



THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

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INTRODUCTION

How are we to describe this document? Is it a letter, a sermon or a thesis? It begins like no other letter in the New Testament begins (which is a reason for suspecting that Paul was not the author!), it continues like a sermon, and it concludes like a letter.

Hebrews 1:1 opens in the style of a thesis or essay. ‘God spoke.’ Hebrews 2:1 reveals the sermon style. ‘We ought to give the more earnest attention to the things which we have heard.’ Hebrews 13:23 concludes like a letter. ‘You should understand that our brother Timothy has been set at liberty.’

What is the correct title? The oldest known title for the document is, simply, ‘To Hebrews’. (About the middle of the 2nd century). Therefore, it was written for Hebrew Christians.

WHY WAS IT WRITTEN?

Since it is generally agreed that it was written about 65 A.D., we can answer this question in a fairly satisfactory manner.

1. Thirty years or more after Pentecost, the novelty of The Faith had worn off.
2. Some of them may possibly have expected an early return of the Lord, in which case they were again disappointed.
3. The end of the old religion is nowhere in sight; the temple was still standing.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that some of them had begun to wonder if they had not been over-hasty, perhaps even made a terrible mistake in becoming Christians.

Maybe they had lost more than they had gained. It was written to discourage such negative thinking and to reveal that the old religion is decayed and lifeless because its purpose has been fulfilled.

AUTHOR

The author of the book is unknown, but is well-versed in Old Testament history. Although some suggest that the apostle Paul wrote it, this is highly unlikely. Notice what the writer says in Hebrews 2:3, ‘This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.’ This implies it’s not speaking about the apostle Paul because he heard directly from the Lord.

Cargill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Hebrews 2:3 indicates that Paul was not the author of the book, because the writer says that he received the gospel second-hand, from those who heard the Lord himself.’

DATE

It is generally agreed that it was written about 65 A.D.

THEME

The main theme of the letter, therefore, is ‘the supremacy of Christ and the superiority of the new over the old.’ The keyword is ‘better’, which occurs thirteen times and is rendered ‘better’ in K.J.V. and ‘superior’ in R.S.V.

OUTLINE

Jesus is greater than the angels. Hebrews 1:1-2:18
 Jesus is greater than Moses. Hebrews 3:1-4:13
 Jesus, our Great High Priest. Hebrews 4:14-7:28
 The New Covenant. Hebrews 8:1-9:28
 Jesus, the Perfect sacrifice. Hebrews 10:1-39
 Faith and assurance. Hebrews 11:1-3
 Men and women of faith. Hebrews 11:4-40
 How to live by faith. Hebrews 12:1-13:25

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.”
 Hebrews 1:1-2

The words, “At many times and in many ways”, Hebrews 1:1, imply that God had more to say. Each prophet did not carry the final message. The whole truth was not yet out. Revelation was not complete.

God first spoke directly to the patriarchs. Then God spoke through the written law. God spoke in dreams and visions. God also spoke through the prophets, Hebrews 1:1. But God was not done revealing His word.

“But in these last days”, Hebrews 1:2, is a Messianic reference. The last days are the days of the Messiah. Peter quotes Joel 2:28-42 and in Acts 2:17-21, and describes the days they were living in as ‘the last days’.

The last days are not something still to come. The last days were then, as the prophets looked forward to the time by speaking of “in those days and at that time.”

God formerly spoke by the prophets at many times and in many ways, but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, Hebrews 1:2. This “us” is not an apostolic “us.” Many times when a New Testament writer speaks about “us,” he speaks as an apostle and about what the apostles experienced.

But by looking at Hebrews 2:3-4, we notice that the author does not include himself as an eyewitness. Therefore, the “us” is the writer identifying himself with his audience in his sermon. God had spoken to all of His followers through His Son. God spoke through the prophets at many times and in many ways.

Now God spoke through His Son. This suggests finality; God's final speech was through His Son. God's message is complete, Jude 3. God is not still speaking at many times and in many ways through the Son. God has spoken (past tense) by the Son, Hebrews 1:2.

God has revealed His total truth, and that truth is now out. That final truth was not revealed through prophets. It was revealed through the Son! The Son is authoritative; the Son's word is authoritative. The Son is the final, completed message of God. As the apostle John would write later, the Son is the 'logos', the Word. John 1:1.

Notice there are seven things mentioned in Hebrews 1:2-4 to demonstrate the greatness of Jesus.

1. Jesus has been appointed as heir of all things, Hebrews 1:2.

The word "whom he appointed as heir of all things" shows authority. God has spoken through His Son, and the Son carries great authority. The Son has been appointed heir of all things, and because He has this authority, the Son can make good on the words He has declared.

2. Jesus created the universe, Hebrews 1:2.

The authority of the Son is so great that it is through the Son that 'all things were created', John 1:3; Colossians 1:16.

"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."
Hebrews 1:3

3. Jesus is the radiance of God's glory, Hebrews 1:3.

This sentence is simply mind-blowing because it is so powerful and so vivid. Jesus is the radiance of God's glory. He is the reflected brightness of God, Matthew 17:1-2.

This Son is so great that He is described as the radiance of God's glory, shining the brightness of God's glory. He is the fulfilment of prophecy concerning the glory of God, Isaiah 40:3-5.

4. Jesus is the exact representation of God, Hebrews 1:3.

The Son is also the exact imprint of God's nature. When you see Jesus, you see God, John 14:8-9. We have not seen God, but we have seen Jesus. The Son gives a clear picture of the very character of God. The Son is exactly like the Father. Jesus is identical.

This is a great passage to fight the idea that Jesus is a lesser god or created god. He is the carbon copy of God, completely identical in every way. Or, perhaps even more literally, the Son is of the exact same substance as God.

5. Jesus sustains all things by His word, Hebrews 1:3.

This is speaking about the powerful word of Jesus. God spoke through prophets before, but now God has spoken definitively and completely through the Son. The Son is superior in His message. His powerful words uphold the universe, Genesis 1:3 / Colossians 1:17.

6. Jesus provided purification for our sins, Hebrews 1:3.

This identifies the Son as a priest. The Son, whose powerful word upholds the universe and whose words contain the final, complete message of God, is a priest.

But He is a special priest because He made purification for sins (past tense). The Son took care of sins, He made a cleansing of sins, He was able to remove the stain of sin, Hebrews 1:8-10 / Hebrews 10:1-18 / Hebrews 12:1-4.

7. He sat down at God's right hand side, Hebrews 1:3.

To sit down suggests that the work of the Son was complete, Ephesians 4:10 / Philippians 2:9 / Luke 22:69. He has done what was needed to be accomplished. There is no more to do because His work is complete. The work of purification for sins was completed.

The work of revealing the glory of God was completed. The work of being God's final message to the world was completed. In His own words, "It is finished," John 19:30.

Further, the right hand of God indicates high honour, rank, and position, Matthew 26:64. This is also a direct allusion to Psalm 110:1-2, identifying the power of the Son, Psalm 110:1-2. “The Son is the seated high priest”. He is also the prince of the house of David. He is the Messiah.

In one sentence, the greatness of the Son is described and glorified. The Son is the High Priest who made complete purification for sins. The Son is the ruler/king who is sitting in glory and honour at the right hand of God.

He is the prophet through whom God’s final, complete message has been revealed. Therefore, He is even superior to spiritual beings like the angels. He is superior in every way. First-century Jews were fascinated with angels and held them in high esteem. The title “Son of God” makes Jesus superior in every way.

CONCLUSION

1. God’s final message came through Him, Hebrews 1:2.
2. Creation occurred through Him, Hebrews 1:2.
3. He upholds the universe by His powerful word, Hebrews 1:2.
4. He is the radiance of God’s glory, Hebrews 1:3.
5. He is the exact imprint of God’s character, Hebrews 1:3.
6. He made purification for sins, Hebrews 1:3.
7. And sat down with His work finished at God’s right hand as prophet, priest, and king, Hebrews 1:3.

We serve a great Lord and Saviour, Jesus.

ANGELS

I introduced this series of studies by pointing out the superiority of Christ over the previous messengers, the Old Testament prophets, because He brought the full and final revelation of God’s plan of salvation.

Now I would like us to look at the next step in the writer’s argument when he shows his readers that the Son is superior to the angels. And if I were to offer a title for this part of the study, I would entitle it, “The worshippers and the worshipped”, because such a title highlights this important distinction between Christ and the angels, based on Hebrews 1:6 / Hebrews 1:14.

Let me begin by pointing out that, in this part of the letter, there are two things which I believe are very significant and which certainly ought to be noticed.

1. The abruptness with which the writer introduces the subject of angels, Hebrews 1:4.

No sooner has he written about the superiority of Christ over the Old Testament prophets than we are confronted, hurried, we might even say, into this discussion about angels.

Now, I think that this is rather surprising, and I suspect that, for many Bible students. The reason for raising the subject at this point is not very clear, or even why it is raised at all!

2. The other surprising thing is the amount of space that the writer devotes to the discussion of angels, especially in the light of the brevity with which he has dealt with the prophets.

In real terms, he dispenses with the prophets in just two verses, Hebrews 1:2-3, but then he launches into a passage of twenty-eight verses to talk about Christ and angels. It appears that he is responding to a discussion about angels which has been going on among these Hebrew Christians.

The question is, why write so much about angels? I believe that I can suggest the very probable reason, but before I give that reason, let me make a few general comments on this subject of angels because it seems to me that this is a subject on which a good many church members, and preachers, are rather reluctant to commit themselves.

If you were to ask them, “What do you believe about angels? Do you actually believe in angels?” I suspect that a large number of them would certainly hesitate to answer, and might even be very reluctant to answer at all!

I wonder why it is that the subject is so seldom discussed these days? Why is it ignored? And I use the word ‘ignored’ rather than ‘overlooked’ because it seems to me that the topic is deliberately avoided. Do you suppose it is because it is thought that these days it is ‘old-fashioned’ to believe in angels?

Is it because we are reluctant to let people think that we are theologically behind the times? That may be part of the answer. Especially when theological students find statements like this in their textbooks.

“It might seem there would be little profit in attempting any discussion of the angels, those higher beings that have been traditionally recognised in Christian faith and theology. As they have been usually represented, they belong to the mythology and poetry of religion, rather than to theology. In the Bible itself, it would be hard to know whether the mention of angels should be understood as implying the activity of some higher order of beings, or whether it is simply a picturesque way of representing the action of God, or his self-communication in the world.” (John MacQuarrie, “Principle of Christian Theology” p.215)

If you examine modern works of theology, you will find that they have little or nothing at all to say about angels. They will discuss God, Man and even the Devil, but they stop short at angels! Now, why is this?

Can it be that, in a world as sophisticated as ours, angels just do not fit in! It is as if those country cousins have come in from the woods to visit their rich city relations, and they are an embarrassment! And we wish they would go away, back to where they came from!

Don’t you find it a little bit strange that people today will accept the possibility of ‘alien visitors from outer space’ and U.F.O’s? They will believe in the occult and superstitious astrological forecasts.

They will talk in a way that shows they believe that it matters and really makes a difference under which so-called ‘star-sign’ they were born. They will listen eagerly to anyone who will talk about having had an ‘out of the body experience.’

The list is almost endless; mention angels, and you become some sort of religious fanatic! Such is the world in which we live! It does not surprise me that liberal theology dismisses a belief in angels as outdated and old-fashioned because it is little more than the Sadduceism of Jesus’ time dressed up in modern clothes.

You will remember that, among the sects and parties of New Testament times, the Sadducees were the ones who did not believe in angels or spirits and who denied both miracles and resurrection and life after death. Matthew 22:23-32 / Acts 23:8. But why Christians should hesitate to confess to a belief in angels is something of a mystery to me.

1. Of course, some think that angels are mysterious beings, about whose nature and function little has been revealed.

They say that, for that reason, we should ‘not seek to be wise above that which is written’, Ecclesiastes 7:16. How often that text has been abused, and that is how they avoid discussing the subject, but how mistaken they are!

And how anyone can claim that little has been revealed is truly amazing, when you know that angels are mentioned two hundred and thirteen times in the Old Testament (Malak), and one hundred and eighty-eight times in the New Testament (Angelos), a total of over four hundred times.

I said before that the Bible never attempts to prove that God exists; His existence is always taken for granted. Well, so with the angels. They are not presented as some strange phenomenon; they are not the subject of progressive revelation, that is to say, they are not first hinted at, and then gradually exposed to view, little by little.

They are there almost as soon as you open your Bible, in Genesis 3:24, and they remain there through to the very last chapter of the book in Revelation 22:8. And if you are a serious student of the Bible, you cannot avoid seeing them. You may, of course, decide to 'let sleeping angels lie,' but they are still there!

Perhaps you have heard that there are several places in both the U.S.A. and Canada, where you may visit what are virtual 'dinosaur graveyards', valleys where huge numbers of dinosaur bones have been discovered.

I heard that one young man suggested to his father that they might drive out and see the bones in one of these valleys. But his father said, "I don't believe in dinosaurs, and I don't want to see any!" Well, we may close our eyes, but the angels will not go away!

2. There are other Christians who take the position that there was a time in a former dispensation when angels were active, but they tell us that since Jesus has become our Mediator, there is no longer any need for the ministry of angels.

And so, again, they very neatly sidestep the need for any further discussion! With a stroke, angels have been taken out of circulation, made redundant, moth-balled, if you like.

Of course, to some people, that explanation may sound very wise and scholarly, but it is not scholarly at all. There is simply no logic to that argument, because, in this letter to the Hebrews, written about thirty-five years after Jesus became our Mediator with God, the writer states that angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to serve those who are to obtain salvation," Hebrews 1:14.

So there is no reason to suppose that the intercession of Christ, as High Priest, in any way affects the service that angels are said to perform. What are we to make of the words of the Lord Jesus himself, when He says, speaking of the children, "Their angels always behold the face of my father", Matthew 18:10.

I am not saying that a belief in angels is necessary for salvation, nor do I claim to understand all that the Bible reveals about them. But I am somewhat surprised at how little is said about them these days, because a failure to understand what the Scriptures teach on the subject means a loss of the encouragement that the doctrine can offer. And I would further point out that whoever else may reject belief in angels.

1. Peter didn't, Acts 12:11.

2. Paul didn't, Acts 27:23.

3. In fact, all of the apostles believed in them, Acts 5:19.

4. What is more, the ministry of the Lord Jesus himself was intimately associated with the angels.

a. They foretold His birth to both Mary and Joseph, Luke 1:25-28.

b. Announced His birth to the Shepherds, Luke 2:8-14.

c. Called Mary and Joseph back from Egypt, Matthew 2:19-20.

d. Ministered to Him after his temptation in the wilderness, Matthew 4:11.

e. Strengthened Him in Gethsemane, Luke 22:43.

f. Rolled the stone from the tomb. Matthew 28:2.

g. Met the disciples who came to the tomb, Matthew 28:1-7.

h. Were present at His ascension, Acts 1:9-11.

i. And will accompany Him when He returns, 2 Thessalonians 1:7.

5. And, for that matter, Satan believes in them, Psalms 91:11 / Matthew 4:6.

If we examine the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, we will see that the range of service they rendered was staggering. And the Hebrew Christians, to whom Jesus wrote, had no problem believing in them either.

1. We know that, over the centuries, the Jews had developed a very complicated angelology, that is, a system of belief about angels, and had come to place an exaggerated importance on the ministry of angels.

I have to smile whenever I use the term ‘angelology’ because it sounds, to me anyway, rather a ridiculous expression. It is not in my Oxford dictionary; it is a word that someone has ‘cobbled together’ to give us another ‘ology’! Although I have to admit that I don’t know any other word to use!

It was probably the ancient Persians who first developed a system of doctrine about angels, but, be that as it may, it is certainly true that the Jews themselves had, by New Testament times, come to hold very firm views about them.

Some of the things they believed were true because they were based on Scripture. For instance, they believed that there are millions of angels, and that is certainly true because the writer of this letter tells us, Hebrews 12:22.

Unfortunately, however, by New Testament times, Jewish teachers had begun to ascribe incredible authority and influence to the angels. They taught the following.

1. Angels are intermediaries between God and men.
2. They control the destiny of both nations and individuals. In other words, angels manipulate human destiny.
3. They also control the movement of the stars.
4. They have power over the elements.
5. And they execute judgment on God’s behalf.

Once people credited angels with such authority and power, it is easy to see that it would be a very small step to the worship of angels, and we can understand, also, that angels could very soon be allowed to take the place of the Lord Jesus.

As men began to depend more upon them than on Jesus, in very much the same way that Catholicism has come to depend more on Mary, whom they have named ‘the mediatrix’, rather than on Christ as their Intercessor.

At the very least, we can see how they could come to regard Jesus as being ‘one of the angels’, just like the rest. This is why the writer of the Hebrew letter concentrates on correcting this heresy and why he spends so much time dealing with the subject at the very beginning of his letter.

He is determined, at the outset, to prove the superiority of the Son over all angelic beings, because the outcome of this false doctrine is that, as well as belittling and demeaning the Lord Jesus, those who held it were actually denying His deity.

In his statement concerning angels, which commences at Hebrews 1:4 and continues to Hebrews 2:16, the writer points out seven respects in which the superiority and supremacy of Christ over the angels are clearly revealed. And it is important that we should have this firmly fixed in our own minds because there are religious groups around today, which teach the same heresy, whilst parading under the Christian name.

a. The so-called “Jehovah’s Witnesses” teach that Jesus was the first-created being, an angel named Michael.

b. Mormon leaders taught that “Adam is our god and the only god with whom we have to do”, and that Jesus was the offspring of Adam and Mary.

c. Christadelphians believe that Jesus had no pre-existence until he was born in Bethlehem. He was merely an idea in the mind of God.

So this heresy is not dead, even yet. The writer of this letter shows that Jesus is not merely an angel, but is far above the angelic order, and he does it by pointing out seven respects in which His supremacy is clearly revealed.

JESUS IS GREATER THAN THE ANGELS

“So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.” Hebrews 1:4

Constable, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the word ‘superior’ or ‘better as some translations render the word.

‘This is the first of the writer’s 13 uses of the word ‘better’ (Gr. kreitton) all of which contrast Jesus Christ and His order with what preceded Him in Judaism, [Hebrews 6:9](#) / [Hebrews 7:7](#) / [Hebrews 7:19](#) / [Hebrews 7:22](#) / [Hebrews 8:6](#) (twice) / [Hebrews 9:23](#) / [Hebrews 10:34](#) / [Hebrews 11:16](#) / [Hebrews 11:35](#) / [Hebrews 11:40](#) / [Hebrews 12:24](#).’ Here are the seven points that the writer makes.

BETTER NAME

1. He has, by inheritance, a more excellent Name than the angels.

The first point the writer makes is that the Son has a superior Name, [Philippians 2:9](#). The argument is fairly simple; the angels are merely messengers of God. But Jesus is the Son, the Son of God. The difference in the Name is significant and immediately denotes the superiority of the Son. The writer now deepens the argument.

“For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son today I have become your Father”? Or again, “I will be his Father, and he will be my Son”? Hebrews 1:5

The writer here tells us what that Name is, it is Son. In both of these quotations, it is not the quotation alone that is powerful but the location of the quotation. The quotation “You are my Son; today I have become your Father” is found in [Psalm 2:7](#). [Psalm 2](#) is a Messianic psalm speaking about the coronation of the Messiah as King, [Psalm 2:6](#). The Son has been enthroned with power, [Psalm 2:8-9](#) / [Psalm 2:12](#).

The second quotation is also about the enthronement of the Messiah. The quote comes from [2 Samuel 7:14](#). In the previous verse, the Lord declared the establishment of the throne in His kingdom forever.

So the question that comes from the text is, when did this coronation and enthronement happen? This is especially of interest because in 2 Samuel, this is spoken of as being in the future, “He will be my Son”, [2 Samuel 7:14](#).

The New Testament, in a couple of places, points out when the coronation and enthronement of the Son occurred, [Romans 1:3-4](#). Notice that the Son was appointed by His resurrection. The coronation and enthronement of the Son took place at His resurrection.

The apostle Paul makes the same argument, [Acts 13:32-34](#). Notice again that this psalm was fulfilled when Jesus rose from the dead. Now, this is important: Jesus is enthroned now! Jesus must be enthroned now.

The kingdom must be now, and Jesus is ruling now because the resurrection from the dead was when the coronation of the Son occurred. The Son has a superior Name through the resurrection, crowned as King.

GREATER DIGNITY

“And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” Hebrews 1:6

2. They are called upon to worship Him.

The Son receives worship, but the angels worship the Son. The Son is clearly greater because He receives worship. Angels do not receive worship. They are to render worship, particularly to the Son.

Notice that the Son is called the firstborn. This concept has led to much misunderstanding. The Son is not being called a created being. Nor is the Son being described as lesser than God. The Son is not a generational reference.

The firstborn held the highest place of privilege, honour, and responsibility. He has preeminence, Colossians 1:15. This is the meaning of the Son as the “firstborn.” The Son has greater dignity. Angels worship the Son, and He receives that worship.

GREATER STATUS

“In speaking of the angels, he says, “He makes his angels spirits, and his servants flames of fire.” Hebrews 1:7

3. Their function is to serve, whilst He is destined to reign.

They are sent out as servants; the very word ‘angelos’ means ‘messenger’. The angels are simply servants. This point will be repeated in Hebrews 1:14. But angels are simply servants, wonderful servants, but still servants. They are spirits, and they are flames of fire, but still servants.

“But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, a sceptre of justice will be the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.” Hebrews 1:8-9

Carefully watch the argument that is made about the Son in Hebrews 1:8-9. This is speaking about the throne of the Son. In speaking about the Son, ‘your throne, O God.’ ‘The Son is God.’

The writer states this point clearly, and it cannot be missed or avoided. This is a quotation from Psalms 45, and it is useful for us to understand this psalm and tie it to the argument made here in Hebrews. Psalms 45 is a royal wedding song written for the King, Psalms 45:10-11 / Psalms 45:13 / Psalms 45:16.

But the psalm is strange in Psalms 45:6, because the king is called God. But Psalms 45:7 is even stranger. The king is God, but He has a God, “your God”. There is no king in the Hebrew Scriptures that this describes. This is about the Messiah.

Again, it is a coronation picture. The Son has been chosen above all and has been anointed with the oil of joy. Olive oil was used to anoint the kings of Israel at the inauguration of their rule.

It is a Messianic royal wedding. This image explains the parables in the Gospels Jesus told concerning ‘The wedding feast’, [Luke 14:7-14](#) / [Revelation 19:6-8](#). Now, let us back up and include [Hebrews 1:7](#) again. The angels serve, but the Son rules. The Son is superior.

GREATER FUNCTION

“He also says, “In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment.” Hebrews 1:10-11

4. They are created beings, whilst He is the Creator.

The writer of Hebrews says that these quotations are still talking about the Son. He emphasises the role of the Son in creation. The Son laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens. Further, the Son is eternal. All of creation will perish, but He remains.

“You will roll them up like a robe, like a garment, they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.” Hebrews 1:12

5. As created beings, their existence is dependent, whilst His existence is un-derived and eternal, [John 5:26](#).

The writer quotes [Psalm 102:25-27](#). In [Psalm 102](#), this song was written to God. Therefore, the argument continues that the Son is God. He remains the same, and His years will never end.

“To which of the angels did God ever say, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?” Hebrews 1:13

6. He is exalted far above the angels.

He has been enthroned until all enemies are placed under His feet, [Philippians 2:10-11](#).

7. He has authority far beyond anything granted to angels, [Hebrews 2:5-8](#).

If we then summarise these arguments, showing that the Lord Jesus is not an angel, but far above them in nature and authority, this is what we find. Please notice that the writer proves the Son’s superiority by using seven quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures.

The number seven may be completely coincidental, but it is interesting that the number seven, which symbolises perfection, is used.

1. He is different in nature. He is eternal, [Hebrews 1:8](#) / [Hebrews 1:12](#).

2. He is different in relationship, The Son, [Hebrews 1:5](#).

3. He is different in status. He is to be worshipped, [Hebrews 1:6](#).

4. He is different in dignity. He occupies the throne, [Hebrews 1:8](#).

5. He is different in title. My Son, [Hebrews 1:8](#).

6. He is different in power. The Creator, [Hebrews 1:10](#).

7. He is different in function. Destined to reign, [Hebrews 1:13](#).

And finally, if we look at [Hebrews 2:9](#), we see that, whilst He is, in every way above the angels, He became, for a little time, lower than the angels but for a great purpose, “that he, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone”.

In other words, Jesus became a man in order to suffer physical death. As a spiritual being, He could not have done this. But He became flesh. Became a man. Or, as Paul puts it in Romans 8:3, “God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.” So what is the conclusion?

1. The Son has a better Name. He was established as king when he rose from the dead, Hebrews 1:4-5 / Philippians 2:9.

2. The Son has greater dignity. The Son receives worship. The angels render worship to him, Hebrews 1:6.

3. The Son has a greater status. The Son rules, angels serve, Hebrews 1:7-9.

4. The Son has a greater function. The Son is eternal and creator; angels serve the created, Hebrews 1:10-14.

The writer of this letter is saying to these Hebrew Christians. Whatever else you make of the angels and even considering the service they have rendered in the past, Jesus, the Son of God, is not and never was an angel.

He has done what no angel could ever do. Though He is essentially higher than angels, He stooped to the level of fallen man and became a man, in order to raise you above the level of angels.

GUARDIAN ANGELS

“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” Hebrews 1:14

This verse is a very significant verse because it indicates that angels have a twofold ministry. The KJV translates this as follows. “Are they not all liturgical (worshipping) spirits, sent forth to serve?”

The two words used are leitourgika, which gives us the word liturgy, and diakonian, which has to do with service. The original meaning of the word leitourgekos was worship offered to God, and it tells us how angels relate to God.

The word diakonia, on the other hand, tells us how angels relate to the heirs of salvation; they render service. They are worshipping spirits whom God sends out to serve the heirs of salvation. And that surely means you and me.

If you now ask me if I believe in guardian angels, I answer yes! And if you now put the question, “How do you recognise a guardian angel?” I answer, ‘That is not my problem!’ As an heir of salvation, mentioned in the verse, I am one of those who are to be cared for. I am neither required nor expected to be able to identify an angel!

The third verse of the hymn, ‘Count your blessings’, says the following.

‘Count your many blessings, angels will attend, help and comfort give you to your journey’s end’.

Is there any Scriptural evidence to validate this regarding angels in this context? Now we’ve already talked about this, but I want to look at it again in order for us to understand what we’re talking about.

So runs the question, a question which, in essence, asks if the Scriptures teach that there are ‘Guardian Angels’? Because, like I said earlier, the very existence of angels is a subject that is rarely discussed these days. We might be forgiven for suspecting that preachers and hearers alike are often reluctant to commit themselves where angels are concerned.

Note the words for ‘angel’, ‘malak’ in the Old Testament, and ‘angelos’ in the New Testament, occur two hundred and thirteen and one hundred and eighty-eight times respectively, and both mean ‘messenger’. Whether a reference is to a human being or a heavenly, spirit being must be determined by the context.

What do the Scriptures reveal about angels and their relationship to human beings? Well, there are some quite clear statements, which should help us in our search for the answer to the question.

Angels have an interest in what happens on Earth. This is a truth that runs right through the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation.

1. In the Old Testament.

Angels brought Abraham the promise of a son, [Genesis 18:10](#). They warned Lot of the impending destruction of Sodom, [Genesis 19:1](#). They met Jacob, on his way home from his uncle Laban's territory, [Genesis 32:1](#). Moses believed in Guardian Angels, [Numbers 20:16](#). Daniel believed in this ministry of Angels, [Daniel 6:22](#). Even Nebuchadnezzar believed in Angels! [Daniel 3:28](#).

2. In the New Testament.

Angels were intimately involved with the Lord Himself, all through His life and ministry.

- a. Angels foretold his birth to Mary and Joseph. [Matthew 1:20](#).
- b. Angels announced it to the shepherds in the fields. [Luke 2:8-14](#).
- c. An angel instructed Mary and Joseph to go to Egypt, [Matthew 2:13](#) / [Matthew 2:19](#).
- d. Angels ministered to him after his fast and temptation in the wilderness, [Matthew 4:11](#).
- e. An angel strengthened him in Gethsemane, [Luke 22:43](#).
- f. Angels stood ready, twelve legions of them! To respond to His call, if He required them! [Matthew 26:53](#).
- g. An angel rolled the stone from the mouth of the tomb, [Matthew 28:2](#).
- h. Angels met Mary Magdalene when she came to the tomb, [John 20:11](#).
- i. Angels were present at his ascension, [Acts 1:10](#).
- j. Angels will accompany Him when he returns, [2 Thessalonians 1:7](#).

An examination of the Scriptures will easily extend this list. In [Matthew 18:10](#), the Lord Himself warns against despising, that is, treating badly or harming 'little ones' who believe in Him. The plain meaning of His statement is that there are heavenly beings to whom is entrusted the special duty of the care and guardianship of believers.

I might add that those words, 'for I say to you', are tremendously significant because that is the formula used by the Lord when He introduced new truth or illuminated truth not previously understood. Compare [Luke 15:7](#) with [Luke 15:10](#),

Note also that He uses the same formula no less than nine times in [Matthew 5](#). [Matthew 5:18](#) / [Matthew 5:20](#) / [Matthew 5:22](#) / [Matthew 5:26](#) / [Matthew 5:28](#) / [Matthew 5:32](#) / [Matthew 5:34](#) / [Matthew 5:39](#) / [Matthew 5:44](#). Angels are interested in the conversion of sinners. [Luke 15:7](#) / [Luke 15:10](#) reveals that 'there is joy among the angels of God' when the lost are found and when the sinner repents.

In the next chapter, [Luke 16:22](#), Jesus tells us that, when he died, Lazarus 'was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom', another example of angelic involvement with the faithful.

They also have an interest in the faithful preaching of the Gospel. In [1 Timothy 5:21](#), the young evangelist, Timothy, is urged to exercise his ministry with care: 'I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels'.

An angel directed Philip the evangelist to meet the 'Ethiopian', [Acts 8:26](#). And Cornelius was told by an angel to 'send to Joppa for Peter,' [Acts 10:5](#). Angels will be the Lord's agents at the time of the Judgement, [Matthew 13:41](#).

In the church, angels are concerned with the woman's subjection to the Man, [1 Corinthians 11:8-10](#). Notice the phrase 'because of the angels'. It means that her acceptance of the divine order constitutes an example to the angels.

CONCLUSION

Do I believe in Guardian Angels? Yes! Emphatically! And if you ask if I can recognise a ‘Guardian Angel’, I answer, No! But that does not constitute a problem for me.

After all, on several of the occasions to which I have already referred, e.g. Abraham in the Old Testament and Peter in the New Testament, they did not recognise them either!

In any case, the recognition of God’s children is the job of the angel, since he is to minister to those who inherit salvation. I don’t need to be able to recognise him, but he is commissioned to recognise me!

How do the angels go about their work? That is for them to know. We are to have faith in our heavenly Father’s promise to care for His people. So there was a fascination with angels, but there was also a great respect and honour held for angels.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 begins by presenting the author’s exhortation to his audience now that he has argued the superiority of the Son over angels and over the message given through the prophets.

WARNING TO PAY ATTENTION

“Therefore, we must pay the most careful attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away”. Hebrews 2:1

Now we come to the theme of the sermon, encouraging these Christians not to give up. This “therefore” in Hebrews 2:1 reaches back to the introduction of the writing in Hebrews 1.

Since God has spoken in these last days through the Son, Hebrews 1:2, we must pay the most careful attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away. The writer says to look and listen more carefully to the message of the Son.

All of us listen to something. We make provisions to listen to the things we want to listen to. We listen to sports, financial, and Christian music. We position ourselves to listen to the radio or watch television. We make ourselves ready to listen.

But do we make ourselves ready to listen to the message of the Son? Are we positioning ourselves to hear the Word of God? Do we take the time to read as we ought? Do we take the time to study? Do we think about the message of Christ? Are we listening to the Word of God?

The point is that we make provisions to listen to the things we want to listen to. We make the time to listen to various other things and watch certain things. But are we making time to listen to the Son? We must pay the most careful attention to the message of the Son.

The reason is so that we “do not drift away”. The imagery that this conjures in our mind is intended by the author. It is a picture of floating away or slipping away. We must pay the most careful attention, or else we are simply going to float away from God.

As someone once said, ‘Going to hell is not hard, we just drift there.’ Do nothing, and you will float yourself right into eternal punishment. Reaching God requires our utmost determination and effort. So pay attention, the writer says, listen carefully so that we do not drift away.

“For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?” Hebrews 2:2-3

Here is an additional reason why we need to pay the closest attention. The argument is built upon the revelation of the Law of Moses and the reliability of that law. The Law of Moses was given through angels and proved to be firm and reliable, [Hebrews 2:2](#) / [Acts 7:53](#) / [Galatians 3:19](#).

There is no question about that law and its validity, and it was given through angels. We know, therefore, that the message of Jesus is valid because it was given through Him as the Son. As chapter one argued, the Son is greater than angels in every respect.

Further, every transgression and every disobedience received a just retribution, [Hebrews 2:2](#). This is one of the important lessons we learn from a study of the Hebrew Scriptures. We read about punishment being dealt by God for those who were disobedient in Israel. We read the stories of Korah, Achan, Uzzah, David, and many more. We learn the fact that a just punishment is given. So how can we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? [Hebrews 2:3](#). How can we possibly think that we will not come under severe punishment and not receive just retribution for neglecting the message given by the Son?

If the message declared by angels brought just retribution to the disobedient, how much more for us if we neglect the message declared by the Son? There is no escape from our neglect, [Romans 1:18](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The contrast in this verse is between the sinners of the Old Testament and the New Testament, leading to the conclusion that if they suffered punishment for disobeying the word that came through angels, how much more certain is it that the wrath and judgment of God shall be executed upon them that neglect or disobey the word delivered by God’s Son himself.’

Consider also that neglect is the opposite of paying the most careful attention, which we were commanded to do in [Hebrews 2:1](#). Do not neglect the message because you will drift away. In drifting away, we will receive just retribution for neglecting the message of the Son.

“This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.”
Hebrews 2:3-4

This message of salvation was first declared by the Lord Jesus. This already makes the message superior to the Law of Moses, whose law came through angels. Further, the message of salvation was confirmed by those who heard, [Hebrews 2:3](#). Some eyewitnesses saw and heard the Lord Jesus, [1 John 1:1-3](#).

Notice that the writer does not include himself in the group of those who heard directly from the Lord, [Hebrews 2:3](#). This point is enough to prove that Paul is not the author of this letter. This implies it’s not speaking about the apostle Paul because he heard directly from the Lord.

Cargill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Hebrews 2:3 indicates that Paul was not the author of the book, because the writer says that he received the gospel second-hand, from those who heard the Lord himself.’

God also testified to this message of salvation through the Son through signs, wonders, various miracles, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, John 20:30-31 / Hebrews 2:4.

JESUS MADE FULLY HUMAN

“It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him? You made them a little lower than the angels, you crowned them with glory and honour and put everything under their feet.” In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present, we do not see everything subject to them. But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.”
Hebrews 2:5-9

Notice that we are continuing this comparison to angels, Hebrews 1:5-13. The world to come has not been subjected to angels. What is “the world to come”? The author helps us by saying, “about which we are speaking,” Hebrews 2:5. Has the writer been talking about the end of the world? No. Has the writer been talking about some future world? No. He has been talking about the superiority of the Son, the Messiah. “The world to come” is simply a reference to the new order of things in the Messianic kingdom.

Robertson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The author is discussing this new order introduced by Christ, which makes obsolete the old dispensation of rites and symbols.’

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The world to come’ is ‘the new world order inaugurated by the enthronement of Christ at the right hand of God.’

Remember that he is writing to those with a Jewish background and is telling them about the superiority of things in the kingdom of the Son. Those things in the Messianic kingdom have not been subjected to angels.

In Hebrews 2:6-8, the writer of Hebrews quotes from Psalms 8:4-6. A difficult question arises with this quotation: Is the author referring to people, or is he referring exclusively to the Son?

First, the word “man” in Hebrews 2:6 is a translation of the Greek word ‘anthropos’, which means “human beings.” It has no reference to gender. “Son of man” is the same thing. The son of a person is a person.

To answer our question, let’s go back to Psalms 8. Psalms 8 praises the Lord for His glorious creation. Carefully look at Psalms 8:3-8, and notice that the psalmist is talking about humans. God has made humans a little lower than the heavenly beings. God has crowned humans with glory and honour.

Further, God has given humans dominion over the works of God’s hands, and all things are under the feet of humans. This praise reflects the teaching in Genesis 1:28-30, where God gave dominion to humans over every created thing. Now, some think that this psalm about humanity is being altered by the writer of Hebrews and is now applied to Jesus as the Son of man. But I do not think that is right, and let me show you why.

Back to Hebrews 2:5-9, the writer is borrowing from Genesis 1 and Psalms 8 to remind the audience that God has placed humans on the earth to rule over the creation. All things are subject to humans. This is a good reminder for our environmentalists and animal rights activists.

While we need to be caretakers of the earth and not show brutality, animals are not higher than humans, and the earth is not higher than people. God has placed humans at the top, and all things created are under our feet.

Hebrews 2:8 wraps up by pointing out that we cannot even begin to comprehend all that this point entails. We do not fully see all that God has placed under our feet.

We are so short-sighted and so unable to comprehend the great dominion that God has given us on this earth. Everything under our feet reflects that the whole created world is in subjection to humans.

But there is something that we do see, according to Hebrews 2:9. In fact, it is ‘a someone’. But we do see Jesus. He also became a human for a little while. This is the thrust of the argument. The Son is superior because He became human. If the quotation isn’t referring to Jesus, then Hebrews 2:9 does not make sense.

What makes sense is to use the psalmist’s argument about the dominion of humans over the created world and then point out that the Son became human. Therefore, the Son also has dominion.

We see Jesus, and we can see His dominion because He was crowned with glory and honour after tasting death for everyone, Hebrews 2:9. We have victory, deliverance, and dominion because of Jesus.

This ties back to Hebrews 2:5, because the author is speaking about the ‘world to come’, that is, the Messianic kingdom. We cannot begin to fully see the dominion and rule we have.

The writer has already pointed out that angels were created, at least for one purpose, to serve those of us who are inheriting salvation, Hebrews 1:14. We cannot see that; we cannot see the inner workings of the spiritual realm and our place in that. But we do see Jesus. Jesus was made human, and He was crowned with glory and honour, Hebrews 2:9. We do see that.

The writer is going to continue to argue that we share in that glory and honour. The Son became human, which makes Him greater than the angels, for He was exalted in the end. So we also will share in that exaltation.

CONCLUSION

1. Pay the most careful attention to the message of salvation delivered by the Son.

The message of the Son is too often called a message of peace and grace, yet the writer declares that just retribution will come on those who neglect His message and drift away.

2. We are unable to see or fully understand the dominion and glory that God has prepared for us.

But we do see Jesus, who has been crowned with glory and honour. We share in that glory and victory because He became like us, a human. The Son is greater than angels because He became a human. The Son became like us and led the way.

“In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.” Hebrews 2:10

In Hebrews 2:9, we saw Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and He rules on His throne. Hebrews 2:10 shows that we are sharing this glory, honour, and victory with Him.

“In bringing many children to glory” shows that we are joined with Him. God made Jesus the pioneer of our salvation through His suffering. The word “pioneer” is the best translation I can find of this Greek word. The word carries with it the idea of being a trailblazer, breaking through new ground so that others can follow behind him.

The word is also used for a prince, a leader, and a representative head of a family. Therefore, Jesus has blazed the trail and is leading the way for us to be crowned with glory and honour with Him.

What does it mean that ‘Jesus was made perfect through what He suffered’? The Greek word is ‘teleioo’, and it means “to bring to an end, to complete, to make perfect.” But, this word translated as “perfect” can also refer to consecration. That is, a person is consecrated so that one can complete and finish a task.

We can see this to a degree in Exodus 29:1-9. In this text, Moses is commanded by God to consecrate Aaron and his sons, Exodus 29:1. The instructions are given about how this consecration would be accomplished.

After these steps, notice, “Thus you shall ordain Aaron and his sons,” Exodus 29:9. After these steps, Aaron and his sons were made ready, consecrated, to accomplish their task as priests. This seems to be the most likely meaning of this word.

Jesus did not need to be made perfect in a moral sense because He was perfectly moral. Rather, the point is that through His suffering, Jesus was consecrated to His High Priestly ministry to complete the task of bringing salvation to us through suffering.

“Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.” Hebrews 2:11

The writer of Hebrews continues and says the One who makes people holy and those who are made holy are one. Most translations add a word after “one,” but that word should be italicised because it is supplied by the translators. I think part of the idea is that we are one family.

This is natural to the rest of the verse, describing us as brothers and sisters with Jesus. Because we are one, is the reason why Jesus calls us brothers and sisters. We are now joined together, ruling with Jesus in one family.

But there is another part when we reach back to the overall argument of Hebrews 1 and Hebrews 2. Jesus is superior to angels. How is Jesus superior to angels in Hebrews 2? Jesus is superior because He was made human, tasted death for everyone, and was crowned with glory and honour.

Morgan, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Son was made lower than the angels, descending to the level of human nature (especially regarding his passion and death), in order that he might die. From death, angels are exempt; therefore, he passed them by, coming not merely to the level of ideal humanity, but to the level of failing humanity; made lower than the angels that he might taste of death.’

We are one in nature with Jesus; Jesus is one of us. He is our trailblazer who is leading us into victory, joining us together as one family. Then we read these amazing words, “So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.” What a blessed thought that Jesus sees those who are made holy as His brothers and sisters.

“He says, “I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters in the assembly, I will sing your praises.” Hebrews 2:12

To prove that we are brothers and sisters with Jesus, the writer of Hebrews quotes from two Hebrew passages. The first quotation comes from Psalms 22:22. This is a fascinating quote in light of the context.

Psalms 22, begins with the words, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me”, Psalms 22:1, and ends with “It is finished,” Psalms 22:31. These were some of the final words of Jesus while on the cross, directing the attention of those looking on to consider these prophecies and apply them to Jesus, Matthew 27:46 / John 19:30.

Psalms 22:22 begins the victory part of the psalm as God has answered His plea and brought deliverance. Psalms 22 also applies to Jesus, who will declare the deliverance of God to His brothers and sisters.

Who are Jesus' brothers and sisters? We are His brothers and sisters, the holy people of God. In fact, key in on the word "assembly." This is most frequently used to refer to the church, the saved people of God. Jesus rises from the dead, conquering death and bringing victory, declaring the power of God to us, His brothers and sisters.

"And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."
Hebrews 2:13

These two quotations come from Isaiah 8:17-18. The context of this prophecy is interesting because it is part of the Immanuel prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14. Immanuel means "God with us," Matthew 1:23. Jesus is saying that He has put His trust in the Lord and God has given Jesus His children. Therefore, we are brothers and sisters with Jesus, John 17:9.

"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason, he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." Hebrews 2:14-18

The writer returns to the idea of our shared victory in Jesus after proving that we are brothers and sisters with Him. Jesus shared in flesh and blood with us so that He could break the power of Satan over us, Hebrews 2:14.

The word "destroy" KJV, is not the best word here, Hebrews 2:14. Jesus' death did not destroy Satan's power, which holds the power of death. It means "to render powerless." Jesus made the power of death that Satan has powerless. Exell, in his commentary, says the following.

'Since Jesus died, the devil and his power are destroyed. Destroyed? Certainly. Not in the sense of being extinct. Still, he assails the Christian warrior, though armed from head to foot, and goes about seeking whom he may devour, and deceives men to ruin. Yet he is destroyed. Are we not all familiar with objects which are destroyed without being actually ended?'

Now we have no fear of death, Hebrews 2:15 / Isaiah 25:7-8 / 2 Timothy 1:10, we know that it is not the end for us, John 11:25 / 1 Corinthians 15:55-57. We know that we are no longer destined for eternal punishment for our sins, 1 John 5:13.

To add to the theme of the argument, Jesus did not do all of these things to help angels, but to help us, Hebrews 2:16. The point is that He did not become the nature of angels to help angels. He took hold of human nature to help humans.

Further, we are 'Abraham's descendants', Hebrews 2:16, the fulfilment of God's promise, Genesis 12:3 / Galatians 3:7.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hebrews 2:16.

'The meaning of this verse is that Christ took upon himself the flesh of the seed of Abraham; and the expression "he took hold of" is very illuminating, for it shows that Christ had an existence before he decided to partake of flesh and blood, and that it was by his own volition that he did so.'

We are God's people, we are His children, we are in His kingdom. This is why Jesus was made like us so that He could become a High Priest, full of mercy and faithfulness, making atonement for the sins of the people, Hebrews 2:17.

Jesus had to be made like us to be able to represent us before God. Further, Jesus is making atonement (propitiation) for our sins, Hebrews 2:17 / 1 Corinthians 5:19.

This is a picture of God issuing mercy for us even though we sinned. Jesus is operating as High Priest on our behalf so that our sins can be covered by God's mercy.

Then the writer of Hebrews goes one step further, declaring that Jesus suffered through temptations and can help us when we are tempted, [Hebrews 2:18](#). Jesus becomes human and is able to help us in so many ways.

1. Jesus helps us by being human because He experienced death for us.
2. Jesus helps us by being human because He can be our brother.
3. Jesus helps us by being human because He can act as High Priest, making atonement for our sins.
4. Finally, Jesus helps us by being human because He is able to help us when we are tempted since He also suffered when He was tempted.

SIX REASONS WHY JESUS BECAME HUMAN

1. That God might consecrate (perfect) Him through sufferings, [Hebrews 2:10](#).
2. To render the power of Satan inoperative, [Hebrews 2:14](#).
3. Become a merciful and faithful High Priest, [Hebrews 2:17](#).
4. Help believers, [Hebrews 2:16](#).
5. Deliver humans from the fear of death, [Hebrews 2:15](#).
6. To rule the world, [Hebrews 2:5-8](#).

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

Before we get into the text, I think it would be useful to highlight the following.

THE SERVANT AND THE SON

The writer has spoken in fairly general terms of the superiority of the Son over all previous messengers, the prophets, who brought only a partial revelation of the will and purpose of God. He has also shown the vast superiority of the Son over the angelic beings that God has used in His service.

Now he approaches what might be regarded as a rather sensitive stage in his presentation and argument, when he comes to deal with the superiority of the Son and the new dispensation over the former dispensation and the one who introduced it, namely, the highly revered figure of Moses.

And highly revered is an accurate description of Moses, because among the Jews of the time of Jesus, especially the Hellenistic Jews, Acts 6:1, there was a tendency to regard Moses as an almost divine figure, certainly as more than a mere human being.

Both Josephus and Philo shared this attitude. Josephus, on the death of Moses, Vol. 1 Book 4 ch.8, states the following.

“Moses exceeded all who ever existed in understanding. He is such command of his passions as if he hardly had any in his soul and only knew them by their names, as rather perceived them in men other than himself. He was such a prophet as was never known, and this, to such a degree, that whatever he pronounced, you would think that you heard the voice of God Himself.”

Deuteronomy 34:10 expresses how the Israelites, and, later, the Jews, thought about Moses. Numbers 12:3 states, “Moses was very meek, more than all men that were on the Face of the earth.”

Indeed, the older Jewish teachers claimed that “There are fifty gates to Wisdom, and Moses held the key to all but one.” Psalms 103:7 makes a significant statement. “God made known His ways to Moses; His acts to the Children of Israel.”

We also should be careful never to lose respect for Moses, although we sometimes appear to be doing precisely that when we quote John 1:17. We should always remember that we do not elevate the Lord Jesus by denigrating Moses. Nothing would irritate Jewish listeners quicker than a criticism of Moses.

On one occasion, Jewish leaders told a man whom the Lord had just healed, John 9:28. Jesus Himself endorsed the authority which Moses possessed when He spoke to the Jews of “Moses on whom you set your hope.” John 5:45 The standing and authority of Moses were unquestioned, and the appeal to what Moses said was the accepted way of settling any question because the word of Moses was regarded as final, Mark 10:3. Jesus even told his own followers, “The Scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat: so practice and observe what they tell you,” Matthew 23:2.

Clearly, then, Moses occupied a unique place in the life and religion of the Jews when this letter to the Hebrews was written, and the inspired writer is well aware of the delicate problem with which he had to contend, and we see how diplomatically and gently he handles the matter.

There is no doubt that there are words and phrases which we like to hear. There are expressions which make us feel good. And that is what the writer is about to make use of.

First, he uses the word “holy brethren”, Hebrews 3:1. He very skilfully establishes a link between these readers and their past, Jewish Christians, who, you will remember, feel that they have lost their connection with the history of their nation.

“Holy brethren”! Not, as you might have thought, a common expression. This is the only time it occurs in the entire New Testament. I know that we use it quite often, as we speak to each other, because the New Testament teaches us that we are holy brethren, saints, sanctified ones. But the use of that phrase in this passage is based on the Old Testament Scriptures rather than the New Testament.

What the writer is doing is simply this: he is using the familiar phrases and terms of the Old Testament Scriptures, as he suggests to his readers that they are still in a relationship with these great men of God whom they suppose they have now lost in becoming Christians.

Later, he will marvellously develop this thought in Hebrews 11, in the well-known roll-call of faith, when he shows his readers that all the patriarchs of the Old Testament were men who lived by faith, just like Moses, and just like themselves.

If you read [Acts 2:29](#), you see that Peter also used this respectful manner of approach when, standing before the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, he said, “Men and brethren”.

And even in classical literature, we have the example of Mark Anthony when he presents the body of the murdered Julius Caesar to the Roman crowd. He establishes solidarity with them when he says, “Friends, Romans, countrymen.”

Well then, all the Jews would be familiar with that expression ‘Holy Brethren’, because it actually referred to their relationship with Abraham, and, more than that, it reminded them that in [Exodus 19:6](#), God Himself had called them a “holy nation”.

The Greek word “Hagios”, in [Hebrews 3:1](#), means separated, not merely separated from other nations, not merely taken out of other nations, but separated from sin.

So, they are holy because they have been separated, and brethren because of their relationship with Abraham. And so, he is creating a comforting and familiar atmosphere so that when he comes to the point, great as Moses was, Jesus, the Son of God, is Greater.

The writer does not treat Moses like the Mormons treat the Bible. He does not try to discredit Moses in order to create a place for Jesus in the way that Mormons attempt to undermine the authority of the Bible so that they may introduce the Book of Mormon.

The writer of this letter doesn’t do it, because not only would that approach be wrong, but also considering the standing of Moses, it would be counter-productive and produce nothing but resentment and hatred in his readers.

Therefore, he concedes the greatness of Moses and then argues for the greatness of Jesus. It is also important to notice that the writer does not suggest that Moses and the Law, which he delivered to the people, failed, whilst Jesus succeeded.

On the contrary, he states in [Hebrews 3:2](#) that Moses was faithful. But [Hebrews 3:3](#) says he was faithful in his role as a servant, whilst Jesus was faithful as the Son. That is the great distinction between Moses and Jesus. The one was a servant whilst the other was God’s own Son, [Hebrews 3:1-6](#).

But, notice this, even when he speaks of Moses the servant, he is taking their minds back to something with which they were familiar in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Speaking to Joshua, God said, in [Joshua 1:2](#), “Moses my servant is dead”. So, there could be no objection to his calling Moses a servant because that is what God called him. And there is something more that I would like you to notice. I want you to think about the word ‘servant’, which we find in this passage.

Can you think of the various Greek words which are used in the New Testament for the word servant? Doulos, bondservant. Diakonos, one who runs errands. Oiketes, a house servant. Pais, the word for boy, is also used for a houseboy.

But the writer does not use any of these words in describing Moses the servant. He uses a word which invests the service of Moses with the greatest possible dignity and honour. He uses the word ‘thereupon’. A therapon was one who rendered voluntary service.

Not as a slave nor under compulsion but as a willing volunteer. Thayer expresses it perfectly when he says that, ‘it is altogether a more beautiful and tender word than doulos’. So, yet again, we see the writer approaching a discussion of the role of Moses in an extremely sensitive and respectful manner.

GREATER CONTRASTS BETWEEN MOSES AND JESUS

1. Moses as a servant, [Hebrews 3:5](#). Jesus as the Son, [Hebrews 3:6](#).
2. Moses laboured in a house he did not build, [Hebrews 3:3-4](#). Jesus as Son in His own house, [Hebrews 3:6](#).
3. Moses had a preliminary mission, [Exodus 3:10](#). Jesus had a final mission, [John 19:30](#).
4. Moses brought a partial revelation, [Hebrews 1:1](#). Jesus, the complete revelation, [Hebrews 1:2](#).
5. Moses was delivered from physical bondage, [Exodus 3:10](#). Jesus delivers from the bondage of sin, [John 8:36](#).
6. Moses brought the pattern of things in the heavenlies, [Hebrews 8:1-5](#). Jesus, the realities, [Hebrews 8:5](#).
7. Those who ate the bread Moses gave died, [Exodus 16:4](#) / [John 6:31-31](#). Those who eat the bread that Jesus provides will live forever, [John 6:33](#).
8. The deliverance which Moses brought was a national deliverance, [Exodus 20:2](#). Jesus makes universal salvation possible, [Romans 5:6-11](#).
9. Moses brought the law. Jesus brought grace, [John 1:17](#).
Incidentally, I think it is worth commenting that we should never overlook the fact that the law which Moses brought was not without grace and the grace which Jesus brought was not without law.
10. Moses himself never entered the Promised Land. [Numbers 20:8-12](#). So far as Jesus is concerned, He is our forerunner, within the veil, He has entered heaven, there to appear before the face of God for us, [Hebrews 6:20](#).
11. The day the Mosaic age began, three thousand died, [Exodus 32:28](#). The day the Christian age began, three thousand were saved, [Acts 2:41](#).
12. Moses, a Jew, was born when Egyptians (Gentiles) ruled the people of Israel, [Exodus 1:8-10](#). Jesus a Jew, was born when the Romans (Gentiles) ruled the people of Israel, [Luke 2:1-5](#).
13. Pharaoh, an evil ruler, decreed that all male Hebrew babies should be killed by casting them into the river, [Exodus 1:23](#). Herod, an evil ruler, decreed that all male Hebrew babies should be put to death, [Matthew 2:16](#).
14. Moses was hidden in Egypt for three months to keep him alive, [Exodus 2:2](#). Jesus was also hidden in Egypt to keep him alive, [Matthew 2:13](#).
15. Moses' mother put him in the river in a basket, [Exodus 2:3](#). Jesus' mother put him in a manger (feeding trough), [Luke 2:7](#).
16. The name Moses means drawn out of the water, [Exodus 2:10](#). Drawing out of water is a picture of salvation, [Isaiah 12:3](#). Moses was Israel's way of salvation. Jesus' name in Hebrew is Yeshua, which means salvation.
17. The favour of God was upon Moses, even as an infant. Pharaoh's daughter took him out of the river, and he became a prince of Egypt, [Exodus 2:5](#). The favour of God was upon Jesus. Wise men worshipped Him and presented gifts to Him, [Matthew 2:11](#).
18. Moses was brought up by a man who was not his natural father, [Exodus 2:9-10](#). Jesus was brought up by a man who was his stepfather, Joseph, [Luke 2:33](#).
19. Moses, when grown, saw the burdens of his brethren and had compassion on them, [Exodus 2:11](#). Jesus saw His people as sheep without a shepherd and had compassion for them, [Mark 6:34](#).
20. Moses at a well was kind to the daughters of the priest of Midian and watered their flock (not the usual custom), [Exodus 2:17](#). Jesus at a well was kind to a Samaritan woman and offered her water (not the usual custom), [John 4:9-11](#).
21. Moses was in exile in a foreign land until the king of Egypt died. [Exodus 2:23](#). Jesus was in exile in a foreign land until King Herod died, [Matthew 2:19-20](#).

While [Hebrews 2:17-18](#) contains the concluding remarks to the argument concerning Jesus and His superiority because of his humanity, it is also the connector into this next topic about Jesus and His superiority over Moses. The second chapter of Hebrews ends with the description of Jesus as our merciful and faithful High Priest who is a propitiation for our sins and shares in our sufferings, [Hebrews 2:17-18](#). Now, let us move on to the text.

JESUS GREATER THAN MOSES

“Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house.” Hebrews 3:1-2

Notice again the concept that we are joined with Jesus. We are brothers and sisters with Jesus, and we are sharing in the heavenly calling as the family of God. The author wants us to stop for a moment and truly consider Jesus. Think carefully about this, Jesus. He is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

Initially, calling Jesus “the apostle,” [Hebrews 3:1](#), seems strange, but the word “apostle” simply means “one sent with authority.” Jesus is sent with authority from God the Father. Further, Jesus acts as High Priest on our behalf, as the writer argued in [Hebrews 2:17-18](#).

We see a beautiful picture of Jesus that we are to understand. Jesus was sent from the Father to us, (apostle) and now atones for the sins of the people to bring the people to God, (High Priest) [Hebrews 3:1](#).

Jesus was sent down from the Father (apostle) to us to act on our behalf, reconciling us back to the Father (High Priest). This is the essence of our confession. Jesus was sent from the Father with His authority as the Son to atone for our sins, bringing us back into a relationship with the Father.

Jesus was faithful to the Father who appointed Him, just as Moses was also faithful in all God’s house. [Hebrews 3:2](#) places Jesus and Moses on equal footing in terms of faithfulness. So the writer is telling us to compare Jesus and Moses.

Consider Jesus and look at Him in terms of Moses. Both are faithful. This reference to Moses is to remind us of how special Moses was. This is a quotation from [Numbers 12:6-7](#).

The writer of Hebrews is reminding us about how important and special Moses was. God did not speak to Moses as He spoke to the other prophets. God used dreams and visions, speaking vaguely to the prophets, [Hebrews 1:1](#). But Moses was faithful in God’s house and therefore God spoke to Moses clearly, face to face.

It is no small thing to say that Moses was faithful in all God’s house. The context of this passage concerns the time when Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses for marrying a Cushite woman, [Numbers 12:1-2](#).

God was saying that Aaron and Miriam should have been afraid to speak against Moses because of his faithfulness and the special relationship God had with Moses. This leads us to the next verse and the contrast between Jesus and Moses.

“Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself.” Hebrews 3:3

For all the glory and honour that Moses deserved because of his faithfulness, Jesus is counted worthy of greater glory than Moses. Why has Jesus been counted worthy of more glory than Moses?

The reason is given because the Builder of the house has more honour and receives more glory than the house itself. Moses is simply part of the building; Jesus is the builder. It is an interesting, yet simple, illustration. People may admire the building, but the glory and honour go to the person who erected the building.

“For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.” Hebrews 3:4

Here is a subtle point: every house has a builder. Houses do not build themselves. God is the builder of everything; He is the one who is always in charge, Psalms 14:1 / Psalms 53:1.

Parks, in his commentary, says the following.

‘I see order and design all about me in the inorganic world. I cannot believe that they are there by the haphazard, fortunate coming together of atoms. For me, this design demands intelligence, and this intelligence I call God.’

Notice the simple argument that the writer just put together. Jesus is the builder of the house; God is the builder of all things; therefore, Jesus is God. Simple, yet effective in argumentation. The writer of Hebrews has the tendency so far to prove that Jesus is God in fairly subtle ways.

Recall Hebrews 1:8, where the Son is explicitly described as God by quoting Psalms 45:5-7. So also here, Jesus is God because He is the builder of the household, the family of God. Now we can examine the writer’s concluding argument.

“Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house,” bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. But Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.” Hebrews 3:5-6

So Moses was faithful in all God’s house; we already noted that this is a quotation from Numbers 12:6-7. But he was faithful in God’s house as a servant, Hebrews 3:5. This is not a put-down in any way. This is just a statement of the reality that, as great as Moses was, he was still a servant.

Further, Moses testified to things that were to be spoken later, Hebrews 3:5. Moses was not the “end all” of Israel. The Scriptures were not speaking about Moses’ coming. Moses himself testified to the things spoken later. Even Moses was looking for another to come, Deuteronomy 18:15 / Deuteronomy 18:18.

However, Christ is faithful over God’s house as a Son, Hebrews 3:6. If we place the two sentences next to each other, we can quickly see the comparison. Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, Hebrews 3:5. Christ is faithful over God’s house as a Son, Hebrews 3:6.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Think of the house of God. He laid the foundations of it, even before the world was, 1 Corinthians 2:7, provided the blue prints of it in the dispensation of Moses, and extended it upward and outward to include all the families of man in the church of Christ; and, finally, he shall present all to himself in that glorious fulfilment of the everlasting kingdom at the last day, 2 Peter 1:11.’

There are two key differences, three if one includes “was” and “is” as an intended contrast. Moses was a faithful servant; Jesus is the faithful Son. Moses was a servant in God’s house; Jesus is faithful over God’s house.

Jesus is superior to Moses just as a son is superior to a servant. The son has a privileged position in the house. He is not a servant, He is an heir, He is in charge. He is over the house, He has rule and authority, the servant does not. Moses was great, but Jesus deserves even greater glory and honour.

We also see an interesting progression in the title or name the author uses. In the first chapter, the writer exclusively uses the title “Son,” Hebrews 3:6. In Hebrews 2:9, he says, “But we see Jesus.” Now the author uses His earthly Name. Now, for the first time, the author attaches the title “Christ,” Hebrews 3:6.

We are His house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope, Hebrews 3:6. We are His house if we do not give up. We must hold firmly to our confidence to be part of His house.

Jesus is faithful to us, but will we be faithful to Him? Those who persevere in the faith have the assurance that they are part of God's house. We are part of God's family.

We are children of Abraham and heirs of the promise, Galatians 3:29. We are part of God's kingdom, reigning with Him if we do not give up. Don't give up! You are part of God's family!

The first six verses of Hebrews 3 make the point that Jesus is superior to Moses. Therefore, we must not give up our confidence and hope because we have been made part of God's house and family. But now the writer wants to issue a grave warning to his audience.

“So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” Hebrews 3:7-11

After encouraging the readers not to give up, the author gives a stern warning based on Israel's history. He quotes Psalms 95:7-11, which scholars say was used by the Jews as a call to worship when they went to synagogue service.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Note the attribution of this Psalm of the Holy Spirit. David, as the human instrument through whom the words came, is not mentioned; and thus the author of this epistle takes his place alongside other New Testament writers in making God the author of the Old Testament, 2 Peter 1:21.’

As one reads Psalms 95, we can see that it is a psalm that is calling people to worship. Psalms 95:2 reads, “Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving.” Psalms 95:6 reads, “Oh come, let us worship and bow down.” Amid this call to worship is the warning against hardening one's heart. The psalmist refers to the times at Meribah and Massah, Psalms 95:8 / Hebrews 3:8.

These are the places where the people complained about water, and Moses provided water from the rock, Exodus 17:1-7 / Numbers 20:1-13. The people had left Egyptian slavery and crossed the Red Sea, but were now complaining about the water situation.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Their (the Christians’) baptism is the antitype of Israel's passage through the Red Sea, 1 Corinthians 10:1-2; their sacrificial feeding on him (Christ) by faith is the antitype of Israel's nourishment with manna and the water from the rock, 1 Corinthians 10:3; Christ, the living Rock, is their guide through the wilderness, 1 Corinthians 10:4; the heavenly rest that lies before them is the counterpart to the earthly Canaan which was the goal of the Israelites.’ You will notice that Meribah and Massah mean “rebellion” and “testing,” Exodus 17:7, which can be seen in the Hebrews quotation, Hebrews 3:8. ‘Worship God today and do not harden your heart’, Hebrews 3:7-8, is the call of the psalmist, Psalms 95:7-8.

Don't forget what happened to those who heard the voice of the Lord but hardened their hearts. They saw the works of God for forty years, Psalms 95:10 / Hebrews 3:9.

But notice the condemnation, “They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways,” Hebrews 3:10. For forty years, the works of God had been seen, yet the people went away from the Lord in their hearts. They did not know the Lord, though they had seen what God had done, Psalms 95:10 / Hebrews 3:10.

If they really knew the ways of God, they would have walked in them, but they did not. Therefore, God swore in His wrath that they would not enter into His rest, Psalms 95:11 / Hebrews 3:11.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning God swore in His wrath, [Hebrews 3:11](#).

‘I swear in my wrath calls attention to God’s making an oath; and although mentioned elsewhere by Zacharias, [Luke 1:73](#), Peter, [Acts 2:30](#), and Stephen, [Acts 7:17](#), it is in Hebrews that this fact receives the greatest attention, there being no less than six references to it, the others being [Hebrews 3:18](#) / [Hebrews 4:3](#) / [Hebrews 6:13](#) / [Hebrews 6:16](#) / [Hebrews 7:21](#).’

The parallel is striking. This is not written to unbelievers in the world; this is being written to Christians as a warning. You have been delivered from the slavery of sin, as the Israelites had been delivered from Egyptian slavery.

You have been baptised and become part of Christ just as the Israelites were “baptised” in the Red Sea, [1 Corinthians 10:1](#). Do not now harden your heart after all that you have experienced. You have seen the mighty works of God; do not turn back.

Before we move forward, I think it is important to highlight the change concerning the forty years. The psalmist speaks about the forty years a little differently, [Psalm 95:9-10](#).

Notice how the writer of Hebrews moves the punctuation to make a slightly different point, “Where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways,’” [Hebrews 3:9-10](#).

The writer of Hebrews says that the people saw the works for forty years and yet rebelled. The psalmist says that God loathed that generation for forty years. Why the difference? I think it is to press the point on the first-century audience. The message to the Hebrews was written around 68 A.D.

It has been forty years since Jesus lived on the earth. He is telling the audience that they have seen the works of God through Jesus and the apostles for forty years. Do not give up, as Israel did forty years after the Red Sea crossing.

“See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. As has just been saying: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.” [Hebrews 3:12-15](#)

Now the writer draws a couple of important lessons. First, ‘take care and be on your guard for an unbelieving heart’, [Hebrews 3:12](#). I believe all of us would say that we do not have an unbelieving heart, so we are in the clear. But let us back up for a moment and examine what he means.

The reference is to those in [Psalm 95:7-11](#), who put God to the test. They did not believe that God would provide for them, and they, therefore, complained about water, [Exodus 17:1-7](#) / [Numbers 20:1-13](#).

They did not put their full trust in God concerning their lives. They did not believe God would provide. The writer will amplify this point more in just a moment.

Notice the writer says that God is a living God, [Hebrews 3:12](#). We don’t worship a dead God but a God who is very much alive, [Matthew 16:16](#) / [Matthew 26:63](#) / [Romans 9:26](#) / [2 Corinthians 3:3](#) / [2 Corinthians 6:16](#) / [1 Thessalonians 1:9](#) / [1 Timothy 3:15](#) / [Revelation 7:2](#).

The second lesson is the necessity to ‘encourage each other every day’, [Hebrews 3:13](#). We need to be encouraged every day so that we are not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Sin lies to us, sin tells us that what we are doing is okay. It makes us put our trust in it rather than God. Sin deceives us into thinking that our hearts are not hardening against God by sinning, [Jeremiah 17:9](#).

Sin lies to us, telling us that no one will know what we are doing. Sin lies to us, making us think that no one will be affected by our sins. So we need to encourage or exhort each other every day.

Every day is today, [Hebrews 3:13](#) / [2 Corinthians 6:2](#). When tomorrow comes, it will be today. This is a call for a deeper fellowship and a regular fellowship with one another to fight against the hardening of the heart.

This explains to us why meeting together is important, [Hebrews 10:24-25](#). When we miss, our hearts grow hard. We must accept this truth. The longer I am disconnected from my family in Christ, the easier it is to stay away from God. Encourage each other every day!

This is the remedy against a hard heart, [Hebrews 3:13](#). Isn't it interesting that more praying or more Bible reading is not the answer here? Encourage each other every day to prevent a hard heart, [Hebrews 3:13](#).

But there is another reason why this is so important, because 'we have come to share in Christ', [Hebrews 3:14](#). We are companions and partners with Christ. We are sharing in Christ, as the writer argued in [Hebrews 2:14-18](#). He is our brother, but we only remain in this family if we hold our original confidence to the end, [Hebrews 3:14](#) / [Hebrews 3:6](#).

In [Hebrews 3:15](#), the writer quotes [Psalm 95](#) again to make the point emphatic, [Psalm 95:7-8](#). Hardening our hearts is to not hold on to the confidence that we had at the beginning of our journey with God, [Hebrews 3:14](#).

I think we can flip the language and understand our warning. If we do not hold on to our original confidence, then we do not share with Christ and are not in God's family, [Hebrews 3:14-15](#).

“Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.” [Hebrews 3:16-19](#)

Who were those who heard, yet rebelled? The answer is all those who left Egypt under Moses' leadership, [Hebrews 3:16](#). They were chosen when they began the journey, but unbelief led to sin and disobedience, [Numbers 13:3-16](#). God swore in His wrath that they would not enter His rest, and their bodies fell in the wilderness, [Hebrews 3:17](#). With whom was God provoked for forty years? The answer is those who sinned, [Hebrews 3:17](#). To whom did God swear that they would not enter His rest? The answer is those who were disobedient, [Hebrews 3:18](#). No rest is the consequence of unbelief, [Hebrews 3:19](#).

BEWARE OF A HARDENING HEART

How do you know if you have a heart that is hardening? The writer uses a couple of key clues, such as not listening to God's voice, sinning, and disobedience. All of these things are unbelief.

So we must ask ourselves if we are listening to God's voice in the Scriptures, or are we choosing to disobey God because of our own selfish desires? Are we showing our unbelief in God because we sin rather than trusting in God to provide for us?

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

As we did in the previous chapter, I think it would be useful to highlight the following before we get into the text.

CHRIST IS GREATER THAN JOSHUA

There is something strikingly topical about this part of the study because we shall be thinking about Joshua, the man who, when the Israelites entered the land of Canaan for the first time, captured the city of Jericho from the Canaanites.

In 1994, on the 4th of May, Israel surrendered the city of Jericho to the descendants of the Canaanites. Anyone who is honestly interested in knowing whether the Bible is true or not needs only to look at the continuing drama of Israel and the Arabs.

But our study concerns something even more important than the modern struggle for the Promised Land. We have seen that the writer of the letter to the Hebrews has stated that the Lord Jesus is:

1. Greater than the prophets.
2. Greater than the angels.
3. Greater than Moses.
4. And, now in **Hebrews 4**, Greater than Joshua.

We have moved on to the time when, under the leadership of Joshua, the Israelites entered the Promised Land. In this connection, the opening words of the Book of Joshua are so important that they should not be overlooked, **Joshua 1:1-2**.

Here you see how the Scriptures establish the connection between Moses and Joshua. Here also, we see continuity. It was once said that “God buries His workmen, but His work goes on”.

Moses, the servant, appointed by God who rendered important, faithful, voluntary, but temporary service, had finished his work, but the purpose of God must continue to go forward.

Joshua was the man to whom God gave the responsibility of leading the people into the Promised Land, **Deuteronomy 34:9**. Something that must be understood at the beginning of this study is that Joshua was not a replacement for Moses.

Before considering how he fulfilled the task assigned to him by God, let me comment on the relationship of Joshua to Moses. Sometimes it is said that Joshua was Moses’ successor; that is not true.

The only sense in which it may be said to be true is that Joshua succeeded him in time. He came after Moses, but he did not succeed him in office. i.e., he did not take over the position or role of Moses.

The One who was ‘a prophet like unto Moses’, **Deuteronomy 18:18**, in fulfilment of this prophecy, was Jesus Himself, as the New Testament makes clear on at least two occasions. Peter in **Acts 3:22**, and Stephen in **Acts 7:37**. The Jewish people themselves certainly did not believe that Joshua was the one who fulfilled the promise, because when they came to John the baptizer, they asked him, “Are you that prophet?” **John 1:21**.

So far as they were concerned, the prophecy relating to ‘the prophet like Moses’ had not yet been fulfilled, and John himself denied that he fulfilled it. So, we must be careful not to teach that Joshua took over the position of Moses. Having said this, we must also be careful not to underestimate the importance of the work which Joshua did or the role he played in God’s plan.

And this, I believe, is something that very often happens, and it happens very easily because he was a man who lived much of his life in the shadow of the great Moses. Moses was such a towering personality that anyone who came immediately after him would seem small by comparison.

Incidentally, I must say that I find it rather strange that this chapter is the only chapter in the New Testament where we find the name of Joshua. I would have expected to find him mentioned in **Hebrews 11**, where the ‘heroes of faith’ are enrolled. But he is only referred to by inference in **Hebrews 11:30**, whilst some other lesser-known people are mentioned by name, e.g., Jephthah, Barak. Gideon.

However, in the life story of Moses, there is a sad chapter of personal failure, for which he paid very dearly, and it was because of this failure that he was not allowed to lead the people into the Promised Land.

He was allowed to see the land from the Eastern side of the Dead Sea, from the Hills of Moab, now in the State of Jordan. But not allowed to enter, or to lead the people into the land, **Numbers 20:8-12**. That had to be done by someone else, and that someone was Joshua.

After looking out over the land towards which he had to lead the people, Moses died, and we read the touching words, “And he (God) buried him in the valley, in the Land of Moab; but no man knows the place of his burial to this day”, **Deuteronomy 34:5-6**

But how much is generally known about Joshua? I think that the answer to that question would be, ‘very little!’ Summed up, it probably amounts to the following.

1. He was the servant of Moses. **Numbers 11:28**.
2. He was one of the only two spies who brought back a good report when sent to spy out the land. **Numbers 14:6-10**.
3. He led the people into Canaan. **Joshua 1**.
4. He won a great victory at Jericho and defeated some other cities. **Joshua 6:1-27**.
5. And we might add to the list something that is usually forgotten, but which is surely significant.

When Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments from God, Joshua went with him, at least part of the way, **Exodus 24:13**. That was a great honour when you remember that Aaron, who had been appointed spokesman for Moses when Moses went to speak with Pharaoh, was left below with the people, and God called for Joshua to accompany Moses.

THE HISTORY OF JOSHUA

1. He was born in Egypt (a slave) towards the end of the Egyptian bondage and just about the time that Moses was making up his mind to renounce his position as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter.

Remember that at this time, the Hebrews were undergoing great suffering at the hands of the Egyptians. The favour they had been shown by the Hyksos rulers in the days of Joseph was long past.

The succeeding native Egyptian dynasty feared that the Israelites, who had multiplied greatly in numbers, might join forces with any invader who would come down from the North to the Nile Delta, ‘the Land of Goshen’, which Joseph’s Pharaoh had assigned to Jacob and his family, **Exodus 1**.

Slaving in the fields, building the store-cities of Pithum and Raamases and being beaten by the task-masters who were set over them, when Moses was born, the Israelites had no reason to love the Egyptians. God actually told Moses, “I have seen the affliction of My People,” **Exodus 3:7**.

And yet, remarkably enough, when this baby was born, his parents gave him the name ‘Osea’, which means “salvation”. So the parents of Joshua must have been very devout and faithful, and optimistic people.

2. It was in Egypt that the young man grew up, whilst Moses was undergoing his forty years of training and preparation, like a shepherd with the Midianites in the wilderness, **Exodus 2:11-25**.

This means that when Moses eventually returned to Egypt to demand that Pharaoh should let the people leave, he, Moses, was eighty years old, and Osea was forty years old, **Exodus 4:18-31**.

3. Osea, to use his first name, must have been a man of outstanding quality, because he became the personal servant and bodyguard of Moses, standing guard outside his tent, **Exodus 33:11**.

4. About two months after the exodus, Moses appointed him commander of the army when he won a great victory over the Amalekites, **Numbers 27:18-23**.

Moses later changed the young man’s name to “Jeoshua” by adding a letter (Y) from the name of God (YHVH), giving his name the meaning, “Jehovah is salvation”, **Numbers 13:16**.

About one thousand years later, in the days of the prophet Nehemiah, we find that the form of the name has become “Jeshua,” **Nehemiah 8:17**. And the name we use today, “Joshua”, is the Greek form of that name.

This, then, is the man who is introduced in **Hebrews 4**. In this chapter, the writer points out that, although Joshua led the people into the Promised Land, he did not succeed in giving the people rest.

The word ‘rest’, ‘katapausis’, which he uses, means ‘to settle down’, and it means that Joshua did not succeed in settling the people in the land, that is, he did not bring them to a settled, stable condition. The word used is the word used to describe colonising.

There is no doubt that Joshua was a tremendously effective leader and general. In the space of six years, he defeated six Canaanite tribes, **Joshua 10:29-39**, and thirty-one Canaanite kings and their cities, **Joshua 12-18**, but he did not give the people rest! Even after the land had been divided up among the various tribes of Israel, the conquest of the land fell far short of what God had prepared for them.

The reason for this was that they were persistently disobedient, and their enjoyment of rest depended on their obedience to God. Because the people were disobedient, God did not remove all their enemies. He allowed some of them to remain in the land to be thorns in their sides, **Joshua 23:12-13**.

The book of Judges records the whole sad story of that period. The book, the seventh in the Old Testament, records seven periods of servitude, when one or other of the tribes had to suffer oppression because of their disobedience. When Joshua died, there was no one of his calibre to take control.

There followed years of lawlessness, and two times we are told that “Each man did that which was right in his own eyes”, **Judges 16:6 / Judges 21:25**. In a word, the history of Israel in the Promised Land is the story of an incomplete conquest and imperfect rest.

This is what the Hebrew writer claims in this chapter. **Hebrews 4:4** states that Joshua did not give them rest. This part of the letter is all about rest. The word occurs ten times in thirteen verses, and the assertion made by the writer is that what Joshua of old failed to do, our Joshua succeeds in doing.

Let me remind you that Joshua is the Old Testament form of the name Jesus, **Matthew 1:21**. In this chapter, the claim is made that Jesus is superior to Joshua because Jesus really gives His people rest. Allow me to point out, very briefly, the series of assertions that we find in this chapter.

1. God had promised His people rest, **Deuteronomy 12:9**.
2. Joshua failed to give them rest, **Deuteronomy 1:34-39 / Hebrews 4:6**.
3. But the promise of rest ‘remains’, **Hebrews 4:1**.
4. The reason why the people did not enter the rest was because of the following.

- a. Not because the promise failed.
- b. Not because the promise was withdrawn.
- c. And not because the rest was unavailable, **Hebrews 4:3**.

The fact is, God's rest is a reality, and He intends that someone should experience it, 'It remains for some to enter it,' **Hebrews 4:6**.

- 5. Even Israel's failure to enter the rest did not cancel or nullify the promise, **Hebrews 4:7**.

Let me digress, for just a moment! Think about the three great blessings which were lost to mankind because of the sin of Adam. Already in this letter, the writer has mentioned two of them.

- 1. Man lost dominion. **Genesis 2:8**.

He was given dominion over creation. He was not afraid of the animals. He actually named them!

- 2. Man lost his life.

He became subject to death because of disobedience, **Genesis 2:17**. The Hebrew text reads, 'Dying thou shalt die'. Not only did man 'die' spiritually, because he lost his fellowship with God, the Source of Life, but the process of physical death began in his body, and he became subject to two deaths.

- 3. Man lost the blessing of rest, **Genesis 3:17**. The tranquillity of a soul that is at peace with God.

You remember that Adam's responsibility for tending the garden was meant to be a pleasant activity. Work was not meant to be tedious. But, instead, it became toil.

You know what God said to him, **Genesis 3:18-19**, but, through Jesus and the Gospel, it is God's purpose that everything that Adam lost should be restored. Of course, we have not yet experienced these blessings to the full. Therefore, **Hebrews 4:9** says, "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God".

Take your Bible and open it to **Genesis 1**. Notice the last sentences in **Genesis 1:5** / **Genesis 1:8** / **Genesis 1:13** / **Genesis 1:19** / **Genesis 1:23** / **Genesis 1:33**. Do you see anything significant? The first six days of creation are defined as length and duration. We read "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day".

That is how it reads right through to and including the sixth day. I.e. **Genesis 1:31**. But! Nothing like that is said about the seventh day. Its duration, its length, is not defined or limited. No "evening and morning"! Days one to six dawned and died! Day seven has no end!

THE REASON?

When God ceased from the work of creation, it was perfect, and He ceased from it permanently. It needed no modification, no alteration, and no improvement. He saw that it was 'very good'. **Genesis 1:31**.

There are a great many restless, unhappy, unsatisfied and searching people out there in the world. The frantic search for 'a good time', as they call it, really means that they are restless. Christians enjoy rest now, but there is something even better still to come. But, never forget the warning which follows, **Hebrews 4:11**.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN JOSHUA AND JESUS

- 1. Joshua is the one who led the Israelites into Canaan.

‘The Promised Land’ and Jesus will lead us into the ‘promised land’ of the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of heaven.

2. Moses’ Law, called the Mosaic Law, could not lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, but Joshua did.

So also, Jesus, the mediator of the Law covenant, will lead Christians into Heaven.

3. Joshua was appointed or anointed by God to lead His people into God’s rest, so also according to **Hebrews 4:8-10**, identifies Jesus as a better Joshua, as Joshua led Israel into the rest of Canaan, but Jesus leads the people of God ‘into a place of rest’, salvation.

4. Joshua was bold in delivering the message of truth about what he saw as a spy, **Numbers 14:6-10**, so also Jesus was bold in delivering His message about the good things of the kingdom, even in the face of the religious leaders of that time.

5. Joshua, when about to die, gathered the people and told them to follow the way of God, **Joshua 24**.

Jesus, when about to die, gathered His disciples and laid down the way to follow God’s Way. In **Hebrews 3**, the writer of Hebrews has warned the Christians not to give up on their confidence and to hold it firm to the end.

The warning looks back to the nation of Israel, which was freed from Egyptian slavery and passed through the Red Sea, but perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. Christians must not fall back and succumb to unbelief. They missed God’s rest. The writer continues forward with his admonition.

A SABBATH-REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

“Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did, but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “On the seventh day God rested from all his works.” And again in the passage above, he says, “They shall never enter my rest.” **Hebrews 4:1-5**

The “therefore” connects us back to the previous point that the people of Israel were unable to enter the rest because of unbelief, **Hebrews 3:19**. But then we come across these shocking words, “while the promise of entering His rest still stands,” **Hebrews 4:1**.

We thought that we were talking about entering the promised land of Canaan. But the writer of Hebrews clears this up now. **Hebrews 4** is the proof that the promise of entering the rest still stands. But before he explains how this could be, the writer continues with his warning.

“The promise of rest remains”, **Hebrews 4:1**, therefore, we must fear so that we do not fail to reach it. A couple of translations read “let us be careful.” This is an unjustified rendering and unfortunate, in my opinion. We need to fear God and not fall into unbelief so that we do not fail to reach the promised rest.

Do not think that our situation is different from their situation. The good news came to them just like it came to us. But the message of that good news did not benefit them. Why did it not benefit them? It did not benefit them because they were not united with those who heard it in faith.

The people missed entering the rest because they were not joined with the same faith as Joshua and Caleb, **Numbers 14:30**. They believed that God would provide for them. They believed that God would eliminate the obstacles to reaching the Promised Land. They put their full trust in God, **Hebrews 4:2**.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The sense is plain enough; the good news had to be assimilated or appropriated by faith if it was to bring any benefit to the hearers.’

The people, however, did not have this faith. They complained in the desert, Exodus 16:2-16; they did not believe God would provide. They saw the size of their enemies, Numbers 13:32-33, and wanted to go back to Egypt, Numbers 14:4. They were not united with those who heard the good news in faith, Hebrews 4:2 / Exodus 16:2-15. “But we who have believed will enter that rest”, Hebrews 4:3.

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hebrews 4:3.

‘The promise of rest applies to us who are Christians, seeing that those to whom the promise was made failed to attain it. And their failure was not due to the fact that the rest had not been prepared, because it existed since the day that God finished his work of creation. This is proved by the words, ‘And God rested’ in one place, and the words ‘my rest’ in another. God’s rest is therefore a fact, and it is clearly his purpose that some shall enter into it.’

The writer reminds the audience of the quotation from Psalm 95:2, which the writer dealt with extensively in Hebrews 3:7-11. “It is for these”, that is, those who have believed that the rest was intended. That is why God said in His wrath that the generation in the wilderness would not enter the rest.

It is not that the rest was not available to the wilderness generation. The rest has been available since God finished all His works. In Hebrews 4:4, the writer quotes Genesis 2:2 in his typical fashion.

When God ceased from the work of creation, it was perfect, and He ceased from it permanently. It needed no modification, no alteration, and no improvement. He saw that it was ‘very good’, Genesis 1:31.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hebrews 1:4.

‘One of the most significant revelations of this chapter is that the seventh day of Creation is still in progress. God rested on the seventh day from all his works (of creation). God is still resting, Hebrews 4:6 / Hebrews 4:11. People should take pains to enter that rest because it is yet available.’

The writer says, “He has somewhere spoken,” Hebrews 4:5, which continues to emphasise God as the author and not the human mouthpieces who said these words. God said, they will never enter, ‘My rest’, Hebrews 4:5. The promise of the rest is available today, but we will enter God’s rest when we have rested from our own works, Hebrews 4:10.

“Therefore, since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, God again set a certain day, calling it “Today.” This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his.” Hebrews 4:6-10

God’s rest is a reality, and He intends that someone should experience it, ‘it remains for some to enter it,’ Hebrews 4:6. The rest remains for some to enter, but not everyone because not everyone will choose to hear God’s voice. Those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, Hebrews 4:6 / Deuteronomy 1:34-39.

But another day is appointed to receive the promise of entering the rest. That day is called “today,” Hebrews 4:7. Because God is determined that some shall enter into His rest, He has ‘set another Day’, Hebrews 4:7. The word “set” is the word “horizo”, and it means, “To mark out”.

The promise of entering the rest is available today. The proof is the quotation from Psalm 95. David said in Psalm 95, “Today if you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”

And think of this, five hundred years after the people entered the land of Canaan, God said, ‘today’. Although the promised rest was not experienced under the leadership of Joshua, by the people for whom it was originally intended.

That promise has neither been cancelled nor withdrawn. Five hundred years later, through the Psalmist, God draws attention to it. This means that God's rest is still on offer.

'There remains a rest for the people of God', **Hebrews 4:6**. And **Hebrews 4:3** says, "We who have believed enter that rest." Why may we experience God's rest? Because our Joshua, that is Jesus, did not fail!

In **Hebrews 4:7**, the writer quotes the solemn words of **Psalm 95:7-8**, "They shall not enter my rest", as a reminder that the rest has been available from the beginning, but they missed the rest because of disobedience and unbelief. But the "today" argument goes further. Since David said "today", the promise is still available; he said those words long after the wilderness generation failed to enter the rest. David did not say that the promised rest is past. He said today the promise still stands even after the wilderness generation, **Hebrews 4:8**.

Hebrews 4:8 states, "He ceased from his labours". This is the word 'sabbatismos', the Sabbath, rest, God's rest, which Jesus has made possible for us. How was Jesus able to do this? **Hebrews 4:10** tells us that it is by His own victory. That verse becomes much easier to understand if I read it to you in the New Living Testament.

Referring to God's rest, the writer says, "Christ has already entered there. He is resting from HIS work just as GOD did, after the Creation". You may recall that at the beginning of this letter, **Hebrews 1:3**, the writer told us that, "after (Jesus) had, by the offering of Himself, purged our sins, He sat down".

His work was finished, just as God's work was finished after the creation. His redemptive service was completed and never to be repeated, so He "sat down". In the language of the Scriptures, "standing" is the symbol of activity, whilst sitting is the symbol of a finished work. Compare **Hebrews 1:3** with **Acts 7:26**, and **John 13:4** with **Revelation 1:13**. Notice 'Sitting' and 'Standing.'

Also, notice Him 'girded' as a slave. His garment was taken up and secured with the towel as a girdle when He became a servant. **John 13:4**. And, later in His glory, clothed down to the feet, when His work is finished.

In **Revelation 15:6**, the girdle is now about His breast and no longer a linen towel, but is of gold! The symbol of royalty.

Further, the writer continues the parallel to the wilderness generation. Joshua and Jesus are the same name. Jesus is the name in Greek, and Joshua is the same name but in Hebrew. So there is a wordplay being made.

The Old Testament "Jesus", that is, Joshua, led the people into the promised land of Canaan. Jesus leads the heirs of the new covenant into the heavenly promised rest.

Joshua did not give them the final promised rest, though they entered Canaan. Joshua led the people to a temporary rest, but Jesus will lead us to true, spiritual rest. Thus, a Sabbath rest remains for the people of God, **Hebrews 4:9**.

Notice that, up to now, the word which the writer has used is the simple word, 'rest', which is "katapausis". But here it is changed, we have a different word, the word 'sabbatismos' which means, 'Sabbath rest', **Hebrews 4:9**.

And the only time you find the word is in the New Testament. This is the word that describes God's rest, the rest about which we read in **Genesis 2:2-3**, tells us that when God finished His work of creation and ceased, he "rested from all His work".

Why is this word different? It is different because it indicates endless, uninterrupted tranquillity. There is 'peace', and there is the 'peace of God'. There is 'rest', and there is the 'rest of God'.

This is the rest of salvation fully realised, fully experienced. Hence, God calls it 'My rest', **Hebrews 4:3**. The promise of the rest is available today, but we will enter God's rest when we have rested from our own works, **Hebrews 4:10**.

Hebrews 4:10 is referring to the finished, completed redemptive work of Christ. And His total victory has made victory possible for every one of us! There are a great many restless, unhappy, unsatisfied and searching people out there in the world.

The frantic search for ‘a good time’, as they call it, really means that they are restless. Christians enjoy rest now, but there is something even better still to come.

Therefore, we are not at rest now. We have obtained the promise of the rest, and we work so that we do not fall short as they did before entering the rest. But never forget the warning which follows.

“Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience. For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow, it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” Hebrews 4:11-13

We do not want to fail by the same example and pattern of disobedience that we see with the wilderness generation. We do not want to copy those who missed the rest. We do not want to make the same mistakes, **Hebrews 4:11**. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It means lest he fall off from the grace of God, from the gospel and its blessings, and perish everlastingly. This is the meaning of the apostle, who never supposed that a man might not make a final shipwreck of faith and of good conscience, as long as he was in a state of probation.’

How can we enter the rest? How can we ensure that we do not copy those whose bodies fell in the wilderness? **Hebrews 4:12** is the answer. We need the power of God’s Word, **Acts 7:38 / 1 Peter 1:23**.

The Word of God is what we need to be using to make sure that we do not fall into the same pattern of disobedience. There are some interesting pictures concerning God’s powerful word.

1. God’s word is living and active, **Hebrews 4:12**.

The Word of God is alive and brings life to those who listen and obey those words. God’s word is not like reading a novel. There is power in God’s words because the words are from God’s mouth. The words can change your life to enter the rest God has promised. Nothing else you read can bring life to your soul.

2. God’s word is sharper than the sharpest sword, **Hebrews 4:12**.

The Word of God is intended to cut. The Word of God is not a butter knife, intending to butter your roll and make you feel better. God’s word is supposed to cut. If it is not cutting, then it is not being used properly. God’s word convicts us.

3. God’s word penetrates, **Hebrews 4:12**.

It pierces the soul and spirit. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. The Word of God is not supposed to cut superficially. God’s word is supposed to cut us to the core. As the Scripture says of the Pentecost audience, they were cut to the heart, **Acts 2:37**.

That is what the Word of God is supposed to do. The Word of God is often not used this way. The word is supposed to step on our toes and crush them. Why? Not because we come to services to feel bad about ourselves, but to cut and penetrate. The Word of God needs to penetrate so that we do not miss the promised rest as Israel did.

4. God’s word exposes, **Hebrews 4:13**.

Nothing is hidden from God’s sight. The Word of God cannot be avoided. It ignites our guilty conscience and presses us to act. Don’t think that God does not see our disobedience and will not keep us out of rest. Therefore, we must make every effort to enter by using the Word of God, so it can cut our spirits so that we can purge our sins and unbelief.

JESUS THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebrews 4:14-16

16

The writer declares that Jesus is our great High Priest, **Hebrews 4:14**. The writer has not really proved that Jesus is our High Priest up to this point. The writer asserted that Jesus became human so that He could become a merciful and faithful High Priest, **Hebrews 2:17**.

In this section of Scripture, the writer is going to prove that Jesus is capable of being our great High Priest. In doing so, we are going to learn what makes Jesus great. We are going to learn what is so great about Jesus being our High Priest.

1. Jesus is a great High Priest because He has passed through the heavens, **Hebrews 4:14**.

These seem to conjure a strange image to some, but this is not talking about Jesus flying through the sky. Rather, we learn that Jesus is operating as High Priest in the heavenly realms, not on earth.

Jesus is great because he is serving as High Priest in God’s house in the heavenly realms, not on earth in a physical temple. The writer will have more to say about this later in the book.

2. Jesus is a great High Priest because He is the Son of God, **Hebrews 4:14**.

He is not a mere person; He is someone who carries great authority and honour. He is the all-important, divine Son of God.

3. Jesus is a great High Priest because He is able to sympathise with our weaknesses, **Hebrews 4:15**.

He knows what we are going through. He was tested in every way as we are. He knows what temptations are for, after all, He was exposed to the onslaught of Satan, **Matthew 4:1-11**.

He knows what it is like to endure great trials. His difficulties were so great that His sweat poured down from His head like blood from the intensity of His emotional pain, **Luke 22:44**.

Milligan, in his commentary, says the following.

‘No inclination to evil ever defiled his pure spirit. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life had no place in his affections. And hence, though tempted by the devil through all the avenues and natural desires of the human heart, he was still ‘without’ sin.’

4. Jesus is a great High Priest because, in the face of all of the adversity and all of the temptations that came His way, He still remained without sin, **Hebrews 4:15**.

Though He faced everything that we face, He is able to be a great High Priest because He did not sin. More will be said about this later by the writer.

Because Jesus is our great High Priest, the writer wants us to do two things.

1. Hold fast to the confession, **Hebrews 4:16**.

As I pointed out at the beginning of this series, this point about holding fast to our confession is the key theme of the book. We have already seen the writer drive this point home several times: **Hebrews 2:3 / Hebrews 3:6 / Hebrews 3:14 / Hebrews 4:1**.

We have a great High Priest, so do not give up. Do not let go of the faithful confession you made at the beginning of your walk with God. Do not throw it away now.

2. Ability to approach the throne of grace, **Hebrews 4:16**.

The second thing we can do because Jesus is our great High Priest is to approach the throne of grace with boldness. The image reveals a personal relationship that we have with the Father because Jesus has made atonement, giving us access to the Father.

It seems there is an implied contrast to the Mosaic system, where no one was allowed to enter the tabernacle. No one had access to the Father. Therefore, the bells on the hem of the high priest's garment would indicate to the people where the priest was in the tabernacle as he performed sacrifices on behalf of the people, **Exodus 28:31-35**.

The people could not enter and seek restitution and forgiveness themselves. Therefore, these words are powerful and precious, and we are able to approach the throne of grace.

Not only can we approach the throne of grace, but we can approach it with confidence, **Hebrews 4:16**. There is no need to enter with fear or timidity. As children of the Father and brothers and sisters with Christ, we can enter with confidence, not with fear, that we will receive grace and help in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:13 tells us that we are naked and exposed in the sight of God. He sees us for the awful sinners that we truly are. However, as we approach the throne, we do not find wrath but mercy and grace to help us in our time of need, even in our sinfulness. We do not need earthly priests anymore. We have full access to God the Father.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

“Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. And no one takes this honour on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.”

Hebrews 5:1-4

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD

Now the writer is going to describe the two key qualifications for a person to stand and function as a high priest before God, **Hebrews 5:1**. As to service, Jesus was the following.

1. He was appointed High Priest, **Hebrews 5:1**.
2. “In things pertaining to God,” **Hebrews 5:1**.

It is a divine service that must not be taken lightly.

3. “To offer gifts,” **Hebrews 5:1**, (from Man to God), is the right approach.
4. “To offer sacrifices,” **Hebrews 5:1**, (for Man to God), the reason for the approach.

The high priest must be able to sympathise with those he represents. A high priest must be able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and those who are going astray, **Hebrews 5:2**.

The high priest will not be harsh with the people he represents before God. He deals gently and kindly with them. The reason why this is possible is that he himself is subject to the same sins, **Hebrews 5:2**.

The word sympathy means to “bear gently with,” that’s the Greek word, ‘metriopatheo’, **Hebrews 5:2**, to be moderately affected by the errors, faults, sins of others, and to bear with them gently, **Acts 17:30-31 / Mark 6:34**. When you meet people in this condition, bearing with them is a genuine sign of interest and self-control. But notice that the High Priest did not intercede for the wilfully sinful, so long as they were wilfully disobedient.

The impulsive reaction would be to turn away in disgust and self-righteous indignation. “Bear with, have compassion on, feel gently,” that is the Greek word, ‘metriopathein’, and is really one of those untranslatable Greek words.

The Greeks always defined virtue as the means between two extremes. On either hand, there was an extreme into which one could fall; in between was the right thing and the right way. Virtue to the Greeks was a balance, a means, the right point between two extremes.

He defined metriopatheia (the corresponding noun) as the meaning between extravagant grief and utter indifference. It meant to feel about people the right way.

McGregor defined it as follows.

‘The mid-course between explosions of anger and lazy indulgence’.

Plutarch speaks of it as follows.

‘That patience which is the child of metriopatheia’. He spoke of it as “that sympathetic feeling which enabled a man to raise up and to save, and to spare and to hear.’

Another Greek was blamed for having “no metriopatheia”, and therefore “refusing to be reconciled” with someone who had differed from him. It is a wonderful word, and it means the ability to bear with people without getting irritated or annoyed.

It means the ability to keep one’s temper with people when they are foolish, when they will not learn, when they do the same foolish or wrong thing over and over again, and when they seem to be senselessly blind.

It describes the attitude towards others which does not issue in anger at the fault and which does not condone the fault, but which spends itself in a gentle but powerful sympathy, which by its very patience moulds a man back onto the right way. It is an attitude that never regards a man as a lost fool, but often sees in him a contrary child of God, who somehow gently must be led back onto the right way.

Notice with whom he is able to be gentle, with the immature, ignorant, those who don’t know, **Acts 17:30-31 / Mark 6:34**. The high priest is one with the people in need of atonement and forgiveness, **Hebrews 5:3**.

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary says the following about the Day of Atonement and the words of the high priest.

‘In the first century, as he laid his hands on the head of the animal, he would say, “O God, I have committed iniquity and transgressed and sinned before thee, I and my house and the children of Aaron, thy holy people. O God, forgive, I pray, the iniquities and transgressions and sins which I have committed and transgressed and sinned before thee, I and my house” (M Yoma 4:2).

God’s demand requires an offering for sins, **Hebrews 5:3**. The Greek word opheiloo means “to owe money, be in debt for, to be under obligation bound by duty or necessity to do something”.

The Jewish high priest must first offer for himself and then for the people because the high priest, like the people, was a sinner, **Leviticus 4:1-3 / Leviticus 9:7 / Leviticus 16:1-3 / Leviticus 16:5-7 / Leviticus 16:11 / Leviticus 16:15**. Our Lord was sinless, **1 Peter 2:21-24**, but bore our sins, **1 Peter 2:24 / 2 Corinthians 5:21 / Isaiah 53:3-6**.

In **Hebrews 5:1**, the high priest is chosen from the people. He is for the people. He is of the people. In **Hebrews 5:2**, the ordinary high priest was beset with weaknesses that Jesus did not have. In **Hebrews 5:3**, the high priest needed to offer a sacrifice for his own sins, which Jesus did not need to do since He was sinless.

If Jesus were such a Great High Priest, it may have been feared that He would be so holy, and “set apart”, **Hebrews 4:15**, that He would be unapproachable or inaccessible by simple sinners like us. Not so.

Jesus is a great High Priest because He is truly accessible. Not only may we approach Him with our weaknesses, but He understands and sympathises. The word “sympathise” is derived from the Greek word “sumpatheo,” and it means to suffer with, literally “with pain”.

How do we know He is able to sympathise? The writer explains that He has been tempted in every way we have, yet without sin, **Hebrews 4:15**. In all things, not just some things.

What bearing does this have on His priesthood? The ordinary high priest offered a sacrifice, firstly for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. We see that between **Hebrews 5:1** and **Hebrews 6:20**, the Hebrews writer declares the vast superiority of Christ over the old Priesthood.

“The high priest must be called by God,” **Hebrews 5:4**. No one decides to be a high priest. People do not choose who is to be the high priest; only God can select who can be the high priest, just like Aaron was selected, **Exodus 28:1-5**. This point would likely have a sharp point against the current priesthood in Jerusalem.

At the time, the Romans were appointing the high priests, making those priests illegitimate in God’s sight. So these are the two qualifications required to be a high priest before God.

1. He must be able to sympathise with those he represents.
2. He must be called by God.

As to selection, Jesus was the following.

No man takes the honour for himself but must be called by God, **Hebrews 5:4**. Aaron, **Exodus 28:1** / **Numbers 16**. Notice the words, “My son”, **Hebrews 5:4**. Christ’s special calling, **Luke 1:5** / **Luke 1:34**. The Lord Jesus also was appointed High Priest by God Himself.

And His appointment was to an office far higher and far more important than that of the Aaronic high priest. As to the position of High Priest, Christ had fulfilled that which was foreshadowed by the Levitical High Priest, superior to Aaron. Not only that, He excelled them on every point.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN JESUS AND THE AARONIC HIGH PRIEST

1. Both are from the people.
2. Both were appointed by God.

Reasons are given in **Hebrews 4:14**, for Christ’s priesthood is superior to Aaron’s.

1. He is the Son of God.
2. He has passed through the heavens.
3. Offered a better sacrifice.
4. He has an abiding priesthood.

5. He was installed “with an oath”.

It is often overlooked that although the first Levitical high priest, Aaron, was installed in office with a solemn oath, those who followed came to office without an oath; the initial oath was regarded as valid for the entire High Priestly dynasty, **Hebrews 7:21**.

Only if there had been a new priestly family would there have been an installation with an oath. God swore by Himself the oath that declared Jesus a priest after the order of Melchizedek, **Hebrews 7:21 / Hebrews 7:24**.

And so demonstrating without any shadow of a doubt that Christ was immeasurably Superior to the high priesthood of Aaron. Christ is superior to the Levitical High Priest in every way.

1. Aaron was only a man.

Christ was the Son, **Hebrews 5:1**.

2. Aaron offered regular and frequent sacrifices.

Christ offered one perfect sacrifice, once for all (time), **Hebrews 5:1 / Hebrews 8:27 / Hebrews 9:28**. Notice His three appearances in **Hebrews 9:24 / Hebrews 9:26 / Hebrews 9:28**.

3. Aaron revealed human weakness.

Christ was the Mighty One. **Hebrews 5:2 / Psalm 89:19**.

4. Aaron needed to offer for his own sins.

Christ was sinless, **Hebrews 5:3 / Hebrews 7:27**.

5. Aaron offered an animal in sacrifice.

Christ offered Himself.

6. Aaron achieved only a temporary salvation, **Hebrews 10:3**.

Christ secured eternal salvation, **Hebrews 10:10**.

7. Aaronic atonement was for Israel only.

Christ died for all and saves all who obey Him.

JESUS MEETS THESE QUALIFICATIONS

“In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, “You are my Son today, I have become your Father.” And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.” **Hebrews 5:5-10**

The rest of this section describes how Jesus meets these qualifications. The writer takes the qualifications in reverse order. First, Jesus has been divinely appointed, **Hebrews 5:5**.

He did not take up Himself the honour of being High Priest. To prove Jesus’ divine appointment, the writer uses two quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures.

The first quotation in **Hebrews 5:5** is from **Psalm 2:7**. The writer used this quotation previously in **Hebrews 1:5**. Recall that we learned this psalm, and this quotation is the royal enthronement of a king.

In Psalm 2:6, we read that God has installed His king on Zion and He will rule with a rod of iron, Psalm 2:9. So the same one (God) who declared Jesus to be the King also declared Jesus to be Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5:6 is a quotation from Psalm 110:4. This psalm also pictures the royal enthronement of Jesus as King. Psalm 110:1 is quoted in Matthew 22:44, and was also used by the writer of Hebrews in 1:13.

Remember that these were arguments to prove that Jesus is the superior Son, who is greater than the angels, seated on the throne. In speaking about this enthroned king, the Lord also said, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek,” Hebrews 5:6.

The word priest is kohen in Greek, and it means one who stands for and mediates for another, one who offers sacrifices. The word is used seven hundred and twenty-five times in the Old Testament and twenty-nine times in the New Testament. The word carries the idea of one who acts as a bridge to link two parties, i.e. God and man.

In Hebrews, the word priest is used twelve times. High priest is used sixteen times. The priesthood is used five times. Before the Law of Moses, the father of each family acted as a priest. Job offered sacrifices on behalf of his family, Job 1:5.

Melchizedek is mentioned in Scripture only five times; we know very little about him. The first appearance of him is found in the days of Abraham, Genesis 14:13-20.

One thousand years later, we read about him in Psalm 110:4. We wait another one thousand years before he appears in the New Testament, Hebrews 5:5-10 / Hebrews 6:20 / Hebrews 7:1-25.

He was both Priest and King of Salem, who met Abram and blessed him and subsequently his priestly ancestors, the Levites. He has no genealogy or known history, yet was greater than Aaron because, in blessing Abram, who was the ancestor of Aaron, Melchizedek blessed the future Jewish High Priest.

Melchizedek was the only man to combine the offices of priest and King. Hebrews 5, therefore, refutes the charge that the Hebrew Christians did not have a High Priest and asserts that they have a very special High Priest, not like Aaron, but superior to Aaron, after the style of Melchizedek.

Jesus’ calling to the high priesthood is special because He functions as Priest forever. His priesthood is also unique because He is not called after the order of Aaron; rather, Jesus is called after the order of Melchizedek. Jesus was divinely called to His priesthood just like His kingship. Therefore, Jesus can function as King and as High Priest.

The second qualification Jesus must meet is to be able to sympathise with those He represents. In Hebrews 5:7, the writer takes us to the earthly life of Jesus and reminds us of what He endured.

While the writer may be thinking of the whole of Jesus’ life, it seems that he is more likely pinpointing the Gethsemane prayers, Matthew 26:36-42, and the cross, Luke 23:34 / Luke 23:43 / John 19:26-27 / Matthew 27:46 / John 19:28 / John 19:30 / Luke 23:46.

Jesus was praying and making appeals to the Father with loud cries and tears in Gethsemane just before His arrest and while on the cross. Notice that Jesus’ prayers and appeals were heard, but He still suffered, Hebrews 5:7. This qualifies Jesus all the more because He heard the answer “no” to His petitions.

Jesus was heard because of His reverent submission to the Father. This seems to stand in contrast to the nation of Israel described in Hebrews 3, who were filled with unbelief and disobedience and missed the promised rest.

Jesus walked in complete submission to God, and we are expected to travel the same path. Jesus’ sufficiency is seen in His petitions, His godly fear, Hebrews 5:7. The Greek word, ‘eulabeia’, means reverence, veneration, piety.

1. Christ’s humanity was nowhere more vividly portrayed than in the dark hour before the cross.

2. He is the person we would want on our side to approach God on our behalf.

3. And we know that God heard His prayers.

4. Prayer, **Hebrews 5:7**, is the Greek word ‘deesis’, and it means need, entreaty, requests addressed by men to God. Strong crying, the deep outpouring of a heart towards God.

5. The word cry, **Hebrews 5:7**, is the Greek word ‘krauge’, and it means a cry which is involuntarily uttered under the stress and agony of some tremendous tension or strain or searing pain.

The writer to the Hebrews is saying that there is no agony of the human spirit through which Jesus has not come. The Rabbis had a saying, “There are three types of prayer, each loftier than the other. Prayer, crying and tears.”

a. Prayer is made in silence.

b. Crying with a raised voice.

c. But tears overcome all things. There is no door through which tears do not pass. Jesus knew even the desperate prayer of tears.

“Although He was a Son, he still suffered”, **Hebrews 5:8**. His position of privilege did not interfere with Him being our High Priest because He suffered despite His Son-ship. The experience of suffering made Jesus ready to act as our High Priest because He is able to sympathise with us.

The writer ends his thought on the concept of obedience. Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered, **Hebrews 5:8**. The fact that He was the Son did not alter this requirement, **Hebrews 5:8**. It is not that He was once disobedient and became obedient, but that He was always obedient.

a. The word “though”, **Hebrews 5:8**, indicates that the high dignity or position of Jesus, yet that high position did not stop Him from carrying out the humiliation which our salvation cost Him.

b. The word “yet”, KJV, **Hebrews 5:8**, is a note of exclamation, to deepen our sense of wonder at His lowering Himself for us, and in His position of servanthood, He did not cease to be the Lord of Glory.

He was no less God when he died than when he was declared to be the Son of God with power through the resurrection, **Romans 1:4**. He learned obedience; the humbling position He assumed in the flesh meant that in His obedience He stripped off many of His attributes of God, and became man. As such, He had to learn and understand what it meant to learn something. **John 5:19-23 / John 5:30 / Luke 2:52**.

By the things which He suffered, the course of learning came at the school of suffering, **Psalms 119:67 / Psalm 119:71 / Isaiah 53**. His entire course was one of suffering, and He had the experience of obedience in it all. He could have called a legion of angels to His aid at any time, yet He endured for our sakes, **Matthew 26:53**.

Every experience of life enabled Him to demonstrate the graces of meekness and humility, **Matthew 11:29**, self-denial, **Romans 15:3**. Patience, **Revelation 1:9**, faith, **Hebrews 2:13**. The greater the experience of suffering, the greater the ability to express the real character. **Isaiah 50:6-7**.

Not suffering, passively endured because He had to, but suffering because that was the way to identify with man and achieve man’s salvation. He who was above all obedience stooped so low as to enter the place of obedience.

His obedience to the will of the Father made Him the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, **Hebrews 5:9**. The obedience of the Redeemer made salvation available to the obedient redeemed.

This is seen in His perfection as a propitiation “been made perfect”, **Hebrews 5:9**. The Greek word for perfect is ‘teleio’, and it means to carry through completely, to complete, perfect, i.e.

Add what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full, **Hebrews 2:10 / Hebrews 7:19**. Seen in His power to all who obey Him, He became the author of eternal life, **Hebrews 5:9**.

a. Although He has the power to save all men for eternity, the conditional qualification is that we obey Him because we want to share our eternity with Him, **Hebrews 5:9**.

- b. The word obey, **Hebrews 5:9**, in Greek is ‘hupakouoo’, and it means to listen to a command, to be obedient to, to submit to, **Ephesians 6:1 / Ephesians 6:5 / Colossians 3:20-22 / 1 Peter 3:16**. To allow oneself to be captivated by, governed by, **Romans 6:12**.
- c. The condition is that we hear His commands until we are captivated by them.

Hence, one who only “half hears” or one who does not bother to study for himself and so ends up saying “I don’t understand” may be more correct than he understands, as far as salvation is concerned. It does take love for His commandments to keep them.

Hebrews 5:10 is seen in His promotion named of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, **Hebrews 5:6 / Hebrews 7**. Jesus’ perfection in the flesh qualified Him to be promoted by the Father, as David declared in **Psalm 2:7 / Psalm 110:4**.

- a. This assures us that our prayers and petitions will get to God the Father, **Hebrews 4:14-16**.
- b. The Hebrew writer understands that some of those reading the letter will be unable to understand his argument right away, for some it will take time to sink in as to what he is saying, but he does not apologise for his approach to the argument rather he reminds them of the basic problem, which relates to their response to Jesus the Redeemer, **John 7:17**.
- c. With the repeated reference to **Psalm 110:4**, in **Psalm 110:10**, the logical sequence of the author’s argument would have led him to expound on the significance of Christ’s being a priest “after the order of Melchizedek”. And He does this in **Hebrews 7:1**.

Because Jesus met all the criteria to become a high priest, God designated Him to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek, **Hebrews 5:10**. Melchizedek is mentioned eight times in **Hebrews 5-7**.

SUMMARY

1. We have a great High Priest who gives us access to the Father, whom we can approach with confidence for help.
2. Jesus is unlike any other high priest because He was sinless. But this does not mean that He does not understand our difficulties because He also suffered.
3. Be obedient through suffering just as Jesus was obedient through His sufferings.

The writer shows that Jesus is unique in this office, in fulfilment of God’s divine plan of redemption. He reminds the Christians of the duties of the High Priest under the Old Covenant.

1. He had to be appointed by God.
2. He must mediate between God and man.
3. He must offer sacrifices and gifts for sins.
4. He must deal gently with the ignorant and the wayward.

He then shows that Jesus met these qualifications and fulfilled the duties. He was appointed by God, **Psalm 2:7 / Psalm 110:4 / Psalm 110:7**. He mediates between God and Man, **Hebrews 9:24**. He offered the ultimate sacrifice, His own life, **Hebrews 9:26**.

He deals gently with all who come to Him, but unlike the Aaronic high priests, He combines in Himself the offices of both King and High Priest. Because of His sufferings, He learnt obedience, even though He was God's Son and because of this, He was made perfect (complete). And so He made salvation possible for all who believe.

THE MELCHIZEDEKIAN

There was a sect in the 3rd century which believed that Melchizedek was a Christophony. Other views expressed about him ranged from the belief that he was an angel to the denial of his having existed! Some theologians even thought that he was actually Shem, who lived long enough after the flood to see Abraham.

In more detail, what was so remarkable about this man? And what is his connection with the Lord Jesus? The argument here is that Jesus is a greater High Priest than Aaron because His priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek.

The first reference to Melchizedek is found in **Genesis 14:18**, where we read of his meeting with Abraham. This means that in this man were combined the offices of Priest and King, a fact which is of profound significance, as I hope we shall see.

Notice, also, that this is the first time the word 'priest', 'icohen', occurs in the Old Testament Scriptures. When the New Testament Scriptures describe Melchizedek as a priest, the word used is 'heireus', which means 'one who is holy and set apart for the service of God'.

His name, 'Malkiy Tsedeq', means 'king of right' or 'righteous king', whilst the name of the city over which he reigned, 'Salem', is a form of 'shalom', which I think most people know, means 'Peace'.

In later times, this became the name of several towns or cities in Palestine, but it is interesting to notice that Salem is mentioned in the Tel-El-Amarna tablets, which date back to before 1400 BC, and, even before the time of Abraham, the city was known by that name.

Centuries later, in the days of Joshua, it was the city of the Jebusites that the Israelites were unable to capture, **Joshua 15:63**, and it is probably because it was occupied and held by the Jebusites as their stronghold until it was captured by King David several centuries later, **2 Samuel 5:9**, that the city of Salem had acquired the name 'Salem of the Jebusites' or 'Jebu-Salem', which eventually became 'Jerusalem'.

Certainly, the identification of 'Salem' with 'Jeru-salem' is established quite clearly in **Psalms 76:2**, "In Judah God is known, his name is great in Israel. His abode has been established in Salem. His dwelling place in Zion."

Josephus, the Jewish historian, who lived in the 1st century AD, stated, "The first founder of Jerusalem was a chief of the Canaanites, who, in our tongue, is called 'Righteous King.'"

And so, Melchizedek was King and Priest in the City which was later to become 'The City of David.' **2 Samuel 5:6-9** records how David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites.

The fact that Melchizedek was both King and Priest surely reveals what a remarkable person he must have been. In an age of polytheism, here was a Canaanite king who knew the One True God, 'God Most High' or 'the supreme God', and who served Him as a priest. In **Psalms 7:17**, God is described as 'Yahweh, the most high.'

The name Melchizedek means "King of Righteousness". He is also referred to as "King of Peace", that is, "King of Salem". Here we have the name of his city, Jerusalem. We have his Name, Righteous King. We have his Office, priest of the Most High God.

In an age when men followed many gods, Melchizedek worshipped the one true God. And Abraham paid tithes to him, and so recognised him as the priest of the God who called him from Ur.

1. He offered a tithe to Melchizedek.

Later, according to the Mosaic Law, the people were required to recognise the position of the Priesthood by giving a tithe, **Numbers 18:24**. Here, Abraham, the federal head of the Hebrew people and the Father of the nation, gave a tithe, not merely for himself, but for all his descendants, and this included the entire priestly tribe of Levi and Aaron, its first High Priest.

2. Abraham accepted bread and wine from Melchizedek.

3. And received a blessing from Melchizedek.

This blessing of Abraham by Melchizedek is something that the Scriptures stress as very significant, pointing out that ‘the lesser is blessed by the greater’, **Hebrews 7:7**.

Or, as the R.S.V. renders the verse, ‘the inferior is blessed by the superior.’ No wonder the inspired writer of the letter to the Hebrews exclaims, “See how great he is,” **Hebrews 7:4**.

The uniqueness of Melchizedek’s priesthood is stressed in **Hebrews 7:3**, where we find the statements which create difficulty. It will help if, when we read this verse, we bear in mind that the writer is setting out the similarity between Melchizedek and the Lord Jesus, in order to show why Jesus is a Priest ‘after the order, ‘taxin’, meaning style or fashion of Melchizedek.’

The uniqueness of the man’s priesthood is stressed by **Hebrews 7:3**. “Without father or mother or genealogy” does not mean that Melchizedek came into existence miraculously, without parents! This simply means that Melchizedek had no priestly ancestry.

To qualify to be an Aaronic priest, a search had to be made into the ancestry of the individual to see if he had the correct ancestry. Melchizedek did not have ancestors in the Aaronic line, and could not have because he existed four hundred years earlier than Aaron. We know nothing about his ancestry because there is no record.

This reveals the difference between his priesthood and that of the sons of Aaron, who came along later, when proof of ancestry was essential before a man should become a Levitical priest, and when the credentials of a priest had to be established beyond doubt.

After the return from the Babylonian captivity, certain men wished to serve in the temple, but were excluded from the priesthood because their names could not be found among ‘those enrolled in the genealogies, so they were excluded from the priesthood as unclean’, **Nehemiah 7:64**.

In any case, Melchizedek could not possibly serve as a Levitical priest because, as **Hebrews 7:10** points out, Aaron had not yet been born! The Aaronic priesthood was established four centuries after the time of Melchizedek!

Similarly, the writer points out that on Earth, Jesus could not have become a priest because, “It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah, concerning which tribe Moses said nothing about the priesthood,” **Hebrews 7:14**.

This underlines the fact that only after He returned to Heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father, did Jesus become a Priest, and so, our Mediator. It also exposes the mistake of describing the Lord’s Prayer in **John 17** as “the High Priestly prayer”.

“Beginning of days or end of life,” **Hebrews 7:3**. This does not refer to physical life; it means that He did not commence His priestly ministry at a given time, nor did he end at a given time. He functioned as a priest as long as he lived.

Normally, the Levitical priests entered their service when they were twenty-five years old and were “retired” at fifty years old. Not so with Melchizedek. Like Jesus, he was a priest forever, or as long as he lived.

When we are told that he had ‘neither beginning of days nor end of life’, **Hebrews 7:3**, it would be foolish to suppose this means that Melchizedek was not born and did not die! This refers to the length of his service as a priest. It means that, unlike the sons of Aaron who became priests, Melchizedek did not succeed anyone in his priestly office, nor was he himself succeeded in it by anyone. His priesthood was unique, as **Hebrews 7:3**, states, he ‘remains a priest forever’.

This draws our attention to the fact that, unlike the Aaronic priests, Melchizedek did not commence his ministry at a set age, nor was he compelled to retire at a set age. He had an ‘abiding’, that is, a continuing priesthood.

Under the Law of Moses, a descendant of Aaron became an apprentice at twenty-five years of age, carrying the tabernacle and performing similar menial tasks, and he became a full priest at thirty years of age.

God’s law governing the priesthood was extremely benevolent and was considerate of the heavy work involved in the priesthood. That law stated that a priest must retire from service upon reaching the age of fifty, although, if he wished and was able, he might continue to serve in a voluntary capacity, **Numbers 8:23-26**. Not so Melchizedek!

There was no set time for his priestly ministry either to begin or to end, so that in this, his service was altogether unique. “Abraham gave him tithes”, **Hebrews 7:4**.

The argument is that because Abraham gave him tithes, and Aaron was not yet born, Aaron, through Abraham, gave tithes to Melchizedek, and so recognised his superiority.

And so Jesus is better than Aaron. As the writer states, the lesser pay tithes to the greater, **Hebrews 7:7**. Melchizedek was the first to fill the offices of King and Priest at the same time. Jesus was to be the last to do this.

Taking all of these facts into consideration, we see the wonderful similarity between Melchizedek and the Lord Jesus.

1. Neither had priestly ancestry.
2. Neither served for a set period of time.
3. Neither had successors in his particular ministry.
4. And in both, the offices of King and Priest were combined.

Whilst Melchizedek was said to be king of Salem and priest of God Most High, concerning the Christ, it had been prophesied, “He shall be a priest upon his throne,” **Zechariah 6:13**.

Bear in mind that this was a prophecy that could not be fulfilled during His earthly ministry, since whilst on earth He could not have been a priest according to the Law of Moses under which He lived as a Jew. But having ascended to heaven, He now reigns and mediates as King and Priest.

In the entire history of God’s ancient people, no one was allowed to serve as both king and priest at the same time. On the three-recorded occasions when kings intruded into the priestly function, the consequences were catastrophic.

1. King Saul presumed to offer a sacrifice and lost his throne as a punishment, **1 Samuel 13**.
2. King Jeroboam dressed himself as a priest and served at an altar to a god of his own making, and the punishment which followed resulted in the destruction of the entire House of Jeroboam, **1 Kings 13**.
3. King Uzziah entered the temple and began to offer incense, and was struck with leprosy, **2 Chronicles 26**.

Down through the ages, from the time of the unique Melchizedek, God held the offices of King and Priest apart until He should come of whom Melchizedek had been a type.

We see the importance then, of the opening statement in **Hebrews 4:14** “Since we HAVE a great High Priest”, and notice how he concludes this discussion in **Hebrews 10:21**, with identical words.

God declared that he intended that His own Son should combine in Himself the functions of Kingship and Priesthood, when in Psalm 110:4, He said, “You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek”.

CONCLUSION

- a. Our redeemer has left us an example that we should follow in His steps. He has shown us how to wear our creature nature; complete unquestioning subjection to God is that which is required of us.
- b. Christ has taught us the extent to which God ought to be submitted to “obedient unto death,” **Philippians 2:8**.
- c. Obedience to God costs something, **2 Timothy 3:12**.
- d. Suffering undergone in the service of God is instructive to us if accepted with the right attitude, **Romans 5:1-6**. Christ himself ‘learned’ by the things He suffered, so we should learn much more because we have so much more to learn.
- e. God’s love for us does not exempt us from suffering; Jesus, the Son of His love, was not spared great sorrows and trials.

WARNING AGAINST FALLING AWAY

“We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand. Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” **Hebrews 5:11-14**

He now inserts this reminder of the problem his readers face, between **Hebrews 5:10** and **Hebrews 7:1**, before he takes up the argument about Melchizedek and Christ again. The insert deals with their sin, which deals with the problem of falling away or neglecting their Christian duty to God, **Hebrews 5:11-6:20**.

The writer wants to discuss at greater length about Jesus functioning as our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. However, he says that while there is much to say about this, there is a problem.

Who is neglecting, who is failing? He now addresses some words of practical admonition to his readers’ spiritual condition, **Hebrews 5:11-14**. The audience is going to have a difficult time understanding, not because the subject matter is too hard, but because they are ‘dull of hearing’, **Hebrews 5:11**.

The word “dull” carries with it the idea of being “slow” and “slothful.” The problem the author is pointing out to his audience is that they have become spiritually lazy.

He tells them, “You have become dull of hearing”, **Hebrews 5:11**. The term dull of hearing comes from the Hebrew ‘nothros’, ‘sluggish’, slow to grasp, **Hebrews 6:12**.

The conversation concerning Christ “of whom we have many things to say”, **Hebrews 5:11**. He says such a study is vital, **John 6:63, 68 / John 12:48**, is often valueless because of your attitude, **John 5:39-47 / John 16:12 / Matthew 16:21-23**.

The condition “hard of interpretation”, or “hard to be understood”, **Hebrews 5:11**, comes from ‘dusermeeneutos’ and means “difficult to explain”. It describes something which may seem difficult to understand until it is explained. And then we wonder why we did not understand it before!

So with “the Mystery of Christ”, **Colossians 4:3**. He is a mystery to many, yet may be easily understood by a child! The cause “seeing you have become dull of hearing”, in Greek is the word ‘ginomai’, and it means “to be changed into something different, to pass into a different state”.

There is a continuation of the problem even today, **Matthew 13:13-23**; these words are needed in our day. Of the ones who enter the kingdom, approximately only five to ten per cent become teachers, **2 Timothy 2:24**, which leaves ninety to ninety-five per cent to become dull of hearing, **Matthew 25:24-30**.

This is a sober warning given to people who hear and then develop no more than fear, legalism, and laziness concerning Christ’s eternal covenant! The author says that they could dig into deeper things, but the readers have not prepared themselves to go deeper. They are shallow Christians.

The author goes further, declaring that they ‘ought to be teachers’, **Hebrews 5:12**, but they still need to be taught the basics. The idea is that they still needed to be taught the ABCs of God’s word. I think we need to pause here for a moment. The goal of every Christian is to be a teacher.

This does not mean that everyone must teach a Bible class at the building. But it does mean that each of us should be able to explain the basic principles of the oracles of God to people.

We may not have a handle on the more difficult concepts and teachings in the Scriptures, but every person ought to be able to teach the basic principles. If not, the writer says we have been spiritually lazy toward God’s word.

He drives home the point further by describing them as ‘little babies who need milk and cannot handle solid food’, **Hebrews 5:12**. There is nothing wrong with an infant who is drinking milk. But those who are parents know that this stage does not last long, as real foods begin to be introduced into the diet.

There is something wrong with a child who does not want to eat delicious solid food but still wants to eat baby jar pureed carrots. We would tell our children that they are too old for such food. Baby food was suitable for an infant, but not for a toddler or pre-schooler. This is the point being made to these Hebrew Christians.

The writer says, ‘you are still on milk’, even worse, you need to be ‘taught again the basics’ and have not progressed forward, **Hebrews 5:12**. There was a time when what we were doing was acceptable. But that time has passed; the way we acted in the past must end.

What has happened? **Hebrews 5:12** tells us that it was delayed development! There is much to say about Melchizedek, which is hard to explain, not because I don’t understand, but because you can’t understand it, because you have become dull of hearing. Because they have failed to grow, they have not only lost the ability to teach but also to learn.

1. The potential.

“They should by now be teaching others,” **Hebrews 5:12**.

a. It is possible, **Matthew 28:19-20** / **Acts 8:4**.

b. It is expected, **2 Timothy 2:2** / **2 Timothy 2:24-26**.

There are many things to say about Melchizedek, which were hard to explain, but they could not understand them, because they had become dull of hearing; not only had they failed to grow, but failing to grow, they had lost the ability to teach and to learn. They should by now be teaching others.

The procrastinator’s pattern is otherwise known as spiritual poliomyelitis. They had not always been like this; they had deteriorated to this point. The problem was that they had not grown, developed, matured in their faith!

What was acceptable in infancy is no longer acceptable as a child grows and progresses. We cannot continue to do what we have always done. The problem is not a lack of education; the problem is not a lack of intelligence. We may want to make these our excuses, but it is a lie.

The problem is a lack of intensity. We do not want to learn; we do not want to put in the effort to learn. We just want to tune out to God's word. Tuning out is an easy thing to do; we see it happen on a regular basis.

Many of us have been in a store or restaurant with a child who is just screaming his or her head off. The parents are not trying to quiet the child. They are tuning out the child; the child screams so much so often that they do not even notice any longer when the child breaks into a crying fit.

"You have need again", **Hebrews 5:12**, because of their attitude, they need teaching. How many in Bible classes are like this? Sadly, so many who have been taught for years still cannot teach others.

"The first principles of God's word", **Hebrews 5:12**. The term "first principles", in Greek, is 'stoicheiou', and it is a word that describes the "first basic things or, as has been called, the A.B.C of Christianity."

a. The A.B.C.s are elements of speech, the elements from which all language comes, the primary, the fundamentals of any art, science, or discipline.

b. They were still on milk, but should by now have been on meat.

The importance of this statement is the result of a man remaining on milk. If a child does not grow, that child will die. So with a Christian, there must be growth.

Why does the Christian life seem so difficult for some Christians? It is because they have remained 'babes' in Christ, no matter how long they have been members of the church. They have not progressed to desiring the 'strong meat' of the Word.

It is the same for a Christian; it is no good saying I will stop where I am because by doing that, you will lose the very thing you are hoping to keep. A person must grow.

The picture that comes to mind is a man weakly staggering down the road with a bottle of baby milk in one hand and hardly able to lift up his other hand, which holds the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Why is Christianity so painful to some Christians? Because they are back on the milk bottle and have spiritual ulcers, instead of spiritual understanding.

The idea of milk, **Hebrews 5:12**, is that mouth-to-mouth resuscitation is vital to keep this member from complete spiritual death. We can tune out the word of God; we are here, but we are not growing. We are here, but we are not changing; we are here, but we are not becoming teachers; we are spiritually lazy.

So we remain unskilled in the word of righteousness, choosing to remain as an infant, **Hebrews 5:13**. "For everyone who partakes of milk is without experience in the word of righteousness," **Hebrews 5:13**. The Greek word is 'apeiros', and it means inexperienced, unskilled, ignorant.

Experience is the best teacher, like the road testing of a product before it is brought to the market. The testing of tablets and pills in medicine before being made public. Paul took men with him on his trips to give them experience, **Acts 16:1-3 / Acts 20:4 / 2 Timothy 2:2**, and was saddened when one proved unreliable, **Acts 15:38**.

How does one become a full-grown man? **Hebrews 5:14**. The Greek word is 'teleios', and it means finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness, adult, mature.

The same word used in **Philippians 3:15-21**, the root of the word is "telios," which means an end. Those who "use" their senses, that is, Greek 'exis', which means it is a habit, whether of mind or body, a power acquired by practice, custom or use.

The word "senses", KJV, **Hebrews 5:14**, is the Greek word 'aistheteridn', and it means an organ of perception, a mental faculty. The word is used in **1 Timothy 4:7** to describe one who strives earnestly to become godly. He must stretch himself, as the author says, "For those who have their faculties trained", KJV.

The athlete who trains every day to prepare himself for that one race for the title, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. The word train, Hebrews 5:14, comes from the Hebrew ‘lexis’, and it means to grow muscles.

It does not appear in the New Testament, but we do have the Greek word ‘gumnazo’ from which we have our word “gymnasium,” a place of training and exercise, where one can grow muscles!

“Discerning good from evil,” Hebrews 5:14, refers to wholesome rather than corrupt doctrine. The implication is that the readers have things out of perspective, make false perceptions and come to false conclusions.

The writer tells us what needs to be done. He says that those who are on solid food are those who have ‘through constant practice trained their senses to distinguish good from evil’, Hebrews 5:14. Those who move forward are those who are constantly working and practising.

If one is spiritually mature and uses their mind, it will become second nature to assess things correctly and make the right decisions, rather than make hasty judgments. He will be able to avoid evil and be able to both see and promote the good in others.

So he is telling them to stop taking the easy way out and do what the Lord wants them to. Every Christian must do their best for the Lord, to work at studying the Lord’s word, and more importantly, to put that word into practice, by teaching and showing others.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

“Therefore, let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And God permitting, we will do so.”
Hebrews 6:1-3

The writer of Hebrews calls for his audience to move forward. Let us leave the ABCs of the teachings of Christ. We cannot stay on the basics. It is not natural, and it is not spiritually healthy. We are to be carried along to maturity. Quit rehearsing the things you already know!

One of the grave mistakes that can be made in our Bible classes and our Bible studies is that we simply rehearse the things we already know, going over the basics again and again. We need to look at the Scriptures in a new light to make sure that we are understanding God’s word properly.

We should not be content to stick with the basics. We should not merely rehearse what we agree on. We need to study, examine, and discuss things that are more challenging in the Scriptures.

The various things described as “laying again a foundation” Hebrews 6:1, seem to be things from both the first covenant and the second covenant. The “cleansing rites,” Hebrews 6:2, are probably a reference to the ritual immersions that took place under the first covenant for ceremonial purity. Note that the KJV uses the word ‘baptisms’ in Hebrews 6:2.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The use of the plural ‘baptisms’ doubtless sprang from the fact that no less than seven baptisms are mentioned in the New Testament, these being: One. the baptism of the Holy Spirit, **Matthew 3:11**; Two. the baptism of fire, **Matthew 3:11**; Three. the baptism of John, **Matthew 3:16**; Four. the baptism unto Moses, **1 Corinthians 10:2**; Five. the baptism of suffering, **Luke 15:30**; Six. the baptism for the dead, **1 Corinthians 15:29**; and Seven. the baptism of the great commission, **Matthew 28:18-20**. The seventh of these is beyond question the ‘one’ baptism of **Ephesians 4:5**; and the knowledge of these things was most certainly part of the elementary things that one had to know in order to become a Christian.’

The “laying on of hands”, **Hebrews 6:2**, likely refers to the imparting of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles, **Acts 8:18**. The resurrection of the dead, **Hebrews 6:2 / John 5:28-29**, was hotly contested and debated in the first century between the Pharisees and Sadducees, as the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, **Acts 23:8**.

But all in all, these things are the foundational elements of the teachings of Christ: repentance, faith, purity, gifts, resurrection, and judgment, **Hebrews 6:2**. It was time to press forward.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘No less than four foundations of Christianity are mentioned in the New Testament, and these are: One. the foundation fact that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, **Matthew 16:13-19 / 1 Corinthians 3:11**; Two. the foundation authority, namely the sayings of Jesus Christ, called by him ‘these sayings of mine’, **Matthew 7:24-27**, ‘whatsoever I have commanded you’, **Matthew 28:20**; Three. the foundation personnel, the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, **Ephesians 2:19**; and Four. the foundation teachings as set forth in the place before us.’

The writer is confident that they will move forward. With God’s help, **Hebrews 6:3**, we can move forward and grow deeper in faith and maturity in Jesus Christ.

A WARNING

“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss, they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end, it will be burned.” **Hebrews 6:4-8**

The theme of this book is that these Christians should not throw away their faith and confidence in Jesus. This warning is brought to light in the gravest way here. “Those who have once been enlightened”, **Hebrews 6:4**, is a reference to receiving the knowledge of the truth. We can see this in **Hebrews 10:32**. This thought is in the context of “sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth.” **Hebrews 10:26**.

So the writer begins that those who have received the knowledge of the truth, and then say they have ‘tasted the heavenly gift’, **Hebrews 6:4**. The Scriptures repeatedly speak of our reception of the gift of grace and the gift of righteousness. We have tasted the gift of God’s grace in the forgiveness of sins.

The writer goes further, “and have shared in the Holy Spirit,” **Hebrews 6:4**. I currently think this is a reference to miraculous spiritual gifts that the apostles gave through the laying on of hands to Christians in the first century. I will explain my reasoning better in just a moment. But I believe the writer is saying that they had shared in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Also, they “have tasted the goodness of the word of God,” **Hebrews 6:5**. You have enjoyed the riches of God’s word and seen how it is useful and beneficial to your life.

Finally, he says that they have tasted “the powers of the age to come,” **Hebrews 6:5**. “The age to come” is normally a reference to the Messianic age, as the Expositor’s Bible Commentary points out.

When we read about “the last days,” “in that day,” and “the age to come”, we are reading references to the coming of the Messiah and the events that would unfold around His arrival.

Therefore, I believe the writer is saying that they are part of the Messianic kingdom. They have seen the power of God’s kingdom and are currently enjoying being part of God’s family. This is the reason why previously I said I believe that the phrase “shared in the Holy Spirit”, **Hebrews 6:4**, means miraculous spiritual gifts.

The other possible meaning for “sharing in the Holy Spirit” would be entering into God’s restored kingdom, receiving God’s blessings, and being part of God’s new family in Christ. But I think these points are summed up in the phrase, “tasted the powers of the age to come,” **Hebrews 6:5**.

So what is the point? If you have enjoyed all the benefits of being in God’s family and have the knowledge of the truth, but then fall away, it is impossible to restore them again to repentance, **Luke 13:3**, because they are choosing to crucify the Son of God and are holding Him in contempt, **Hebrews 6:6**.

There is nothing that we will be able to do to bring them to repentance because they already know what they need to do. They have received the knowledge of the truth and participated in God’s family.

It is impossible for you to restore them because they are choosing to crucify the Son of God, **Hebrews 6:6**. They have not slipped into temptation or are having a moment of weakness. They know but choose to hold Jesus in contempt. MacKnight, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The apostle does not mean that it is impossible for God to renew a second time an apostate; but that it is impossible for the ministers of Christ (to do so).’

Remember, the writer is speaking about Jewish Christians who wanted to go back to the old law and the old system. The point is, why would they, the Jewish Christians, want to go back to Judaism?

The writer uses those very words in **Hebrews 6:6**. They received the knowledge of the truth and are full participants in God’s kingdom, but fall away, **Hebrews 6:6**. The principle of falling away is here; how can anyone argue that we cannot fall away? **2 Peter 2:20-22**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning falling away, **Hebrews 6:6**.

‘The more one studies this passage, the more it comes through as absolutely certain that those who, in this instance, are spoken of as falling away, were at first good Christians, genuinely converted, enlightened, partakers of the Holy Spirit, and having tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the age to come!’

The writer then uses illustrations in **Hebrews 6:7-8** to prove his point. In a sense, this is the writer’s version of Jesus’ parable of the soils, **Matthew 13:2-9** / **Matthew 13:18-23**. The kind of heart you have will determine what happens when the blessings of God are poured out on you.

“Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are convinced of better things in your case—the things that have to do with salvation. God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realised. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.” **Hebrews 6:9-12**

The writer comes back to them and says that he knows that they will not fall into this category. God sees your work and love shown by serving the saints. He cautions them not to fall back and not to be dull; “sluggish” is the same Greek word as “dull” in **Hebrews 5:11**.

Show the same earnestness so that you have the full assurance of hope until the end, **Hebrews 6:9**. Do not lose your faith and fall away from the Lord and all of His goodness, **Hebrews 6:10 / Acts 6:2**.

Milligan, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Hebrew brethren had been culpably negligent in the study of God’s word; but notwithstanding this, they had been diligent in the works of benevolence.’

Imitate those who, through faith and longsuffering, inherit the promises, **Hebrews 6:11**. Press forward like the example of those before us so that we also obtain the promises of the rest and the promises given to Abraham, **Hebrews 6:12**.

THE CERTAINTY OF GOD’S PROMISE

“When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, “I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.” And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised. People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.”

Hebrews 6:13-20

The writer concludes his thought about the surety of God fulfilling His promises to those who endure with diligence to the end. God swore to Abraham that he would receive the promises, **Genesis 22:16-18 / Hebrews 11:19**, and he did receive the promise, **Hebrews 6:13-15**.

Two things are going for us that we know with certainty: the promises await us.

1. God made an oath, **Hebrews 6:16 / Hebrews 3:10**.

Look at **Hebrews 6:17**, to show more convincingly that this promise will come to us, God also took an oath. God is bound by an oath and by the fact that it is absolutely impossible for Him to lie.

2. It is impossible for God to lie, **Hebrews 6:18**.

If He says something will happen, it will. This is our anchor through hard times, **Hebrews 6:19**. The word anchor in Greek is ‘anchoria’. It’s the idea of a small boat going ahead from a ship to fasten the rope to a rock on an island. Jesus went before and fastened it. While the waves of life beat against us and make us want to become spiritually lazy, the anchor of this promise keeps us from drifting away from God.

Our hope rests on Jesus, who is serving as our High Priest in the heavenly realms before God Himself. He is our forerunner, our trailblazer, leading the way to our heavenly home with God, **Hebrews 6:20**.

Morgan, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It marks a difference between Christ passing in within the veil, and everything that had preceded it in the ritual of the Hebrew people. Aaron had entered within the veil once a year, but never as a forerunner. He entered as the representative of those who were left outside, but they were always left outside. No one followed Aaron when he entered within the veil to stand in the presence of the ark and the mercy seat. When Jesus passed within the veil, he entered as a forerunner, which at once suggested that the way was open for others to follow him.’

The author of Hebrews has mentioned twice that Jesus is the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, **Hebrews 6:20**. The first statement is found in **Hebrews 5:10**, but the author could not speak about what he wished concerning Jesus' priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek because the audience is dull of hearing, **Hebrews 5:11**. In **Hebrews 6**, the author spent his time challenging the readers to move away from the ABCs and move away from spiritual laziness. Then he concludes this discussion in **Hebrews 6:20**, with the same point, "Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." Notice the addition of the word "forever", **Hebrews 6:20**, because this is the direction in which he wants to go in his discussion in **Hebrews 7**.

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

"This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness" then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever." **Hebrews 7:1-3**

THE GREATNESS OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK

Melchizedek is mentioned in Scripture only five times; we know very little about him. The first appearance of him is found in the days of Abraham, **Genesis 14:13-20**. One thousand years later, we read about him in **Psalm 110:4**. We wait another one thousand years before he appears in the New Testament, **Hebrews 5:5-10** / **Hebrews 6:20** / **Hebrews 7:1-25**.

The author begins by bringing the history of Melchizedek to mind, who is found in **Genesis 14**. He was the king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. After Lot had been captured, Abraham conquered those kings and rescued Lot.

Abraham paid a tenth to Melchizedek, and Melchizedek blessed Abraham, **Hebrews 7:1**. Now, the author is going to make several arguments based on this very short narrative found in **Genesis 14**.

First, Melchizedek is special because of who he is. His name means "king of righteousness", and he was the king of Salem, and "Salem" (same root as shalom) means "peace," **Hebrews 7:2**. So he is the king of righteousness and the king of peace. We should be able to quickly see that the author is building an allusion to Christ.

Further, Melchizedek is "without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life," **Hebrews 7:3**. Melchizedek suddenly appears on the sacred pages without any previous information about him. We do not know who his parents were. We do not know where he came from. We do not know how he died. He seems to have no beginning or end.

"Beginning of days or end of life," **Hebrews 7:3**, does not refer to physical life; it means that He did not commence His priestly ministry at a given time, nor did he end at a given time. He functioned as a priest as long as he lived.

Normally, the Levitical priests entered their service when they were twenty-five years old and were “retired” at fifty years old. Not so with Melchizedek. Like Jesus, he was a priest forever, or as long as he lived.

When we are told that he had ‘neither beginning of days nor end of life’, [Hebrews 7:3](#), it would be foolish to suppose this means that Melchizedek was not born and did not die! This refers to the length of his service as a priest. It means that, unlike the sons of Aaron who became priests, Melchizedek did not succeed anyone in his priestly office, nor was he himself succeeded in it by anyone. His priesthood was unique, as [Hebrews 7:3](#), states, he ‘remains a priest forever’.

This draws our attention to the fact that, unlike the Aaronic priests, Melchizedek did not commence his ministry at a set age, nor was he compelled to retire at a set age. He had an ‘abiding’, that is, a continuing priesthood.

Under the Law of Moses, a descendant of Aaron became an apprentice at twenty-five years of age, carrying the tabernacle and performing similar menial tasks, and he became a full priest at thirty years of age.

God’s law governing the priesthood was extremely benevolent and was considerate of the heavy work involved in the priesthood. That law stated that a priest must retire from service upon reaching the age of fifty, although, if he wished and was able, he might continue to serve in a voluntary capacity, [Numbers 8:23-26](#). Not so Melchizedek!

Therefore, the priesthood is continuous. In particular, the comparison explicitly stated that Melchizedek resembles the Son of God by continuing as priest forever.

Lenski, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The readers, former Jews who were now thinking of returning to Judaism, are here confronted with their great forefather Abraham and are shown how he accepted the royal priest Melchizedek long before Levi and Aaron were born and the Aaronic priesthood came into existence. The readers want to be true sons of Abraham, yea, are thinking of returning to Judaism for that very reason. Well, let them look at Abraham and at the one priest to whom Abraham bowed. Let them consider what God said through David regarding the royal priest and regarding the Messiah-Christ who is typified by Melchizedek.’

The writer of Hebrews may be recalling this knowledge from these Jewish Christians and is now going to expand upon it.

“Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, from their fellow Israelites—even though they also are descended from Abraham. This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. And without doubt, the lesser is blessed by the greater. In the one case, the tenth is collected by people who die, but in the other case, by him who is declared to be living. One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor.” [Hebrews 7:4-10](#)

The writer wants us to know the greatness of Melchizedek. Abraham paid a tenth to him, [Hebrews 7:4](#). The argument is that because Abraham gave him tithes, and Aaron was not yet born, Aaron, through Abraham, gave tithes to Melchizedek, and so recognised his superiority.

Hence, the Levitical priesthood is a descendant of Abraham; therefore, Levi is lesser than Abraham, [Hebrews 7:5](#). Melchizedek is greater than Abraham because he does not descend from Levi, received the tenth from Abraham, and blessed Abraham, [Hebrews 7:6](#). Obviously, the one who gives the blessing is greater than the one who receives the blessing, [Hebrews 7:7](#).

Milligan, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In all this, the transcendent dignity of Melchizedek, as the honoured priest of the Most High God, is abundantly manifested.’

Therefore, Melchizedek is far greater than Levi, and the priesthood of Melchizedek is far greater than the Levitical priesthood. Further, the Scriptures record the death of the Levitical priests, but Melchizedek lives on, Hebrews 7:8-10. The writer is strongly playing upon the idea of the eternal nature of the priesthood of Melchizedek.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The burden of the argument in this place is simply that the priesthood of Melchizedek (and therefore of Christ) is greater than the Levitical priesthood; and the proof offered is that the whole Hebrew nation, including of course the Levites, in the person of Abraham, were tithed by Melchizedek whose priesthood has actually never ended. It should be noted that the purpose of the author is to glorify Christ, not Melchizedek.’

JESUS LIKE MELCHIZEDEK

“If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood—and indeed the law given to the people established that priesthood—why was there still need for another priest to come, one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when the priesthood is changed, the law must be changed also. He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe, Moses said nothing about priests.” Hebrews 7:11-14

If we could be made in a condition acceptable to God through the Levitical priesthood, then we would not need another priest, Hebrews 7:11. We would not need a saviour, we would not need a deliverer.

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Aaronic priesthood was neither designed nor competent to inaugurate the age of fulfilment; that age must be marked by the rise of another priest, whose priesthood was of a different order and character from that of Aaron.’

We could just stay with the priesthood of Aaron and continue to offer our sacrifices for our sins, and we would be found acceptable and whole toward God. The implied argument is that we know that the Aaronic priesthood does not perfect us before God.

We needed a change in the priesthood, Hebrews 7:12. If there is a change in the priesthood, then there must be a change of law. Why? The Law of Moses said that the priests would be sons of Aaron through the tribe of Levi, Hebrews 7:13. If we change the priesthood, then we must have a new law in effect.

Particularly, since Jesus is our High Priest, as the writer has argued repeatedly throughout this letter, then we have a problem because He belongs to another tribe.

Jesus, our Lord, came from the tribe of Judah, Hebrews 7:14 / Genesis 49:8-12 / Revelation 5:5, and no one from Judah ever functioned as a priest of God, and Moses did not speak about that tribe being a priesthood, Exodus 32:25-29. So there must be a change of law since there has been a change of priesthood.

“And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared: “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.” Hebrews

Notice the writer speaks about Melchizedek again, but he also speaks of someone who will appear like Melchizedek, Hebrews 7:15-16.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The big thought under consideration here is the abrogation of the entire Hebrew system of religion, which has already been observed under Hebrews 7:11-12, (which see); and the argument, to paraphrase it, is this: 1. it is evident that with the rising of a new and greater priest, not out of Levi but out of Judah, the law was abrogated; 2. but it is ‘far more evident’ that the law was abrogated, when it is considered that the great new high priest is, in addition to being from an unlawful tribe (Judah) as far as the priesthood was concerned, also from an utterly new and different order, that of Melchizedek.’

Bruce, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The law which established the Aaronic priesthood is called a carnal commandment because it is a system of earth-bound rules; it is concerned with the externalities of religion, the physical descent of priests, a material shrine, animal sacrifices, and so forth.’

Proof of the change in the priesthood is the quotation in Hebrews 7:17, from Psalms 110:4, which we looked at when it was quoted by the writer in Hebrews 5:6.

Remember that Psalms 110 is the prophecy of a priest and king maintaining the office forever in the order of Melchizedek. Since we have a new priesthood, there must have been a change of law. Therefore, the former law has been set aside (annulled) because of its weakness, Hebrews 7:18.

The weakness is not within the law itself but its effect on those who are disobedient. The law does not make us in an acceptable condition to God after our disobedience. In this, the law is weak and useless; it cannot reconcile us to God.

But the new law that has been established because there is a new priesthood introduces to us a superior hope because this law and priesthood can draw us near to God, Hebrews 7:19. This is the way for us to be reconciled, Matthew 11:29-30 / Romans 3:24-25 / Hebrews 10:19-22 / James 4:8.

“And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: ‘The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever.’” Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant.” Hebrews 7:20-22

The new priesthood is superior because of a Divine oath, Hebrews 7:20. This priesthood is also superior to the Aaronic priesthood because it was established with the Lord’s oath, Hebrews 7:21 / Psalms 110:4. The Lord swore to the permanency of the priesthood of Christ. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind; Christ is Priest forever, Hebrews 7:22.

Further, Jesus is the guarantee of this better covenant, Hebrews 7:22. He guarantees to men that God will fulfil His covenant of forgiveness, and He guarantees to God that those who are in Him are acceptable.

“Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office, but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness, but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.” Hebrews 7:23-28

The new priesthood is superior because of a permanent Priesthood. The author returns to the contrast of the temporal nature of those who acted as priests on behalf of the people under the Levitical priesthood, Hebrews 7:23. They could

not continue their role in office because of death. However, Jesus holds the priesthood permanently because He will never die, [Hebrews 7:24](#).

Therefore, Jesus is able to save completely those who draw near to Him because He always lives to make intercession, [Hebrews 7:25](#). Remember the theme of this book has been not to turn back, not to give up, and not to drift away from God.

Here is a reminder of that. Those who draw near to God have an advantage under the priesthood of Christ, who is always making intercession and is able to completely save, [Hebrews 7:25](#).

The new priesthood is superior because of our priests' superior character. We have a special High Priest with His unique character. He is holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens, [Hebrews 7:26](#).

Because of this, He does not have the need to offer daily sacrifices on His own behalf, as the priests of Aaron had to, [Hebrews 7:27](#) / [Hebrews 9:7](#) / [Hebrews 10:1](#) / [Leviticus 9:8-14](#) / [Leviticus 16:2](#) / [Leviticus 16:29](#) / [Leviticus 16:34](#). He made one offering for sins on behalf of the people because of His perfect nature. But the sacrifice was himself, [Hebrews 7:27](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Hebrews 7:28](#).

'The verse is a recapitulation of what had already been said that the Levitical priests were weak, mortal, sinful people; but that the Son of God, the glorious priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, is perfected forevermore.'

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

"Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being. Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law." [Hebrews 8:1-4](#)

THE HIGH PRIEST OF A NEW COVENANT

What a Saviour we have! What a great High Priest! Jesus, as our High Priest, has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of God, [Hebrews 8:1](#). For Jesus to be seated further indicates that Jesus' priestly work is complete. He is not making offerings. His work is finished.

The image also shows that Jesus is enthroned as King. He is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven. The writer is driving home the point to our minds that Jesus is unique and superior as he is Priest and King, according to the promise of God.

This imagery is another allusion to [Psalm 110](#), where Jesus is enthroned at the right hand of God as King, [Psalm 110:1](#) and Priest, [Psalm 110:4](#). This statement also shows the continuity of His message because this point was made in [Hebrews 1:3](#).

But the work of Jesus goes beyond the cross. The writer of Hebrews informs us that He is a servant in the holy places, the real tabernacle set up by the Lord and not human hands, [Hebrews 8:2](#).

Note that the Hebrew writer never uses the word temple. Why? Because God never asked for a temple to be built, [1 Chronicles 17:1-6](#). There were never any instructions given to anyone about the construction of a temple.

The tabernacle was a temporary structure, [Exodus 25:8-Exodus 37:9](#). As a priest, Jesus does not serve on Earth, but in heaven itself. Priests offer gifts and sacrifices, so Jesus also must offer something, [Hebrews 8:3](#) / [Hebrews 5:1](#) / [Hebrews 7:27](#).

[Hebrews 8](#) does not tell us what Jesus offered, but [Hebrews 9](#) will. But I am sure, based upon what we have studied so far, you can determine what Jesus offered as Priest.

Now, if Jesus did serve on the Earth, He could not be a priest because the priests offer gifts according to the law, [Hebrews 8:4](#). This refers back to what we learned in [Hebrews 7:11-28](#).

For Jesus to be a priest means that there has been a change in the law, [Hebrews 7:12](#). If the law has not been changed, then Jesus cannot be a priest. The argument seems to reach a bit further in that it is the Levitical priesthood that operates on the earth. Jesus, however, not being from the tribe of Levi, must necessarily perform His priestly functions in heaven, [Hebrews 7:12](#).

“They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” But in fact, the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.” [Hebrews 8:5-7](#)

The work of the priests on Earth was not real and true. What they were doing was simply copies and shadows of the heavenly things and the heavenly work that Jesus would offer, [Hebrews 8:5](#).

The proof the writer of Hebrews uses is from [Exodus 25:40](#), where God instructs Moses to construct everything according to the pattern shown to him. The argument hinges on the word “pattern,” [Hebrews 8:5](#). Since the earthly tabernacle was a pattern, then it must have been modelled after something.

The writer is telling us that it was modelled after the heavenly tabernacle. The earthly tabernacle was not the reality but just a shadow of a later work that would be accomplished by a great High Priest.

So Jesus is serving in the greater, heavenly tabernacle, not the lesser, earthly tabernacle like the Levitical priests. So Jesus has a more excellent ministry, a more excellent priesthood.

Further, He is the mediator of a better covenant, [Hebrews 8:6](#). The covenant that He has brought and enacted through His death is better than the first covenant made to Moses.

One reason this covenant, enacted by Jesus, is better is because it is established on better promises, [Hebrews 8:6](#). The “better promises” must be the forgiveness of sins primarily or, to use the language of [Hebrews 7](#), a way to make us acceptable (perfect) before God, [Hebrews 7:19](#). This connection is made in [Hebrews 8:7](#); if there had not been a problem with the first covenant, there would have been no need to look for a second covenant.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Hebrews 8:6-7](#).

‘Summarising these marks of identification of ‘the first covenant,’ the one which was annulled, we have the following: 1. It was the one made with Israel AND JUDAH. 2. It was the one that had the Decalogue as a basic component. 3. It was the one made at the time of Israel’s coming out of Egypt. 4. It was the one said by God himself to be with Moses (with ‘thee’), as well as with Israel, [Exodus 24:27](#). Therefore, ‘the first covenant,’ as used in these verses, means the whole religious system of the Jews, the Decalogue, the priesthood, the sacrifices, the tabernacle ritual, the temple services (as later developed), the statutes, and the judgments, and the commandments, and embracing the entire ceremonial and moral constitution of Judaism, [Hebrews 7:11-12](#).’

What was the problem? The problem is stated in Hebrews 8:8, “For he finds fault with them.” The sins of the people are where the problem lies. The Law of Moses gave us a means to be reconciled to God after disobedience. The law showed us God and pointed out sin, but did nothing to help those who were violators. The author now makes a large quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34.

“But God found fault with the people and said: ‘The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.’” Hebrews 8:8-12

The writer reminds his audience that a new covenant had been prophesied to the people. A new law had to come. Remember that Jesus is our great High Priest, and for Jesus to be our High Priest, there must be a change of law, Hebrews 7:12. Jeremiah said that there would be a change of law when the Messiah came.

The days were coming when God would make a new covenant with Israel and Judah, Hebrews 8:8 / Jeremiah 31:31. But the new law that would be enacted would not be like the law made when Moses brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, Hebrews 8:9 / Jeremiah 31:32.

This is important because the previous covenant did not make provisions for the people to be reconciled to God so that they would be found acceptable. So what is different about this new law under the priesthood of Jesus?

1. The law would be written in their minds and their hearts, Hebrews 8:10 / Jeremiah 31:33.

The law would not come to the people on two tablets of stone; rather, the law must come into the hearts of the people. One will not think that they are part of this covenant through birth or by keeping outward signs.

God’s covenantal people will be those who keep His law by their hearts and minds, not as ritual or habit. I think this is an important reminder that God’s people are those who keep His laws because they want to. They do not see obedience as rules and rituals; rather, they see obedience as loving the Lord.

2. This covenant will bring reconciliation. God says that He will be their God and they shall be His people, Hebrews 8:10 / Jeremiah 31:33.

This had also been promised in the first covenant in Exodus 6:7, but the people broke the covenant and were no longer God’s people. The prophet Hosea three times declared that Israel was no longer His people, Hosea 1:9 / Hosea 1:10 / Hosea 2:23. Paul reminds his audience of that fact in Romans 9:25.

But under this covenant and under Jesus, we can be called His people again, Hebrews 8:10 / Jeremiah 31:33. We can call God our God and we can be called His people.

3. Everyone in the covenant will know the Lord, Hebrews 8:11 / Jeremiah 31:34.

This verse has been misunderstood by many, but it is simply a contrast between the first covenant and the second covenant. Under the first covenant, people were part of the covenant when they were born. Children were born into a relationship with God as Israelites.

As children, they did not know the Lord, Hebrews 8:11. They would need to be taught later about the Lord and how they were in a covenant with Him. This would no longer be the case.

Those who are part of this new covenant of Jesus will already know the Lord, Hebrews 8:11 / John 1:12-13. One would not be born into this new covenant. The only way to be in this relationship is by knowing the Lord.

4. This new covenant is that God will forgive sins and not remember those sins, Hebrews 8:12 / Jeremiah 31:34.

Sins are really going to be dealt with through the priesthood of Jesus. We will see this argument more powerfully made later on. But it is enough to say that Jesus shows His and that He has dealt with sin in one sacrifice, not repeated daily or annual sacrifices of the first covenant.

“By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete, and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.” Hebrews 8:13

After quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34, the writer makes a final remark. He presents this last argument based on Jeremiah’s words about a “new covenant.” If the second covenant is “new,” then the first covenant is old. It is not a covenant that people should go back to with fond memories or nostalgia.

The first covenant was ineffective because it could not deal with our sins and could not make us acceptable to God. The first covenant did not meet our need for reconciliation.

But we should be struck by the statement that the first covenant is “becoming obsolete and growing old” and “is ready to vanish away.” Why is this not stated in the past tense that the covenant has already vanished away? Why say that it was in the process of vanishing away?

I believe the answer is that the Levitical priesthood was still intact and was still performing sacrifices for the people in the temple. But that would soon change when the Romans would destroy the temple in 70 AD.

Though the new covenant was in effect because Jesus is our great High Priest, the old priesthood had not vanished yet. But it was in the process of vanishing away and was obsolete because of Jesus, our new and superior High Priest.

1. The Levitical priesthood and tabernacle were only shadows and copies of the reality that Jesus would fulfil.

Therefore, this system is inferior to the priesthood of Jesus. Why would premillennialism think that re-establishing the sacrifice system of the first covenant is necessary or even useful in the end times? Such an idea is a great violation of the priesthood of Jesus. We have a better priesthood.

2. The second covenant is superior to the first covenant.

With Jesus, we have a restored relationship with God, a covenant that is from the heart, a covenant that requires knowledge of the Lord, and brings forgiveness of sins.

3. We cannot go back to any aspect of the first covenant and declare those laws binding.

The first covenant has been set aside, annulled, and made obsolete. The writer begins this section by taking us on a tour of the tabernacle. Remember that the writer concluded with the thought that the first covenant was obsolete, growing old, and ready to vanish away. Yet this was written in a progressive tense, even though the new covenant had been put into effect.

The reason seems to be that the first covenant system and Levitical priesthood were still in effect while Herod’s temple stood. The writer is going to tell us more about the need for the first tabernacle to vanish away.

The first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. These regulations and practices were commanded by God. God had established these things, but we learned that the fault was with the people for not keeping God’s laws. Therefore, the tabernacle and the first covenant became insufficient, but this was God’s plan.

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

“Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up.” Hebrews 9:1-2

WORSHIP IN THE EARTHLY TABERNACLE

1. Human-made, Hebrews 9:1-2.

The first reason that the earthly tabernacle is insufficient is that it was constructed by humans. This is implied in Hebrews 9:1-2, with the words “an earthly place of holiness” (ESV) and “a tent was prepared.”

The tabernacle was built by Moses and the priests, not by God. This point is explicitly stated in Hebrews 9:11. Being of this earth and being made by humans make it insufficient and inferior to the heavenly tabernacle.

“In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered Ark of the Covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.” Hebrews 9:2-5

2. Symbolised something greater, Hebrews 9:2-5.

The writer lists all of the articles in the tabernacle. But in Hebrews 9:23, we are told that these articles were simply copies of the heavenly things. These things symbolised a greater fulfilment to come. I believe the writer of Hebrews is declaring that Jesus is the fulfilment of these copies and shadows, Hebrews 9:24.

a. Lampstand, Hebrews 9:2 / Exodus 25:31-39 / Exodus 40:24.

The writer tells us that inside the earthly tabernacle was the lampstand. Jesus is the true light of the world, John 8:12, and those who are in His family are also to be lights, Matthew 5:14-16 / Philippians 2:14-15.

b. Table of showbread. Hebrews 9:2 / Exodus 25:23-30 / Exodus 40:22.

Each Sabbath, the priest would remove the old loaves and put fresh loaves on the table, Leviticus 24:5-9. The old loaves were eaten by the priests, and these loaves were called “the bread of presence.”

Only the priests could eat the bread, and it could only be eaten within the tabernacle. Jesus called himself the bread of life, who is given to the whole world, John 6:50-51.

Josephus described the decorations of the table of showbread made by Ptolemy. It was elaborately covered with a grapevine, and he describes it as follows.

‘(It had) tendrils of the vine, sending forth clusters of grapes, that you would guess were nowise different from real tendrils; for they were so very thin, and so very far extended at their extremities, that they were moved by the wind, and made one believe that they were the product of nature, and not the representation of art.’

c. Altar of incense, Hebrews 9:3-4 / Exodus 30:1-9 / Exodus 40:26.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the ‘curtain in the holy place,’ Hebrews 9:3.

‘The only access to that Holy of Holies was through the veil, a description of which is afforded by Exodus 26:31-37. It was this veil which was parted in twain from the top to the bottom at the time of our Lord’s crucifixion, Matthew 27:51, thus being brought into focus to reveal an astonishing weight of symbolism.’

The golden altar stood in the holy place just in front of the veil that divided the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place in the tabernacle. Each morning and evening, a priest burned incense on this altar, a picture of intercession and a representation of the people's prayers going to God, [Psalm 141:2](#) / [Revelation 5:8](#).

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to take the coals from the altar of incense and go into the Holy of Holies so that smoke would fill the room and cover the mercy seat. Jesus is our intercessor through whom we have access to God and through whom we offer our prayers to the Father.

d. Ark of the Covenant, [Hebrews 9:4](#) / [Exodus 25:10-22](#).

Finally, the most important piece was the Ark of the Covenant. On the top of the Ark of the Covenant were the cherubim of glory, covering the mercy seat, [Hebrews 9:5](#) / [Exodus 25:20](#) / [1 Kings 8:7-15](#). This was considered the throne of God where God met with His people, [Psalm 80:1](#) / [Psalm 99:1](#).

On the Day of Atonement, the high priest sprinkled blood upon this mercy seat. It is an interesting visualisation when we remember that the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff, which had budded, and the two tablets of stone, the Law, were inside the Ark of the Covenant, [Hebrews 9:4](#) / [Exodus 25:16-17](#).

Therefore, the law was covered by the mercy seat, which on the Day of Atonement was covered by blood. Jesus is the atonement for our sins, the propitiation for the sin of the whole world, [Romans 3:25](#) / [Hebrews 2:17](#) / [1 John 2:2](#).

Everything in the earthly tabernacle was simply a symbol for a future, greater reality found in Jesus. The writer doesn't want to spend time discussing all these things in detail at the moment, [Hebrews 9:5](#).

“When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.” [Hebrews 9:6-7](#)

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The use of the present tense in this verse shows that the services being performed by the priests were still going on, which would mean that the Herodian temple was yet standing and certainly dating Hebrews prior to 70 A.D. Here is a partial list of services performed by the priests: One. They lighted the lamps each evening and trimmed them every morning, [Exodus 27:21](#) / [Exodus 30:8](#). Two. Each sabbath day, they renewed the loaves on the table of showbread, [Leviticus 24:5](#). Three. They burned twice daily the incense on the golden altar, this coinciding with the morning and evening sacrifices, and with the trimming and lighting of the lamps, [Exodus 30:7-8](#) / [Luke 1:10](#). All of these actions took place in the holy place.’

3. Inaccessible to the people. [Hebrews 9:6-7](#).

The third point that we learn about the earthly tabernacle was that it did not grant access to the people. Only the priests could go into the first section, the holy place, and perform their duties.

Only the high priest could enter into the second section, the Holy of Holies, to offer atonement one time each year, [Leviticus 16](#). Notice that the atonement was for the “unintentional sins of the people,” [Hebrews 9:7](#). Some translations read, “Sins of ignorance.”

The point is that rebellious sins were not being atoned for by the high priest. Atonement was not provided for intentional disobedience. But the people had no access to God to be able to take care of their sins. A priest had to do the work on their behalf to make atonement for their unintentional sins.

Not only that, but the priests themselves had to make offerings for their own sins before they could make sacrifices for the sins of the people. Even the high priest could not enter and perform his duty until he had atoned for his sins.

“The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning.” [Hebrews 9:8](#)

4. Temporary, Hebrews 9:8.

Hebrews 9:8 appears to be a key argument that may not be readily understood. The surface point is that there is no way to enter the holy of holies while the first tabernacle stands. Nor was it revealed that we could enter. As long as the priests were serving in the holy place, the way into the presence of God had not been opened.

But then, the beginning of Hebrews 9:9 says something interesting, “which is symbolic for the present age.” The implication is that things are going to change. While the first tabernacle stands, the way into the presence of God has not been revealed.

Therefore, the first tabernacle must end so that the way to God can be revealed, Hebrews 10:20. This is depicted in the temporary nature of the tabernacle system. Further, it implies that the temple must be destroyed so that the way to God can be revealed.

“This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order.” Hebrews 9:9-10

5. External ministry. Hebrews 9:9-10.

The problem with the first covenant and the tabernacle system is that these things could not perfect the conscience of the worshipper. It only deals with the externals. The consciences were not cleared or cleansed.

The worshippers knew they sinned, but the sacrifice did not resolve the separation from God. It only reminded the worshipper of the sin. These sacrifices did not take care of our moral situation. They only dealt with the regulations of the body.

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

“But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation.” Hebrews 9:11

The superior heavenly sanctuary, Hebrews 9:11-28. Now the writer is going to show us how and why the heavenly sanctuary is far superior to the earthly tabernacle.

1. Heavenly, Hebrews 9:11.

We saw this contrast earlier, but now it is explicitly stated. Jesus has appeared as the High Priest over the good things that have come. This happened through the greater and more perfect tent. What makes this tabernacle greater is that it was not made with hands.

Humans did not construct the heavenly sanctuary. It is not of this creation. Jesus is functioning as a High Priest in heaven in the heavenly sanctuary that is not a copy, but the reality.

Robertson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Christ is a high priest of good things that have already come, as well as the glorious future hope.

“He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.” Hebrews 9:12-15

2. Service deals with sin, Hebrews 9:12-15.

Jesus' priesthood is superior because it effectively deals with sin, and the heavenly sanctuary is superior because that is where true atonement is made. Jesus entered the holy places, not with the blood of animals, but with His own blood, Hebrews 9:12.

It is His own blood that effectively deals with sin, bringing us eternal redemption. The blood of animals cannot solve the problem of sin. Jesus' sacrifice is superior to the sacrifice of animals.

Further, the blood of Jesus gives purification that the blood of animals was unable to accomplish. The blood of animals brought purification of the flesh, Hebrews 9:13.

If the blood of animals can deal with the ceremonial defilement and purification rituals for the externals, then how much more can the blood of Jesus deal with our sins? The writer goes further that it is the blood of Jesus that is able to purify our 'consciences from dead works', Hebrews 9:14.

The blood of Christ cleanses our consciences! Hebrews 9:14. This is the essence of the grace of God. We can forget about our sins. We are able to let violations go. We do not need to hold on to the guilt. We do not need to be reminded of our sins on a regular basis.

The sacrifice of Jesus truly takes our sins away. We have been cleansed from our sinfulness to serve the living God. The blood of Jesus has the power to cleanse our hearts and guilty consciences. It is wrong for us to continue to carry the weight of our sins when the blood of Jesus has taken those sins away!

How can we act like the blood of Jesus is insufficient for our sins? We are either acting arrogantly, selfishly or pitifully to think that we cannot move forward from the things that we have done wrong in our past.

Why would we want to keep rehearsing and reliving our mistakes? Let the blood of Jesus cleanse your conscience! 1 Peter 3:21. We are acting like we are under the old covenant, constantly reminding ourselves of our sins. The blood of Jesus is sufficient.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning, through the eternal Spirit, Hebrews 9:14.

'This distinction between the flesh of Christ and his Spirit appears in three other New Testament references, Romans 1:3-4 / 1 Timothy 3:16 / 1 Peter 3:18.

Barmby, in his commentary, says the following, concerning Romans 1:3-4 / 1 Timothy 3:16 / 1 Peter 3:18.

'In all these passages, THE SPIRIT is that divine element of the life of Christ, distinct from the human nature which he assumed of the seed of David, in virtue of which he rose from the dead.'

Jesus has brought us the new covenant, Hebrews 9:15, and through His calling, we receive the promised eternal inheritance. Jesus' death has redeemed us. Through Jesus, we are set free, through Jesus, we have forgiveness, through Jesus, we are redeemed.

"In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living." Hebrews 9:16-17

This new covenant could come about only through a better sacrifice, something far superior to animals. The author begins by using an illustration of the legal customs of the day.

He uses the example of a will because the Greek word for covenant could also mean will. It was a contract that became valid only when someone died, Hebrews 9:16-17.

"This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. When Moses had proclaimed every command of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep. In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its

ceremonies. The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” Hebrews 9:18-22

The Sinai covenant also involved death, the death of animals, Hebrews 9:18-20 / Exodus 24:5-8. The Law of Moses required blood in its rituals of cleansing, Hebrews 9:21-22. Obviously, drops of blood do not make anything physically clean.

Lenski, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Since there was so much use of blood in connection with the Mosaic testament and all that pertained to that testament, how can any of the readers find fault with Christ’s death and blood in connection with the New Testament? They should do the very opposite: appreciate the fact that Christ’s death and blood are infinitely more precious than all the Mosaic sacrifices.’

What the Israelites needed was a spiritual cleansing, an elimination of spiritual defilement, imperfection, sin, guilt and anything that separated them from God. They needed forgiveness.

Physical blood cannot change spiritual realities, and animal sacrifices cannot eliminate sin, Hebrews 10:4, but the old covenant nevertheless prescribed animal sacrifices for forgiveness, Hebrews 9:22. Just as the tabernacle itself pictured a heavenly reality, these animal sacrifices pictured a death that would be effective in removing sin.

“It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence.” Hebrews 9:23-24

WHAT ARE THE HEAVENLY THINGS?

In Leviticus 16:16, we see a direct link with Hebrews 9:23. The question is, what are the heavenly things? And why should they require purifying being in heaven?

Hebrews 9 to the Tabernacle and the animal sacrifices which were offered according to the Mosaic Law. I might say, in passing, that it is worth noting that all the illustrations used by the writer of this letter, as he deals with the subject of Worship, are based on the Tabernacle system and not on the Temple. This is because of the following.

1. Whilst the Tabernacle was built by Moses in obedience to the direct will, plan and command of God Himself, the Temple was built according to the plan of David, under the permissive will of God.
2. A tabernacle, a moveable structure, was more appropriate to the needs of a pilgrim people than was a temple. The replacement of the Tabernacle with the more permanent Temple indicated that Israel had lost sight of its pilgrim character.

In Hebrews 9:1-10, the writer introduces a discussion of things with which his readers would undoubtedly be familiar; namely, the furnishings of the Tabernacle and the sacrifices that were offered in it.

He is careful, however, that everything included in worship offered according to the Covenant enacted at Sinai was merely preparatory and represented or portrayed something to come later, which would accomplish what had been impossible to achieve under the Mosaic system.

The frequent references to blood are significant. That word is mentioned twelve times in this chapter alone. The reason for this is given by the writer when he states that under the Law, ‘everything is purified by blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins’, Hebrews 9:22.

It is this reference to ‘purification’ that is the crux of the question which we are to consider. We have no difficulty in following the writer, reasoning when he refers to the purification, or cleansing of the Tabernacle and everything and everyone connected with it, because we recognise that this cleansing was necessary for the purpose of sanctification. This was the way in which people and things were made fit for the service of God.

It is here, however, that we are reminded of the vast difference between what was affected by the blood offered in the tabernacle by the Aaronic high priest, and that which was offered by the High Priest who was ‘after the style of Melchizedek’, the Lord Jesus.

The tabernacle and the High Priest who served in it, along with the sacrifices he offered, were only copies of the ‘true’ or ‘real’ Sanctuary, which is Heaven itself and of the True High Priest who offered blood which really took sin away.

The word ‘copies’ is the word ‘hupodeigmata’ and means that they were imperfect representations of the real. As symbols, or types, they conveyed a sense of the ‘true’, but what they were and what they accomplished fell far short of the reality.

The meaning of the passage, therefore, is that under the Mosaic system, God was willing to allow the high priest to enter the Holy of Holies and approach Him on behalf of the people, as he bore the blood of an animal sacrifice, which was, in itself, a confession of their guilt before Him.

But Heaven itself, the true Holy of Holies, could not be entered on that basis. A better sacrifice was required. That better, effective sacrifice was that of the blood of Christ Himself.

We need not see a difficulty in the use of ‘sacrifices’ in [Hebrews 9:23](#), and ‘sacrifice’ in [Hebrews 9:26](#), because the word ‘sacrifices’, relates to those that were offered on the Day of Atonement, which is the occasion referred to in [Hebrews 9:6](#), whilst the ‘sacrifice’ mentioned in [Hebrews 9:26](#), is the one true act of atonement, accomplished by the shedding of the blood of Christ.

TRUE PURIFICATION

The writer implies that the use of animal blood served an important purpose as a means of ritual cleansing. In [Hebrews 9:13](#), we are told that such sacrifices were effective in purifying the flesh, and [Hebrews 9:22](#) states that ‘almost everything’ was ‘purified with blood’.

But such sacrifices were ineffective in the infinitely more important matter of the cleansing of the heart and conscience. This is stated in [Hebrews 9:9](#), where we read that they were sacrifices, ‘which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper.’

What we see here, therefore, is a reference to the contrast between the physical (bodily) cleansing, for which the Tabernacle and the animal sacrifices were sufficient and the spiritual cleansing, that of the conscience, or the spiritual side of Man’s being, which needed the ‘better sacrifice’.

The writer states that the ‘heavenly’ or ‘spiritual things’ are only cleansed by the sacrifice of Christ Himself. [Hebrews 9:13-14](#) appears to me to provide the answer to our question.

The earthly tabernacle had to be ritually purified by animal sacrifices, but the heavenly holy place required a far better sacrifice, [Hebrews 9:23](#). The spiritual barrier between God and humans required a spiritual sacrifice, someone with a perfect conscience, totally without sin.

Jesus was not dealing with a physical, symbolic copy, Hebrews 9:24. He was not working with external rituals. Rather, He was dealing with the real spiritual problem, and He did His work in heaven. It was a better place and a better sacrifice.

Humans are both matter and spirit; Christ's work was both physical and spiritual. He became fully human, mortal and physical, in order to redeem humans.

But His redemption had to be on the spiritual level as well, a conscience untainted by sin, a life willingly offered on behalf of others, a being worthy of entering heaven itself to intercede for humans. He offered himself, both body and spirit.

Jesus Christ now appears for us in heaven to help us, Hebrews 9:24. He is the God-man who bridges the gap between God and humans. His work is fully effective, for all time.

“Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Hebrews 9:25-26

Once was enough, unlike the work of the Levitical priests, who had to repeat the same rituals over and over again, Hebrews 9:25. By this, the Holy Spirit was showing that their work was not effective. True cleansing was possible only through a better sacrifice, a better priest, and a better covenant.

Jesus did not go to heaven to perform endless rituals. He is not copying the old covenant, because the old covenant had only temporary substitutes, Hebrews 9:25.

Jesus does not have to suffer forever to rescue us from sin, Hebrews 9:26. He gave himself once, and that was enough. Notice “He has appeared once for all.” When? “At the end of the ages.” Why? “To do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself,” Hebrews 9:26.

Even one thousand nine hundred and fifty years ago, believers were living in the “end of the ages”, “in these last days,” Hebrews 1:2. The old era was fading away, and a new age had begun with Jesus Christ. The spiritual world was radically different. The sacrifice of all time had been given.

“Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many, and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.” Hebrews 9:27-28

But the story is not yet done, just as ordinary humans appear once, and then will appear again in the judgment, so also with Christ. Each person dies for his or her own sins, but Jesus died for others, Isaiah 53:4-6. Each person will face the judgment for his or her sins, but Jesus will be the Judge.

I am sure everyone would agree that Hebrews 9:27 is the general rule for all of mankind: people will die once and then face judgment. But were there any exceptions to this general rule?

The answer is yes, the exceptions to this general rule were Enoch, Genesis 5:22-24 / Hebrews 11:5, and Elijah, 2 Kings 2:11, as both men did not die but went to heaven.

Are people going to believe and teach that people will no longer die, like Enoch and Elijah, but will go straight to heaven based on these two exceptions to the rule? Surely no one would suggest such a thing.

Then why do people believe and teach the exception rule concerning salvation? People speak about being saved by faith alone, and there is no need for baptism. They point to the thief of the cross and ignore the general rules for salvation? The general rules always outweigh the exceptions.

Jesus death took away the sins of all who believe in Him, and when He appears again, He will not be bringing their sins against them, Romans 8:1-2 / Hebrews 10:17. Rather, He will be bringing eternal salvation for all who trust in Him, Hebrews 9:28.

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

“The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.” Hebrews 10:1-2

CHRIST’S SACRIFICE ONCE FOR ALL

The Law of Moses was only a shadow of the good things to come. The Law of Moses was not the ultimate reality. Since the Law of Moses was just a shadow of the coming good things, it can never make perfect those who draw near by the sacrifices that are offered annually. It simply was not the purpose of the Law of Moses to perfect the worshipers, 1 Corinthians 13:9-12 / James 1:25.

The law was looking forward to the good things to come, that is, sacrifices that can bring the forgiveness of sins. If the Law of Moses could perfect the worshiper, then the sacrificial system of the Law of Moses would have never stopped.

But the Law of Moses could never make us complete. The Law of Moses could not put us in the right relationship once we sinned. The Law of Moses could not perfectly cleanse.

Hebrews 10:2 tells us that if the Law of Moses had perfected the people, they would no longer have a consciousness of sin. However, that is not what the Law of Moses does.

Rather than remove the guilt, the repeated sacrifices reminded the worshipers of the guilt of their sins. The repetition of sacrifice demonstrates the ongoing grip of sin.

“But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” Hebrews 10:3-4

Hebrews 10:3, has often been misunderstood. Many have read it to mean that God kept remembering the sins of the people year after year. I have heard it taught that every year God remembers the sins of the people. That is, the sacrifice of atonement was made, and God forgot their sins until the following year.

But this is not at all what the writer of Hebrews is teaching. The writer is not telling us that God remembered the sins. Rather, the worshipers remembered their sins.

The worshipers understood that the sacrifice of animals did not take away their sins. The sacrifices reminded them of their sins and did not cleanse their consciences. The writer made this point earlier in Hebrews 9:9.

Therefore, according to Hebrews 10:4, the worshipers knew that it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. The Law of Moses was a shadow of a coming sacrifice that would take away sins.

If the Law of Moses could take away sins and cleanse the consciences of the worshipers, then the sacrifices would still be offered. But the sacrifices simply reminded the worshipers of the guilt of their sins and did not take away sins.

Milligan, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The sacred services of the great Day of Atonement failed to prevent the same sins from being remembered again, as proved by the ceremony of the scapegoat which bore ‘away’ the sins of the people, a thing that would not have been required if the sins had truly been forgiven or no longer existed.’

“Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll— I have come to do your will, my God.’” Hebrews 10:5-7

The writer now proves the point that sacrifices were insufficient to deal with removing our sins. The illustration comes from Jesus, and the quotation from the Old Testament Scripture.

When Jesus came into the world, he said what is recorded here, and they are a quotation from Psalms 40:6-8. Psalms 40 is a song of salvation and deliverance.

Rather than quoting these words and attributing them to David, the writer of Hebrews attributes the words as spoken by Christ. This is a conversation between Christ and Father.

Westcott, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The words, it will be observed, assume the pre-existence of Christ.’

Notice also that Jesus came to do the will of the Father, Genesis 3:15 / Luke 22:42.

“First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law.” Hebrews 10:8

When Christ was to come in the flesh, John 1:1 / John 1:14, these are the words of the conversation. The Father did not want more animal sacrifices and offerings. The answer was in the body prepared for Christ. The sacrifice of Christ would be the answer for sins.

God did not take pleasure in the burnt offerings and sin sacrifices. God took pleasure in the perfect obedience of Jesus. This has always been true concerning God and His desire, 1 Samuel 15:22.

Jesus came to do the will of the Father, something no human had ever accomplished previously and would never accomplish later. Only Jesus was able to completely do the will of the Father. This leads to an important teaching in Hebrews 10:9-10.

“Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Hebrews 10:9-10

Jesus came to do God’s will, Genesis 3:15. What was God’s will? To take away the first covenant and establish a second covenant through which we can have true cleansing. The writer of Hebrews has spent a lengthy amount of time teaching us that Jesus is the High Priest, which means there must be a new law.

WHY DID JESUS NEED A BODY?

1. To be able to communicate with mankind in a personal, unmistakable and uncomplicated manner.
2. To present the ‘signs’ which were to be the authentication and endorsement of His Messiah-ship.
3. To set the human race as the perfect example of obedience to the will of the Father.
4. And above all, by means of that perfect life, to demonstrate His worthiness to become the perfect offering for the sin of the world.

And so the Word must become flesh, John 1:1-3 / John 1:14. This was the divine plan, Hebrews 7:27, and it is why we find the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, in Hebrews 10:5, placing the words of the Psalmist from Psalms 40:6-8, into the Lord’s mouth.

“Day after day, every priest stands and performs his religious duties, again and again, he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First, he says: “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.” Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.” Hebrews 10:11-18

Jesus completes God’s will and sets aside the first covenant and brings the second covenant, Hebrews 10:11, fulfilling Jeremiah’s prophecy, Jeremiah 31:31-34, which the writer of Hebrews quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12.

It is through the second covenant, the sacrifice of Jesus, that we have our sins removed and our consciences cleansed. This second covenant is what makes us holy, Hebrews 10:14. This sacrifice has been made once for all and takes care of sins, Hebrews 10:11.

By contrast, according to Hebrews 10:11, the priests served daily, offering repeatedly the same sacrifice which could never take away sins. Jesus offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.

Then He sat down at the right hand of God, Hebrews 10:12. A clear contrast is being made. The priests stand daily for service, but Jesus sits at the right hand of God.

When we look into the earthly tabernacle, one would notice that there were no chairs in it. Priests did not sit down; there was work to be accomplished while in the tabernacle. With Jesus, however, the work has been done; there is no more work left to do. Jesus has sat down at the right hand of God.

It is a place of honour and a place of power. What is Jesus doing sitting at the right hand of God? Jesus is waiting; He is waiting from that time until His enemies are put under His feet, Hebrews 10:13. Paul makes a similar point in 1 Corinthians 15:25-28.

There are enemies still against God. Everything has not yet been put into subjection under Him. This is why there is evil in the world, this is why there is suffering.

This is why the world is the way that it is. The enemies of God have not yet been brought into subjection. That day will come when every knee will bow, Philippians 2:9.

But that time is not now and has not arrived yet, but the work of Jesus is complete. So, according to Hebrews 10:14, by His single offering, Jesus has perfected for all time those who are being made holy. Therefore, the words of Jeremiah’s prophecy have been fulfilled, Hebrews 10:15-16 / Jeremiah 31:31.

Thomas, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hebrews 10:15.

‘We have the three-fold revelation of God in this passage, a very definite spiritual and practical exemplification of the Holy Trinity, in the WILL of God, Hebrews 10:9, the work of Christ, Hebrews 10:12, and the WITNESS of the Spirit, Hebrews 10:15.’

Forgiveness of sins has come, and there is no need for any offerings for sins, Hebrews 10:17-18 / Jeremiah 31:34.

Lenski, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Hebrews 10:18](#).

‘The remission of sins means, literally, ‘the sending away’ of sins. (This means) to send away the sins of a sinner as far as the east is from the west. [Psalms 103:12](#), as a cloud is blotted out and vanishes, [Isaiah 44:22](#), to the bottom of the sea, [Micah 7:19](#), thus blotting out the sins even from memory.’

A CALL TO PERSEVERE IN FAITH

“Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have the confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” [Hebrews 10:19-25](#)

Allow the words of [Hebrews 10:19](#) to sink in. We have the privilege of following Jesus, our trailblazer, into the heavenly tabernacle, into the presence of God. One of the most important things for us to see, the sacrifice of Jesus has opened the way to God, [Acts 20:28](#). Jesus is our High Priest, and He has torn the veil so that we can approach God.

Jesus is the ‘New and living way’, [Hebrews 10:20](#). Jesus is The Way, [John 14:6](#). [Isaiah 35:8](#) speaks about the way of holiness. The word way is the Greek word ‘hodos’, which means the road.

Confidence, boldness in the new and living way. Jesus says He is The Way, [John 14:6](#); He is not showing the way because He is The Way. Jesus is our great high priest, [Hebrews 10:21](#) / [1 Timothy 3:15](#).

Under the old covenant, the people themselves would sacrifice the animal and then the high priest would take the blood in a small vessel to the Holy of Holies, on the way to the Holy of Holies the blood would be sprinkled or spilt on the way and leave a stain, showing the road the priest had taken.

Three times on the same day, he would make sacrifices for the following.

1. His own sins.
2. Sins for the priesthood.
3. Sins for the people.

Jesus’ blood has created the way.

1. Let us draw near, [Hebrews 10:22](#).

Come to God with a sincere heart, [Matthew 5:8](#). Come to God desiring Him, [Proverbs 4:23](#). As we come into the presence of God, we are called upon to act faithfully.

It took all of that work and foundational teaching by the writer of Hebrews so that we could understand this important teaching. Now we have our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, [1 Peter 3:21](#).

The Law of Moses could not do this. Our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean. We enter the covenant of Christ and have our consciences cleansed when our bodies are washed in water and baptism.

This fits Peter’s teaching all the more, [1 Peter 3:21](#). We are getting our guilty consciences cleansed through the sacrifice of Jesus, [Acts 22:16](#) / [Ephesians 5:26](#) / [Titus 3:5](#).

2. Let us hold fast, [Hebrews 10:23](#).

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep His promise. This has been the theme of the sermon. Do not give up. Do not fall back. Do not waver. Do not quit. Do not neglect the salvation that you have received.

3. Let us consider, [Hebrews 10:24](#).

Finally, we need to think about how we can stir up one another to love and good work. We need to think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.

How much time do we spend thinking about ways to motivate each other to do good things? It ought to be something that we actively consider for one another. One of the ways we do this is by taking advantage of every opportunity to meet together so that we can encourage one another, [Hebrews 3:6](#) / [Hebrews 3:13](#).

Note, the Day is not Judgment Day but each Lord's Day Sunday. When it comes to any passage of Scripture, it's all too easy to come to it with our minds already made up and make it mean what we want it to mean.

It's all too easy to read too much into a text and come to a conclusion that the writer didn't have in mind in the first place. It doesn't surprise me that so many writers offer the range of explanations that they do, concerning the 'Day' mentioned in [Hebrews 10:25](#).

WHAT IS THE 'DAY'?

I want to say from the beginning that this study isn't focusing on whether Christians should meet together for worship on the first day of the week, Sunday, [Acts 2:42](#) / [Acts 20:7](#) / [1 Corinthians 16:2](#) / [Revelation 1:10](#). It isn't designed to put Christians on some kind of 'guilt trip' either, it isn't focused on encouraging better attendance during worship.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE LETTER

The Hebrew letter was written about thirty years after the establishment of the church, and the amazing days which followed 'Pentecost' were just a memory, and very little had changed religiously.

The old Mosaic religion was still very much alive, the temple and the priesthood were still active, and there had been no mass conversion of Israel. Not surprisingly, Jewish Christians had begun to fear that they had made a terrible mistake and were in danger of apostasy. That is the historic reality, and the letter both encourages them to be faithful and warns them of the fearful consequences of turning back to Judaism.

As mentioned above, the writer tells us to do what five things?

1. Draw near to God, [Hebrews 10:22](#).
2. Hold unswervingly to the hope, [Hebrews 10:23](#).
3. Consider how to spur one another on, [Hebrews 10:24](#).
4. Do not give up meeting together, [Hebrews 10:25](#).
5. Encourage one another daily, [Hebrews 10:25](#).

Let's go ahead and focus on [Hebrews 10:25](#) for a moment. Needless to say, all manner of explanations have been offered concerning what 'Day' is being referred to in this passage.

Because we know that Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed a few years later, in A.D. 70, I'm not surprised that Millennialists of all shades want to see the 'Second Coming' and the 'End of the World', in this passage.

One of the early English commentators, Matthew Poole, covered himself completely by offering a whole range of 'possibilities', ranging from the destruction of the temple to the End of the World, and, of course, it has also been explained as relating to the Roman attack on the city in that year.

But, if you didn't know about that event, you couldn't possibly find it in this chapter! It's a case of finding an event which fits the passage! What 'Day' is 'the Day which is approaching'? I want to share with you three popular ideas and theories concerning this 'Day'.

Firstly, we'll look at the Judgment Day theory, secondly, we'll look at the destruction of Jerusalem theory, and finally, we'll look at the Lord's Day theory.

THE END OF THE WORLD

Those who believe that the 'Day' is referring to 'the end of the world' are basically interpreting this passage as follows.

'As you see the end of the world getting nearer and nearer, it is even more critical to assemble to exhort, or exhort to assemble.'

There are a couple of problems with this interpretation because the writer is speaking about a certain day that the Jewish Christians in the first century could see coming, but there was another day coming, the end of the world, which they couldn't see coming.

Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, that the judgment wouldn't come 'UNTIL the rebellion occurs' and 'the man of lawlessness is revealed' first. We also know that no one knows WHEN the Lord will return, Matthew 24:43-44 / Mark 13:32 / 1 Thessalonians 5:2 / 2 Peter 3:10.

In other words, because there are no signs given and will be no signs given to indicate the end of the world is approaching, Hebrews 10:25 can't be speaking about the end of the world. To make the 'Day' mean Judgment Day is reading into the text something which isn't there or implied.

THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

Then there are those who believe that the 'Day' is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70. There's no doubt that hundreds of thousands of Jews lost their lives during the siege, but there were some who listened to Jesus' earlier warnings concerning this event.

In Matthew 24:1-36, He warned them about the temple and Jerusalem being destroyed, and He told them to watch for the signs, Matthew 24:21. As we noted earlier, the Book of Hebrews was written to Jews and out of all the nations of the earth, they would have been affected by this destruction more than anyone else.

These Jewish Christians were already being persecuted and harassed by unbelieving Jews. As Jerusalem's destruction got closer and closer, the persecution would have increased, Matthew 24:9-10.

We can only imagine how much pressure these Jewish Christians would have been under, and we can easily imagine them questioning their faith in the Lord. No wonder some wanted to abandon Christ and go back to Judaism.

As these Jewish Christians saw Jerusalem's destruction getting closer and closer, and the persecution they were receiving was getting worse, the writer is basically telling them this is all the more reason they need to attend the assembly of the church; this is where they will receive encouragement to stay faithful and not fall back into Judaism.

There's a strong possibility that this interpretation of the 'Day' found in [Hebrews 10:25](#) is correct, as it appears to fit in with the overall theme of Hebrews. However, there's one more theory which I think is worthwhile considering.

THE LORD'S DAY

The first thing we must understand is that there's a difference between 'The Lord's Day' and 'The Day of the Lord'. Just before John received his vision concerning Christ, he writes, 'On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit,' [Revelation 1:10](#).

Many people make the mistake of thinking that the words used by John, 'The Lord's Day,' have the same meaning and are a reference to 'The Day of the Lord.' In [Isaiah 13:6](#) / [Isaiah 13:9](#) / [2 Thessalonians 2:2](#), for example, it's used to speak about an upcoming judgement.

The actual words, 'Lord's Day' is 'Kyriako hemera' in Greek is found nowhere else in the New Testament, though similar phrases such as 'Lord's Table', 'Lord's Cup' and 'Lord's Supper' are used, [1 Corinthians 10:21](#) / [1 Corinthians 11:20](#).

The adjective form in [Revelation 1:10](#), signifies 'pertaining to, belonging to' the Lord. The term 'Lord' signifies 'ownership.' Again, this confirms that the [Hebrews 10:25](#) passage cannot be referring to the end of the world. As I mentioned earlier, to find the meaning of the verse, we must find an event which fits the passage!

1. The 'Day' is mentioned in terms that imply that it was something about which they knew and anticipated, and for which they should be prepared.

Just look at what the verse actually says, because the words are very interesting. I think that if the writer had had the final Judgment in mind, he would have said something about its importance. And, although he says, 'as you see the Day approaching', they certainly saw NO signs of the approach of the Return of Christ or the End of the World.

2. The word he uses for 'assembling' is very significant.

It is the word 'episunagoge,' and you see the word 'synagogue' in it. The writer is careful to distinguish between Jewish Worship and Christian Worship by using 'episunagoge', alluding to the day set aside for the assembly for worship, which the believers to whom the letter was sent were neglecting because of their depressed state of mind.

We can find the noun form of the word only once more, in [2 Thessalonians 2:1](#), but the verb form, 'to assemble', occurs at least half a dozen times in the Gospels, [Matthew 24:31](#) / [Mark 13:27](#) / [Luke 13:34](#), places where it is translated 'gathered together'.

Ignatius, one of the so-called 'early church fathers', wrote that by the 'assembling of yourselves together the powers of Satan are overthrown, and his mischief neutralised by your like-mindedness in the Faith!'

CONCLUSION

I suggest that the bottom line is, regardless of whether the verse relates to the end of the world, the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, or the Lord's Day, believers should be encouraged, in all circumstances, not to neglect the regular assembling of themselves together for Worship. About the Lord's return and the end of the world, we can do nothing about it, but we CAN do something about our attendance for worship on the Lord's Day.

“If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left.”
Hebrews 10:26

This begins the section of warning, which is similar to what he taught back in Hebrews 6:4-6. The writer of Hebrews is not saying that if you commit one sin, you have fallen from grace, are completely out of God's favour, and are eternally lost.

So what are we talking about? Most of the translations help us understand by using the word “deliberately.” He is issuing a warning to those who deliberately keep on choosing to sin in their lives. As the NRSV reads, “they choose to persist in sin”. If we make that choice to keep on sinning after receiving the knowledge about what Jesus has done for us, here are the consequences.

“But only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.” Hebrews 10:27

We must not think that we have the atoning blood of Jesus operating on our behalf when we stop seeking after God but choose to turn to sin. A sacrifice for sins no longer remains when we wilfully persist in sin. The Book of Hebrews has been all about the good news about Jesus, who has made purification for sins and sat down at the right hand of God.

We have been told about the superior sacrifice for sins that Jesus offered through His body. Rather than expecting the perfect sacrifice for sins, we can expect something else, judgment. But this is not good judgment. This is the fearful expectation of judgment.

The HCSB and NASB read a “terrifying expectation of judgment.” The penalty for our sins is no longer paid by Jesus but is paid by us. In this judgment, we can expect a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. The phrase “fury of fire” is probably the best way to understand this text.

The Greek word translated into English as “fury” is a word that is commonly translated as “zeal” throughout the New Testament. The fury, wrath, and zeal of God are going to be poured out against us. When that happens, the adversaries of God are consumed.

Now the writer of Hebrews knows that we are not fully comprehending how severe this judgment is against us. The writer knows that this information is not enough to sink into our hearts so as to change our ways, so he amplifies this picture.

“Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?”
Hebrews 10:28-29

The writer of Hebrews asks a question. What happens when a person under the Law of Moses set aside the law? What happened to those who rejected the Law of Moses and refused to obey?

The person died without mercy. There was no mercy to be obtained, there was no pardon. There was no forgiveness, there was no sacrifice for sins. The law demanded that the person who rejected the law was to be put to death, Numbers 15:32-36.

Now, notice [Hebrews 10:29](#). There is a worse punishment to be executed now. This is an argument from the lesser to the greater. If a person died without mercy for rejecting the Law of Moses, how much worse do you think it will be if we set aside the law of Christ? Of course, it will be far worse.

I would like us to notice how God perceives our choosing to persist in sin. It is described as trampling the Son of God, or some translations “spurning the Son of God”, regarding the blood of the covenant that makes us holy as common and unholy, and has outraged and insulted the Spirit of grace. We need to see the severity of what we are doing.

Why would we think that there remains any relationship with God? We have rejected God’s law, and God sees this as trampling the Son of God, treating the blood of the covenant as unholy and common, and saying that the words of grace given by the Holy Spirit are nothing.

“For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge, I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” [Hebrews 10:30-31](#)

Therefore, God’s punishment toward someone who makes such a decision to turn away from God is certain. These quotations come from [Deuteronomy 32:35-36](#), and are also recorded by the apostle Paul in [Romans 12:19](#).

Moses said those words in his song just before his death as a reminder to the people concerning their obedience to the law. I think we carry the thought of this text through.

Since “Vengeance is mine; I will repay”, [Deuteronomy 32:35](#), and “The Lord will judge his people”, [Deuteronomy 32:35](#) / [Psalm 135:14](#), are statements about disobedience under the law of Moses, then this is certainly true, and more so, for the law of Christ.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, [Hebrews 10:31](#) / [Hebrews 3:12](#) / [Hebrews 9:14](#) / [Hebrews 12:22](#). We ought to be terrified at the thought of rejecting God by continuing to persist in sin.

“Remember those earlier days after you had received the light when you endured a great conflict full of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. So do not throw away your confidence, it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For, “In just a little while, he who is coming will come and will not delay.” And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.” [Hebrews 10:32-39](#)

The writer of Hebrews wraps up his warning by reminding his readers about how they endured in their past and their need to continue to endure. The writer reminds them of all they endured after they had come to the knowledge of the truth.

They endured a hard struggle with suffering, [Hebrews 10:32](#). Sometimes they were exposed to public mocking and afflictions, [Hebrews 10:33](#). They were even willing to stand side by side with those who endured such hostility, [Hebrews 10:33](#).

They showed compassion for those who were imprisoned, [Hebrews 10:34](#). They accepted the robbery of their property, [Hebrews 10:34](#). In the face of all of these problems and suffering, they were able to endure because they knew they had a better possession and everlasting possession, [Hebrews 10:34](#) / [Matthew 5:12](#).

When we know that we have a better and lasting possession, we are not paralysed by loss. We will not break, and we won’t throw away our faith when we lose something. But notice, it is not that these Christians were not just paralysed, they rejoiced at their loss, [Hebrews 10:34](#).

The possession we have is so much better and so long-lasting that if we have things and lose them, it is okay. Our reward is so great that we can endure anything!

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward, [Hebrews 10:35](#). Look at what you have already endured! Do not give up now! Don't throw away the confidence that you have, which got you through previously, now that difficult times have returned.

We need endurance, we need to build our faith and make ourselves spiritually strong in the Lord because we will endure life's difficulties. Keep doing the will of God during these times of suffering because when you have done God's will, you will receive the promised reward.

The writer takes two texts and quotes them together, [Hebrews 10:36-38](#). The first part of the quotation comes from [Isaiah 26:20](#), while the majority of the quotation comes from [Habakkuk 2:3-4](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Hebrews 10:37](#).

'The blessed Saviour will surely return. If it shall seem to people that Christ's return is delayed, let them remember that the final day, the consummation of all things, the judgment and overthrow of the wicked, all these are every moment nearer than ever before.'

The righteous live by faith, [Hebrews 10:38](#). We are not putting our trust and confidence in the things of this world. Our faith is not supposed to be found in the physical, material things.

If it is, then when we suffer tragedy and loss, we will shrink back and give up. However, God has no pleasure in those who give up. Notice that [Hebrews 10:39](#) emphasises that very point.

We are not those who shrink back and are destroyed, [Hebrews 6:9-10](#). We will not be those people who make the mistake of giving up on God. We will not be the ones who reject the law of God. We will not be the people who lose heart and lose their faith. We are those who have faith, and we will preserve ourselves through that faith.

There are only two possibilities for us. Either we will shrink back under the weight of life's difficulties and be destroyed, or we will have endurance, place our faith in God, and preserve ourselves before the fury of fire.

Don't turn to the things of the world for your comfort. Do not turn away from God. Do not listen to the lies of Satan. Life in God is better than possessions, better than sex, and better than power.

Jesus did not have possessions, did not have sex, and did not use the power of divinity that was within Him. His life fulfilment was in the kingdom of God. We are in a world that thinks that we cannot do without these things. Yet true satisfaction comes from God, not from physical, temporary things.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

The writer of Hebrews concluded [Hebrews 10](#) by reminding his audience that the righteous live by faith, not by what is seen. Further, those who give up and shrink back will be destroyed by God. But those who have endurance and keep their faith will preserve their souls. The writer states with confidence that we are those who have faith.

In Hebrews 11, the writer is going to tell us what faith looks like. It is fascinating to see how many misconceptions of faith exist, considering that Hebrews 11 gives a great explanation of faith and what faith looks like. Some think of faith as having any sort of spirituality.

We hear language today that there are many faiths, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, etc. Some understand faith as having the belief that something good is going to happen to them. Some think of faith as something that is blind, that is, taking a blind leap against known facts. But none of these is descriptions of Biblical faith.

This chapter has been described in various ways, perhaps the most familiar is “The Roll call of Faith,” but I think that a more accurate description would be that used by Bishop Westcott, “The past triumphs of faith”

There is no question that this is one of the most powerful chapters in the entire New Testament. Certainly, it is one of the best known and most popular, and the highlight of this letter, and if, as I suggested at the beginning of these studies, this letter had circulated as a sermon, this chapter must have been the climax to it.

If you look at the last verse, Hebrews 10:39, you will see how this chapter on the heroes of faith is led in. He speaks of “those who have faith and keep their souls”. And it is obvious that he is telling his readers that if they do not keep their faith, they are in danger of losing their souls.

But there is a deeper reason for this chapter than that. Remember the problem with which these former Jews were struggling. We have seen that he has shown the superiority of Christ and the new covenant faith over the Old Law, showing that Christ is superior to previous messengers, the angels, Moses, Joshua, Abraham and Aaron.

It now appears that only one objection remains. Imagine his readers saying, “Very well, all that you say may be true. But what about the Fathers, the Patriarchs? Surely, they belong to the old religion?”

And in turning our backs on Judaism and the Old Law, we have turned our backs on them. We have cut ourselves off from them. We have lost our historic heritage! Surely they are on the other side!”

And the writer’s reply, as revealed in this chapter, is quite simple. He says, “No! That is where you are mistaken, the great men and women of the past do not belong to the Old Law.

They belong to faith, your faith. They belong to the new covenant, because, even though they lived under the old, they looked forward to the new. They were men and women who lived by faith, and therefore they are yours!” This is probably the climax of the letter to the Hebrews, revealing how, in every age, men and women have triumphed through the exercise of faith.

Notice again how the passage is introduced, by the last verse of Hebrews 10, Hebrews 10:39, where the writer refers to ‘those who have faith and keep their souls’.

The word ‘faith’, which appears twenty-four times in the passage, is *pistis*, belief. *Pisteuo* means ‘to have faith,’ to believe together; these words appear two hundred and forty-four times in the New Testament.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER

1. We have a general statement on the nature and character of faith.
2. A statement on the importance of faith, in relation to creation.
3. Examples of faith throughout the ages, demonstrated in the lives of men and women of God.
4. Up to the flood, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Hebrews 11:4-7.

5. After the flood and in the land of Canaan, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Sarah is also mentioned here, [Hebrews 11:8-20](#).

6. From Egypt to the conquest of Canaan. Including Joseph and Moses.

His parents, Joshua, by implication. Rahab, [Hebrews 11:21-31](#).

7. In the land of Canaan.

During the Judge's period in the kingdom. Gideon, Samson, Barak, Jephthah, Samuel, David and all the prophets, [Hebrews 11:32-37](#).

8. The inter-Testamental period.

The final struggle of the period of the Maccabees. The unnamed Eleazar, whose mother and seven brothers were tortured and killed rather than deny their faith in God, [Hebrews 11:38](#).

It is important to recognise that this is not a random choice of personalities, but is a logical, systematic, chronological progression through history, revealing how faith acts.

For this reason, there are some dramatic omissions! Where are Adam and Eve? Aaron and Miriam? Solomon? The principle which is illustrated is that a man's behaviour is determined and directed by what he believes, [James 2:18](#).

FAITH IN ACTION

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for.” Hebrews 11:1-2

Faith is the basis, the substructure, of the whole Christian life. Faith is the basis for everything on which we have hope in this life. Faith involves confident action in response to what God has made known, [Genesis 1:1](#). Faith does look upward, away from the things of this world, toward the unseen things above.

We sing songs like ‘My faith looks up to Thee’ and many other songs that remind us and encourage us to keep our eyes on our unseen reward. Our faith also looks forward in time to when Christ comes, [Hebrews 10:38](#).

Faith is about having confidence that the promises that have been given by God and things that we cannot see will actually happen. We cannot forget that it is by faith that people are approved by God.

What exactly did these people do who are praised in this chapter? They put their undivided confidence in God. Despite their trials and difficult circumstances, they triumphed because of their trust in God.

What we are seeing as we read about their heroes of faith is people who are clinging to the promises of God, depending on God's word, and remaining faithful to God in their actions. Everything depends on faith, [Hebrews 11:1](#). This statement is not a ‘definition’ of faith; it points to the nature or character of faith.

a. It is the assurance of things hoped for.

The word ‘hupostasis’ means ‘that which stands under’. We get our word ‘substance’ from this: ‘sub-stansis’. Furthermore, the word ‘hupostasis,’ assurance, was also used to describe a collection of documents, or title deeds, deposited for safe-keeping, as proof of one's claim to a property.

And, notice that the word ‘things’ is the word ‘pragma’ in Greek, which means ‘a thing-done.’ So, faith is the title deed to everything hoped for. It is your assurance, your guarantee, your proof.

Faith is the conviction, evidence of things not seen. The word ‘elezchos’ means ‘a proof, that by means of which a thing is tested.’ In other words, faith is the means whereby we become convinced and convicted of things which are unseen.

1. Faith is the basis of conviction, the foundation of all our hopes for the future.
2. Faith gives foundation, direction, power and meaning to life.
3. Faith and belief are synonymous, Hebrews 11:6.
4. Faith is produced by evidence, Romans 10:17 / John 17:20 / 1 Thessalonians 5:21.
 - a. Our faith can be no greater than our trust in the Word of God.

Those who do not trust God’s Word do not believe or trust Christ.

- b. God does not give faith without effort on man’s part.

5. The “ancients” are men of old, those who lived in past ages, the fathers of Israel, those of whom he is about to speak.

They were men who trusted in God; they believed in His Word. The word ‘presbuteros’ is the word for elders; they received God’s approval because they exercised faith. Because they bore witness to Him, He bore witness to them. The word ‘martureo’, used here, means ‘to bear witness’.

This is what the writer now sets out to demonstrate: that these Old Testament worthies were approved by God because they acted on the principle of faith. That picture of faith is really seen in the example provided in Hebrews 11:3.

“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.” Hebrews 11:3

The beginning point is quite simple, yet powerful. The universe and everything created were brought into existence by things that cannot be seen, Colossians 1:16.

The words of God, as He commanded the universe into existence, cannot be seen. Yet those unseen words brought the visible worlds. I believe this stands as what has been called today the watchmaker argument.

We have not seen the person who made our watch, made our car, or made any other object or possession. Yet although we have not seen the one who made our watch, we know someone made it.

Random chance and long periods of time do not create useful, powerful objects. So also it is with the universe. The visible world was created by the invisible God through His invisible command.

First, however, he declares that it is by faith that we understand that the world was created. How can you prove it? This cannot be either proved or disproved by the Empiric method. i.e., it is not an experiment that can be repeated! In the final analysis, it is a matter of faith. The word for ‘understand’ is the word ‘noeo’, and it means ‘to perceive by reflective intelligence’.

The word ‘world’ is the word ‘aion’ in Greek and it means both ‘created things’ and ‘ages or periods of time’. The word ‘created’ in Greek is ‘katartizo’, and it means ‘filled out’ or ‘arranged’. In other words, God did not merely create all matter, but He arranged it in an orderly manner so that it became fit for the purpose He had in mind.

And all this was done by ‘the word of God’. The word ‘rhema’ means ‘the spoken word’. This is not a reference to the activity of Christ, as the Incarnate Word, John 1:1 / Psalm 33:6-9.

1. By faith we understand that the world was created by the Word of God, Psalm 33:6 / Romans 1:20.

2. It is because of faith and by means of faith that a true understanding of the created order is gained.

THE FAITH OF ABEL

“By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith, he was commended as righteous when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead.” Hebrews 11:4

Up to the flood, Hebrews 11:4-7.

Abel is chosen as the first example of faith acting because he was concerned with getting right with God, and keeping right! Through his faith, he was ‘approved as righteous’.

His faith was demonstrated in that he offered a sacrifice that was ‘more acceptable,’ better than that of his brother Cain. How did Abel know about sacrifice? And why was his sacrifice ‘more acceptable’? “Faith comes by hearing the word of God,” Romans 10:17.

God must have told these men what He required, Genesis 4:7. Abel’s sacrifice was accepted, not because of its quantity, but because of its quality. It involved the shedding of blood. It cost a life, and his act of faith is ‘still speaks, even though he is dead’.

What does Abel still say to us today? Well, he says three things.

1. Abel still speaks of the necessity of faith.

The very first name mentioned in this chapter as an example of faith is Abel. Remember the writer says, ‘without faith it is impossible to please God,’ Hebrews 1:6. And the very first person that showed us that principle was Abel. By faith, Abel offered a better sacrifice to God than Cain did.

One thing that the story tells us is that not only is man called to work, but from the very beginning, he’s been called to worship. So, in Genesis 4, we see men coming to God to worship him.

Now we need to ask the question, why was Cain’s offering of labour not pleasing to God? They both brought to God the best of what they did all day. In the Old Testament, grain offerings were often given to the Lord, and he was pleased with them.

But why wasn’t he pleased with the grain offering of Cain? Obviously, the story leaves a lot out. But I think the text implies that God had given specific instructions concerning proper sacrifice.

Notice, for example, there appears to be a proper time because the text says, ‘in the course of time’, which literally says, ‘at the ends of days they came to the Lord’, Genesis 4:3. In other words, there was a ‘prescribed time’.

Apparently, there was also a ‘prescribed place’, it says, ‘they brought their offerings to the Lord,’ Genesis 4:3. Where was that? My suspicion is that it was at the place where the cherubim were, because in the Old Testament, often the cherubim guard the presence of God, but that is just speculation.

But there was apparently a prescribed time at the end of days. There was a prescribed place, to the Lord. And evidently, there was also a ‘prescribed way’. Because notice God said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? If you do what’s right, won’t you be accepted?’ Genesis 4:6. God could only say that if Cain knew what was right to do.

What does the Bible say about faith? ‘Faith comes through hearing.’ Romans 10:17. You can’t act in faith until you’re given a revelation from God for you to act on. So evidently God had given them instructions about a time and a place and a way to bring him offerings.

And evidently, God had instructed these first worshippers that the only acceptable offering for sin had to involve death. I suspect that he gave that revelation, remember when he made coats of skin for Adam and Eve, [Genesis 3:21](#). But somehow God had communicated a revelation that an offering of atonement must involve death. Yes, the Bible does talk about grain offerings, but never for atonement. Any offering in the Bible for atonement always involved blood, [Leviticus 17:11](#) / [Hebrews 9:22](#).

Now think about this, is that why possibly Abel was a keeper of flocks, [Genesis 4:2](#), because he wanted to act in faith to the Lord's command?. You might say, well, why wouldn't he keep flocks?

Remember, at this point, man is still a vegetarian. Why would he keep flocks if he's not going to eat meat? I guess the wool would be useful for clothing, but evidently, it was important to Abel to always make sure there was always a lamb ready for sacrifice to God.

When it comes to approaching God, all men have to choose either the way of Cain or the way of Abel. Abel offered God faith, and Cain offered God fruit. Remember that.

Because those exact two choices are still the same two choices that men make today. Most men go the way of Cain, and they offer God the fruit of their hands. It could be their labour. It could be their morality. It could be their religion. It could be their knowledge.

Whatever it is, I'm going to offer God the fruit of my hands. But the Bible says in the very beginning, 'God is not pleased with an offering of fruit for atonement.' The only thing that can make atonement is blood.

Men want to go the way of Cain and come to God and say, 'The way of faith is just too cheap, I'm going to impress God with something with my hands and give it to him, and we'll make a trade. God, if you forgive me, I give you something I made with my hands.'

The way of faith is not cheap; it's a free gift, but it is not cheap. It cost God the blood of his holy and sinless son to make atonement for sin, [Philippians 3:9](#). Abel still says. He still declares it is impossible to please God without faith. 2. Abel still speaks of the hostility against righteousness.

Originally, Cain was angry at God, so why did he turn his anger at God onto his brother? [Genesis 4:8](#). Worldly people cannot stand to be reminded that their lives are not lined up with the will of God. Abel is telling us that devoted people should expect hostility from an ungodly world, [1 John 3:11](#).

Abel was hated because his life was a public rebuke to the way of Cain. In [Luke 11:51](#), we find that when Jesus was talking to the Pharisees, Jesus says, 'you know, you guys, you kill prophets and then your kids make monuments to them', he says, 'you've been doing that ever since the days of Abel.'

So, Jesus says Abel was a prophet, so perhaps not only did Abel's own righteous life rebuke Cain, but perhaps Abel even preached to Cain. Perhaps Abel tries to say to his brother, 'Brother Cain, you need to listen to God, you should not go your own way, you should not rebel against God, you need to do what God says, and you need to honour God.'

Jesus knew something; He knew that the murder of Abel was really the work of the serpent, [John 8:44](#). Jesus knew who was behind the murder of Abel. Jesus knew the offspring of the serpent would always be at enmity with the offspring of the woman. You can just count on that; there are not going to be any peace talks, [2 Timothy 3:12](#).

There is only one way we can avoid hostility from the world, and that's to compromise and look so much like the world that they can't recognise their own actions as evil as they are. That's the only way.

In other words, there is going to be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman as long as this world turns. It is going to be with us until Jesus comes back.

If you accept a standard that is different from the world. There are going to be clashes. If you pursue loyalties that are above earthly loyalties, you're going to be opposed.

When God said, 'from this woman's seed there's going to be a head crusher', [Genesis 3:15](#), Satan made up his mind that he was going to attack every godly seed that came from this woman. He did to Abel, he did to every prophet who came after Abel, and he's still doing it today.

Don't deceive yourselves that someday there is going to be great harmony and there is going to be great peace between the people of God and the people of the world. There is never going to be peace. Because Satan doesn't want peace.

What I'm saying is that you need to feel good that you are on the serpent's enemy list, and when he comes after you, and he attacks you, and he sends the Cains of this world to attack and oppress and confront and ridicule you, you need to feel good that you are on the serpent's enemy list. Because this thing is going to keep going until the world stops. And that's what Abel is trying to say.

1. 'You've got to focus on faith.'
2. 'The hostility between Cain and me is going to last until Jesus comes back'.
3. 'Abel still speaks of the certainty of judgement.'

Evidently, Cain thought that nobody would notice his crime. 'I'll take him out into the field, we'll be all by ourselves, I'll kill my brother, who's going to know?' And so, God comes to him and says, 'Cain, where is your brother?' [Genesis 4:9](#).

And this arrogant fool thinks he can even fool God. 'I don't know, I don't make it my job to keep up with my brother', [Genesis 4:9](#). And God says, 'What have you done? Listen!' [Genesis 4:10](#).

I'm sure there was a pause, and Cain turned his head. He hears the sound of the birds in the trees, the sound of the breeze against the grain. 'What? what?' Then God said, 'your brother's blood cries up to me from the ground', [Genesis 4:10](#), and for the first time God curses a man.

And Cain, he is so hardened in sin at this point, that he doesn't respond with remorse, he doesn't fall down on his face and repent. He responds with reproach, he says, 'You can't do that, that's too much, I can't bear what you've done,' [Genesis 4:13](#). Basically, he's saying, 'God, you don't have the right to assign that kind of judgment.'

Let me tell you something about the serpent's seed: they are always blasting God for his right to assign judgment. Have you ever heard this question? How can a loving God send people to hell?

The serpent has been getting Canaanites to ask that question since the beginning of creation. That is not the question the Bible asks. The Bible says upfront that a Holy God has the right to assign judgment.

Here is the question of the Bible. How can a Holy God let people into heaven? How can a Holy God let people into heaven? And that is the question the Bible answers.

Now, the amazing thing to me is that God put a mark on Cain to say to the rest of the world, 'even this evil man's blood is my property, so don't touch it,' [Genesis 4:15](#).

But God also sent out another word. He put the world on alert that God hears the cries of the Abels who have been treated unjustly, and he will take up their cause. One of the things that burdens us as believers is that we see a world where there is little justice, and we get upset with God.

Why do innocent babies get shot when there is a war? Who's going to speak for all the infants that were torn out of wombs by abortionists? What about all the women who have been raped, and the people who did it were never caught? All the millions and millions of kids who have been abused and violated, and nothing ever happened?

The list just goes on and on and on and on and on. And sometimes it gets so big that people even start to doubt God. And they see this world that is so full of unjudged evil, they start to think nobody is in control.

This story tells us that judgement is certain. God has heard the cry of every innocent drop of blood that's ever been spilt, and He will deal with it in His time, [Revelation 6:9-11](#).

That's probably not the answer you want to hear to that question. God, how long are you going to wait before you avenge the blood of all the righteous people on earth? And the answer is, 'I'll take care of it, but not yet,'

But you need to understand, nobody is going to escape the justice of God's court. God's justice system doesn't have any cracks, [Hebrews 9:27](#). A time is coming when all men will either be born again or wish they had never been born at all. The blood of Abel still cries for justice.

You might be thinking, wait a minute, I've made mistakes, I've gone the way of Cain in my life, what hope is there for me if all the people I've hurt are crying for justice? Well, Abel still speaks, but Abel doesn't have to have the last word.

Let me close by telling you that Jesus speaks, too, and Jesus speaks a better word than Abel. In [Hebrews 12:29](#), we are told 'how awesome God is, how God is a consuming fire, how God is a God that makes men tremble and quake.' But read what it says about us, [Hebrews 12:22-24](#).

Abel's blood cries out for judgement, but Jesus' blood cries out for mercy. Abel's blood sends the sinner away from God to wander, and Jesus' blood opens the way back to God, [Hebrews 10:19](#).

All men can't hear the blood of Abel, but God can, but there is something else that God can hear that men can't hear. God hears the blood of Jesus. And God hears every time the blood of Jesus speaks for a sinner, every time.

We need to pray for sinners who are still living the way of hostility; these people will face judgement. And if they do not have the blood of Jesus to speak for them, the blood of Abel will speak against them, and they will be lost.

1. Abel, [Hebrews 11:4](#) / [Genesis 4:3-7](#).

2. Abel's worship and sacrifice were made in faith.

It was more excellent, and God accepted it.

3. All who worship God must worship in faith.

4. Saving faith does not "set down and trust. It gets up and follows."

THE FAITH OF ENOCH

"By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: "He could not be found, because God had taken him away." For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God." Hebrews 11:5

Enoch was the father of Methuselah, who was the oldest living man, [Genesis 5:27](#). Notice that 'Enoch walked faithfully with God three hundred years', implying that he did what God wanted him to do for that length of time, [Jude 14-15](#). After three hundred and sixty-five years on earth, God took Enoch away.

Because of Enoch's faith, he was 'translated' the Greek word is 'metathemi', and when broken down, we see the word 'meta,' which means change, and the word 'tithemi,' which means place. 'To change from one place to another.'

The same word is used for the carrying of the bones of Jacob from Egypt to Canaan. Acts 7:16. So, because he lived by faith, Enoch was moved from one realm to another, from Earth to Heaven. How was his faith revealed?

1. He walked with God, Genesis 5:22.

He and God walked together.

2. He went in the same direction as God.

3. He kept pace with God and was consistent.

4. He trusted God, and therefore God trusted him and told him about the coming deluge.

5. He pleased God, Hebrews 11:6.

Enoch never died but was translated, transferred into an eternal fellowship with the Creator. He was received into eternal fellowship with God without being obligated to pass through the experience of death.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the Hebrew passage.

‘Here the apostle explains what God’s taking him means, by saying that he was translated that he should not see death; from which we learn that he did not die, and that God took him to a state of blessedness without obliging him to pass through death’.

MacKnight, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Enoch’s translation by faith is mentioned by the apostle, not to raise in believers an expectation of being translated into heaven, as he was, without dying, but to excite them to imitate his faith, in the assurance of being admitted into heaven in the body after the resurrection.’

1. Enoch, Hebrews 11:5 / Genesis 5:21-24.

2. Enoch walked with God, and because of this, he pleased God and did not die, 2 Corinthians 5:7.

3. Enoch was a prophet, Jude 14-15.

THIS IS A KEY TEACHING

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” Hebrews 11:6

Notice that it is not difficult to please God without faith. It is not challenging to please God without faith. There are very few statements in the Scriptures where we find the words that something is impossible.

We have been taught that there is nothing that is impossible with God. But here is a statement about what is impossible, and we need to listen to these words very carefully. It is impossible to please God without faith.

Without having our confidence in God, without relying on God’s promises, without depending upon God’s word, and without faithful actions toward God, we are not going to make it.

If our eyes are on the things of this world, we will definitely shrink back, and we will give up. We need to feel the force and the sting of the word “impossible.” We are not going to make it if we do not have our full faith in God.

I see that in my own life, and I am sure that you have seen it in your own lives also. Without a full and complete reliance upon God, difficult circumstances will cause us to shrink back and give up.

Notice that there are two things that we need to have full confidence in our lives.

1. Must believe that God exists.

I submit to you that this is not just merely the mental assent that one believes in God. Faith is being certain about things we cannot see, Hebrews 11:1. Do you have the faith that gives you the certainty that God exists?

Do you believe in the God you cannot see? Do you believe that He spoke the worlds into existence? It really does matter because if we do not, then we are going to shrink back and not be found pleasing to God.

2. Must believe that God rewards those who sincerely seek him.

This belief is just as important. For us not to shrink back, we really must have confidence that there is a reward coming from God if we choose to seek Him. We must know this. We must believe this.

These things tie to the endurance that we were told we needed to have in Hebrews 10:36. We must know that God exists and know that He cares. For God to reward me means that He cares and knows what is going on with me. That knowledge is what will pull us through difficult times.

THE FAITH OF NOAH

“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith, he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.” Hebrews 11:7

The faith demonstrated by Noah is seen in that he was ‘instructed by God’, the Greek word is ‘chrematistheis’. The same word is used in Acts 11:26, where disciples are ‘called by God’ Christians. The word ‘chrematistheis’ is used in classical Greek for ‘to make known by an oracle’.

Noah ‘took heed’, and here the word means ‘to act cautiously, to reverence’; in Greek, it is the word ‘eulabeomai’. He constructed an ark. He ‘equipped, fitted out the ark’, and in obeying God and acting on faith in this way, he ‘condemned the world.’

He condemned the world. His act of building, at God’s command, announced to the world that it was under condemnation, that God had pronounced a sentence on it.

The word ‘world’ is ‘kosmos’ in Greek, and refers to organised society. His faith not only saved his family, but through it, he also ‘became the heir (owner or possessor) of righteousness’.

Imagine the ridicule he bore whilst he was building! Imagine how eagerly his neighbours seized whatever he left behind when he entered the ark! And then see Noah becoming the only landowner in the world!

NOAH AND BAPTISM

From 1 Peter 3:18-20, some teach that Jesus proclaimed the message of salvation to the souls of sinners imprisoned there since the flood, but this is totally contradictory to Peter’s own words, 2 Peter 2:4-5 / 2 Peter 2:9.

Notice that the ‘spirits’ that Peter is talking about were ‘disobedient in the days of Noah’. To say that the Spirit of Christ went to release the souls of the righteous who repented before the flood is a misunderstanding because at the time of the flood, there were no righteous people around, only Noah and his family, Genesis 6:5-13 / Genesis 7:1.

Christ in His Spirit didn't go anywhere to save those who were righteous before the flood because there were none, just Noah and His family. Remember our Bibles are split into chapters and verses, and sometimes that is helpful, and other times it's not so helpful. To keep these verses in their context, we must go back to 1 Peter 2:18-24.

Peter reminded us that if suffering should come our way, then Christians should make sure they are suffering for the right reasons. In other words, if you're going to suffer, suffer for doing good, not for doing evil.

And then when we go to 1 Peter 3:13-22, where he returns to the theme of suffering again, and he informs us about three different suffering situations. In 1 Peter 3:13-14, he reminds us about the possible suffering of Christians, in 1 Peter 3:18, he reminds us of the suffering of Christ, and finally, in 1 Peter 3:20, he reminds us of the suffering of the disobedient souls before the flood.

What Peter is telling us is that those who rebelled against God in the days of Noah suffered at the hand of God for doing evil, but the end result wasn't a blessing but imprisonment after they had died.

Peter is telling us that Jesus suffered whilst He was alive, but He did it for the good, and the reason He did it for the good was that He did it for God. And what was the end result? Jesus was resurrected and enthroned at the right hand of God.

We need to choose what it will be. 1 Peter 3:14 gives us the choice to suffer for doing good, and the end result will be salvation beyond the grave; that's why Peter talks about being raised with Christ. That's why Peter talks about baptism being a commitment to obedience, 1 Peter 3:20-22.

But those who were baptised during Noah's time with the flood, figuratively speaking, were imprisoned beyond the grave because of their commitment to their disobedience.

What Peter is doing is comparing the two; he's saying back in Noah's day, those who didn't listen to God, their flood baptism resulted in death and imprisonment. But the Christian baptism results in life; it results in renewed life to God through the resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ.

He's saying if we're going to suffer Christian, even to the point of death, at least we didn't die at the hand of God like those who were around at Noah's time. Peter says that the spirits are those to whom Noah preached when Noah and they were very much alive, but by the time Peter writes this letter, those very same spirits are long gone, and they are now spirits who are in prison, 1 Peter 4:6.

They were dead whilst Peter wrote this letter, but they were very much alive whilst the Gospel was being preached to them. But didn't Jesus preach to these spirits when He was in the grave for three days? Peter is saying that the Spirit of Christ, in other words, the Holy Spirit, spoke through the prophets to the people when they were alive, 1 Peter 3:19.

And what he's saying here is that the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, spoke through Noah to the people when they were alive, 1 Peter 1:11-12. And also remember that Noah was a preacher of righteousness, 2 Peter 2:5.

He's not talking about what happened when Jesus was in the grave, and we shouldn't make a text mean something it doesn't say. Jesus spoke through the prophets of old for centuries, but only a few listened to Him. He spoke through Noah for one hundred and twenty years, but no one except his family listened to Him.

After talking about how the Spirit of Christ preached through Noah to those who were disobedient, Peter makes a statement that is as plain as the nose on our face concerning salvation.

When Peter uses the word 'baptism', he is using it in a way which we call an antitype, which basically means 'a thing formed after some pattern, that which corresponds to a type'.

You have two things that somehow relate or correspond to each other: one is a type, the other is the antitype. In other words, Peter says the waters of the flood are the 'type', and the waters of baptism are the 'antitype'.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The meaning here is, that baptism corresponded to, or had a resemblance to, the water by which Noah was saved; or that there was a use of water in the one case which corresponded in some respects to the water that was used in the other; to wit, in effecting salvation.’

1. Noah, Genesis 6-9.
2. Noah’s faith was a faith of action.
3. He took God at His Word.
4. Noah’s conduct condemned the unbelieving world.
5. Noah did all that God commanded.

His faith stood out in strong contrast to the unbelieving world.

6. Noah became righteous by building the ark.

THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith, he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.

And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.” Hebrews 11:8-12

5. After the flood and in the land of Canaan, Hebrews 11:8-20.

Lockyer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Abraham’s place in the Bible portrait gallery is altogether unique and unapproachable. He stands out as a landmark in the spiritual history of the world. Chosen of God to become the father of a new spiritual race, the file leader of a mighty host, the revelation of God found in him one of its most important epochs.’

Abraham’s faith was proved because ‘he went out (from Ur of the Chaldees) not knowing where he was to go’.

Notice, first, Hebrews 11:8. ‘When he was called’ means, ‘being called’, in Greek, is the word ‘kaloumenos’.

The significance is that his obedience was immediate. There was no hesitation, no questioning, even though he did not know, at the time, the destination to which he was being sent. Strictly speaking, the statement means that even whilst he was being called, Abraham was obeying and went out.

What is more, ‘not knowing where he was to go’ is powerful. The usual word for ‘know’ is ‘ginosko’ in Greek. But the Greek word here, ‘epistomenos’, means not merely that he did not know, but that he did not care where he was being sent. He did not even think about it!

The word means ‘to fix one’s thought on’. Faith trusts God and acts. And when he reached Canaan, he lived there as a pilgrim, a tent-dweller, recognising that it was but a temporary stay. ‘As in a foreign land’, because he knew that God had something better prepared for him. Hebrews 11:10 tells us that Abraham looked for a city built by God.

Some people today want something in which Abraham had absolutely no interest! He did not want a permanent home in Palestine! He saw, because he had faith, that the earthly Canaan was only a symbol of a heavenly home, and that is what he wanted.

THE FAITH OF SARAH

How was the faith of Sarah demonstrated? Notice the word ‘even’, [Hebrews 11:11](#), because it stresses the fact that, although she formerly laughed, more in amazement than disbelief by the way, she came to exercise sufficient faith in God’s promise that she was enabled to bear a son, through whom the promises of God were to be fulfilled.

1. [Hebrews 11:8](#).
2. The Book of Genesis remarks about the faith of Abraham.
3. Abraham was the classic example of faith to the Jew, [Nehemiah 9:7-8](#).
4. Abraham is called “the friend of God,” [2 Chronicles 20:7](#) / [Isaiah 41:8](#).
5. Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldees.

Ur was in Mesopotamia, [Genesis 11:27-31](#).

6. “He was called.”

The idea is that as soon as Abraham was called, he obeyed. He freed himself from his own country, family and friends. He stepped out on the call of God. He trusted God’s promise and went out “not knowing where he was going.” Abraham’s leaving, going into the unknown, displays the intensity of his faith.

1. [Hebrews 11:9](#).
2. Abraham’s faith led him to live like a stranger in a foreign land.

This is the type of faith that Christians should have, [1 Peter 1:17](#).

3. When Abraham died, his only possession in the land was the cave of Machpelah and the field around it, [Genesis 23:3-20](#) / [Genesis 25:7-10](#).
1. [Hebrews 11:10](#).
2. Abraham longed for a higher and heavenly home, the city of God, [Hebrews 12:22](#), which is to come, [Hebrews 13:14](#).
3. God is the designer and constructor of this heavenly city. It is a prepared place for those who are obedient to God.
4. Abraham understood better than many who live today that this earth offers no permanent residence.

1. [Hebrews 11:11](#).
2. One time, Sarah laughed to herself when she heard that she would give birth, [Genesis 18:9-15](#). Her laughter was of amazement because both she and Abraham were old.

3. Sarah’s faith won over her amazement. She considered God trustworthy.

1. [Hebrews 11:12](#).
2. Abraham and Sarah no longer had the ability to have children. [Romans 4:19](#).
3. God’s promise set aside these obstacles, and their descendants were like the stars in heaven and the sand by the sea, [Genesis 15:5](#) / [Genesis 22:17](#) / [Isaiah 51:2](#) / [Galatians 3:29](#).

“All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.” Hebrews 11:13-16

Hebrews 11:13-16 concludes with the statement, ‘These all died in faith not having received what was promised’, that is, they did not live to see, in the deepest sense of the word, the fulfilment of God’s promises.

This was because the plans which God had made were not intended to reach fruition in their time. But having told us this, the writer then declared that they were confident that God would keep His word, and ‘they saw them, and greeted them from afar,’ **Hebrews 11:13**.

This is an expression used to describe seamen, who can see on the horizon the shore of a country, on which they cannot land, and they ‘greet it from afar’. Literally, they are waving to it as they sail by!

Living a life of trust in God, they died in faith. They had not seen the fulfilment of God’s promises. Yet, they had seen God working out His promises through them. They were convinced that God could and would keep His promises, **John 8:56**.

In other words, when they were alive, they didn’t see heaven as we understand heaven today. The text doesn’t say they didn’t go to heaven, but while they were alive, they longed to go to heaven.

Even in their limited understanding of what heaven is, they wanted to be with God, **Hebrews 11:10**. All those mentioned in **Hebrews 11** were commended and approved on account of their confidence in God, **Hebrews 11:2**. So these men and women of faith accepted that they were pilgrims, strangers and exiles on this Earth. There is an anonymous letter from the 2nd Century A.D., known as the ‘Letter to Diognetus’, which beautifully expresses the faith of the early Christians.

It says, “They inhabit their own country, but as sojourners; they take part in all things as citizens, and endure all things as aliens; every country is theirs, and every country is foreign.” This expresses the real essence of Pilgrimage. Living by faith!

Hebrews 11:15 tells us that if these people had been thinking about the land they left. The phrase ‘had been thinking’ means, ‘if they had habitually remembered’. If the land from which they originally went out had been in their minds, they could have gone back. They could have returned to Mesopotamia. But now, that is, ‘as things stand’, because of their obedient, trustful faith.

1. “God is not ashamed to be called their God”, **Genesis 11:16**.

That expression is a striking one; the Greek word is ‘epikaleisthai’, and it means that God is not ashamed to have them add His Name to their own! For example, God says, “I am THE God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” “I am the God of Israel”. He is graciously pleased to say this and to have them say that He is their God. ‘The God of Abraham. The God of Jacob. The God of Isaac.’

2. He has prepared a city for them.

And they make it clear that they were seeking a ‘homeland,’ **Hebrews 11:14**. It is not back in Mesopotamia, where Abraham set out. It is not in Palestine, where they eventually arrived. In the Greek, ‘whose architect and builder is God’, **Hebrews 11:10**. And God has not changed! In every age, it is faith which He acknowledges and rewards.

Hebrews 11:13-16 are very important to understanding the nature of our faith. All died in faith, not receiving the things promised, acknowledging that they were merely strangers and exiles on earth.

Faith shows us that our attention is not here on the things of this world. Faith is understanding that we serve God, not for what we will receive right now. To serve God for what we can get now is simply idolatry.

We are turning God into our idol who needs to provide us with health and wealth. We will only bow if God makes us happy, and nothing less will be acceptable. This is not faith, but idolatry. Faith is about the unseen, not about receiving what can be seen right now.

This is why I love [Hebrews 11:13](#): these heroes of faith saw their promises from afar. How could they see the promises when faith is in the unseen, and when they did not receive the promises?

It is an awesome answer; these people were so certain in God's promises and that God would reward them that they could see the unseen. Though they did not receive the promises and did not have anything tangible, they were so certain in their faith that they could see what they were going to receive.

THIS WORLD WAS NOT THEIR HOME

[Hebrews 11:14](#) tells us that they were seeking their home. They were simply traversing through this life to go to a better country, [Hebrews 11:16](#). Carefully consider [Hebrews 11:15](#); if we are thinking about this world, we will go back to it.

If we are concerned about this life, we will shrink back, and we will cling to the things of this world. If our hearts are here, then we will stay here. We will place life's importance on the physical and material rather than on the better country that God has promised.

The heroes of faith desired a better country. True faith desires more than what is available here. Let us not forget that God made all of this. All of these things are His.

He is promising that there is something better and something greater. Do not trade in the better, heavenly country for the temporary, fleeting pleasures of this world.

Look at [Hebrews 11:16](#), because these are encouraging words also. Can you imagine God saying that He is willing to admit that we are His people and He is our God? What a glorious picture! Then the writer reminds us of what is waiting for us.

God has already prepared a city for us. The statement is in the past tense. The reward is there waiting for us. The reward is certain. Desire a better city, not the temporary pleasures of this world. This idea is continued throughout the rest of [Hebrews 11](#).

1. [Hebrews 11:13](#).
2. Living a life of trust in God, they died in faith.
3. They had not seen the fulfilment of God's promises.

Yet, they had seen God working out His promises through them. They were convinced that God could and would keep His promises, [John 8:56](#).

4. Because of their trust in God, they lived in a foreign land as strangers and pilgrims, [Genesis 23:4](#).
5. The idea is of a pilgrim, one who stays in a strange place, seeing his home city on the horizon, [Hebrews 13:14](#).
6. The things in this life have no enduring foundation.

1. [Hebrews 11:14](#).
2. The patriarchs understood that the land in which they lived was not their own, and they were headed for another land.
3. Essential elements for the search.

- a. Trusting, unwavering faith in God and His Word.
 - b. God-fearing obedience of faith from the heart produces prompt and full submission to the will of God, Revelation 22:14.
 - c. Those who search with a heart to trust and obey will find, Deuteronomy 4:29.
3. For what are you seeking and looking? Earthly fame, pleasures, wealth?
- a. One should be looking for the crown of life, 2 Timothy 4:6-8.
 - b. One's primary citizenship should be in heaven, Philippians 3:20-21 / Colossians 3:1-2.
 - c. Those who seek the wrong things have a day of reckoning approaching, 2 Peter 3:11-12.
1. Hebrews 11:15.
 2. There was nothing to stop them from returning to Ur, the place of their birth.
 3. None of them showed a desire to return.
 4. Abraham went to great pains to keep Isaac from returning to the homeland, Genesis 24:5-8.
1. Hebrews 11:16.
 2. While living on Earth, their desire and hope were in heaven.
 3. They were not ashamed of God, and He was not ashamed of them.

This God showed by identifying Himself as the "God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Exodus 3:15 / Matthew 22:32.

4. As evidence of the fact that God approved of them, He prepared for them a city, a heavenly city.

The patriarchs were so convinced that they were willing to suffer the loss of all earthly things to remain the people of God. This was the type of attitude Paul had in service to the Lord, Philippians 3:8.

"By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had embraced the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could even raise the dead, and so in a manner of speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death." Hebrews 11:17-19

1. Hebrews 11:17.
 2. Abraham was in the act of offering his son when God stopped him, Genesis 22:1-18.
- The idea is that, as far as Abraham was concerned, the offering was a completed action.
3. "Only begotten son," Hebrews 11:17 / Genesis 22:2.
 - a. Isaac was not Abraham's only begotten son, Genesis 17:23-27.
 - b. Isaac was the only begotten son of promise.

1. Hebrews 11:18.
2. The test was extremely demanding.

Abraham loved his son, and all his hopes of the promises of God were centred on Isaac.

3. Abraham trusted God and left all in His hands.
1. Hebrews 11:19.
 2. Abraham was not expecting such a command.
 3. He reasoned that God would keep His promises and raise Isaac from the dead.

4. We can see the faith of Abraham in what he said to the young men who accompanied him to the land of Moriah, Genesis 22:5.

5. Isaac was as good as dead.

When God stopped Abraham in mid-air, Abraham, in a figure, received his son back from the dead.

THE FAITH OF ISAAC

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.” Hebrews 11:20

1. Hebrews 11:20.

2. Genesis 27:1-40 / Genesis 28:1-5.

3. Isaac, thinking Jacob to be Esau, pronounced a blessing upon Jacob.

When Isaac learned that he blessed Jacob, he determined not to change the blessing and confirmed it, “Yes, and he shall be blessed.” Genesis 27:33. Isaac restates the blessing by giving Jacob the blessing of Abraham, Genesis 28:1-4.

4. A mark of true faith is a soul that yields to God.

Isaac perceived the hand of God at work. He did not murmur or rebel but yielded to the will of God.

THE FAITH OF JACOB

“By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons, and worshipped as he leaned on the top of his staff.” Hebrews 11:21

From Egypt to the conquest of Canaan, Hebrews 11:21-31.

1. Hebrews 11:21.

2. This verse relates to two incidents in Jacob’s life.

They are in inverted order.

3. In blessing the two sons of Joseph, Jacob blessed the younger, Ephraim, first, Genesis 48:14-20. This he did by faith.

4. Bowing in worship over the head of his staff refers to an earlier point in Jacob’s life, Genesis 47:29-31.

Jacob knew that he was near death, so he made Joseph promise to bury him in the land of his fathers and not in Egypt.

a. In Genesis 47:31, the text says that Jacob bowed his head upon the bed.

The LXX says that it was a staff. The same Hebrew word is used for both, with only the vowels changing. The consonants are MTH. The word bed is ‘mittah’, and the word staff is ‘matteh.’

b. Some believe that both readings are correct.

Jacob was leaning on the head of the bed and the staff. This is very possible and reasonable to believe. It was the custom of the ancients to put their staff at the head of the bed. They would also put the spear of a warrior at the head of their beds.

THE FAITH OF JOSEPH

“By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions concerning the burial of his bones.” Hebrews 11:22

1. Hebrews 11:22.
2. Genesis 50:24-25.
3. Before his death, Joseph saw the promise of God coming about in that the Israelites would leave Egypt.

He commanded that his bones be carried out of Egypt and buried in the land of promise, Exodus 13:19 / Joshua 24:32.

THE FAITH OF AMRAM, JOCHEBED AND MOSES

“By faith Moses’ parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king’s edict.” Hebrews 11:23

1. Hebrews 11:23.
2. Moses was a great man of faith.

His life is divided into three periods of forty years each. The first forty years were in Egypt. The second forty years were in the wilderness of Midian, with the family of Jethro. In the last forty years of Moses’ life, he was the leader of the Israelites, leading them in the wilderness as they journeyed toward Canaan.

3. In this verse, one can see the faith of Moses’ parents.

The Israelites were under inhumane treatment at the hands of Pharaoh, Exodus 1:8-22.

4. Moses was “a proper child.”

He was a beautiful child. This describes an attractive beauty that is unique.

5. The parents of Moses saw in him a distinctive quality that could be used for God’s purpose one day.

THE FAITH OF MOSES

“By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.”

Hebrews 11:24-26

1. Hebrews 11:24.
2. The faith of Moses enabled him to choose wisely.
3. There are two elements in every choice.
 - a. The negative element, a refusal.

One must refuse something decisively, Philippians 3:7.

- b. The positive element, choosing the better way.

Moses did more than say “no” to Egypt. He refused to go one way in order to say “yes” to another.

c. Moses’ decision was one that was deliberate.

Moses made the same trade-off. Let go of the temporary pleasures, looking forward to the great reward.

4. What did Moses give up?

a. A high social position in Egypt.

b. “The treasures of Egypt,” the great wealth of the greatest kingdom on Earth at that time.

c. “The pleasures of sin,” ease and luxury, the sensual pleasures that Egypt had to offer.

Moses understood that the pleasures of sin were only seasonal, short-lived. This is a lesson that must be learned today, 1 John 2:15-17.

5. Moses’ choice involved.

a. He chose a life of suffering and affliction.

b. He chose fellowship with God’s people.

6. He chose a life of hardship, “the reproach of Christ.”

a. He suffered the same reproach that Christ was later to bear.

b. “All reproach suffered for righteousness’ sake since the world began has been suffered for Christ’s sake”.

7. How was Moses able to give up all the pleasures of Egypt?

a. He fixed his heart on his heavenly reward.

b. He was determined to be true to God.

c. He was a man of faith and trust in God.

d. Jesus teaches all today to have this type of attitude, Matthew 6:33 / Mark 8:36-37 / James 4:14.

“By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger, he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.” Hebrews 11:27

1. There is some difficulty in determining when this statement occurred in Moses’ life.

Some believe it was when Moses fled Egypt, going into Midian, and others believe it is when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. The latter would put the text out of chronological order. In Exodus 2:11-15, Moses fled Egypt after killing an Egyptian. It was at this time that Moses fled in fear.

2. It seems reasonable that Moses feared the king in a relative sense for his personal safety.

But he did not fear him so much as to disobey God.

a. Stephen’s account adds light to it when he said that Moses believed himself to be the deliverer of God’s people, Acts 7:24-29.

b. The people at this time were not ready to have Moses as their leader, but it never stopped his faith in God.

It was in Midian that Moses learned that he had to do God’s work in God’s way.

c. In Moses’ choice to serve God and not Pharaoh, he had no fear.

It is this choice that the author is speaking of.

3. Moses endured because he saw the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that God would not leave His people in Egypt.

His faith enabled him to endure.

“By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.” Hebrews 11:28

1. The only means of escape from him who destroyed was obedience to God’s Word.

2. The Israelites showed their faith in God by keeping and following the commands of God that Moses gave them, Exodus 12:2-14.

THE DESTROYER

Who is the destroyer? Notice, He, the LORD, will not permit THE DESTROYER to enter your houses and strike you down, Exodus 12:23. This certainly reads as though there are two distinct persons involved, the LORD and the destroyer.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This plague (death of the firstborn) is distinctly attributed here to the personal intervention of the Lord; but it is to be observed that although the Lord Himself passed through to smite the Egyptians, He employed the agency of the ‘destroyer.’

Davies, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The destroyer is the personified power of Yahweh Himself manifesting itself as destruction.’

The Hebrew word for destroyer is ‘shachath’, which means to decay, i.e. ruin. The Hebrew writer also makes reference to ‘the destroyer’ in Hebrews 11:28. He uses the Greek word ‘olothreuo’, which means to spoil, i.e. slay. The apostle Paul makes reference to ‘the destroying angel’ in 1 Corinthians 10:10. He uses the Greek word ‘olothreutes’, which means a ruiner.

The Jews believe that the destroyer is a divine agent or angel, and certain Rabbis believe that the destroyer could be both an angelic figure and an embodiment of divine judgment.

Some Christian commentators believe the destroyer is the preincarnate Christ, while others suggest that the destroyer is the angel of death, and others believe the destroyer is the archangel Michael or Satan or one of his followers.

Encyclopaedia of the Bible says the following.

‘A superhuman being, used as an instrument of God’s wrath in the execution of His judgment. It is difficult to say whether this is a good angel used by God as an agent of destruction, or Satan or one of his minions. If a good angel, God could use it to bring both blessing and destruction. The term is used only twice, Exodus 12:23 / Hebrews 11:28, and 1 Corinthians 10:10. In the Exodus passage, it is used in connection with the tenth plague of Egypt, the destruction of the Egyptian firstborn. In the 1 Corinthians passage, Paul warned against grumbling, as some Israelites did in the wilderness and were destroyed by the Destroyer. It is thought by some that the Destroyer referred to by Paul was the fiery serpents God sent to bring death to the complaining Israelites.’

Some translations use the phrase ‘the angel of death’ instead of ‘the destroyer’, which isn’t at all what the Hebrew actually says. The main example given for proof of an ‘angel of death’ is found in Exodus when the final plague came upon Egypt, where the firstborn sons of the Egyptians would die, [Exodus 11:4-5](#).

The phrase ‘angel of death’ is nowhere to be found within the Scriptures. And when we go over to the next chapter, we see this promise coming to fruition, [Exodus 12:29](#). Notice in both of these passages, there is no mention of any angel, never mind any mention of an ‘angel of death’.

If you read [Exodus 11:4-5](#) and [Exodus 12:29](#) carefully, you can’t miss the fact that it’s God Himself who carries out this judgement. The text says, ‘I (God) will go out’, [Exodus 11:4](#).

[Exodus 12:23](#) says that ‘the LORD will pass through’ and ‘the LORD will pass over.’ [Exodus 12:29](#) says, ‘The LORD struck down.’ As it is written, God was the One who promised to judge, and He is the One who executed it. Though we read that God used the destroyer to bring about His judgment, [Exodus 12:23](#) / [Hebrews 11:28](#). The destroyer clearly emanates from the LORD. The Scriptures don’t reveal to us who this is, and the destroyer is not named as the ‘angel of death’ or even mentioned as an angel.

“By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land, but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.” Hebrews 11:29

1. [Exodus 14:13-27](#).
2. The Israelites committed themselves to the sea through faith.

They trusted in God and obeyed the commands of Moses.

3. The Egyptians following the Israelites was an act of presumption.

They thought they would be granted safe passage through the sea. The Egyptians presumed wrongly!

4. This was a great victory that God won for His people, [Exodus 14:13](#).

THE FAITH OF JOSHUA

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell after the army had marched around them for seven days.” Hebrews 11:30

1. [Joshua 6:1-27](#).
2. God told Joshua and the Israelites to march around Jericho once a day for six days and seven times on the seventh day.

God told them to have seven priests blow on the ram’s horn, and the people shout. They did as they were told, and the city fell. It was an act of faith.

3. There can be no faith in God unless one follows His instructions.

THE FAITH OF RAHAB

“By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.” Hebrews 11:31

1. [Joshua 2:8-21](#) / [Joshua 6:25](#).

2. In teaching a lesson on works of faith, James goes back to Rahab to confirm that faith is dead without works, James 2:24-26.

3. Rahab was a Gentile who had faith in God, Joshua 2:11.

Her faith in God enabled her and her family to live.

“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David, Samuel and the prophets” Hebrews 11:32

In the land of Canaan, Hebrews 11:32-37.

1. There was a multitude of examples the author could have used in teaching about true faith.

His time was limited, and he did not go into detail.

2. Gideon was a man of faith.

He took three hundred men, and God gave them victory over the Midianites, Judges 7.

3. Barak, along with Deborah, led the Israelites to a victory over the Canaanites, Judges 4-5.

4. Samson was God’s champion over the Philistines, Judges 15-16.

5. Jephthah was victorious over the Ammonites, Judges 11.

6. David, as a boy and as a king, trusted in God, 1 Samuel 17:45-46.

7. Samuel was a man whose life was filled with service to God.

He was a man of courage who stood against King Saul, 1 Samuel 15:13-14 / 1 Samuel 15:22-23.

8. Prophets spoke God’s message to the people.

“Who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised, who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword, whose weakness was turned to strength and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.” Hebrews 11:33-34

1. The faith of God’s servants enabled them to subdue kingdoms and establish righteousness.

It is through their faith that they received the fulfilment of God’s promises, Joshua 21:45 / 1 Kings 8:56.

2. It was through faith that men like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who refused to worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar built, were delivered from fire, Daniel 3:17-18. And Daniel was saved from the lions, Daniel 6.

3. It was through faith that men like Elijah, Elisha and Jeremiah “escaped the edge of the sword.”

4. It was through faith that Hezekiah was able to look to God when he was near death and became strong, Isaiah 38:18.

5. It was through faith that wars were fought and won because they believed not it was their war, but God’s, 2 Chronicles 20:15 / 1 Samuel 17:46.

“Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection.” Hebrews 11:35

1. The women who received their dead by resurrection is a reference to the work that God did through the prophets Elijah and Elisha, 1 Kings 17:17-24 / 2 Kings 4:18-37.

2. Some were ready to accept torture and death as they looked to a better resurrection. It is better than the boys that Elijah and Elisha raised because it is a resurrection to everlasting life.

“Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.” Hebrews 11:36

1. These were some of God's faithful who suffered because of their trust in God.
2. Jeremiah suffered because his faith was unwavering in God.
 - a. He was beaten and put in stocks, Jeremiah 20:2.
 - b. He was mocked, Jeremiah 20:7-9.
 - c. He was put in prison, Jeremiah 37:15.
 - d. He was put in a dungeon with no water, to sink in the mire, Jeremiah 38:6.

“They were put to death by stoning, they were sawed in two, they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated.” Hebrews 11:37

1. Zechariah was stoned for telling the people that they had forsaken the Lord, 2 Chronicles 24:20-21.
2. Tradition teaches that Isaiah was sawn asunder.
3. Elijah said that prophets were slain with the sword, 1 Kings 19:10 / 1 Kings 19:14.
4. Some lived like vagabonds because of their faith in God.

“The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and holes in the ground.” Hebrews 11:38

The inter-Testamental period, Hebrews 11:38.

1. The world did not accept them, yet the world was not worthy of them.
2. They lived in poverty and were persecuted because of their faith.

“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.” Since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:39-40

Notice that the writer of Hebrews comes back to the point made in Hebrews 11:13-16. It is not about what we will receive now, but what God has promised for us later. Don't give up, have true faith. Put your full trust in God, and you will receive the promises of God.

1. They lived and died in faith, hoping for the fulfilment of the promise.
2. They did not receive the promise.

This is the first place in the book of Hebrews where the 'promise' is used in the singular, Hebrews 11:17. None of those who are mentioned by faith in Hebrews 11 experienced the fulfilment of the singular New Covenant fulfilled by Christ. Instead, they anticipated the fulfilment of that promise by faith.

God has provided something better for us. The New Testament believer has a better promise than the Old Testament believers. The church has the New Covenant fulfilled in Christ.

Since the day that Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, they all looked for one to arise from the seed of the woman, who would be bruised on the heel, but who would bruise the serpent on the head, Genesis 3:15.

Since the days of Moses, they have always looked for the prophet to arise like Moses, who would be another deliverer, Deuteronomy 18:15-29. Since the days of David, they always looked for the one to arise from his line to sit on David's throne forever, 2 Samuel 7:13.

Since the days of Isaiah, they have always looked for the one born of a virgin who would be called Immanuel, Isaiah 7:14. Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, Isaiah 9:6.

They were looking for the one to sit upon the seat of David, and reign forever and ever, Isaiah 9:7. This was the great promise that all of the Old Testament saints were looking for.

And yet, according to [Hebrews 11:39](#), they “did not receive what was promised.” When the scripture says they didn’t receive the promise, this simply means that they did not receive the fulfilment of the promise or did not receive all that was promised.

They all still looked forward to some future blessings, [Hebrews 11:13](#). All these died before the final unfolding of God’s promise, the coming of His Messiah into the world.

WHAT WAS THE PROMISE?

The promise they didn’t receive was seeing the Messiah in the flesh. They saw him by faith, they believed in him and rejoiced at the expectation of His coming, but they never saw Him in the flesh, [John 1:14](#).

Since these Old Testament faithfuls so strongly believed, and so cheerfully suffered before Christ came, the writer’s argument is that those who did see Him, and all Christians today, should ‘throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith,’ [Hebrews 12:1-2](#).

WHERE ARE ALL THE OLD TESTAMENT FAITHFUL?

In [Matthew 22:23-32](#), Jesus taught that Old Testament believers go directly into God’s presence upon death. In that passage, Jesus is rebuking the Sadducees, who argued against the idea of a resurrection, [Matthew 22:23](#).

Jesus’ reply reveals a lot to us in [Matthew 22:31-32](#); those words have meaning only if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, all Old Testament saints, were presently and consciously living in the presence of God, [Luke 20:38](#).

The story of the Rich man and Lazarus has Abraham in ‘paradise’, ‘heaven’, ‘God’s dwelling place’, [Luke 16:22](#) / [Luke 23:43](#) / [2 Corinthians 12:2-4](#) / [Revelation 2:7](#).

If there is a ‘waiting place’ for Christians before Judgment Day, then who are ‘the spirits of the righteous made perfect,’ and where are they now according to [Hebrews 12:22-24](#)?

If there is a waiting place for Christians before Judgment Day, then who are ‘the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained,’ and where are they now according to [Revelation 6:9-11](#)?

1. Those of old lived in anticipation of the coming Christ.
2. Christians live in the age that the ancients looked for, the time of Christ and His work.
3. In the Christian age, better things are provided.

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

In Hebrews 11, the writer shows us what faith looks like. Faith is being certain in the unseen things, particularly that God exists and that God rewards those who diligently seek Him, Hebrews 11:6. The writer shows us that the heroes mentioned in this chapter had that kind of faith.

They endured great tragedy, trials, and loss, knowing that their faith was in the better country that God promised. They did not have their eyes and hearts in this world, but desired things better than what we can have here. Realising that we have these witnesses of faith, we ought to be motivated to live our lives in the way that they did.

These people recorded in Hebrews 11 are witnesses to us about what it looks like to have faith. They show us what God-approved faith looks like. These people have shown us the life of faith that can be lived.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2

Let me begin this chapter by asking the question from the previous chapter. If there is a ‘waiting place’ for Christians before Judgment Day, then who are ‘the spirits of the righteous made perfect,’ and where are they now according to Hebrews 12:22-24? These people who are mentioned in Hebrews 11 are clearly spoken of as being in heaven, as do those who are mentioned in Revelation 6:9-11.

Think of the Olympics, and a huge stadium, think of the audience, those who have already run the race, cheering us on. Think about all those heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11. Their faithfulness is our encouragement. They were able to run the race and finish. We are able to run this race and finish.

I think it is important to consider that the object of this race of faith is to finish. It is not about running fast, but running to finish. We need to run the race well. What do we need to do to run this race well so that we can finish? The writer tells us some necessary instructions for running the race.

Notice the words, “let us throw off everything that hinders”, Hebrews 12:1. The original runners in the Olympics were men only, and they ran naked, for the purpose of being lighter, so that nothing would hinder their race whilst they were running.

Notice the writer is not talking about sin at this point. He will address the sin that clings to us in just a moment. Rather, he is concerned about things that are not sins but are weighing us down. What things are weighing you down and keeping you from running the race to finish?

Many things are not sinful that we make sinful because they are hindering us from having the faith demanded by God. Money can weigh us down. There is nothing sinful about having money. We read about rich, godly people in the Scriptures.

On the other hand, we are strongly warned about money because it can so easily cause us to lose our faith, 1 Timothy 6:17-19. So many people think that their desire for money is normal and acceptable.

Yet this can be the very weight that is slowing us down. We have a focus on money rather than the heavenly country. Remember that we read about Moses, who turned down the fleeting pleasures of wealth and sin because he regarded suffering with Christ to be greater wealth, Hebrews 11:25-26.

What about our comforts and ease? We have become a very comfortable society, and we demand that we have our hobbies and pleasures that we can enjoy. So we spend our time watching TV, listening to music, surfing the internet, reading books, and the like. Nothing that we enjoy to unwind and relax is sinful in itself. But these things can become weights that slow us down in our race.

These are the things that block the building of our faith because we choose these points of relaxation rather than studying our Bibles. We relax rather than pray. We chill out on the couch rather than read the Bible. We spend all of our time doing everything else but deepening our faith.

So then we think we do not have time to teach children's Bible classes because we are spending a significant portion of our time doing things that are blocking our race of faith. No, you aren't doing anything sinful. But the things you are doing are acting like heavyweights, which are slowing you down in the race.

Even our families can get in the way of our service to God. We may have a weak spouse or a spouse who does not want us to worship God. We have to fight through that problem, realising that God comes first, before being pleasing to our family, Luke 14:26-43.

Too often, we are asking why we cannot do something as Christians. Often, we are simply trying to justify ourselves for the various actions that we want to engage in.

But let us no longer ask why we cannot do something. Rather, we need to ask, "Will this help me run the race?" So do not ask, "Is it wrong if I" and fill in the blank. Ask if it will help you run the race.

"Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles", Hebrews 12:1, implies that sin is heavy in weight. We need to cast off sin. This should be an obvious instruction, but I do not know that we always realise that sin is slowing us down in this race. Sin is stopping you from running this race. Sin causes interference and is an obstacle on our path.

What are the sins that we are not letting go of? Sexual immorality, anger, lying, selfishness, greed, and such ruin our walk with God. Admit your addictions and get help. You must stop sinning.

We are to be dead to sin and alive to Jesus. We cannot continue in sin, thinking that we are acceptable to God. Let us be reminded of the warning that the writer of Hebrews gave us previously, Hebrews 10:26-27.

"Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us", Hebrews 12:1. The writer already pointed out in Hebrews 10:36 that we have a need for endurance. The race that has been set out before us requires endurance. Who in Hebrews 11 did not need endurance for the race set before them? All of them needed endurance! 1 Corinthians 9:24-26.

Did Abraham need endurance? He most certainly did need endurance. We need endurance also if we are going to finish this race of faith. So how can we have this athletic discipline necessary to finish the race? The writer of Hebrews gives us the answer.

During these Olympics, the Emperor would often participate, but most times he would be in the audience, and the runners would focus their eyes on him, Hebrews 12:2. We can finish the race by glueing our eyes on Jesus.

We need to get our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus. This is a call for us to have a determined focus. We are to be looking at Jesus and nothing else! We are not to have divided attention, Luke 16:13.

Too often, we are being distracted by the world. We are being distracted by all of these things that are not necessarily sinful, but they are taking our attention away from Jesus. The writer of Hebrews is calling for us to have a determined focus. Get your eyes on Jesus and off of sin! Colossians 3:1-2.

Get your eyes on Jesus and off of possessions! Get your eyes on Jesus and off of work! Get your eyes on Jesus and off of money! What are our minds focused on? What are we looking at when we fix our eyes on Jesus?

1. What Jesus did!

Jesus is described as the pioneer and the perfecter of our faith, Hebrews 12:2. We have seen this description used before by the writer of Hebrews. In Hebrews 2:10, we see the same language.

Recall that when we studied that text we noted that the likely meaning is that Jesus is our trailblazer. Jesus has blazed the path for us to follow. We are not going down an unknown road. We are going down the road that Jesus has blazed for us.

He is our pioneer, our leader, who has led the way of faith for us. Not only this, but by following Jesus, He will ‘bring our faith to completion’, Hebrews 12:2. Jesus has shown us the road we need to walk.

2. How Jesus endured.

How did Jesus make it? Jesus made it the same way that those in Hebrews 11 made it. They had their eyes fixed on the promised reward, not here on earth, Hebrews 12:2. Jesus did the same.

What does the text say that Jesus was focused on? He was focused on ‘the joy set before Him’. Jesus did not look at the physical, but at the goal. He looked at the purpose. Jesus was able to endure because He saw the joy that was set before him.

That is how Jesus endured the cross. He held the shame of the cross in no regard. He was able to look through the cross. He did not simply see the cross and consider its weight and meaning. He could look beyond the cross. He could see the joy of the salvation that would be offered by His act.

He did not focus on the temporary suffering of the cross. He did not focus on the mocking and shame of the cross. He counted these earthly things as nothing. He disregarded those things and saw the joy set before.

This is how we are to endure our suffering. Do not focus on the suffering. Fix your eyes on Jesus. See through the suffering and see the joy that will come from having endurance, Hebrews 2:10. We have a greater promise given to us that we are able to place our hope upon.

Was Jesus right to see through the cross? Yes, because God kept His promise by exalting Jesus to the right hand of the throne of God, Hebrews 12:2 / Hebrews 1:3. Jesus’ work was accomplished, and He was rewarded for His faith. God keeps His promises.

The same thing is true for us. It is right for us to see through the suffering, knowing that God keeps His promises and we have a better country and better reward waiting for us.

In Hebrews 12:1-2, the writer of Hebrews taught us to fix our eyes on Jesus. We need to look to Him as our leader of faith. We are to follow the example of the cloud of witnesses that have walked the path of faith before us by laying aside every weight that is slowing us down from righteousness and getting rid of the sin that clings so closely to us. The writer now returns to the theme of the letter, which is to encourage these Christians not to give up.

“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.” Hebrews 12:3-4

Previously, we were told to fix our eyes on Jesus, Hebrews 12:2. Now, the writer asks for some reflection. Think about what Jesus endured. Think about what Jesus suffered. Particularly, think about the hostility Jesus endured from sinners. Think about the mistreatment that He endured from His own creation.

Why should we think about the suffering of Jesus and how He endured mistreatment? The writer says we are thinking about this so that ‘we do not grow weary or discouraged’, Hebrews 12:3. The instructions that follow are to encourage us not to give up or grow weary.

“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood”, Hebrews 12:4. This seems to be asking Christians to compare their lives to what Jesus endured. Our fight against sin has not been to the extent that Jesus fought. We have not had to go as far as Jesus had to go.

Our suffering has not been to the degree that Jesus suffered. We know this, but often forget this important point. Jesus ended up suffering all the way to the point of death, and so did many of the heroes of faith recorded in Hebrews 11.

We should not feel sorry for ourselves when we suffer. Nor should we grow weary or give up when we are considering the life of Jesus and the cloud of witnesses.

It is easy for us to give up. It is human nature for us to become discouraged and want to throw in the towel. You are fighting Satan, and you are engaged in a war against sin. But your battle has not reached the degree that Jesus endured. Ephesians 6:10-18.

GOD DISCIPLINES HIS CHILDREN

“And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:5-11

The writer continues by reminding his audience that they have been called children of God. But being called children of God does not exclude us from difficult times and suffering. Being a child does not mean that everything is going to go smoothly in life. Don’t forget the exhortation given.

In Hebrews 12:5-6, the writer then quotes from Proverbs 3:11-12. Do not take the Lord’s teaching lightly. Who said that life was going to be easy? Who said that as God’s children we would not need some discipline and correction along the way? Hardship should be looked at as God’s method of training and discipline.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The doctrine of the chastening of God is neglected today; and it is likely that some have scarcely heard of it; but, of course, it is a valid teaching of the scriptures, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament; and the knowledge of it in Christian hearts can be the source of glorious light on many a dark day.’

The parent loves the child by correcting and disciplining. This text certainly enforces God’s view of parents using physical pain as a means of disciplining children.

The picture is that the Lord disciplines and whips us in this life. We have a saying that is falling out of our language about being “whipped into shape.” God is whipping us into shape because He is our Father and we are His children. Notice Hebrews 12:7, with these hardships God is treating us as His children.

“For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?” Hebrews 12:7. This was an obvious answer in days past that every father disciplines his child. But that unfortunately is not true anymore, and now we have to prove that physical discipline is not only acceptable to God but commanded by God.

So what are we being taught here? God allows bad things, hard things, and difficult things to happen to us to teach us, reprove us, discipline us, and whip us into shape. God spans us!

The atheist says there is no God because bad things happen. God says, “What kind of father would I be to you if I gave you the easy life?” Every child needs correcting.

Every child needs hardships to learn. We are not sheltered, and neither should our children be sheltered from consequences and mistakes. We learn from pain. We change because of hardships.

Notice in Hebrews 12:8 that God declares that we are illegitimate children if we are left without discipline. God says that it is neglect and child abuse if He does not discipline us as children. No discipline, no whipping, and no reproof show that you are not my child, and I do not love you.

Notice in Hebrews 12:9 that our earthly fathers disciplined us. What was our response? Today, psychologists tell us that if we whip our children into shape, they will be more violent, that they will hate us, that they will abuse other people, and so forth.

What does God say? We learned respect. We respected our parents because they were teaching us, training us, and getting our lives ready for the world. Notice the rest of Hebrews 12:9, should we not expect God to do the same and respect Him for it?

Barnby, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If a dutiful child submits patiently to the chastisements of his earthly parents, although he has derived only his body from them, how much more submissively should we bear the divine corrections, seeing they proceed from him from whom alone we have received our spiritual and immortal nature!’

In Hebrews 12:10, we read that our parents disciplined us for a short time to the best of their ability. The implication is that our parents made mistakes. Some did not discipline properly, some were too lenient, some were too strict. Some are disciplined in selfish ways rather than according to God’s plan. But God disciplines for our own good. We suffer it is for our own good, “that we may share his holiness,” Hebrews 12:10.

God is moulding our character to be holy. If we never suffered and we were not whipped into shape, we would never change. We think that we are adults and that we are through with being corrected.

“No one can tell me what to do!” God will still correct you. The shepherds of the church will still correct you. The evangelist will still correct you. We need correction and hardships to come to bring those changes about.

Thus, Hebrews 12:11 tells us that all discipline is painful. These times of correction are not fun. But these difficulties are bringing about the fruit of righteousness in our lives. But only if we allow ourselves to be trained by the difficulties.

We cannot give up. We cannot quit. We cannot decide not to learn God’s lessons. Life is hard, so we will bear fruit if we allow ourselves to be changed by the things we experience.

WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT

“Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. “Make level paths for your feet,” so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy without holiness, no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.” Hebrews 12:12-15

Be strong! Get a grip! Stop whining! Pull yourself together! Put things in order and prepare for your journey of faith. Don’t get out of joint, but put your trust in God! Have faith!

Stay with God and be healed. Quit falling apart under the weight of suffering. In our struggle against sin, we have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood, Hebrews 12:12-13.

Then notice Hebrews 12:14, strive for peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. Remember what the writer of Hebrews taught in Hebrews 11:6, “It is impossible to please God without faith.” Notice this other impossibility: no one will see the Lord without holiness. We have to act differently! We are not going to make it if we act like everyone else who falls apart in difficult times. We are called to be holy, that is, different and set apart for God’s service. We are being disciplined so that we can be holy.

We are being whipped into shape so that we can be set apart for God, for without this holiness, we are not going to see God. To put it another way, without God’s correction, reproof, discipline, and whipping us into shape, we are not going to see the Lord.

Let God change you! Let Him change you by being peaceable with everyone. Don’t be a quarreller! Don’t be a fighter! Don’t be argumentative! Seek reconciliation, not fighting. Seek peace in relationships, not strife.

Hebrews 12:15 tells us that we need to let God’s correction change our hearts, ridding us of bitterness. Cut out the root of bitterness in your life. Get rid of the animosity you have that is causing you to hold a grudge against another. Be forgiving, not bitter.

Notice that the writer uses the metaphor of a root to speak about bitterness, Hebrews 12:15, because you don’t see roots. We see the stalk, we see the branch, we see the trunk, we even see the fruit, but we don’t see the roots. That’s exactly how bitterness operates, bitter people rarely realise that they are and even more rarely, they won’t admit they are. Bitterness is an underground sin; it festers, it grows, it’s poisonous, but no one really sees it. We need to get underneath the surface and root bitterness out, and here’s how to do that.

1. Don’t curse your offender.

The world says when we get hit, we should retaliate, when we get wounded, we should wound back. And it’s so easy to rationalise, it’s so easy to justify our offence and to want to hurt back. Most people in life think you survive by hurting back, you slap me, and I’ll slap you back harder. That’s how we think, I can give it back as good as I can take it!

Why do we think we can heal a wound by causing another one? Why do we think that hurting someone else is going to help our hurt? Paul says, Don’t curse your offender, bless them, Romans 12:14.

There are times when we want to curse them to God, we might even want God to damn them. You’re certainly not going to pray for them. And then you’re going to mouth off about them to anyone who will listen.

You’ll make sure that you tell everyone how bad they are and how badly you’ve been treated. And if you get a chance, boy, you’ll tell them right to their face how miserable they are, that’s cursing someone.

Is that what Jesus did? Did he retaliate when people insulted him? You want to let your enemy have it? Do what Jesus did, let God have it, 1 Peter 2:23. Just hand over the whole situation to God and trust Him with it. If you need to talk out your pain, talk it out with God, don’t curse your offender.

2. Don’t nurse your pain.

If you want to justify your bitterness, you’ll find out it’s pretty easy to do; you’ll come up with some good arguments. Bitter people will articulate their injustice over and over to anybody who will listen, but all you’re doing is nursing that pain.

How does holding onto your pain change the past or repair broken relationships? Some people cling to their pain, and sadly, it has become their new identity.

I'm the woman who was abandoned by my husband. I'm the kid who grew up with an alcoholic dad. I'm the Christian who was mistreated by the church. And that's going to be their identity for the rest of their lives.

The Bible says no, there's a better way, you deal with your resentment immediately and radically, Ephesians 4:26-27. When you nurse your anger, you're letting yourself become vulnerable to satanic intrusion. You're saying to the devil, 'I'm going to take off my armour on this whole side of my body, go ahead, shoot all the darts you want right here.'

What you don't release, you will begin to resemble. You will never lovingly share grace until you understand how much you need it. In Matthew 18, there was a guy who owed somebody an absolute fortune; he was up to his eyes in debt to another man. It was so horrendous; he knew he could never pay it off.

The man who owed the money told the guy he would wipe the slate clean. He didn't have to pay a single penny of his debt, then this guy found someone else who owed him a few pence, a pittance in fact.

But what did he do? When the first man found out what had happened, that someone whom he had released from a huge debt wouldn't release someone from a small debt, he had him thrown in jail eternally, Matthew 18:30.

The point of the parable is this: we have all run up debts in different ways. But every single one of us is a debtor, and none of us can pay our debt before God. But we have a God who freed us from our debt, even though we had wounded Him greatly.

The parable doesn't say the man was angry because the guy had a huge debt; he was angry because the guy wouldn't forgive his neighbour. You say can, 'But I have been wronged! And justice demands that someone pays for that wrong.'

There's a hill outside of Jerusalem called Calvary, and that's where Someone did pay for it. Why do you want your enemy to pay for something that Jesus has already paid for? If the blood of Jesus has satisfied God for their sin, why are you still not satisfied?

You see, the cross has invalidated all justification for holding a grudge, Ephesians 2:16. That doesn't mean you still can't hate; it means you don't have a right to. You have no right because of the righteousness of the cross of Jesus to hold onto a grudge against anybody.

That's the problem with bitterness: we aren't willing to let go of it, we want to hang on to it, and we want to hold people in our debt, Matthew 18:30. The struggle to forgive is the struggle of the will, and to soften your will, you have to do some serious business at the cross.

Forgiveness is hard, but so was Calvary, and that's our model, Ephesians 4:32 / Colossians 3:13. The cross doesn't make forgiveness easy, but it does make it possible.

How do you root out that bitter spirit? Don't curse, that won't help it; don't nurse it, that won't help it. You do what God did: you focus on your enemy's needs instead of your hurts. You act, instead of react, you initiate instead of retaliate.

Christians are warriors; they're not just survivors, we're not trying to survive evil, we're trying to conquer evil. And we conquer evil by throwing good back at it because God is stronger than evil.

When you root out bitterness and do good to your enemy, it may not change your enemy, but it will change you. God is in the business of changing people, and God will be relentless if you hold onto bitterness.

When Jesus hung on the cross, nails didn't silence Him; He prayed for His enemies, Luke 23:34. You can't see what's rooted deep inside each other, but I do know from experience that if bitterness is rooted deep within your soul, you need to root it out. Because it's just going to gnaw away at your faith and your relationship with God and His people.

Don't let Satan get a hold of you with bitterness; let it go by talking to God about it. He understands when people hurt you and let you down. He's been there in more ways than we will ever experience in this life.

But He will not change His mind. We must forgive our debtors if we want to be forgiven our debts, Matthew 6:12. Will you let go of any bitterness you may have today? Will you allow Jesus to take it away today? I hope and pray that you do, because like I said, speaking from experience, the joy will come into your life when you throw out the bitterness from your life.

To grow through bitterness, you need to practice what Jesus preached. Love your enemies, do good to them, feed them when they are hungry, give them clothes when they are cold, and visit them when they are sick.

Notice the warning of Hebrews 12:15. Don't lose your grace by not allowing yourself to be trained and moulded by God's correction. How do we fail to obtain the grace of God? The writer is going to conclude with the example of Esau.

“See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. Even though he sought the blessing with tears, he could not change what he had done.” Hebrews 12:16-17

What does Esau have to do with not giving up and accepting God's discipline? What did Esau do? Remember what took place in Genesis with his brother Jacob, Genesis 25:29-34. Esau went hunting and came back very hungry. Jacob had made a stew, but would not give it to Esau without him giving his birthright to Jacob. The birthright was important. He would receive a double portion of the inheritance from his father. He gave up his inheritance for the stew that Jacob had made. This should bring the point of the writer of Hebrews into focus.

Esau traded the spiritually and eternally important for something that was only physically and temporarily important. He did not see the importance of his birthright. Genesis says that Esau despised his birthright, Genesis 25:24. This is the teaching lesson for us. We are suffering, we are going through hardships and difficulties, but just because you are going through hardships, do not trade away your eternal inheritance with the Lord just for temporary comfort and pleasure now.

That is exactly what Esau did, and he was rejected by God and did not receive the blessing either. The blessing went to his brother, Jacob, instead. Are you going to throw away your eternal reward because you are suffering?

You have not suffered to the point of shedding blood like Jesus! Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Be strong! Look through the suffering and see the eternal reward. Don't trade away God's blessings and God's inheritance for a few crumbs of this physical world.

THE MOUNTAIN OF FEAR AND THE MOUNTAIN OF JOY

“You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire to darkness, gloom and storm to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned to death.” The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.” Hebrews 12:18-21

The author begins by telling his audience what they have not come to. They have not come to what may be touched, that is, physical things. In particular, the author is describing Mount Sinai when the people of Israel came to the mountain, Hebrews 12:18.

To appreciate what the author is relating to, note Exodus 19:10-20:21, and see the power and vivid imagery of God coming to His people. Deuteronomy 5:22-27 gives us a little more information about the terrifying image of God's presence at Sinai. It was imagery intended to bring about awe and fear. The warnings to the people were intended to bring that fear, Hebrews 12:19.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The sound of the trumpet’ is of special interest since a trumpet sound is associated with the final judgment and the resurrection of the dead, 1 Corinthians 15:52. Also, the seven angels with seven trumpets are a feature of John's vision of the last things, Revelation 8:2.’

No one was to come near the mountain. Limits were set around the mountain, and no one was to come close. If they did, they would be killed by God. Even if an animal came close to the mountain, it would also be killed, Hebrews 12:20 / Exodus 19:12-13.

What a powerful picture of the presence and holiness of God! Do not come near to God. Be fearful! Be afraid! Stay back! Even Moses was afraid, Hebrews 12:21 / Deuteronomy 9:19. God is holy, and this fear was to compel the people not to sin, Exodus 20:20.

But the author has told these disciples that they have not come to that mountain. They have not come to the physical things that can be touched. This is not the way it is any longer. It was that way, but not now. That is not what we have come to.

“But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.” Hebrews 12:22-24

Rather than explaining more, the author tells us what we have come to. We have come to Mount Zion. We have not come to the physical but, by implication, to the spiritual. We have come to Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, Hebrews 12:22.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The prophets had extolled the word of the Lord as going forth from Mount Zion, Isaiah 2:3; it was toward Mount Zion that the captive Daniel had prayed in Babylon; and even Jesus Christ referred to it as the ‘city of the great King’, Matthew 5:35.’

We have not come to the physical city, but to the city of the living God, Hebrews 12:22. By faith Abraham looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God, Hebrews 11:10. That is the city we have come to. Let us consider what else we have come to.

“Thousands of angels in joyful assembly”, Hebrews 12:22. Too often, we read these descriptions and do not ask what this is telling us. We simply say that we have come to innumerable angels. But what does that mean for us? Consider the Scriptures and think about where these innumerable angels are, Daniel 7:9-10 / Revelation 5:11-12.

What is the writer saying that we have come to innumerable angels? We have come to the very presence of God. We have not come to the God who had to tell the people not to come near Him because of His holiness. We have come near to God, which is the point the writer of Hebrews made earlier in his writing, Hebrews 4:16.

What else is the author telling us we have come to? Hebrews 12:22-23. Remember that the writer of Hebrews is teaching us what we have left and what we now have. This is not a third party.

He is telling us that we are part of the new covenant, we are the assembly of the saved, and our names are written in heaven. You are part of something great. You have not come to the physical; rather, you are part of the group of people whose names are registered in heaven. Simply awesome!

We are of the firstborn, not only because Jesus is the firstborn of the dead, but because we have valued our birthright. We have not been like Esau, the firstborn, who despised his birthright inheritance and gave it away for the pleasures of this world. We are not that.

We value our inheritance with God and are part of the family of God, Hebrews 2:11. Part of this assembly is those who have died, Hebrews 12:23. They are also part of the family, and we are joined together. Death separates us, but we are still joined together as God's saved family.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'A study of the various references to the book of life reveals the following: One. Christians' names are written in it; Two. the ancient faithful, such as Moses, are therein; Three. those whose names are not inscribed in it shall not be saved, Revelation 13:8 / Revelation 20:15 / Revelation 21:27; Four. even though inscribed there, a name can be blotted out, and for sufficient cause will be blotted out, Revelation 3:5.'

Notice we've come "To Jesus", Hebrews 12:24. This is really awesome. You have not come to the physical. You have not come to Sinai, but you have come to Jesus.

Moses was the mediator of the Sinai covenant. Jesus is the mediator of the Zion covenant. We have come to the sprinkled blood, which is a picture of atonement, Hebrews 12:24. We've come to "The blood of Abel", Hebrews 12:24. The question is, which blood?

1. Is it Abel's own blood, shed by Cain?
2. Or is it the blood that Abel himself offered in sacrifice when he slew the lamb?

It is often supposed that it was his own blood, an opinion based on Genesis 4:10, because God said to Cain, "The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the ground". I believe that this is a mistaken view and that the blood referred to in Hebrews 12:24 is the blood that Abel himself shed.

We need to ask ourselves, in what sense does the blood of Christ speak better things than the blood of Abel? If there is one thing of which the blood of Abel's sacrifice speaks, it is sin and the separation which sin creates.

Abel's sacrifice spoke of guilt, as did every other sacrifice offered under the Patriarchal Age and the Mosaic Age that followed, and it was, like the offerings made under the Mosaic Law, which was yet to come, a confession of unworthiness before God.

But in contrast with the blood of Abel, the blood of Christ speaks of the possibility of forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to God, which brings forgiveness.

It is not the blood of wrath, which is what the blood of Abel spoke. Abel's death demanded vengeance on Cain. We have come to the blood of Jesus, which takes away wrath and brings mercy. We are under the new covenant of Jesus. That is what we have come to.

1. Jesus is the mediator of the New Testament because of the blood He shed at Golgotha, Hebrews 9:18-26.
2. The blood of Abel cried for vengeance against the one who sinned against him, Genesis 4:10.

The blood of Christ "speaks better things," that is, salvation for those who obey the Gospel, Ephesians 1:7 / Colossians 1:13-14.

"See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time, his voice shook the

earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:25-29

This is where the author’s teaching goes deep in this chapter. Unfortunately, the text has been glossed over. I listened to several sermons online, and all of them missed the thunderous point that the author is making, so let’s dig deeper.

Now, some may tend to read this and think that God is a kinder, gentler God. Before we approached God with fear, but now we can go to God any way we like. To prevent such thinking, the writer of Hebrews gives a warning now. “See that you do not refuse him who is speaking,” [Hebrews 12:25](#). Here is another argument from the lesser to the greater, [Hebrews 10:28-30](#).

If they did not escape when they refused to listen to Moses, who warned them on the Earth, how do we think we will escape if we reject the One who speaks to us from heaven? [Hebrews 12:25](#). Obviously, we will not escape judgment. Now watch what the author presents.

When God spoke at that time, His voice shook the earth, [Hebrews 12:26](#). This observation refers back to the events of Mount Sinai that we read about earlier, [Exodus 19:18-19](#). But something has been promised for right now, the first century, when the author is writing these words.

The promise the author is referring to in [Hebrews 12:26](#) is found in [Haggai 2:6](#). Remember, this prophecy was stated by Haggai in the context of the construction of the temple in Jerusalem.

The author states that this promise refers to the removal of things that are shaken. What are the things that are shaken? [Hebrews 12:26](#). The author is referring to the things that are made. The things that have been made must be removed so that the things which cannot be shaken can remain. What are the things that cannot be shaken?

According to [Hebrews 12:27](#), the things that cannot be shaken are the things that have not been made with human hands. [Hebrews 12:28](#) gives us more clarity that the things that cannot be shaken is the kingdom we are receiving. Now we cannot pass this by because he just made a critical point that is easy to miss.

The things that have been made must be removed so that the things that cannot be shaken can remain. The things that are shaken was Mount Sinai, and the quotation was given in the context of the building of the physical temple in Jerusalem.

[Hebrews 12:27](#) tells us that these things must be removed so that the unshakable kingdom of God can remain. The point is not that we can go before God any way we want.

The point is that God has kept His word, bringing about an unshakable kingdom that we are able to enter because we have come to Mount Zion and not Mount Sinai. We are part of the assembly of the firstborn, those who have not thrown away their birthright inheritance.

Therefore, we need to be grateful for the kingdom we are receiving, [Hebrews 12:28](#). We need to be thankful to be fellow partakers of the superior covenant, superior sacrifice, superior High Priest, and superior kingdom.

Let us then offer acceptable worship in reverence and awe because God is a consuming fire, [Hebrews 12:29](#). God is not lenient now. Our God is a consuming fire. We need to worship Him with reverence and awe. We need to be obedient since we are part of this unshakable kingdom.

CONCLUSION

1. Look at what you have come to!

2. Look how you are part of the unshakable kingdom!

3. Look at how you can worship God acceptably!

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

“Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?” Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Hebrews 13:1-8

CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS

As we come into Hebrews 13, we are left with several curiosities. The first is the quick, short nature of the commands in this chapter. After developing his points throughout the lesson, the author of Hebrews gives seemingly random, scattered instructions.

The writer is also drawing a sharp contrast that the chapter break obscures. Look at how the previous chapter ended, “Our God is a consuming fire,” Hebrews 12:9. Then look at how this chapter begins, “Let brotherly love continue,” Hebrews 13:1. Quite a contrast! So what is the author of Hebrews doing?

I believe the author is giving exhortations to us to do these things because God is a consuming fire and because we are in God’s kingdom. These are some of the things that we need to do to remain in God’s unshakable kingdom, Hebrews 12:28-29. Don’t think that you are part of God’s unshakable kingdom if we are not doing these things.

1. Love one another, Hebrews 13:1.

We are commanded to have brotherly love for each other, 1 John 2:11. We are to have a love for each other like the ideal love that should be found in a family. And why not? We are the family of God!

God is simply telling us to act like it. You are family! Act like it! Don’t think you are in the unshakable kingdom of God if you are not treating others with brotherly love.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This verse teaches three things: 1. that the Hebrews addressed here had such love of the brethren; 2. that it is God’s will that such brotherly love should have been continued; and 3. that there were manifestly some dangers that it might be permitted to wane.’

2. Do not neglect hospitality, Hebrews 13:2.

Often, the force of this command is lost because of the explanation given for hospitality. Before that explanation is addressed, let us not neglect the command.

We are not part of God's unshakable kingdom if we are not acting hospitably. We need to go out of our way to make sure other people feel comfortable and welcome.

That is true when they come to worship together and when we get to know them. It is awful to go to services where the people act like they do not care if you are there. When we see people, welcome them. Welcome them to our meetings and welcome them into your lives.

But the writer gives us a positive reason for acting hospitably: God rewards hospitality, [Hebrews 13:2](#). The situation with Abraham is one of many instances where we read about hospitality being rewarded, [Genesis 18:1](#) / [Genesis 19:1](#).

Rahab welcomed the spies, who were strangers, and by providing for them was spared the destruction of Jericho. The emphasis is not on the angels, but on the reward Abraham received by being hospitable.

Jesus taught the same point to His disciples in [Matthew 25:40](#) / [Matthew 25:45](#), where Jesus said that what we do toward one another is what we are doing toward Jesus.

This is not saying that you need to be hospitable because you never know if you are serving an angel. Rather, a blessing from God comes to those who are hospitable. This action will show us to be like Abraham, children of his and therefore part of God's covenantal family.

3. Put yourself in the shoes of those who are suffering, [Hebrews 13:3](#).

We are not in God's unshakable kingdom if we are not compassionate and active toward those who are enduring hardship. We need to put ourselves in the shoes of our fellow brethren. When they are suffering, we need to suffer with them, [Romans 12:15](#) / [Hebrews 10:33-34](#).

We are to be so closely connected that anything that happens to you, it should be as if it happened to me. It is a call for a greater amount of sympathy and compassion.

I believe this is talking about Christians who were suffering and enduring mistreatment for the Lord's sake. The end of [Hebrews 13:3](#) reminds us that we are to be connected.

These people are part of the body of Christ. When one member of the body suffers, all of the members of the body feel that pain. We are together as God's family.

4. Marriage held in honour, [Hebrews 13:4](#).

We live in a world where sexual relations are freely given away to every person, with whom we may have a mild concern. However, God declares that marriage is the only place for sexual union. This is how marriage is held in honour.

Marriage is not to be defiled. We are not to commit sexual immorality and so defile ourselves. God will judge the sexually immoral and the adulterous. Hold marriage in honour, keep your pants on until you are married, [Hebrews 12:16](#).

Once married, stay faithful to your spouse and have no relations with any other person. We are not part of God's unshakable kingdom when we do not hold our marriages in honour.

5. No love of money, [Hebrews 13:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:6](#).

We are not part of God's unshakable kingdom if we have a love of money. We need to be content with the things that we have. We need to be content with the amount of money that we have. We need to be content with our possessions, [Colossians 3:5](#).

The writer tells us that we need to enjoy what we have and stop ignoring the good things we have. I have considered that this is the essence of the problem. When we have a love of money and possessions, it is because we are not appreciating what we have. We want a new television because we do not appreciate the one we have.

We want a new car because we do not appreciate what we have. We want a new house because we do not appreciate the house we have. Our lack of contentment ruins us. We are unable to enjoy and appreciate the things we have because our lack of contentment keeps putting our eyes on the things we do not have.

It reminds me of the Rolling Stones song, 'I can't get no satisfaction'. Those who are in God's unshakable kingdom enjoy and appreciate what they have, seeing these possessions as God's gift to us.

I have often been surprised at the connection between Hebrews 13:5-6. Hebrews 13:6 is connected to Hebrews 5, with the word "so" or "therefore." But how is contentment connected to the fact that we can say with confidence, "The Lord is our helper, I will not fear; what can man do to me?" Psalms 118:6-7.

But isn't the point about trust? Where is your confidence? What do you trust in? Do we have our hope and trust in possessions and wealth? Or do we have our hope and trust in the Lord? It is hard to know until our possessions and wealth are stripped away from us.

Those who are in God's kingdom and are free from the love of money can boldly say, no matter what happens, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

But those who are not in God's kingdom panic. Their trust is in the possessions and wealth of this world. So when life gives us a seismic shift, we fear, and we lack confidence because we have put our trust in the paycheck, house, car, and other stuff.

We need to strive to live with less rather than desiring more. We need to stop being accumulators and be good givers and sharers. We will be satisfied when we realise that God is sufficient to meet our needs.

A love of money is a statement that we do not trust God to take care of us, Deuteronomy 31:6, that we need to do it ourselves, and must provide for ourselves, rather than rely upon God to give it.

But God is reliable. He will not leave us. He will not forsake us, Deuteronomy 31:6. God is with me no matter what people may do to us, Psalms 118:6-7. Do not rely on physical helpers. Rely on God. We are not in God's unshakable kingdom when our trust does not fully rest on God.

6. Follow the faith of the apostles, Hebrews 13:7.

Finally, we are not in God's unshakable kingdom when we do not look to the faith of the apostles and model our faith after theirs. I believe that these leaders are the apostles because of the phrase, "those who spoke to you the word of God," Hebrews 13:7.

This seems to point to those who are greater than the author. He does not say to look at me, but look at those who taught you and led you. I think this is the apostles.

The second reason this seems to be looking to the apostles is because of the next phrase, "Consider the outcome of their way of life," Hebrews 13:7. The language suggests that these people have died. Look at how they lived. These are words used about those who have gone on before us in life. I believe that the writing of Hebrews took place around 68-69 A.D.

Most, if not all, of the apostles except John would be dead by this time. You are not in God's kingdom when you are not looking at the faith of the apostles and other heroes of the Scriptures and imitating that faith, Hebrews 11.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nothing is of more moving and lasting power than a faithful example; and the author calls to mind the noble elders and ministers, already passed to their reward at the time he wrote, but who were remembered for the noble example of their faith; which, from the words here, would seem to have issued at last in some dramatic exhibition of it, as perhaps like that of Stephen’s martyrdom. The lives of such noble leaders were to be imitated, not necessarily in regard to all their deeds, but rather in the supreme matter of their unwavering faith.’

Tying into [Hebrews 13:8](#), follow the example and words that they taught you and showed you. Follow their example, follow their teaching, Jesus does not change. Jesus doesn’t change because He is God, [Numbers 23:19](#) / [Malachi 3:6](#) / [Hebrews 1:8](#) / [Hebrews 6:17-18](#) / [James 1:17](#).

Don’t worry about any new teachings that come along. Just look at the teachings and faith of the apostles, and follow them in faith. In a changing world, we can trust in the unchanging Jesus.

“Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so.” Hebrews 13:9

The author just finished speaking about how we should remember the apostolic leaders who spoke to them the word of God and imitate their faith. Keep to the teachings you have been taught and do not move from them. Here he continues this thinking.

Particularly, the problem was that there was a teaching that said they were strengthened by food, and not by grace. True life is in grace, not in food regulations.

We are in the family of God by grace, not by the foods that we eat, [Mark 7:19](#) / [Acts 10:14](#). We see this problem more expressly described in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

We live in a world that continues to fill itself with strange teachings. We have people claiming that Jesus was married and had children, contrary to any biblical or extra-biblical evidence.

We have religious people claiming that the Scriptures are not trustworthy, being edited and distorted from the original message, [2 John 1:9](#). We have preachers teaching that if you enlarge your vision and conceive it in your heart, God will give it to you.

They say that God wants to give you your dream house if you will only visualise it and believe it, [1 Timothy 4:1-5](#). We live in a world that teaches that God is merely a hobby. Show up for services once in a while, and you will appease God.

God is our idol, and we do what we want, and He will be happy with that. We have people like Oprah teaching that all spirituality leads to God. All that matters is being spiritual. Even within our own brethren, there are strange teachings about the church and salvation.

Don’t be pulled away from the Word of God. The apostle’s teaching is what is important. We cannot hold to traditions; we cannot grab on to every new doctrine. Neither extreme will help our faith; hold on to the Word of God.

“We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat. The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.” Hebrews 13:10-13

Let us carefully go through these words to see the point that the author is making. We have a special altar that those not under Christ do not have access to.

The Old Testament priesthood does not have access to this altar. By implication, I think this is saying that the sinful nation of Israel does not have access to His altar.

Hebrews 13:11 recalls the Old Testament system. The blood was taken into the holy place as an offering for sin, and the body was taken outside the camp, Leviticus 16:27.

Jesus parallels this. The writer has already told us that through the death of Jesus, he went into the realities of heaven, not the copies of the earthly tabernacle. The cross is the altar upon which the sacrifice for sins was made.

Through the cross, we are made holy and set apart, Hebrews 13:12. But crucifixion was done outside of the city walls because the Jews thought that it was a defilement, based upon the Law of Moses.

This is why the author says Jesus suffered outside the camp, Hebrews 13:11. He is referring to suffering outside the gates of the city. He suffered for sins and bore insults to be an offering for atonement.

MacKnight, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Israelites’ having cities to live in at the time of our Lord’s suffering, ‘without the gate’ was the same as ‘without the camp’ in the wilderness. Wherefore, criminals, being regarded as unclean, were always put to death without the gates of their cities. In this manner, our Lord and his martyr Stephen suffered.’

Now notice Hebrews 13:13. On the surface, this sounds like a fairly straightforward teaching. Enduring suffering like Jesus suffered, we need to go to Jesus. Let us make the sacrifice that He made, let us go down the road that Jesus walked, carrying the cross to our death.

It is not we who live, but Jesus who is living in us. Let us carry the cross and disregard the shame as we go to Jesus. This is not a message of moving to what is comfortable for us; this is a call for us to move to Jesus despite the suffering.

But notice how we are to go to Jesus. We go to him by going “outside the camp,” Hebrews 13:12 / Deuteronomy 21:23. He is calling on his readers to leave Jerusalem and all that it stands for. Leave the physical city and go to Jesus, leave the Law of Moses and go to Jesus.

The point seems to be similar to the point made by Paul in Galatians 4, when he used an allegory to show that the people should leave the Law of Moses, leave Sinai, and leave the physical nation and go to the spiritual, heavenly Jerusalem. The author of Hebrews has made the same point.

“For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.” Hebrews 13:14

This verse shows that our interpretation is correct. Leave Jerusalem because we have no lasting city here. Rather, we see the city that is to come. Go outside the city, leave behind the physical and go to Jesus, the fulfilment of the law and the prophets. Our hope is in the eternal city, not in Jerusalem, Hebrews 11:10, paradise is not here.

“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.” Hebrews

13:15-17

So what should we do since we are leaving physical Jerusalem with its sacrifices? Do not offer the physical sacrifices in the temple in Jerusalem, but we still have to offer sacrifices. Notice these are not the sacrifices of animals; it is not the sacrifice of blood.

Now we all must offer the continual sacrifice of praise to God, Hebrews 13:15. Our praise is now our offering to God. Notice that he explains what this offering looks like.

It is “the fruit of our lips”, Hebrews 13:15, that God desires. Our sacrifice is praising God with our lips. Our sacrifice is the confession of our lips of who He is.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Every hour of every day the child of God should seek occasions to speak humbly and lovingly of the wonderful blessings in Christian service, of the love and mercy of God, of God’s goodness, and of the peace and joy in believing.’

Are we making our offering? We still need to come to God with our offerings. But are we remembering to offer worship with the fruit of our lips? Are we confessing Him to people we know?

Are we acknowledging Jesus to the world? The fruit of our lips must not be filthy, improper words. We must have lips that offer the sacrifice of praise, Hebrews 13:15.

The second sacrifice we must offer is “doing good and sharing the things we have with others”, Hebrews 13:16. These are sacrifices that please God. Animal sacrifices are not the things that please God. Are we offering these sacrifices? Are we doing good toward others?

Are we giving the possessions and wealth that God has so generously given to us? Our possessions are not for us to spend on ourselves selfishly. We have things to do that are good for the kingdom of God and to share with others.

Third, “obey your leaders and submit to them”, Hebrews 13:17. I believe these leaders are the shepherds of local congregations, 1 Timothy 3:1-13 / Titus 1:5-9. They are watching over our souls, which fits Paul’s instructions in Acts 20:28.

They have to give an account regarding their charge and shepherding over us. It is our responsibility to yield to them and obey them. They are looking out for us. We need to let them shepherd us with joy, not with pain and groaning. Shepherds are to help us; they are an advantage for our souls.

Why would we want to treat them badly or ignore their guidance and instructions? Hebrews 13:17. We need to work together with our shepherds for the goal of expanding God’s kingdom in the hearts of the people.

“Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honourably in every way. I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon. Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” Hebrews 13:18-21

The writer is now concluding, and he has some final remarks. He asks for the prayers of the people.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The use of the plural ‘us’ suggests that the author is associated with others and desires that all of them should be the beneficiaries of the prayers of the readers; but, since he shifted to the emphatic singular a few words later, it may be more properly understood as an editorial pronoun, like the editorial ‘we’.’

They have a clear conscience about the things they are doing for the Lord, Hebrews 13:18, but the desire to act honourably in all that they are doing. The author is also hopeful to be with these Christians again, Hebrews 13:19.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is not a reference to the imprisonment of the author, that idea being ruled out by what is said a little later in Hebrews 13:23; but it implies that circumstances beyond his control had hindered him until that time.’

Hebrews 13:20-21 is a powerful doxology. He mentioned the source of our peace, which is God. Paul often refers to the peace of God in his final remarks when writing to others, Romans 15:33 / Romans 16:20 / 2 Corinthians 13:11 / 1 Thessalonians 5:23. It summarises our hope in the resurrection of Jesus and our hope in the blood of the eternal covenant, the bloodshed by Jesus our Saviour, Hebrews 13:20.

Notice the author calls Jesus the great Shepherd of the sheep, Hebrews 13:20. Jesus is the Good shepherd, John 10:11, and He is the Chief shepherd, 1 Peter 5:4. May we, in this hope, be equipped for every good work so that we will do God's will, Hebrews 13:21.

BENEDICTION AND FINAL GREETINGS

“Brothers and sisters, I urge you to bear with my word of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you quite briefly. I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you. Greet all your leaders and all the Lord's people. Those from Italy send you their greetings. Grace be with you all.”
Hebrews 13:22-25

The final verses offer some personal information. He tells his audience that his letter was brief, and urges them to bear with his word, Hebrews 13:22. Timothy has been released; he apparently had been imprisoned, Hebrews 13:23. Perhaps Timothy is one of the leaders mentioned in Hebrews 13:7, whom they were to remember by way of their teaching and faith.

1. Hebrews 13:23.

It is reasonable to believe that this is the Timothy who was Paul's son in the faith, 1 Timothy 1:2.

2. It is reasonable to believe that Timothy was a close friend of the author.

3. He desired to see Timothy and them.

1. Hebrews 13:24.

The author has nothing but goodwill for the elders and Christians to whom this letter is written.

2. The letter was written in Italy, and the Christians there sent their greeting.

1. Hebrews 13:25.

This is a typical closing asking that God's grace be with them. God's grace is that unmerited favour He bestows upon His people, Hebrews 12:15 / Titus 2:11.

2. The only way for Christians to abide in the grace of God is to abide in the doctrine of Christ, 2 John 9.