use. By not hearing and studying the Word of God the greater danger becomes the complete abandonment of the Christian faith and apostasy from Christ.

It is the fear of the author that his readers are not growing in their walk with Christ and he urges them to advance from the primary elements to a fuller knowledge of the Christian faith. His desire here is that they become aroused to receive his teaching concerning the high priesthood of Christ.

The elementary teaching of the gospel message belongs to a stage that should now have been passed. "Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity." These primary teachings are not to be forgotten, denied, or neglected, but their attention is not only limited to them.

The maturity sought consists, not in a state of moral attainment, but in maturity of knowledge. It is a condition of full grown believers of which the author has previously spoken of. Mature believers who can receive the deeper truths concerning Christ, in contrast to the babes in Christ who must be fed milk.

The elementary doctrines the author lists for some ministers are the sole topics on which they dwell. Ministers who teach only the simple gospel are denying their congregations of spiritual maturity. Their congregations are only receiving the milk and not the solid food.

There are six Christian doctrines listed by the author. They concern conversion or the entrance into the Christian life; ordinances or church ceremonies; and prophecy or the events of the last days.

The first two mentions are "repentance from dead works" and "faith toward God." These are the initial stage of the Christian experience. (2 Peter 3:9) Repentance here is characterized as "from dead works." It is meant here that repentance is not only from sin but in good works done for merit or obedience to the Law aside from any real relationship to God. The remedy for such "dead works" is "faith toward God." Faith is not just a belief in the existence of God but trust in Him and the acceptance of His grace revealed in Christ. Repentance and faith are absolutes in the Christian walk but they are only small segments of the Christian doctrine. A believer who is eager to testify about his conversion may still be immature in his Christian walk. A preacher may be offering little spiritual food as he continually urges his hearers to repent from their sin and accept Christ.

"Instruction about washings and laying on of hands" is important doctrine but yet it is elementary. The ordinances of the church must be properly administered but one may display his immaturity by undue emphasis on the form of baptism, or the formulas of confirmation, or the conditions and methods of ordination.

The “resurrection of the dead” and “eternal judgment” are necessary truths. Many teachers today avoid end time prophecy. On the other side of the coin others dwell exclusively on end time prophecy and neglect other truths and defraud their hearers of spiritual food needed for their spiritual growth.

As the author declares all of these truths are fundamental and form the foundation for the faith. But the author pleads with his readers that they need to move beyond the basics and move on to the higher stages of knowledge. “And this we will do” the author adds hopefully, “If God permits.”

The author gives a dreadful warning to his readers. If a person does not progress in the Christian faith, he will relapse. One cannot stand still in their Christian walk they must move forward or they will fall backward. The author goes on to warn the reader that if they have made a beginning in the Christian life and then turns from Christ and His gospel, they will find no other means of salvation. They would never again be able to be brought to repentance.

This warning has caused ceaseless and needless controversy. Does it mean that once on is saved he can be lost? Or does it teach that one who has “fallen away” can never repent? Taken out of their context these words can be pressed to their logical limits and made to support either of these propositions. This would, however, would be to misinterpret the spirit and purpose of the author. This warning is to be taken in context with other similar warnings which express the main purpose of this letter. This letter is addressed to those who are in danger of neglecting, and so of losing, their knowledge of Christian truth. His purpose is to keep the readers loyal to Christ and true to His gospel. The author is pointing out the absolute hopelessness of apostasy.

The ones who the author fears will defect are described as “those who have once been enlightened” in the knowledge of the truth of Christ. To those who had “tasted of the heavenly gift,” the gift of eternal life, “and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 12:31) Sharing not only in His indwelling but also in the miraculous gifts which He gave to the early church, “and have tasted the good word of God,” realizing the goodness and beauty of the Gospel message, “and the powers of the age to come,” abiding in Christ that they had shared the spiritual forces of the future age.

This description is undoubtedly of persons who have experienced the blessedness of a Christian life. But the author then adds “and then has fallen away.” His words do imply that such a fate might be possible but he never affirms or denies that true Christians do this, fall away. The author is presupposing an experience that he is sure will not be realized in the case of even dull and indifferent readers whom he is addressing. The author is seeking to awaken them out of their lethargy. Therefore he writes, “it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.” To turn away from Christ is a step that is

final and irrevocable. Repentance would not be possible because of the moral condition of the apostate. “Since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.” To turn away from Christ is to reject Him the same as the ones who nailed Him to the cross. They would be consenting to the judgment of His adversaries, to their blasphemies and cruelties in putting Him to death. It would be “impossible to renew them again to repentance.” There would be no new gospel message to present and no new motive in which to appeal.

The author give an analogy from nature. Land that is cared for and tilled will bring forth a good harvest. If the land is neglected, “it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned.” The use of divine gifts issues greater blessings but their neglect can only result in condemnation and loss. No peril can compare with falling away from Christ and despising the gospel of His grace and love.

#### *Verses 9-20*

Immediately following this stern warning about falling away the author of Hebrews turns to a pastoral expression of affection and encouragement. His focus is on the things pertaining to salvation. The recipients of this letter would be affirmed by this encouraging word, “But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation.” The translation for the word beloved is dear friends. These were people whom the author knew and was close to. The word beloved is used only here in the entire letter. The word accompany is translated as belong to. It is the word that we get echo from. What are the things that echo salvation across all the valleys and through the hills of life? They are the things that God through enabling His people does. They are the things that Christians want to do. They are undistorted reflections of God’s mind and heart, purpose and will. They are the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. (Galatians 5:22)

Salvation is not just a theological transaction, a psychological phenomenon, or an emotional experience. Salvation is a marvelous reality. It echoes ways of integrity, words of wisdom, and works of righteousness. It brings forth Christian character and uncompromising morality. Its attributes are self-sacrifice, giving, discipline, obedience, and faithfulness. It is filled with sharing, ministry, and witness. It is known by just balances, fair dealings, and good works.

Our good works are known to the Lord. “For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.” The Christian is to live in spiritual earnestness holding on to a sure hope “until the end.” The work of the Lord is winsomely contagious and is manifested by enthusiasm and excitement. They have counsel to be “imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises,” is the advice given in light of those who worked faithfully and patiently and who found God trustworthy.

God's Word is sure and His promises are true. In God's dealings with Abraham He appropriately illustrate "unchangeableness of His purpose" and show how it is "impossible for God to lie." God's promise was that He would multiply his seed. It was the continuing promise of God that "heirs of the promise" have absolute confidence in Him. The human part of the covenant cannot be ignored, only when Abraham was faithful and "patiently waited" that he "he obtained the promise."

Christians are latter day heirs of God's promise to Abraham, the father of the faithful, have "who have taken refuge" to Jesus with "would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us." When the storms of life come and are all about the Christian there is refuge in Jesus. Jesus will never leave us or forsake us. "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us." God who kept His promise to Abraham has kept His promise to us through Jesus Christ. Through Jesus God is working a far greater and universal miracle of new birth through Jesus whose converted people are commissioned to be His witness "unto the uttermost part of the earth."(Acts 1:8)

Jesus, "as a forerunner for us on our behalf" became we are told again, "a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." The author has repeated this again in order that the reader will have its truth etched in their memories.

#### Key Verses

2 Peter 3:9, Matthew 12:31, Galatians 5:22-23, Acts 1:8

## Chapter 7

### Verses 1-10

#### Melchizedek

Melchizedek was not a Jew but he chose to worship the Most High God. In an era of paganism and idolatry, Melchizedek clung to God Most High and served him faithfully.

Melchizedek blessed Abram, later to be renamed Abraham, after Abram rescued his nephew Lot from enemy captivity and brought back other people and goods. (Genesis 14:18-20) Abram honored Melchizedek by giving him one tenth of the plunder of battle, or a tithe. Melchizedek's graciousness is contrasted with the rudeness of the King of Sodom.

God revealed himself to Abraham, but we don't know how Melchizedek learned of the true God. Monotheism, or worship of one god, was rare in the ancient world. Most of the

people worshiped several gods. Some even had dozens of local or household gods, which were represented by manmade idols.

The Bible does not shed any light on Melchizedek's religious rituals either, except to mention that he brought out "bread and wine" for Abram. This act and Melchizedek's holiness have led some scholars to describe him as a type of Christ, one of those Bible people who show the same qualities as Jesus Christ, Savior of the World. With no record of father or mother, and no genealogical background in Scripture, this description is fitting.

Melchizedek is a majestic figure that is first mentioned in Genesis and is now referenced by the author of Hebrews. Melchizedek was the High Priest of the Most High God. The meaning of his name is "king of righteousness" and he was the King of Salem which translates the King of Peace. This title points to him as the King of Righteousness and the Prince of Peace. Christ, like Melchizedek, is a universal Priest who is limited to no tribe or race, and he is at once both Priest and King. Neither Genesis nor Hebrews makes mention of the ancestry of Melchizedek or his priestly pedigree, or his birth or death.

This lack of genealogy does not mean that Melchizedek was an immortal but in this mystery he was made "like unto the Son of God." Christ even more truly than Melchizedek "abideth a priest continually."

The author telling this story Melchizedek resumes the discussion of Christ as the High Priest. This discussion was begun in chapter 5:1-10 with a statement of the qualifications of a high priest. In chapters 5:11 to 6:20 we receive the solemn warning against falling away from Christ. The author now continues to establish his point by stating the priesthood of Melchizedek in order to establish the superiority of Christ to the priesthood of Aaron. In this comparison Melchizedek is in the middle. The reason for this is plain in that the priesthood of Christ is after the order of Melchizedek, Melchizedek was superior to Aaron, and therefore Christ is superior to Aaron.

Abraham, who is the ancestor of Levi, and of Aaron, paid tithes to Melchizedek and was blessed by Melchizedek. Melchizedek receiving tithes from Abraham indicated certain supremacy of Melchizedek over Abraham. The Levitical priests had an implied superiority to their brethren, were also the decedents of Abraham and therefore equal in rank. Melchizedek, whose priesthood did not depend on human descent, received tithes from Abraham himself. So the Levitical priests, the descendents of Aaron, rendered reverence to Melchizedek in the person of their ancestor, Abraham. The Levitical priest who received these tithes from their brethren were subject to death; but there is no mention of Melchizedek's death made in the Old Testament.

Melchizedek blessed Abraham and Aaron and the other Levitical priests shared in the blessing promised to Abraham. Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and "without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater." Both by imparting a blessing and receiving tithes

Melchizedek was seen to be superior to Abraham. Christ, who was of the same order as Melchizedek, was superior to the Levitical, or Aaronic, priests, who were descended from Abraham.

The author's implied message here is for the followers of Christ is if his abiding and unchanging priesthood is typified by the priesthood of Melchizedek, then He may be expected to bless all those, who like Abraham, are true servants of God. Those who receive those blessings should render Him honor and homage, even as Abraham offered Melchizedek tithes from those blessings.

#### *Verses 11-25*

The author now proves that the priesthood of Christ supersedes the priesthood of Aaron. If all that was promised was accomplished by the Aaronic priesthood, there would have been no need for a priesthood of a different order. The priesthood of Christ implies that the former priesthood is no longer in effect and has been done away with. The Levitical Aaronic priesthood was the essential feature of the Mosaic Law. Christ now as our High Priest requires the old system of the Levitical priesthood to be done away with.

“Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law),” the author contends, “What further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek?” God is a righteous God and is Holy; unrighteousness cannot be in His presence. Before a man can stand before God he must be perfect. “Perfection” is the only relation that man can have before God, or the reconciliation of men to God. Sin is the obstacle that prevents free access to God and the removal must be accomplished before a right fellowship with God can be obtained. The Levitical priesthood could typify and predict but it could not secure such reconciliation of man unto God. Because of this another priesthood capable of reconciling men to God had to come about. This doctrine was clearly understood by the writer of the Psalm, who enjoyed all the privileges of the Levitical priesthood. The Psalmist predicted the coming of a Priest and wrote “after the order of Melchizedek.” The Levitical priesthood was the very soul of the Mosaic system. Therefore the author insists, “For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.”

The Priest who had come that could reconcile men to God was a great change in the Jewish belief system. Moses had been superseded by Christ, was also evidenced by the fact that the Priest who had come “after the order of Melchizedek” belonged to the tribe of Judah and not to the tribe of Levi. “For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.”

By this change in the priesthood the Mosaic economy had disappeared and is further proved by the nature of the new Priest, and the unique basis on which His office rest. His appointment was not by a rule or statute but in virtue of an inherent, imperishable life. As the author writes, "And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. For it is attested of Him, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

The difference between the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of Christ is drawn. The former priesthood was that men should be appointed priest because they were sons of certain parents. It was not a matter of their spiritual fitness or personal desire. Their service was according to the law of physical descent, "the law of a carnal commandment." The Priesthood of Jesus Christ was different, He served not because of any external compulsion, but because impelled and enabled by an inner power, the power of a life that death could not dissolve.

Christ eternal priesthood is confirmed by the Psalmist "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

The author now makes a contrast between the "carnal commandment" of the Aaronic priesthood and "the power of an indestructible life" which is the priesthood of Christ. There is a twofold result to this change. First, "there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness." The old priesthood was imperfect and based on external law of fleshly descent and passes away. This is because of its helplessness in bringing sinful man into spiritual fellowship with a holy God. The characteristic feature of the old system was in that "the Law made nothing perfect." The law did have its place and function, as it was preparatory, instructive, and prophetic, yet it brought nothing to perfection. It failed to bring man into a right relationship with God.

Secondly, there is "a bringing in of a better hope. "The better hope of attaining the goal which the law had pointed to, the hope "through which we draw near to God."

Christ priesthood secures what the old system had failed to do, provide a direct entrance into perfect fellowship with God. This hope springs from faith in Jesus Christ. This hope was described in the previous chapter. It is "the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil; whiter as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

Another aspect of Christ priesthood was that it was ratified by a solemn divine oath, which was absent from the Levitical priesthood. "for they indeed became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "The Lord has sworn And will not change His mind, 'You are a priest forever'"

With the priesthood of Christ being final and eternal, and superior to the priesthood of Aaron, it follows that the covenant under which He ministers is far superior to the Old Testament system. “So much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.” This new covenant is not temporary and provisional, but abiding and effective and certain to secure the ends for which it was established, the forgiveness of sins and the bringing of men into fellowship with God.

Christ as our eternal priest is able “save forever those who draw near to God through Him.” This is true because the ministry of Jesus Christ will never cease: “He always lives to make intercession for them.”

#### *Verses 26-28*

Now the author gives a summary of what he has said about the priesthood of Christ and contrasts it with the Levitical priesthood. The author now states that for the completion of our salvation we need, in the heavenly sanctuary a perfect High Priest as Christ. We are sinful and frail and dependent, we must have a Saviour, a mediator, a High Priest, on whom we can have perfect confidence, one who is holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

Jesus is now “separated from sinners,” free from any contamination, “and exalted above the heavens,” in celestial purity and glory and in a position of universal power.

Unlike the Levitical priest who daily made sacrifices for the people and the High Priest who made sacrifices yearly, Christ’s sacrifice was made “once for all when He offered up Himself.” Since “such a high priest” has been given us, we should turn from all other mediators, we should cease from all self-confidence, we should depend on no human rites or ceremonies, and should “draw near unto God through Him,” with unchanging devotion, with unflinching trust.

Key Verse

Genesis 14:18-20

## Chapter 8

#### *Verses 1-6*

The author now turns to the actual work of Christ as our High Priest. Jesus Christ is so superior to that of the Jewish priest and because of this the whole Mosaic economy is done away with. It is replaced with the abiding and absolute, eternal, perfect priesthood of Jesus Christ. First we see that Christ’s ministry is conducted in the true sanctuary, not a sanctuary of earth but of heaven. The new sanctuary is conducted under the New Covenant, a covenant not of works but of grace.

The author compares the death, ascension, and intercession of Christ with the ritual of the Day of Atonement as observed by the Levitical priests. The thought then turns to the sacrifice of Christ, the abiding effectiveness of which is contrasted with the repeated offerings of the Levitical priest.

Foremost the superior greatness of Christ priesthood is indicated by the scene in which it is being exercised: "Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man."

Christ is at once a Priest and a King. Jesus now holds the place of supreme power. Christ is so much greater than the Levitical priest as the universe is greater than the contracted tent in which those priests were appointed to serve. Christ is serving His priesthood from a heavenly upper sanctuary, and as such must "have something to offer." Christ must serve as priest from a heavenly place because the office of priest is filled here on earth. The author so declares; "Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law." Christ serves in the true sanctuary as the one that Moses built is but a "copy and shadow" of the one Christ now serves from. The tabernacle Moses built was a symbol of the tabernacle that Christ serves from. God plainly directed Moses as to its erection: "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain."

The tabernacle that Moses built was the realities of the tabernacle in the heavens and included the holiness of God, access to God, the worship of God, the divine provision for moral cleansing, the necessity for mediation, for sacrifice, and for intercession. The priesthood of Christ is concerned with these spiritual realities. Christ so far surpasses the Levitical priests as substance surpasses shadow, as fulfillment surpasses prophecy, as a reality surpasses type. Moses' tabernacle in the wilderness was full of significance but the relation of men and God is fulfilled in the spiritual experiences made possible by the atoning work and ministry of Jesus Christ. "But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises."

Jesus Christ has combined the offices of Moses, who mediated the law, and Aaron the High Priest who interceded with God for the people.

### *Verses 7-13*

The superiority of Christ ministry to that of the Levitical priest is evident from the fact that is exercised in a heavenly sanctuary, but also because it is related to a new and better covenant. The word covenant translates to mean as an agreement between two parties. In a divine covenant the two parties do not stand as equal contractors. This is true of the

old covenant as well as the new covenant. The two covenants were an expression of the will of God which was to be accepted to whom it was given. The word covenant translated in English is testament. Testament means will, or an instrument that disposes of property according to the purpose of a testator. The Mosaic covenant forms so essential a feature of the Jewish Scriptures that these writings are called the Old Testament. The covenant mediated by Christ is so central in the Christian Scriptures that the latter are called the New Testament. The American Standard Bible is more exact in printing on the title page these words: The New Covenant commonly called The New Testament. The old covenant and the new covenant are phrases which properly may be regarded as embodying the essential difference between Judaism and Christianity, the old dispensation and the new, between Moses and Christ.

Both covenants were designed to bring men into fellowship with God. Why, then, was the old replaced with the new? The author of this letter makes this answer: the first covenant failed to accomplish its purpose because of the frailty of man. Second, even the prophets of God who lived under the old predicted the establishment of a new covenant. Lastly, the very title New antiquated the Old.

The author states that if the old had been flawless it would not have been replaced with the new dispensation: "For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second." The old did not bring men into an abiding relationship with God. The cause of this failure was in the character of the people and not the law, which was holy, righteous, and good. God did not find fault with the covenant but "finding fault with them" He predicted the making of a new covenant.

Jeremiah predicted in a prophecy that God would make a new covenant which would be different than the one given on Mount Sinai. There was no lack of power and grace on God's part as He had just delivered the people from Egypt. The covenant had been abandoned by both parties: "they did not continue in My covenant, And I did not care for them, says the Lord."

There would be three particulars to the new order that God was to establish.

First, it was to be a system of inner rather than of outer law, spiritual rather than external and formal: "I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them on their hearts." (Hebrews 8:10 Jeremiah 31:31-34)

The law would not be graven on stone, the law would be written on the spirit and desires of men, so that their wills would be in harmony with the divine will: "And I will be their God, And they shall be My people."

Second, as a result there would be an immediate knowledge of God. No longer would there be a privileged class standing between God and men: "And they shall not teach

everyone his fellow citizen, And everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' For all will know Me, From the least to the greatest of them.” (Hebrews 8:11 Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Lastly, it shall be a dispensation of grace and forgiveness. This is the supreme pledge of its efficacy: “For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more.” (Hebrews 8:12 Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Jeremiah long ago spoke as the change would be imminent, as it must now be near its consummation; “But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear”

Key Verse

Jeremiah 31:31-34

## Chapter 9

### *Verses 1-10*

We are seeing the superiority of Christ's atoning work to that of the Levitical priest. Christ ministers not from an earthly sanctuary but in the sphere of heavenly realities. The new covenant in which Christ serves is one of grace and not of works. In the old covenant the High Priest was only able to enter into the Holy of Holies once a year not allowing for the free access of man to God. Jesus as our High Priest is there now interceding for us daily providing for the believer access to God instantly.

In comparing the old and the new covenants the author describes with appreciation the glory of the ancient ordinances of worship. The author gives us a vivid description of the tabernacle in the wilderness, the visible earthly sanctuary erected according to divine appointment. The tabernacle was constructed of two parts, the outer room known as the Holy Place, and beyond a separating veil, the inner room, known as the Holy of Holies. In the Holy Place were the golden candlestick, the table of showbread, and the altar of incense. In the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant with its mercy seat and cherubim of glory; this was the place where the divine presence was manifested.

The author makes mention of the golden altar of incense as belonging to the Holy of Holies because of its close association with this most holy place in the ancient ritual. The altar represented worship; the Holy of Holies symbolized the manifestation of God. Therefore the two are placed in immediate connection.

Having reminded his readers of the construction of the tabernacle, the author now introduces the significant use of its two rooms and the lesson it embodied. The priest were allowed to continually go into the first room, the holy place, but into the Holy of Holies

on the High Priest could enter once a year. There the High Priest made atonement for his own sins and for the sins of the people. This arrangement of the usage, which the Holy of Holies was made so inaccessible, the Holy Spirit, the author of the ritual, employed as a symbolic expression of the fact that free access in the immediate presence of God was not yet possible, and therefore fellowship with God was not yet perfect. The ancient tabernacle was a parable of the entire Mosaic dispensation in its failure to affect a full and free spiritual approach to God. All the sacrifices of the old covenant failed in the full accomplishment of their purpose. They could not, “make the worshiper perfect in conscience.” They could not bring inner peace in the heat that would come with cleansing and spiritual renewal. They were merely physical outward expressions and temporary. They had to do “food and drink and various washings.” They were ordinances of the flesh and not of the spirit. The old covenant we imposed “until a time of reformation,” a time when the new covenant would bring matters into a satisfactory and permanent state. Only through Jesus Christ do men find perfect fellowship with God, peace of conscience, rest for their souls.

#### *Verses 11-22*

The Mosaic ancient ordinances pointed to an ideal system which has been introduced by Christ. The ministry of Christ is preformed in the sphere of divine realities, in “greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation,” not a tabernacle that was made by human hands which was symbolic, temporary, and earthly.

The sacrifice made by Christ offers in not of “the blood of goats and calves,” but of His own life, with “His own blood.” Christ by His atoning blood “entered the holy place once for all,” into the presence of God, “having obtained eternal redemption.” By Christ own blood offering He has secured for us salvation, deliverance from the guilt of sin, and an unending fellowship with God. The sacrifice that Christ made on the cross is eternal in contrast to the repeated offering of the ancient ritual.

The contrast of the old and new, between the atonement of the law and the atonement of Christ is expanded in the remaining paragraphs of this chapter. The author dwells first on the purifying power of Christ sacrifice. “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” The sacrifice of animals only accomplished a ceremonial cleansing, how much more shall the spiritual sacrifice of Christ purify the soul.

The author still speaks of the Day of Atonement with its offerings of “goats and bulls,” which we find in Leviticus Chapter 16. The ordinance is also recorded in Numbers Chapter 19, which speaks of a person who had been defiled by contact with the dead, and so disbarred from worship, might be cleansed and so restored to fellowship with the people

of God. This was effected by the “water for impurity,” in which had been placed the ashes of a sacrifice. When sprinkled with this water the unclean was again sanctified.

The author contrasts the cleansing power of “His own blood.” Christ sacrificed Himself voluntarily, it was rational, and it was by action of “eternal Spirit.” For this reason it was effectual in the spiritual realm and eternal. Christ sacrifice could secure eternal redemption. It could “cleanse your conscience from dead works.” The result of Christ spiritual cleansing is that one is purified and may “serve the living God,” may enter into fellowship with Him, and render the priestly service of a holy life. It is important to consider the service that God expects. The intention of service here is not just formal worship. The recurring emphasis on obedience, growth, maturity, and the things that accompany salvation argue for assigning a meaning for service. Service would encompass the doing of truth, righteousness, justice, and peace. When questioned about what reasonable service to God might have as its absolute minimum, Jesus answered that we are to “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Since the sacrifice of Christ cleanses the conscience and brings men into fellowship with God, Christ is the “mediator of a new covenant.” The old covenants atonement for sin was symbolic but the new covenants true atonement is of Christ, which is the foundation of the new covenant. This new covenant brought in by Christ also avails for those who lived under the old covenant. Christ’s death secures “the redemption of the transgressions that were *committed* under the first covenant.” God’s people in the days of the old covenant had been promised an “inheritance.” This “eternal Inheritance,” this perfect salvation, could not be enjoyed until the sacrifice of Christ.

The sacrifice of Christ was absolutely necessary: “For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.” Christ offered Himself as the true Sacrifice. The absolute necessity of His death could not be expressed by saying that a covenant must be sealed by a vicarious offering. The death of Christ was as necessary to the establishment of the new covenant as the death of a testator is to the putting into force of a last will and testament. “For a covenant is valid *only* when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.”

In both the old and the new covenants death was necessary. In establishing the new covenant it was the death of Christ. In the old covenant it was the sacrifice of animals. The particular of death was needed and required in both covenants. “Therefore even the first covenant,” the author declares, “was not inaugurated without blood.” At the time of its solemn ratification, “For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you.” And in the same way he

sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood. And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

The author states this principle of penitence by the shedding of blood in connection with the first covenant is used to illustrate the absolute necessity of the sacrificial death of Christ in order to establish the new covenant under the remission of sins and access to God were made possible.

There is significance in the words of Moses, which the author quotes: “Behold the blood of the covenant.” (Exodus 24:8) They recall the words used by our Lord at the last Supper which ever after was to be a memorial of His atoning Death. “While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26;26-28)

Here the author has made a theological insight and is one that today’s churches may ignore. A theology that steers around this insight is sadly anemic. A hymnologist who cuts out all gospel songs about the blood of Christ is unbiblically squeamish. A ministry that will not preach or teach about the deep meaning of sacrificed life as symbolized in the blood and stated here in verse 22 is too politely proper to communicate the gospel of God in Christ.

#### *Verses 23-28*

Under the old covenant it was necessary for both the tabernacle and the things in it to be purified through prescribed rites. The heavenly things, the things of heaven itself, are somehow purified and given special glory and honor in the presence of the crucified and risen and ascended Lamb of God whose better sacrifice transforms not only earth but also heaven itself. Christ entered not into an earthly tent or sanctuary but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Christ will not offer Himself repeatedly as He sacrificed himself but “nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”

“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment.” The word judgment is transliterated, transferred letter by letter, to make our word crisis. The final crisis for man will be the determination of his everlasting fate after death and at the time of Judgment. The judge’s determination is recorded in Matthew 25:31-46. ““But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His

glorious throne."All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' "Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' "Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say "These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

In the normal course of human events people die and they are not allowed to come back to life and start over again. Christ came and gave His life once. Judgment follows death so Christ's sinless and sacrificial death will not be repeated. Christ "will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin.*" Christians are not fearful, apprehensive, anguished waiting on the judgment of the Lord. Christians joyfully anticipate the second coming when there will be a final consummation in eternity of their salvation that has begun in time.

On the Day of Atonement the High Priest laid aside his garment of glory and clothed himself only in white garments to perform his sacrificial duties and entered into the Holy of Holies. When the High Priest returned to the people he was again clothed in his garments of glory. Christ laid aside His garments of heavenly splendor and appeared on earth in the garb of spotless manhood to accomplish His atoning work. Christ then ascended back to the heavenly sanctuary, opening for man a way of spiritual access to God. Someday, to His expectant followers, He will reappear in robes of imperial majesty, not to suffer for sins but to bring to a consummation the salvation promised to those who put their trust in Him.

We see hear three appearing or manifestations of Christ. Together they summarize His atoning work. First He was manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, when He came into the world to suffer and die as the Redeemer of mankind. Then He entered into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us as our Mediator and

Intercessor, making access and fellowship possible and complete. Then again He shall appear a second time in power and great glory, the returning Savior, the reigning, rewarding, triumphant King.

#### Key Verses

Matthew 22:34-40, Matthew 26:26-28, Exodus 24:8, Matthew 25:31-46,

## Chapter 10

### *Verses 1-18*

The exhaustive statement about Abraham, Moses, Melchizedek, the tabernacle, the Levitical priesthood, the High Priest, and the sin offering is about to be brought to a close. The law and the sacrifices are but shadows of the true redemption achieved through Christ's sacrifice. Having come to earth to do the Father's will, He abolished the old order and established the new order. According to the will of God Himself "this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." All Christians are sanctified by Christ who brings us pure, spotlessly cleansed by His own blood, before the Father.

When Christ's great High Priestly work is finished, "sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet." by His single offering of Himself, He "perfected for all time those who are sanctified," putting His laws in their hearts and writing them on their minds, and remembering their sin no more. Where such forgiveness is fully given by God in Christ and fully received through personal repentance for sin and personal faith in the Lord Jesus, "there is no longer *any* offering for sin."

The author of Hebrews has carefully shared his mind and heart about these immensely important matters. No more about them needs to be said. The sermon has been preached, and the exhortation is about to begin.

### *Verses 19-25*

The opening chapters of this letter to the Hebrews have focused on the atoning work of Christ under the types of the Old Testament priesthood. The closing chapters of this letter speak to the readers of the conduct becoming to those who have accepted the salvation provided by Christ. The substance of the message is now based upon the privileges of the Christian life; they concern its trials and temptations and enforce its social and religious duties.

The author has shown that Christ has secured for His followers immediate and free access to God that the former religious system of the old covenant has been done away, and a new covenant has been established. In view of what Christ has done the readers are encouraged to accept their privileges and to fulfill their duties.

God has done great things for us. In these verses we see to great privileges granted to the Christian by the work of Jesus. The first is by His grace Christians can come boldly to Him. "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus." Christians are empowered to live a new life, "by a new and living way." The way of access is "through the veil" which Christ has opened up "that is, His flesh." In the old covenant the worshiper was excluded from the Holy of Holies by the veil. The High Priest could only enter into the Holy of Holies once a year to make atonement for his sin and the sin of the people. By the crucifixion of Christ the barrier of the veil was removed. By Christ's sacrifice and His atoning work. All who trust in Him can enjoy immediate and confident entrance into the holy place, to the mercy seat, to the throne of grace, and to a loving God.

The second privilege is mentioned in "*have* a great priest over the house of God." The author must mean by the house of God that sphere of divine realities that Christ serves in contrast with the shadows and types of the old Jewish ritual of the old covenant. The house of God must also denote the people of God for whom Christ ministers.

The Christian is called to "draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith." In repentance sinners draw near to Jesus for conversion and needy believers draw near to Him for renewal, for strength, for comfort, for help, and for guidance.

Jesus knows our heart and therefore one must approach Him with a true heart. Only with a true heart can one receive God's saving grace. The Christian who seeks a closer walk with Him, who sincerely and prayerfully strives to draw near to the heart of God, must approach God in honest commitment of mind, soul, and will. Only with a genuineness of heart are we able to worship God in spirit and truth. These are the ones that the Father seeks the true hearted people to worship Him. (John 4:23)

There are three things the Christians are to abide in, faith, hope, and love. (1 Corinthians 13:13) The first concern in drawing near to God with a true heart is faith. The Christian is to draw near "in full assurance of faith." The author of Hebrews had a primary aim of to bring his readers to this full assurance of faith. To complete confidence in God, to positive certainty about Him who we have committed everything for time and eternity. To know whom we have believed is to have this full assurance of faith. (2 Timothy 1:12)

The second concern is hope, we are urged, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering." It has been the shared hope of Christians throughout history to spend eternity with the Lord and his redeemed people. The Christian endures trials, conquers

temptations, bears witness, follows righteousness, do the things that make for peace, and awaits the return of our Lord in their hope. Hope springs eternally in the heart of the Christian and is kindled by the Spirit of God. The Christian's hope is fanned into a flame by his confession of Christ. The Christians confession is born in hope, is now being nurtured in hope, and will go onto glory in hope.

The third concern in drawing near to God is love. "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love." Love is not just a thought, something you say, or something you feel, love is something you do. As important as love is it is not something that can be taken for granted. Love must be stirred up, aroused, fanned into flame, natured, cultivated, and encouraged.

Consider in verse 24 is translated "vie with one another" in the Twentieth Century New Testament. In the New English Bible it is "see how each of us may best arouse others. It could be translated "Let us rival one another" or Let us outdo one another." The Author of Hebrews didn't just ask his readers to calmly contemplate some possible ways to encourage each other to love. Instead the author called them to a constructive outdoing of each other in outgoing, self giving love. We must aggressively stir each other up to love one another. We do this that we don't miss the full blessing of love which God intends for us to experience.

A forth concern is drawing near to God is "good works." Good work her is linked with good works. Christian love and good works belong together. Authentic Christian love is inseparable from good works. Christians are to strive to outdo each other in good works. Instead most Christians seem ready to spend their time and energies in arguing how good works cannot save us. Granted salvation is through Jesus Christ. Christians know that. The author of Hebrews made that point abundantly clear with such persistence that this message can hardly be missed. Nevertheless, the author urges us to vie with one another in doing good works. Not for us to be cleansed but because we have been cleansed. We are to stimulate each other to do the gospel. Spreading the gospel is the nature of the authentic Christian faith, authentic Christian hope, and authentic Christian love to do good work without ceasing. Faith, hope, and love find both validation and fruition in good works.

It is important for Christians to gather together. "Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some." If we neglect Christian fellowship there are certain dangers, spiritual and ethical, in the individualism which fancies itself above the need for Christian fellowship. The first function of the New Testament church is fellowship. A human being cannot be born alone, and neither can human beings successfully live alone. God has made humanity for community. God's church was especially designed as a spiritual family in which the members will spiritual brother and sister each other. Never have Christians been intended to be pious particles apart from Cod's family of faith. The

church is a spiritual support community and individuals who cut themselves off from its meetings cut themselves off from its undergirding care.

This encouragement in the Christian life is important as “encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” The day of Jesus Christ’s return is soon. The second coming of Christ was viewed then as it is today as imminent. He could come this very day. there is great moral teaching as it denies us the worldly luxury of moral relaxation. It increases the need for our readiness and wards off weariness. It gives us a powerful incentive to right living. It compels us to keep our lamps trimmed and burning as the wise virgins in the parable of Jesus did who were ready for the bridegroom’s coming. (Matthew 25:1-13) That day will be a day of celebration for the Christian, as day of joy and victory when the great judge Himself will receive the faithful into everlasting bliss.

#### *Verses 26-31*

As Christians we see the day of the Lord drawing near and we must be vigilant to avoid deliberate sin. We must also be careful not to spurn the Son of God., profane the blood of the covenant, throw away our confidence, or shrink back from our commitment. Once again the author returns in to the haunting terror with which he had previously dealt, that of apostasy. Perhaps here, as earlier, the author means to sound a note of warning which would keep his readers decisively turned away from lukewarmness, coldness, and subsequent apostasy.

Deliberate sin is the willful, intentional abandonment of Christ after “receiving the knowledge of the truth.” If this would be the case for a Christian then “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” For the one who turns away from Christ there would be “but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.”

The Mosaic Law had twenty-five offenses that when guilt was confirmed “on *the testimony of two or three witnesses*,” were punishable by death. Such a death was awful; but “How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?”

The author has in mind the vengeance and judgment of God when he issued this warning, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” With that verse, verse 31, Jonathan Edwards called multitudes to repentance in early American revivals. We would do well to cultivate a continuing spirit of personal repentance and personal faith. The serious warning of Hebrews 10:26-31 is that anyone who would spurn Christ after receiving “the knowledge of the truth would most certainly expect to be consumed by the burning wrath of the Almighty.

This may seem to be strong medicine but we must remember that God is not an indulgent granddaddy and the gospel of God in Christ is not a soft and shallow thing. It is a solemn matter of birth and death, blood and fire, heaven and hell, and time and eternity. Here is a serious correction for those who treat the gospel of Christ with a bumper sticker piety and a T-shirt theology which has beset us in this time of doctrinal flabbiness. A morality that is flippant and bent on pasting up posters that insist we are OK and that confuse the faith, confuse the faithful, and comfort the faithless. We all would do well to hear this prophetic warning, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” God’s promises of judgment are as certain as His promises of grace, and we had not forget either side of the spectrum.

#### Verses 32-39

Next the author reminds his readers of their struggles and sufferings in the time of their persecutions which they had passed/ their endurance through these trials was because they “have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.” Those who “do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.” We are not to go off into apostasy but to endure to “done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.” The author quotes Habbakuk 2:3-4 to call attention to the fact that the just, or righteous, shall live by faith and that God will have no pleasure in one who shrinks back. Christians “are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.”

#### Key Verses

John 4:23, 1 Corinthians 13:13, 2 Timothy 1:12, Matthew 23:1-13, Habbakuk 2:3-4

## Chapter 11

#### Verses 1-3

The eleventh chapter of this letter is magnificent, it is not just a chapter about faith, it is a chapter about faith in action. It is about faith at work, faith that does not shrink from battle, faith that does not flee from confrontation, faith that does not bend under pressure, faith that does not wither under the heat of persecution.

What is faith? “Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Or as the King James puts it, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Hope is built on the foundation of faith. What does faith do? Faith is the evidence, proof, or conviction which enables us to perceive unseen things just as if they were seen, to have a sense of spiritual realities just as truly as we sense things by seeing and smelling, hearing and touching. With faith we can claim the future now in the present. Faith brings the things of the future all the certainty of things that already are. By faith unseen things take on substance and future things take on a present reality. The faithful are transported to the high places where eternity can be seen beyond the boundaries and barriers of this present world. We hold a clear title to our salvation through faith. In the possession of our faith, history becomes filled with meaning, life's present puzzle is no longer a mystery, and the unseen future comes into a clear vision. Faith is not a gift of seeing unreal things but a gift of seeing through the haze of doubt, the pollution of sin, and allows us to see the distant city of God set on the mountain of eternity. Faith does not believe in something in spite of the evidence but living life for the Lord God in scorn of all earthly consequence.

Faith is not actually the substance of salvation but the assurance that there is substance to the hope given us by the God of all grace. Faith is not to be understood so much as the evidence itself of things not seen as it is our conviction that God is absolutely trustworthy and His promises are completely sure.

Our spiritual forebears "gained approval" through their faith. By their demonstrated trust in God, He affirmed them and blessed them. "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God." Scientists keep coming up with new theories about the when of creation and have moved backward some three or four billion years. The how of creation is a theological perception which the author of Hebrews has spoken with profound insight. By faith we understand that whenever it was done, creation was done by "the Word of God." Our belief in the origin of the universe is a supreme example of "a conviction of things not seen." It is an act of faith, and faith is accepting what God has revealed. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands." (Psalms 19:1) God made this material world out of immaterial, "so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible."

The author now takes on a thrilling journey back through the history of revealed religion. He will bring to our minds the illustrations of how faith has been put into action by men and women like us. This chapter contains appropriate markers for many of the great men and women who are the spiritual giants of the Bible.

#### *Verses 4-7*

Able offered a better sacrifice than Cain through his faith "By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts." It was not words that Able spoke that caused him to receive God's approval as righteous; it was the right deed of his offering to God of the better and more acceptable sacrifice. In spite of Able's death, and through faith, though he is dead,

he still speaks.” Able’s demonstrated faith still speaks to us concerning the importance of obedient and active faith.

Enoch “walked with God” (Genesis 5:24), and “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death.” Enoch’s communion with God was so complete that his journey from time to eternity was not interrupted by the door of death. His faith was in line with Jesus’ teaching that by faith we can move mountains (Matthew 17:20), simply removed the mountain of death. Enoch walked with the Lord and by doing so pleased God. Without such faith it is impossible to please God. “And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” Anyone who wants to draw near to God must first believe that He is and that God is just and righteous to reward, or to be found by, those who sincerely seek Him. The devils believe that God exists (James 2:19), but they do not respond to His righteous character which insists that we cease to do evil and learn to do well. Whoever comes to God in faith must understand both God’s existence and His justice in rewarding those who seek His face. Faith expects great things from God and attempts great things for God.

There is something especially important to be said of Noah. After being warned of the flood to come by God, by faith he took heed and “prepared an ark for the salvation of his household.” By doing so “By which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” By Noah’s active faith he built the ark and made him an heir of the righteousness. Through a working faith comes righteousness allowing us to be not taken under by the floods of life but float above them in the safety of God’s grace.

#### *Verses 8-22*

The unquestioned place of greatest prominence on the list belongs to Abraham, the father of the faithful. The Genesis account says that Abraham “Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.” (Genesis 15:6) This passage of Hebrews says, “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out.” “By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise” as “for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.” “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac” because Abraham believed “He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead.”

Sarah also receives special attention as a heroine of faith.” By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life.” Sarah’s faith was an active faith that reckoned God “Him faithful who had promised.”

The main point the author of Hebrews did not want his readers to forget was being made with these illustrations. Therefore he pauses here to remind them of his purpose before

proceeding. All of these, Able, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, “died in faith, without receiving the promises.” With their eyes of faith they saw from afar the distant promises of God’s redemption and greeted it, remaining essentially strangers and exiles on the earth. They lived and spoke in a way to make it clear they were seeking a homeland, that their hope had not been realized on earth and in time. They could have remained or returned to the lands and occupations and ways of life from which God had called them. Instead they had set their hearts on a better land, a heavenly one and because of their active and obedient faith “Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.” From this review we are reminded not to set our minds on the things of this world as we too are sojourners on our way to a better country. We are to keep our focus on the unfolding future that God has prepared for us. We walk in the faith of things unseen, and cling to our faith unto righteousness and a sense of unchanged and unchanging moral values.

We now are reminded of Isaac, to whom it is said, “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come.” Isaac, like his father Abraham, believed God and manifested his faith by passing on his blessing to Jacob and Esau, that through that blessing it past to succeeding generations. By this Isaac showed that his own death would not cancel out the promises of God.

And Jacob, “By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff,” as a sign that he, like Isaac, was looking to the future fulfillment of the promises of God. Even as famine had forced him and his family to Egypt, his ties to the land of promise were not severed and his confidence in the promises of God was not shaken. This is evident in the word that God had spoken to Jacob, “I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes.” Also in the fact that Jacob said to Joseph, “Then Israel said to Joseph, “Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers.” Then by faith Joseph is said to have spoken at the end of his life of the exodus of the Israelites and to have given instructions for them to take his bones back for burial in the Land of Promise when they themselves returned.

#### *Verses 23-31*

It is not surprising that the story of Moses’ faith begins with mention of his parents. Usually those of great faith come from parents who maintain Godly homes. Moses is the example of one whose glorious career can be traced to the righteousness of his parents. “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.” Here it is seen that the faith of Moses’ parents was strengthened by the birth of their child, Moses. It is often true that the birth of a child will draw parents into a deeper appreciation of God and his spiritual blessing. In the case of Moses’ parents there is something more here than just the birth of a child. Their faith was not merely an expectation of his future usefulness

based upon the beauty of the child, but the unusual loveliness of that babe made the parents believe that in him a divine promise would be fulfilled. God had foretold that His enslaved people would be delivered. Centuries earlier God had spoken to Abraham and promised that the bondage of Israel would end after 400 years. (Genesis 15:13) Those years had now passed and the parents of Moses believed God. Their belief and faith in God's word was so strong that it overcame their fear of Pharaoh's decree that all male infants should be put to death. They hid Moses for three months and were rewarded by Pharaoh's daughter rescuing Moses and adopting him as her own son. (Exodus Chapter 2) Modern parents today lay hold of the promises of God and their faith issues blessings which eternity can't bound.

Moses as an infant stimulated faith but as a man he was impelled by faith. His heroic and dramatic choices were determined by faith. "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin." The faith of Moses was seen by his regarding a race of slaves as the chosen people of God and believing the divine promise of release and future blessing to the world. Thus Moses chose to share in their humiliation rather than enjoy for a time the pleasures of sin. The pleasures of sin do not refer to possible sensual and unlawful gratifications, but to the continued acceptance of royal favor and all the delights of princely position and power, instead of serving as the deliverer of Israel. The sin would have been that of being disloyal to his people and untrue to his divinely appointed task.

Moses made such a choice "considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." The reproach Moses endured was his belief and acting upon the promises of God which found their ultimate fulfillment in Christ. The readers of this letter knew well what the reproach of Christ meant, and what the author indicated when he used this praise to describe the suffering of Moses, the great deliverer, the type of Savior who was in the fullness of time was to appear.

Moses accepted the promises of God on faith and looked to the future. "For he was looking to the reward." To those deliverances, those compensations, those abiding satisfactions, which in time and in eternity, all who trust and obey God are certain to receive.

"By faith he left Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen." Undoubtedly Pharaoh was angered by Moses' refusal and courses of conduct which led to his flight from Egypt and finally to the deliverance of his people. It is indicated by the author that it is more than a single act as the author adds, for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. Moses was not deterred by the wrath of Pharaoh, as he saw the unseen King. The spiritual vision on Moses' part is the real explanation of his

career; it embodies the essence of this great chapter of the letter to the Hebrews, which was written to illustrate the power of faith as “a conviction of things not seen.:

“By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood.” Moses was directly obedient to the explicit and surprising command of God. For Moses to believe that the blood of a lamb sprinkled on the doorposts of their homes would cause the angel of death to pass over the Israelites, and that on the same night they would be delivered from Egypt, required strong faith on the part of Moses. Moses took God at His word. As a result salvation did occur and Moses instituted a festival which for centuries has commemorated escape from death and release from bondage and the birth of a nation. This institution was also a promise of a greater deliverance to be wrought by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God who became the Savior of the world.

The faith of Moses was shared by the people who followed him. Moses’ faith was also their faith. Moses and the Israelites made a great venture and “passed through the Red Sea” (Exodus 14:22) as though they were passing over “dry land.” They not only passed safely, they accomplished an impossible thing. Their faith is emphasized by contrast with the audacity and presumption of the Egyptians, who when attempting the same thing, were swallowed of by the sea. (Exodus 14:23,28)

The walls of Jericho came crashing down by the same faith. There was no siege on the city of Jericho and no force was applied. The host of Israel took God at His word and marched around the stronghold, and on the seventh day, according to the divine promise, the triumph was secured and the way to conquest of Canaan was opened. The obstacles of life are ever being removed for those who trust in God.

In contrast to Sarah one other woman is mentioned in the national triumph of faith. She is a Gentile woman and an outcast. “By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.” Rahab’s faith was extraordinary as she believed on the reports brought to her concerning God and His people. These reports were shared by all the people of Jericho but they refused to believe and obey so they perished. Rahab showed her faith by her works risking her life to protect the Hebrew spies. (James 2:25) By Rahab’s faith she was saved and joined a long line of notorious sinners who “through their faith” have been redeemed and have “Had witness borne to them.

#### *Verses32-40*

The author now summarizes the achievements of the heroes of subsequent Jewish history. The impression here is deepened by noting that reference is made first to the achievements of these heroes, then to their sufferings, and finally to their rewards. “Who by faith conquered kingdoms,” as did the Judges and David; “performed *acts of righteousness*,” in establishing a just government; “obtained promises,” not those of the

coming Messiah but those of special times and needs, (Joshua 21:45 Judges 7:7 Judges 13:5 1Kings 8:56) “shut the mouths of lions,” as in the case of Daniel; “quenched the power of fire,” when the three friends of Daniel were cast into the flaming furnace; “escaped the edge of the sword,” as David eluded the javelin of Saul, as Elijah was delivered from Jezebel, or as the entire nation was saved by the intercession of Ester. “From weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight,” may refer to Deborah, to David, and to the Maccabees.

“Women received *back* their dead by resurrection.” There may be at least two cases in mind, the widow of Zarephath, (1 Kings 17:17-24), and the Shunammite woman, (2 Kings 4:32-37).

“Mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment,” were common experiences of the prophets, (1 Kings 22:27 Jeremiah 20:2 Jeremiah 37:15-16 Jeremiah 38:6). “They were stoned,” as was Zechariah, (2 Chronicles 24:20-21), “they were sawn in two,” the reputed fate of Isaiah. “They were tempted,” to become apostates by proffered relief from intolerable torment. “They were put to death with the sword,” the experience of Uriah, (Jeremiah 26:23), and the fellow prophets of Elijah.

“They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.” Such was true of Elijah and Elisha as well as of the faithful in the Maccabaean days.

They were treated as people not worthy to live in this world but in truth the world was not worthy for them to live in. What was the reward for their faith? For each one it was the recompense of an inviolate conscience, of divine approval, of a place in the inspired roll of immortals, for “these, having gained approval through their faith.” Yet they did not “receive what was promised,” the full blessedness that was to be brought on by Christ.

“Because God had provided something better for us,” we shall be included with all His people in the privileges of the new covenant and of eternal inheritance. “So that apart from us they would not be made perfect.” This does not mean that their bliss was dependent upon our presence or our power, but that their hopes could not be fulfilled until Christ had wrought out that salvation in which with them and we have a share.

These words are used by the author to encourage his readers. The saints of old triumphed through faith in the promises which they did not see fulfilled. The readers live in days which have witnessed the work of the redeemer. The Christian today should live in the example of those heroes of the past, they should be inspired to endure less severe trials in expectation of an approaching and coming reward at the reappearing of Christ.

### Key Verses

Psalms 19:1, Genesis 5:24, Matthew 17:20, James 2:19, Isaiah 1:16-18, Genesis 48:21, Genesis 15:13, Exodus 14:22, Exodus 14:32,28, James 2:25, Joshua 21:45, Judges 7:7, Judges 13:5, 1Kings 8:56, 1 Kings 17:17-24, 2 Kings 4:32-37, 1 Kings 22:27, Jeremiah 20:2, Jeremiah 37:15-16, Jeremiah 38:6, 2 Chronicles 24:20-21, Jeremiah 26:23

## Chapter 12

### Verses 1-2

With so great a testimony of the previous chapter, the great cloud of witnesses of old, the author reaches his climax by mentioning Jesus as the unique and matchless illustration of faith. The readers of this letter are exhorted to steadfast endurance by the testimony from the cloud of witnesses the author has presented, and by fixing their focus upon Jesus. All the heroes of old who triumphed “by faith,” from the days of Able, Enoch, and Noah to those of the Maccabees, form a tier above a tier of spectators, looking down upon us as we struggle along the course. The word witnesses means not those who see but those who testify. As we hear their shouts while running our course, they are telling us of the power of faith.

We must “lay aside every weight,” not only sin but anything which impedes our progress in the Christian life. Our sin is like a clinging garment that “so easily entangles us,” preventing our freedom of action, threatening to trip us and make us fall.

“Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” is the sum and substance of the appeal. All other parts are subordinate. We are not to think of our fatigue, or the possibility of failure. We are not to fall to envy of those whose struggles seem less severe and whose victories are more easily won. We are not to seek for a smoother, shorter course to the crown. We are to endure, undaunted, undismayed, and confident of success.

We have the one absolute condition to our victory, “fixing our eyes on Jesus.” Jesus is the ultimate example of faith and not the heroes of old. Looking away from all others and Looking towards Jesus, as He is the author, not the source, but the leader, the pioneer, and the “perfecter of faith.” In Jesus faith has found its perfect expression.

The supreme pattern of faith is that He looked unto the unseen, He believed God’s promises, He fixed His heart upon the unselfish “joy set before Him,” the joy of serving others, the joy of becoming the Redeemer of the world. He “endured the cross,” not only

its anguish and torture but its ignominy and disgrace, “despising the shame.” Faith never loses its reward and He has been highly exalted, now Jesus sets at the “right hand of the throne of God.” We should be inspired by such an example of faith; we should be inspired by listening to the testimony of such a great “cloud of witnesses,” we should be enabled to “lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us,” and to “run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

### Verses 3-13

We are admonished to consider Jesus. We are reminded to keep our focus on Him, think about Him, and keep our sight fixed upon Him. We are to keep in remembrance that Jesus “endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” Jesus is our example of the patience we should have in the face of opposition. Jesus did not grow weary or fainthearted so we too must endure through our own struggles. Jesus had endured the horror of the Roman cross but the readers of this letter are reminded that in their own struggle against sin they had not yet resisted to the point of losing their lives.

The hostility of this world and the persecutions we face can be extremely debilitating. They can sap the juices of life, steal our joy and squelch our enthusiasm. The opposition of this world can bring on weariness and faintheartedness. The exhortation in which the Father addresses in Proverbs 3:11-12 is called to mind. “My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD Or loathe His reproof, For whom the LORD loves He reproves, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.” “It is for discipline that you endure means that for Christians suffering endured is meant to be discipline experienced. The Lords discipline is a reminder that God loves us. Our earthly fathers disciplined us and we had a fearful respect for their care of us, so we respect the heavenly Father who loves us enough to discipline “but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.” In all things Christians are to be subject to the Father of spirits, and live.” By obedience in suffering and through trials, by patient endurance of hostility and even open persecution, Christians are to demonstrate subjection to God, “the Father of spirits; and in doing so we “live.” The end result of such endurance is “those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

“Therefore, strengthen the hands to praise God and serve others; “and the knees that are feeble” for the heavy loads that are to be lifted and the heard tasks to be undertaken; “make straight paths for your feet.” It is not the intention of God that Christians should march into battle with lame feet but with the members of the body fully healed, fully healthy, and fully well. The concern here is for spiritual health and vibrant faith. Jesus Christ has opened the door to God, and we are to walk confidently through that door and in His way. The reference of weak hands and knees is from Isaiah 35:3, where the prophet was encouraging the people to endure with the assurance that God would come and save

them. Christians are encouraged to endure in the full knowledge that Christ will return to save us.

#### *Verses 14-17*

Believers in their conflict with the world have been urged to be courageous and also help their weaker brethren. Not only are we to be helpful but also to strive to be harmonious; “Pursue peace with all men,” with friend and foe alike. In the quest for peace almost anything can be sacrificed, but not purity. As Christians we must “follow after peace” but we must also seek the “the sanctification,” the priestly consecration and growth in holiness, “without which no one will see the Lord.” Our Christian experience must include a spiritual vision that points to the blessed beholding of Christ as he appears in glory, when we shall be like Him, when we shall see Him as He is.

Christians must keep watch over one another with care. “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God,” so that by apostasy there not be any defections from their company and anyone fail to attain the blessedness which the grace of God offers.

A wicked man among the many is like a poisonous root, he could spring up and spread his corrupt influence through the church, “and by it many be defiled.”

Christians must not be led astray by any sensualist, or worldly minded, unspiritual, “profane” man like Esau. Who for a bowl of soup battered away his birthright. Esau was a fit warning to the readers of Hebrews who were continually tempted to secure safety and relief from persecution by parting with their Christian faith. The author emphasizes the point by Esau’s fate; “For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.” The example of Esau is one who made an irrevocable and fatal choice. His deed could not be undone. So if one of the readers of the letter to Hebrews under the allurements of the world or the pressure of temptation should turn away from Christ the act could never be recalled. This is a solemn warning against the forfeiting of heavenly prospects for worldly enjoyments.

#### *Verses 18-29*

The author of Hebrews has spoken of irrevocable loss of promised blessing. In so doing it is an introduction to the last warning of this letter to the Hebrews. Here the author is stating the peril of bartering the blessings of the new out of love for the old, the danger of clinging to Moses while rejecting Christ, the folly of lingering in the earthly Jerusalem and declining citizenship in the heavenly Zion.

The first warning was against neglect, Chapter 2:1-4. The second was against unbelief, Chapters 3:7 to 4:13, and the third against falling away, Chapters 5:11 to 6:20, and lastly against willful sin, Chapter 10:26-31. These warnings are summarized in a single sentence: “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking.” All five warnings carry

out the purpose of this letter, which is to secure loyalty to Christ and prevent the readers from turning away from Him.

The final warning is given in a comparison of the two dispensations. The old covenant revealed the unapproachable holiness of God and the new covenant reveals His grace, which through Christ provides access to God and fellowship and communion with Him. It emphasizes the author reminds his readers the terrifying physical manifestations which accompanied the revelation of God on Mount Sinai, and the spiritual and heavenly blessings now enjoyed by faith in Christ. When God gave Moses the Law on Mount Sinai there was great smoke, the mountain quaked, there was fire and blackness, darkness and tempest; there was the sound of the trumpet and the unendurable voice. These symbols the author now implies have passed away with the old dispensation.

In the new dispensation the author writes, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." In fellowship with the King they already, in effect, are in his eternal city. They now have "myriads of angels" to minister to them. They are now in communion with "the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven." They are in the presence of God, the final "Judge of all," they belong to the blessed company of those who have been justified and "made perfect" as worshipers by "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant." The blood of Jesus speaks of cleansing and pardon, unlike the blood of Able which cries from the ground for vengeance.

Surely those who have been given this privilege and blessing and entered upon the enjoyment must not think of disregarding this full and final revelation of God. They must not "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking." If those who disregarded the outward, visible, terrifying manifestation of God were severely punished, how much more severe must be the penalty of those who disregard the heavenly message sent through His Son.

The voice heard from Mount Sinai was terrifying, causing the earth to tremble; but the Scripture predicts a more appalling shaking which will "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven." This would signify the future final testing, and the removal of all that is merely earthly and sensual and temporal, so that the world of spiritual and heavenly realities "may remain."

As Christians we belong to that heavenly and permanent order, since we are to inherit "a kingdom which cannot be shaken," let us seek to receive God's grace that will enable us to render Him a humbler "service" of worshiping priests. Such for "God an acceptable service." We should offer our service to Him in resignation to His will "reverence and awe," as we regard His holiness. For even now, while He is full of mercy toward us, still "our God is a consuming fire."

#### Key Verses

Proverbs 3:11-12, Isaiah 35:3, Leviticus 20:7, 1 Peter 1:16

## Chapter 13

*Verses 1-6*

This last chapter of Hebrews is a chapter of final exhortations to consistent Christian living. Though these exhortations are not all connected, yet they seem to be related to one temptation. We often face the temptation to conceal one's Christian profession, to disregard fellow believers, to disown religious teachers, and to shun the hardship and the shame which might attend open allegiance to Christ.

The first of these exhortations relate to our social life. Christians are to be hospitable and to practice charity, and we are to avoid impurity and greed. "Let love of the brethren continue." Our Christian love is not only to be shown towards our Christian brothers and sisters but neither are we to "show hospitality to strangers. In the early church hospitality was a needed grace. Just like in our times proper places for entertainment were difficult to secure, and Christians were continually traveling as either evangelist or to escape persecution, and many traveled on business pursuits. The uses of the grace of hospitality often brings unexpected blessing: "for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." This was literally true for Abraham and Lot. Many times one can be surprised to find in humble guests veritable messengers of God.

As we cannot be the judge of peoples circumstances, for only God Knows, remember to minister to those who are bond in prisons with the compassion and empathy as if we were there with them. We must also be mindful and in prayer for those who are ill treated and persecuted, "since you yourselves also are in the body," and therefore are also liable to the same treatment. "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge." We should sanctify our marriage and hold firm in our vows to our life's mate. Marriage is a bond that is as holy as the bride of Jesus, the church, who eagerly waits for His return as the bridegroom to claim His bride. Those who desecrate the marriage bond will be overtaken, here and hereafter, by the judgments of God.

The scriptures speak frequently of impurity and covetousness, impure love and a lust for gold, and here are denounced at the same time: "Marriage *is to be held* in honor" and "*Make sure that* your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have." (1 Timothy 6:10) Our base for contentment is found in the promises of God, who has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:6 Joshua 1:5) Our response as Christians in the assurance of His divine care is we need not be anxious, not greedy of gain, but can express confidence in God, using the joyful

exclamation of the psalmist quoted in this letter. “The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?”

#### *Verses 7-17*

The next exhortations pertain to the personal religious life. The readers are reminded to of the former teachers of the church; they are to imitate their faith in Christ and their willingness to suffer for His sake. They must be thankful to God, kind to their fellow men, and loyal to their spiritual leaders.

The Christian is to honor them in memory of “Remember those who led you,” those teachers who centered their lives in their proclamation of the gospel, for who the Christian is indebted for their knowledge of “the word of God.”

The early teachers must be remembered for their fortitude and courage as they met persecution and death. The Savior is your Savior, “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today and forever.” Christ who was worthy of their trust and sacrifice is also worthy of ours. Christ who sustained and strengthened them will be your support and deliverer, now and forever more.

The Christian must be loyal to the changeless Christ. There are many who teach falsely and we must guard against their novel teachings. Therefore the Christian should not be “carried away,” for it is good for the heart to be strengthened” by the grace which God has bestowed in the gospel.

As Christians we “have an altar,” the cross of Jesus and the saving benefits of His death. From the benefits of the altar of the cross of Christ those are excluded who “serve the tabernacle,” those who still trust in rites and ceremonies, and who have rejected the Savior whom God has sent. On the great Day of Atonement the bodies of those animals whose blood was carried by the High Priest into the Holy Place were burned outside the camp. Neither the priest nor the worshipers could eat of the flesh of those animal sacrifices. The Sacrifice of Christ was offered outside the gate of the Holy City. Christ was surrendered into the hands of the Gentiles. The divine offering was not associated with the ritual of Moses and the Law. Those who still adhere to the system of Judaism for their salvation do not share in the benefits of the cross and the death of Christ.

“So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” Our loyalty to Jesus Christ will mean separation from the worldly way. It often involves the loss of friends and the acceptance of reproach and shame. It is like leaving the world of our birth but results in entering the city of God. The Jerusalem that is above is the embodiment of all that is spiritual, glorious, and eternal. We must be patient in all the losses and separations of time, for we belong to eternity. “For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come.”

As we partake of the blessings of the perfect sacrifice, there are offerings we must bring, the offerings of praise to God and of loving service to our fellow men. If our offerings are offered in the name of Jesus Christ, and with our trust in Him, then these offerings are pleasing to God. “Through Him then,” says the author, “let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God,” and, “And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

Christians are not only to be in remembrance of the teachers of the past, but they are also to be obedient to those of the present. “Obey your leaders and submit *to them*.” Reasoning is not given for this exhortation. The first is the serious responsibility of these leaders. They are His shepherds who someday will render to the Chief Shepherd and account for their service. Our obedience is so that they may discharge their task “joy and not with grief,” the second reason for obedience to Christian leaders is that a contrary course only results in personal loss. “For this would be unprofitable for you.”

#### *Verses 20-21*

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

#### Key Verses

1 Timothy 6:10, Deuteronomy 31:6, Joshua 1:5