

THE BIBLE NOTEBOOK

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Verse By Verse Bible Studies

HEBREWS

CHRIST: SUPERIOR IN LIFE AND IN DEATH

A Verse By Verse Study

By

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DEDICATION

TO THE MEMORY

Of

My Paternal Grandfather

John Wesley (Johnny) Sanders

The most unforgettable character I never met

And

My Maternal Grandfather

Lee Ander Cofer

The Most unforgettable character I ever met

I. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST IS DECLARED, 1:1 - 4:13.

A. Christ Is Superior to the Prophets, 1:1-3.

CHRISTOLOGICAL PASSAGE, 1:1-3

Hebrews 1:1-3 is one of the four most important Christological passages in Scripture, along with John 1:1; Phil. 2:6-11; and Col. 1:15-20. The writer takes note of the variety of ways and manners by which God has spoken to man, concluding that God ultimately and more perfectly spoke through His Son. Seven affirmative statements are made about the Son of God in these verses (see list on vs. 2 below).

William Barclay calls verse 1-3, "the most sonorous piece of Greek in the whole New Testament. It is a passage that any classical Greek orator would have been proud to write.

1:1 - GOD...SPOKE. Compare the NKJV:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, with the NNAS: God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways.

AT VARIOUS TIMES. God spoke at "various times and in various ways" "indicates the fragmentary and occasional nature of the O.T. revelation as compared to God's final and complete revelation in His Son Jesus" [BSB -QV].

BY THE PROPHETS. God revealed Himself through the prophets, The immediate readers of this epistle were Jews who would appreciate this reference to the Old Testament prophets, as well as the author's identification with them. They had profound respect for the prophets of old. Many loved the Scriptures deeply. They would agree that God had spoken to the writing prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah(Major Prophets), or Hosea and Amos (Minor Prophets). He had also spoken to the non-writing prophets like Elijah, Elisha and Nathan.

The basic idea of the whole book is that Jesus Christ alone brings to men the full revelation of God and that He alone enables men to enter into the very presence of God. He begins by comparing Jesus with the prophets. "The Lord God will do nothing but He revealeth His secrets to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). By contrast, Jesus is far greater and His revelation is superior.

1:2 - IN THESE LAST DAYS. The Believers Study Bible notes that: "Has in these last days" is understood literally as "recently" by some, but the author should be understood to say that the

coming of the Messiah inaugurated the last days (Acts 2:16, 17; James 5:3; 1 Pet. 1:20; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18) [BSB - QV].

There seems to be common agreement that the last days here means "the entire gospel dispensation extending from the first to the second advent of Christ" [RSB - QV]. In a different context the last days might refer specifically to the days immediately preceding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

BY HIS SON. God is revealed more perfectly through His Son than through the prophets of the Old Testament period. In "these last days," or in this period of time, God has spoken to us through His Son. The Gospel according to John documents this fact. God sent His Son into the world to pay the price for man's salvation and to initiate a new age; the age of grace. He really does love us. Observe in verses 2 and 3:

- a. Jesus is the "heir of all things."
- b. He is the creator of all things.
- c. He is the brightness of the glory of God.
- d. He is the express image of His person.
- e. He sustains all things through the word of His power.
- f. He made provisions for our salvation.
- g. Having provided for our salvation, He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

BY WHOM ALSO HE MADE THE WORLDS. "The worlds" here is literally, the ages, and would include time, space, and the material world. Jesus is the agent of God's creation. John 1:1-3 spells it out:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being (NNAS).

1:3 - THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS GLORY. This expression which means that it is in Christ that the glory of God shines through to us. The NNAS has "the radiance of His glory." The brightness is an "effulgence or flood of resplendent light or radiance. The word means 'an outshining,' not a reflection" [RSB - QV].

THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON. Christ, God's Son is "the express image of His person." This phrase can be translated "the impress of His essence," which affirms the full deity of Jesus [BSB - QV]. The NNAS has, "the exact representation of His nature." Jesus is the exact or perfect representation of God's essence and nature. These expressions in verse 3 are powerful and dramatic assertions of the deity of Christ.

The writer of this epistle was inspired to write that Jesus is "express image of His person."

While studying this passage, I recalled something that helped me understand this. Several years ago my wife and I asked my brother, Mike, a Monroe, Louisiana attorney to rewrite our wills. We were preparing to sign and have the wills witnessed and notarized. Mike handed the drafts of the wills to a secretary and said, "I want them to have two originals each." She asked, "Do you mean one original and one copy?" He answered, "No, I want two originals for each of them." Jesus Christ is not a carbon copy, or even a photo copy of the Father. The Father is original. Jesus is original; one with the Father, the "express image of His Person." See John 1:1ff.

SAT DOWN ON THE RIGHT HAND OF THE MAJESTY ON HIGH. "The picture of Christ being seated indicates the finished character of His once-for-all sacrifice for sin (10:10, 12), and the right hand indicates the place of honor that He occupies" [RSB - QV].

Is it any wonder that His is the "name above every name?" The author of Hebrews is wasting no time in getting to the heart of the issue. He seeks to hold Jesus Christ up to the people of Israel in such a way that they must see Him in His place - the exalted, preeminent, glorious Messiah. He is "the Christ, the Son of the living God."

B. Jesus is superior to the Angels (1:4 - 2:18).

1. He is superior in His relationship with the Father, 1:4-14.

a. He has a name more excellent than theirs, 1:4 .

In verses 1-3, the Scripture declares that Jesus is far superior to the prophets. In addition, the writer stresses that God revealed Himself more perfectly through Jesus than He had through the prophets of old. Now, he will prove that Jesus is superior to angels.

1:4 - MUCH BETTER THAN THE ANGELS. The Jews of the first century held a deep belief in angels. They believed there were millions of angels and that they brought God's message to man. The word translated angel actually means messenger. They believed the angels brought God's word to people and delivered their prayers to Him. For a discussion of the basic Jewish beliefs about angels, see Barclay, pp 8f.

The point here is that the Son is far greater than angels, and that anyone who knows the Son needs no angel to serve as an intermediary between himself and God. The author used proof texts: Ps. 2:7; II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 97:7; Deut. 32:43; Ps. 104:4; 45:7,8; 102:26, 27; 110:1. As The Believers Study Bible [BSB: QV] notes that author quotes seven O. T. passages in verses 5-14 in support of this claim.

A MORE EXCELLENT NAME. One of my first books of sermons was a book by R. G. Lee entitled, *The Name Above Every Name*. I also heard him preach on the same subject. Every time I read this verse or Phil. 2:10-11, I recall how brilliantly Dr. Lee sought to magnify that marvelous and holy name. But no sermon can exhaust meaning of those simple words Paul was inspired to write some two thousand years ago to the church he loved so dearly.

So that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11 NNAS).

b. He has a closer relationship with God than the angels, 1:5-7.

1:5 - ANGELS. As we have already seen, the word angel means "messenger." It goes without saying that a messenger is in the service of the one whose message he bears - in this case, a servant; and the servant is not greater than his master.

According to some surveys there is a strong belief in angels in America at the present time. The renewed interest in angels, however, has not been limited to Christians. The New Age religions (or whatever designation one would give the postmodern spiritual beliefs) have shown an unusual interest in angles. With such interest in angels Christians need to be sure they understand what the Bible has to say about them. Our source is the Scripture, but Billy Graham's popular book on angels should be of interest to students of the Word. According to the Ryrie Study Bible:

All angels were originally created in a holy state, but some followed Satan in his revolt against God and became the demons. Some demons are loose and some are confined. See notes on Matt. 7:22; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6. Angels are created beings who must ultimately answer to their Creator (Col. 1:16) [RSB: QV].

One frequently hears someone say that each person has a guardian angel. The Bible says that God has given His angels watch care over us but it does not teach that each person has a guardian angel. We have something better - God has sent His Holy Spirit to indwell each believer (see John 16).

A number of facts may be gleaned from the Bible about angels.

1. It seems that they are organized and ranked (Isa. 6:1-3; Dan. 10:13; Eph. 3:10; Jude 9).
2. Angels ministered to Christ often during His earthly ministry and they will accompany Him at His return (Matt. 2:13; 4:11; 26:53; 28:2, 5; Luke 22:43; 2 Thess. 1:7-8).
3. They serve believers (v. 14) and watch over them (1 Cor. 4:9; 11:10).
- 4.

Michael is the only one designated an archangel (Dan. 10:13, 21; Jude 9), though Gabriel also has an important position and may hold that rank (Luke 1:19, 26).

THOU ART MY SON. The NNAS translation reads: *For to which of the angels did He ever say, "YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU"?* (Italics added). The point is that God never said that of any angel. These words were apparently used in the coronation of Solomon, and therefore the expression, "this day have I begotten thee" would understandably relate to Solomon or another king of the Davidic line. It must be here stressed that Jesus was not "begotten" in the same sense that angels or human beings were created. According to John 1:1ff, Jesus is coeternal, and coequal with the Father, and as such, the uncaused Cause of everything that exists.

Ryrie has observed that:

In this verse the writer of Hebrews is quoting II Sam. 7:14 and Ps. 2:7. Never to an angel did God say that he was a son, only to and of Christ. 2 Sam. 7:14 was addressed to Solomon, and Ps. 2:7 may have been sung to a monarch on the day of his coronation. Christ, explains the writer of Hebrews, is the ultimate fulfillment of these words [RSB: QV].

FATHER...SON. The NNAS reads: "And again, 'I WILL BE A FATHER TO HIM AND HE SHALL BE A SON TO ME'?" The Lord says this only of Christ - never of angels.

1:6 - WHEN HE BRINGETH. Does He have in mind the Incarnation, or the Second Coming? It might be translated "when He again brings," referring to the second coming of Christ. Regardless of how we answer that question, we must conclude that God expects both angels and Christians to worship His Son.

LET THE ANGELS WORSHIP HIM. The lord says that He gives the title "My Son" to Jesus Christ, but not to angels (vs. 5) and here He commands the angels to worship him. He also expects us to worship Him.

1:7 - OF THE ANGELS. The NNAS reads, "And of the angels He says, "WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS, AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE." The NKJV has, "says: "Who makes His angels *spirits* And His ministers a flame of fire (italics added)." The NRSV agrees with the NNAS. "Winds," is better. The quotation is from Ps. 104:4. Angels are servants of God, as are wind and fire, and as such they are subordinate to the Son.

c. He reigns forever. His throne is forever and ever, 1:8-9.

1:8 - YOUR THRONE IS FOREVER. The writer quotes Ps. 45:6-7, which was probably sung at a Hebrew king's wedding. What was true of the earthly king by virtue of his office, is absolutely and eternally true of Christ "by virtue of His nature" [RSB: QV]. The NNAS renders this verse:

But of the Son He says, "YOUR THRONE, O GOD, IS FOREVER
AND EVER, AND THE RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER IS THE
SCEPTER OF HIS KINGDOM.

The righteous King's scepter is a scepter of righteousness. He reigns in righteousness: the Sovereign of the universe, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

O GOD. "O God' addresses the messianic King as fully divine" [BSB: QV]. He is one with the Father ("I and My Father are one," John 10:30).

1:9 - YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS. It is the nature of a holy God to love righteousness and hate iniquity. He challenged ancient Israel, "But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24).

The Messiah is addressed again as God, stressing His divine nature. This fact must be expressed in these postmodern times without fear of the charge that we are being redundant. There are many cults out there and some of them make a point of identifying themselves with Christ. The Mormons run commercial after commercial in which they offer free of charge to anyone a copy of the Book of Mormon, "the other Gospel of Jesus." One of the basic characteristics of a cult is that they either minimize the deity of Christ or deny His humanity. See the prologue to the Gospel according to John for the Christian's defense against these false doctrines.

ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS. The KJV has "above your fellows." He is above and beyond all others, including angels.

d. He is immutable (changeless), 1:10-12.

1:10 - YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING. He laid the foundation of the earth and created all things. "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:3). For a century, evolution was the gospel of humanism. Today, many scientists and educators have abandoned post-Darwinian atheistic evolution in favor of pre-Darwinian pantheistic evolution. It is recognized here that many Christians, including theologians, subscribe to some form of theistic evolution (God got it started and then left it to the evolutionary process). Not only do both creationists and evolutionists reject this theory, it is such an inefficient method of creation that I find it inconsistent with nature of God we see in the Scripture.

There is a lot I do not know about creation, but this much I do know - my authority for what happened and why it happened was there and we have His first hand account. Creation is an

essential doctrine, but a much neglected doctrine, neglected in part because “scientists” and “educators” have intimidated Christians. There is a disturbing silence among Christians on the subject of creation. The church is failing its members through its silence. If this seems too strong a charge, ask yourself how many of today’s evolutionists once sat as children and young people in someone’s Sunday School class, and under some pastors preaching. It is amazing how many of them really believe science has “proved” evolution.

Ken Ham, Director of Answers in Genesis, asks “Whose word are you going to take - man, who doesn’t know everything and who wasn’t there; or God Who does know everything and Who was there.” God’s people may trust God and believe His Word,

1:11 - THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN. Geologists tell us the earth is changing all the time. Astro-physicists tell us the universe is running down and even without divine intervention, the day will come when there would be no more earth. The sun is being consumed at an incredible rate (in only five million more years it will burn itself out, after having expanded and destroyed the earth!). Stars are fading, planets are changing, oceans are shifting. But Jesus Christ is changeless. He is the same today as He was when He laid the foundation of the world. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever," (Hebrews 13:8).

1:12 - THEY SHALL BE CHANGED. According to the First Law of Thermodynamics, all elements are preserved, but according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, the order of all things is breaking down. The Second Law of Thermodynamics is cited by creationists as one of the greatest arguments against evolution. Park a fifty-thousand dollar luxury car out behind your house for five or six years and see if it appreciates or depreciates in value. Rather than evolution, we see devolution! All material things are changing today and the day is coming when the physical universe we see around us will be destroyed.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up (II Peter 3:10, NKJV).

BUT YOU ARE THE SAME. Immutability is one of the basic attributes of God: “For I am the LORD, I change not...” (Mal. 3:6). Every attribute of God the Father is also an attribute of God the Son. He is the same “yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8).

e. He alone sits at the right hand of God, 1:13-14.

1:13 - TO WHICH OF THE ANGELS. We should remind ourselves that the theme of this section is the superiority of Christ over angels. So, the writer is inspired to ask, “But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? (NKJV). The reference, from Ps. 110:1, is to the final victory of our Lord over His enemies. Jesus alone is invited to "sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." He is preeminent, yesterday, today, and forever!

1:14 - MINISTERING SPIRITS. Jesus is the Sovereign Lord, the angels His ministering spirits “sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” They minister to the children of God.

2. His preeminence is seen in His message of salvation (2:1-4).

a. We must pay attention to His word, 2:1.

NOTE: In 2:1-4 we find the first of five "warning passages" found in the book of Hebrews. The other warning passages are found in 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:12; 10:19-39; 12:14-29.

2:1 - FOR THIS REASON. For what reason? For the reason already given in chapter one. Christ is superior to the prophets, and He is superior to angels. The NNAS reads, “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.”

TO WHAT WE HAVE HEARD. There is a good reason for paying close attention to what is revealed of God to us through Jesus Christ. The author has in mind two revelations, the revelation of the law which came through the medium of angels and the revelation which came through Jesus Christ. Those who neglected the revelation which came through angels were subject to swift and severe judgment. A far greater and more terrible punishment faces those who neglect the revelation which comes through the Son.

SO THAT WE DO NOT DRIFT. The Authorized Version has “lest at any time we should let them slip away.” A number of modern translations prefer “drift away,” “loose from their moorings if they forget how superior Christ is” [RSB: QV].

For most of us the danger is not as much that we will plunge into disaster as it is that we will drift into sin. There are those who deliberately, in a dramatic moment, turn their backs on God. But there are many who day by day drift farther and farther from Him. Barclay translates this, "Therefore, we must the more eagerly anchor our lives to the things which we have been taught, lest the ship of life drift past the harbour and be wrecked."

b. There is no escape for those who reject His salvation, 2:2-3a.

2:2 - IF THE WORD SPOKEN BY ANGELS. This refers is to the Mosaic Law (Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:53). Judaism taught that angels had delivered the law.

Both Stephen (Acts 7:53) and Paul (Gal. 3:19) indicate that the Law was given by angels. In Deut. 33:2 of the LXX, the last clause of the verse reads "at His right hand were angels with Him," which apparently was an interpretation of the "holy ones" in the previous clause [BSB: QV].

“If the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty” (NNAS), how much more so would the word spoken through the Son of God. “The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever” (Is. 40:8, NKJV).

2:3a - HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE...? If the word delivered by angels was certain to be fulfilled, how will we escape the consequences if we reject (or neglect) the message of “so great a salvation” delivered by the Son?”

c. His message is confirmed by God, 2:3b-4.

2:3b - SPOKEN BY THE LORD. The writer of Hebrews says that the word of God was first spoken to New Testament believers by the Lord (Jesus) Himself; and then it was “confirmed to us by those who heard Him (the apostles and other disciples).

2:4 - GOD ALSO TESTIFYING. The Lord sent John the Baptist to bear witness of Christ: “John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, ‘This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me” (John 1:15, NKJV).

And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God" (John 1:31-34).

Jesus added His witness: "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true" (John 5:31).

SIGNS AND WONDERS. “God also testified with them, both by signs and wonders and various miracles.” In the Gospel According to John, the Miracles of Jesus are called signs, and according to the Scripture, “many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did” (John 2:23).

The verse employs all three of the terms generally used in the N.T. to convey the idea of the miraculous. "Signs" emphasizes the divine communication in the miraculous. "Wonders" stresses the impression made upon those witnessing the miracle. "Miracles" is better rendered "powers" and calls attention to the awesome abilities which produce the miraculous (cf. Acts 2:22, note) [BSB: QV].

AND BY GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. “Gifts of the Holy Spirit” have been interpreted in two ways. This may mean that God gives the Holy Spirit to each believer (Gal. 3:5), which, of course, is true. Or it may mean that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to believers (1 Cor. 12:11), which is

also true.

3. Jesus is superior in His purpose, 2:5-18.

NOTE 1. This is a very important section from a theological perspective. In it we will see some specific reasons why the incarnation was necessary for atonement. Verses 17 and 18 are especially important.

NOTE 2: In 2:5-9 the writer considers the question, what is man? A. G. Chesterson said, "Whatever else is or is not true, this one thing is certain -- man is not what he was meant to be. F. F. Bruce said: "The man who says, 'I could not have a high opinion of a God who would do this or that is not adding anything to our knowledge of God; he is simply telling us something about himself.'" The writer of Hebrews goes a step further as he brings Jesus into the picture. Barclay, not surprisingly, has three points:

- (1) God created man a little lower than himself to have the mastery over all things.
- (2) Man through sin entered into frustration and defeat instead of mastery and dominion.
- (3) Into this state of frustration and defeat came Jesus Christ, in order that by His life and death and glory, He might make man what man was meant to be.

2:5 - THE WORLD TO COME. What does the Lord have in mind here. (1) Is He thinking of the creation? If so, the point is that God gave dominion over the earth at the time of creation to man, not angels. (2) Is it possible that He is pointing to a time in our future when men, rather than angels will have dominion? Ryrie says, "the world to come" is literally, "the coming inhabited earth (as in Luke 2:1). A reference to the millennial kingdom on earth, which will not be ruled by angels but by Christ and the redeemed" [RSB:QV].

2:6 - BUT ONE TESTIFIED IN A CERTAIN PLACE. The NKJV has, "But one testified in a certain place, saying: 'What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him?'" This is an interesting way of stating what both the human author and the Hebrew recipients all knew very well. They knew that the "one" who testified was David and they knew that the "certain place" was Psalm 8. "For the author of Hebrews, all the O.T. is the voice of the Holy Spirit, regardless of the human author" [BSB: QV].

2:7 - A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS. "You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands" (NKJV). It may come as a surprise to some that the Hebrew actually used the word Elohim, the word for God (or gods) in Psalm 8. The comment in the Believers Study Bible should help clear up any confusion:

The Hebrew text has [^]elohim ("God" or "gods") in Ps. 8:5, while the LXX, as this text, has "angels." The Hebrew "gods" was used in a lesser sense of both angels and men (Ps. 82:6). Jesus understood "men" as the meaning of "gods" (Ps. 82:6), as John 10:35 indicates (cf. Ps. 8:5, note).

2:8 - UNDER HIS FEET. The Scripture says that God has “put all things in subjection under his feet” (NKJV). The reference is not to Christ, but to man, who was given dominion over the creation (Gen. 1:28), but who lost it when he sinned (Rom. 8:20). In the future Christ will place all things in subjection under His feet and the redeemed who will reign with Him because of Christ's death for sin (v. 10). Man is unworthy of God's attention but God in His merciful kindness has shown man His favor.

WE DO NOT YET. The NNAS reads, “He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.” It is an accomplished fact in the mind of God, though we do not yet see it. It remains to be fulfilled at His return.

In summary, these verses teach us that when God created man He gave him dominion over the world He created. He did not give dominion to the angels. However, in the Fall (through sin) man lost that dominion. Jesus Christ became man (the Incarnation) and through His Own death and resurrection He regained that lost dominion. He does not yet exercise dominion, but with the Lord's return it is assured.

b. Jesus became man that he might die for man (overcome death for man) (2:9-18).

2:9 - BUT WE DO SEE HIM. We have not seen all things brought under subjection at this time, but we may see Jesus now; we may hear Him now; we may know Him intimately right now.

WHO WAS MADE. The Incarnation made it possible for us to see Him “who was made a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone” (NNAS). He was made a little lower than the angels that He might suffer death for man. Isaiah recorded the vicarious death of Jesus more than seven hundred years before it happened. And now, the author of Hebrews, writing after the fact, states it succinctly: "By the grace of God" He died for us (No where is expressed more clearly than in John 3:16).

CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOR. His Incarnation, perfect life, vicarious death, and glorious exaltation are the basis for His being crowned with glory and honor. “That Jesus tasted of death for every man is another testimony to the universality of the atonement” [BSB: QV].

2:10 - IT WAS FITTING FOR HIM. It was fitting for Jesus (and only for Jesus) because He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things that exist. In verses 10 -18 we see another way in which Christ is superior to the angels - He is the Savior.

PERFECT THE AUTHOR OF THEIR SALVATION. The NKJV has, “to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Jesus Christ is the captain (author, origin) of our salvation. He is the source of eternal life to all who believe in Him.

To “make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering” does not imply that there was any imperfection in Him. “Rather, He fully experienced the suffering of humanity through complete identification with humanity. The word ‘perfect’ has the idea of ‘completion” [BSB: QV].

2:10 - ALL FROM ONE FATHER. We are all united with Christ as one in the Father. The qualifying statement, “both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified,” precludes any claim of universalism. Those who are sanctified are those who have been saved and set apart for the glory of God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit Who indwells all believers. Only true believers are “all from one Father.” And because they have received Jesus Christ, “He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

We live in a world that recognizes the recognized in society. We honor the honored in science; glorify the glorified in entertainment; we glamorize the glamorous with pageants. We hang medals on athletes and war heroes, and Ooh and Aah over the lifestyle of the rich and famous. We love polls and champion the Who’s Who in every field. Preachers even publish award winning sermons and vote on Who’s Who in Religion. I have no problem with the giving or receiving of such awards, even though I can hardly imagine Amos, Elijah, or Jeremiah receiving such recognition. Most preachers, however, never expect to be honored, especially in this post-Christian age. It is enough - more than enough - to have been given the privilege of calling our Creator “Father,” and the agent of Creation my “Brother.” Believers are Children of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. That is absolutely mind-boggling!

2:12 - I WILL PROCLAIM YOUR NAME. We must read this as a continuation of the thought expressed in verse 11. Jesus says He will proclaim your name “TO MY BRETHREN, IN THE MIDST OF THE CONGREGATION I WILL SING YOUR PRAISE” (NNAS). I was flattered when as a young pastor I went to hear a leading Southern Baptist preacher who was preaching in a church about two hours away. He was stressing that Jesus is our friend, and that He gives us the privilege of communicating with Him. To illustrate his point he “I see Johnny Sanders out there. If I go out after the service and see Johnny, I will say ‘How are you, Johnny?’ And he will say ‘I’m fine Dr. Eddleman. How are you?’” And then he added, “At least, he had better say it!”

I’ll have to admit it, I was honored when the president of my seminary called me by name in front of a large congregation, especially since it was near my home and some of the people knew me. Some of them had helped me when I was in seminary and they respected Dr. Eddleman. By his calling me by my name in the service he alerted them to my presence and they made it a point to visit with me before I left.

Dr. Eddleman had called me by name many times before. We had spent a lot of time together in the gym while I was in school, and when I was standing in line immediately before graduation, he had walked over and asked, “Johnny, do you think we need to call a little conference

in the gym tonight?" That was nice, but this was different and I was honored.

The day is coming when Jesus Christ is going to call me by name and say, "Come, ye blessed of My Father." All earthly honors will fade in that moment. Earth's treasures and earth's honors will be meaningless. The contemplation of such a greeting is exciting.

2:13 - AND AGAIN. The author of Hebrews continues to quote from the OT Scriptures this time from Isaiah: "I will put My trust in Him" (Is. 12:2). "And again," He says (quoting Is. 8:18), "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."

2:14 - CHILDREN SHARE IN FLESH AND BLOOD. Once again, attention is called to the Incarnation and to the humanity of Jesus. "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (NNAS). Jesus became flesh and blood to overcome death and destroy him that has the power of death (Satan). Bruce wrote: "If ever death had appeared to be triumphant, it was when Jesus of Nazareth, disowned by his nation, abandoned by His disciples, executed by the might of imperial Rome, breathed His last on the cross" [BARCLAY]. But He entered death and overcame it.

Matthew Henry comments on verses 14-18

The angels fell, and remained without hope or help. Christ never designed to be the Saviour of the fallen angels, therefore he did not take their nature; and the nature of angels could not be an atoning sacrifice for the sin of man. Here is a price paid, enough for all, and suitable to all, for it was in our nature. Here the wonderful love of God appeared, that, when Christ knew what he must suffer in our nature, and how he must die in it, yet he readily took it upon him. And this atonement made way for his people's deliverance from Satan's bondage, and for the pardon of their sins through faith [MH: QV].

2:15 - MIGHT FREE THOSE. That is, that He "might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." The word free (deliver) means absolute freedom. It was used outside the New Testament of divorce, so in Christ there is a divorcement from this paralyzing fear of death. As A. T. Robertson points out, ancients lived in fear of death, even though some philosophers like Seneca denied it [ATR: SM]. The author of Hebrews gives the lost another reason for fear of death - there is a judgment following death (Heb. 9:27). Jesus came to set free those who were slaves to sin, and consequently to the fear of death: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). In the same discourse (8:36), He added, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Sin and are serious matters and the unsaved person has every reason to fear. Jesus said, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28, KJV). The lost should fear eternal death, but the

righteous should only fear God in a positive sense - we might call it reverential awe. This characterized the early church: "And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied" (Acts 9:31b, NKJV).

In our modern age of pop-psychology many people are much more concerned about fear and guilt feelings than sin and spiritual death. In Christ there is freedom from sin and the fear of death. One of the great paradoxes in the Bible is found in the relationship between fear and joy. There is no joy in fear of death or fear of the unknown, but there is joy in reverential fear of God. We see that glorious combination in expressed in the women leaving the open tomb on that blessed Resurrection morn: "So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word" (Matt. 28:8, NKJV).

2:16 - HE GIVES HELP. Jesus did not become an angel to die for angelic sin - He became flesh and blood to die for human sin: "For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham." He did not come to earth to save fallen angels, but to save fallen human beings. It is significant that Jesus took on the form of the seed of Abraham in order to "make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Jesus might have taken on any form, including that of an angel, but He did not.

"Seed of Abraham" usually refers to the physical descendants of Abraham, but the absence of the article in Greek before "seed" may emphasize the character of the people, thus the spiritual seed of Abraham: Gentiles and Jews (Gal. 3:29). The same expression in John 8:33, however, obviously means "Jews" [BSB: QV].

2:17 - BEING MADE LIKE HIS BRETHREN. In this verse we have a continuation of the emphasis on the Incarnation and the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The deity of Christ is never to be stressed to the neglect of the humanity of Christ, and the humanity of Christ is never to be preached in any way that denies the deity of Christ. He was as much human as if He had not been divine at all; and He was as much divine as if He had not been human at all.

Jesus became flesh and blood, as we find in the prologue to the Gospel According to John (1:14) "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Jesus is the High Priest of our salvation. This reference (vs. 17) would not go unnoticed by the Jewish readers. If the modern reader is familiar with the Old Testament, this will be more meaningful to him than if he has neglected it. The NRSV renders it:

Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.

From the early gnostics to certain of the postmodern New Age religionists, many have struggled either with His deity, or His humanity. The docetic gnostics taught that He only seemed to be human. Some taught that He was human until His baptism, at which time He became divine

(spiritual), and then before the crucifixion he became human again (they believed spirit could not die). Jesus was both human and divine, and any group that denies either meets one of the basic traits of a cult.

A MERCIFUL AND FAITHFUL HIGH PRIEST. The phrase "a merciful and faithful High Priest" refers to the mediatorial office of Jesus Christ as High Priest before God. The preeminence of the high priesthood of Jesus Christ is a major theme of the Book of Hebrews. He will develop this theological concept at great length later in the epistle.

Jesus is a "merciful" High Priest in that as Man He fully understands man, and He is a "faithful" High Priest in that as God He can be completely trusted by men to be their means of atonement. All can approach Christ with absolute confidence (for He is faithful) and with assurance that they will find mercy (for He is merciful). Note how these twin concepts are developed in 3:1-6 and 4:14-16 [BSB: QV].

TO MAKE PROPITIATION. Our superior High Priest offered the superior sacrifice (once-for-all sacrifice) "to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Rather than propitiation, the word should be translated propitiate (or expiate). *Propitiation* "refers to God's wrath being satisfied by the death of Christ (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2)" [RSB: QV]. *Expiation* has to do with "the removal of sin by the sacrifice that satisfied God. Sin interrupts normal relations with God; expiation removes sin and restores the relationship [RSB: QV]. The Holman Bible Dictionary states that expiation and propitiation are:

Terms used by Christian theologians in attempts to define and explain the meaning of Christ's death on the cross as it relates to God and to believers. Expiation emphasizes the removal of guilt through a payment of the penalty, while propitiation emphasizes the appeasement or averting of God's wrath and justice. Both words are related to reconciliation, since it is through Christ's death on the cross for our sins that we are reconciled to a God of holy love (Rom. 5:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Col. 1:19-23).

Biblical Vocabulary The point of difference in interpretation for theologians has centered on the Greek word *hilasmos* in 1 John 2:2; 4:10. A look at various translations show the distinctions here: "propitiation" (KJV, NASB); "expiation" (RSV); "atoning sacrifice for our sins" (NIV, NRSV, compare REB); "means by which our sins are forgiven" (TEV). Related Greek words occur in Matthew 16:22; Luke 18:13; Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 8:12; 9:5. KJV uses various translations of these words: "be merciful," "make reconciliation," "to be a propitiation," "the mercy-seat," "be it far from thee," "I will be merciful" [HBD: QV].

2:18 - SINCE HE HIMSELF WAS TEMPTED. Rabbinical reasoning with which the Hebrew readers were so familiar is used throughout this passage, and moves to a logical conclusion with this verse: "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the

aid of those who are tempted.” Here we see that Jesus can identify with man's temptations. "He knows what is in every man." Our Savior is not a remote deity, callused by time and space. He has seen our problems through our eyes. He knows what we need right now. A black deacon expressed it so well: “He’s sit’n high an’ look’n low.”

Jesus Christ, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, not only suffered physically for us, He faced all the temptations any human faces in this world. He was tempted to sin, and put to the test by trials, just as any other man. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15, NKJV). But there is more; “not only was tempted by trials that befall humans generally but also by those that were designed to sidetrack Him in the purpose of His coming to earth” [RSB: QV]. A. T. Robertson (Word Pictures in the New Testament on CD ROM) points out that

The temptation to escape the shame of the Cross was early and repeatedly presented to Christ, by Satan in the wilderness (Mt 4:8-11), by Peter in the spirit of Satan (Mt 16:22f.), in Gethsemane (Mt 26:39), and caused intense suffering to Jesus (Lu 22:44; Heb 5:8). {He is able} (dunatai). This word strikes the heart of it all [ATR: SM].

C. Christ is Superior to Moses (3:1-6).

In this section Christ is presented as the “Apostle of our profession, the Messenger sent by God to men, the great Revealer of that faith which we profess to hold, and of that hope which we profess to have. As Christ, the Messiah, anointed for the office both of Apostle and High Priest” [MH: QV]. He is Jesus, Saviour, Healer, the great Physician.

1. A builder is superior to the house, 3:1-4.

3:1 - HOLY BRETHREN. This is the first time the author makes a direct appeal. He also identifies with them by calling them “brethren.” "Partakers" is partners; they are partners in God's service. "Of a heavenly calling. . ." shows that the call comes from Heaven and it is a call to Heaven. The word "consider. . ." means to fix the mind (eyes) on as in Matthew 7:3. Jesus is called "Apostle and High Priest. . ." This is the only time in the New Testament that Jesus called apostolos, though he often used apostello of God's sending him forth as in John 17:3. Robertson rightly points out that these Hebrew Christians had confessed Jesus as their Apostle and High Priest and that if they are tempted to give Him up, they do not begin to understand what Jesus is and means [BARCLAY: 23-25].

CONSIDER JESUS. “Therefore,” he says (based on the points he has already made), “holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus.” He merits our consideration because of Who He is and because of what He is - “the Author and High Priest of our confession.” But there is another reason we should consider Jesus - because we have been sanctified (cf. 2:11).

Lost people should consider Him as Savior and believers should consider Him as Lord. “Jesus is the

Apostle, meaning ‘the one sent from God to represent God to us’ (John 5:24), and High Priest, meaning ‘the one who represents us to God’ [RSB: QV].

3:2 - HE WAS FAITHFUL...AS MOSES. “He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house” (NNAS). In the mind of the Jew, Moses held a place which was absolutely unique. They would, or should understand the point he is making here. The basis for his argument is that the full and supreme revelation of God came through Jesus Christ and only through Him is there access to God. He has proved that Jesus is superior to the prophets and to the angels. Now he will prove that He is superior to Moses. “The author makes no deprecatory remarks about Moses as he did not about the prophets and the angels” [ATR:].

3:3. HATH BEEN COUNTED WORTHY. Perfect passive of axioo, to deem worthy, permanent situation described with the definite claim of Christ's superiority to Moses [ATR:]. The author reasons that the architect is superior to the house. The house of God existed before Moses (II:2, 25). Jesus as God's Son founded and supervised the house of God. The incomparable Christ supersedes Moses because Christ is the builder of God's house and Moses was only a servant in the house.

3:4 - THE BUILDER OF ALL THINGS. “For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God” (NNAS). He is the Architect, Designer, and builder of all things.

2. A son is superior to a servant (5-6).

3:5 - MOSES WAS FAITHFUL. “Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant...” He ranks among the most important people in history. The leader of the Exodus is held in high esteem by both Christians and Jews, and rightly so because he was faithful to the work to which God called him.

FOR A TESTIMONY. All Moses did would stand for a testimony to be spoken later. “The phrase “testimony ... afterward” may refer to subsequent revelations to be given to Moses. More likely, the reference is to post-Mosaic revelation regarding Christ (Deut. 18:15)” [BSB: QV].

Since the first readers were familiar with the rabbinical method of teaching, they would not be surprised by either the repetition or the length the writer goes to make his point. The point is that Moses was a servant (vs. 5), but Christ is a Son (vs. 6). Moses served in the house but Christ rules over the house.

3:6 - BUT CHRIST. In contrast with Moses. As a son He is over the house. In the original it is “very neat and quite conclusive, especially when we recall the high place occupied by Moses in Jewish thought” [ATR:].

The Jews had a high opinion of the faithfulness of Moses, yet his faithfulness was but a type of Christ's. Christ was the Master of this house, of his church, his people,

as well as their Maker. Moses was a faithful servant; Christ, as the eternal Son of God, is rightful Owner and Sovereign Ruler of the Church [MH: QV].

3:6 - WHOSE HOUSE ARE WE. All believers today comprise this "house, whether we think of it as the church or the Kingdom of God. We Christians (Jews and Gentiles) are seen as a whole (the over all spiritual church), not as a local organization.

IF WE HOLD FAST. Condition of the third class (we may, or we may not). This note of contingency runs through the entire Epistle, but the conditional clause beginning with "if" does not focus on doubt. "Here, and repeatedly throughout Hebrews, we find that perseverance in the Christian life is the test of whether one's Christian commitment is genuine" [BSB: QV].

D. Unbelief Is a Grave Matter (3:7-11).

The quotation here is from Ps. 95:7-11. The children of Israel rebelled against God in the wilderness. Because of this, they failed to enter into the land of Canaan and they perished in the wilderness.

3:7 - JUST AS THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS. Appropriate emphasis is placed on the role of the Holy Spirit in the communication of the Word of God. To fail to heed His warning will bring catastrophic consequences. "The Holy Spirit says, " **TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE...**" The quotation in 7:11 is from Psalm 95:7-11. The author has been trying to prove the unique supremacy of Jesus. Now he exhorts them, if Jesus is so supremely and uniquely great, then it follows that complete trust and obedience must be given him.

3:8 - 8 DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS. This warning has relevance for any person, but it had special significance to the Hebrew readers. They would understand why the writer added, "AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS" (NNAS). Both here and Psalm 95:8, the KJV translates it, "Harden not your heart, as in *the provocation*, and as in the day of *temptation* in the wilderness." The NKJV "Do not harden your hearts, as in the *rebellion*, As in the day of *trial* in the wilderness" (italics added for emphasis). Psalms 105 and 106 give a concise Reader's Digest type summary of Israel's four centuries in Egypt, the eventual oppression, God's deliverance, their rebellion in the wilderness and its consequences, the conquest which was never completed and the consequences of that failure. They knew well the history from the Torah as well as those two psalms which were given to keep it before them as a warning.

3:9 - WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED ME. In the wilderness, God says, their forefathers "TRIED Me BY TESTING Me," and saw first hand the works of God for forty years, not only in

judgment, but also in preserving His Chosen People and miraculously sustaining His covenant.

When Satan tempted Jesus, the Lord rebuked Him: “Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matt. 4:7m, KJV). He was quoting a verse they all knew well: “Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah” (Deut. 6:16, KJV). The NNAS renders it, “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah.”

And what happened at Massah? “Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? (Ex. 17:2, KJV). It is interesting that God did not rebuke the people for putting Him to the test at Massah (Ex. 17), but commands in Deut. 6 that they should never do it again (as Jesus points out). Why is it condemned in Deut. 6:16, but not in Ex. 17:2? What has happened between the time they put Him to the test at Massah and the commandment in Deuteronomy? They had been to Sinai! They had entered a covenant relationship with Yahweh. In their infancy they might not have known any better, they could never again claim ignorance.

3:10 - I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION. The first century Hebrews were keenly aware of their history. They had heard many lessons about the rebellion of their ancestors in the wilderness and the bitter consequences of their infidelity.

3:11 - AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH. The wrath of God is an awesome thing to contemplate. The wrath of God is the natural reaction of His holiness against evil. We must face the fact that what man would rationalize as ignorance in such matters. God clearly calls iniquity. His response was decisive: “THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST” (NNAS).

"Rest" is used in the Book of Hebrews in at least four different ways.

- (1) The land of Canaan (3:7-19).
- (2) Salvation as rest (4:1, 3, 8, 9).
- (3) God's rest at the completion of creation (4:4).
- (4) Heaven, the Christian's ultimate rest (4:10, 11).

“In all such cases the word means to desist from one form of activity in order to give oneself to a wholly new enterprise. There is no reference whatsoever to sleep or slumber. To enter God's eternal rest is to devote oneself to the worship and work of heaven, in which there is neither frustration nor exhaustion” [BSB: QV].

3:12 - TAKE CARE. In verses 12-15 the author uses the experience of the Children of Israel in the wilderness and applies it as a strong warning to his current readers: “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God” (NNAS). “The phrase "evil heart of unbelief" can mean (1) an evil heart produced by unbelief, (2) an evil heart resulting in unbelief, or (3) an evil, i.e., unbelieving, heart” [BSB: QV].

There would be intense pressure placed on some of those Hebrew Christians of the first century to give up their association with Christians and their identification with this new movement and return to Judaism. The Lord is using this means to encourage His people to remain faithful and to avoid apostasy. Throughout history there have been people in various religions who have found it expedient to transfer their allegiance from one religion or sect to another. Christians have seen converts, under pressure from family and friends, go back to other religions after professing a faith in Christ. During fifteenth century in Spain there were Jews who “converted” to Christianity to avoid the Inquisition.

The Jewish person who was genuinely saved would not lose his salvation if he withdrew from the church and returned to the practice of Judaism. He would, however, lose something significant in terms of sanctification, fruitfulness, and joy. He would fail the Lord both in terms of his testimony and his service. He would deny himself the rewards of a faithful Christian life. No believer can expect to grow in Christ or to be blessed by the Lord if he grieves the Holy Spirit.

3:13 - ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER. “But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (NNAS). The KJV says, “exhort one another daily.”

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN. Sin is personified here and portrayed as an aggressive, malignant force. This sin of unbelief is referred to in 12:1 as “the sin which doth so easily beset us.” It is not unusual to find sin personified in Scripture: “...Ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23).

3:14 - PARTAKERS OF CHRIST. Those who believe one can “fall from grace” may use passages like this as a proof text, but we must be sure we understand what the issue is here, and keep our interpretation in context. Is the Scripture warning believers of the danger of becoming lost through apostasy? Or, is he warning first century Hebrew Christians of what is at stake if they give up their identification with Christ and return to Judaism? Is the Lord warning of the danger of losing one’s salvation, or is He stressing the blessing that come to the partakers of Christ, “if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end?”

3:15 - DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS. This verse is often quoted in evangelistic sermons and invitations. The NKJV reads, “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” Their ancestors had hardened their hearts and suffered the consequences. These first century believers should learn from their lesson. A word to the wise should be sufficient.

The children of Israel had been miraculously delivered from Egypt by the mighty hand of Almighty God. Because of their rebellion then were forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years. When God had led them out of Egypt, He planned for them to meet Him at Sinai where they would receive the Law and enter into a Covenant with Him. Then He would lead them on to the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey (the place of rest, vs. 11). We must remember

that when they rebelled, the Lord (1) did not return them to Egypt, and (2) He did not let them enter the Promised Land.

Today when Christians rebel against God's plan to lead them into His rest He (1) does not return them to Egypt (bondage, slavery to sin), and (2) He does not let them enter His Promised Land (for believers). Unless they repent and let Him lead them into their spiritual Canaan, they will be condemned to wander in the wilderness (flesh, carnality)

3:16 - WHO PROVOKED HIM? In the current verse Israel's sin in the wilderness is portrayed as provocation or rebellion. In verse 17 their conduct is called sin; in verse 18 it is disobedience; and in verse 19 it is described as unbelief. Here He asks, "For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?" All Israel had rebelled against the Lord, with the notable exception of Joshua and Caleb.

3:17 - WITH WHOM WAS HE ANGRY? "...Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?" Not only do we find the account of their rebellion in Exodus; various psalms commemorate the miraculous deliverance of their ancestors from Egypt. These psalms also detail their inexcusable rebellion in the wilderness and the agonizing consequences of their provocation. The intensity of God's wrath is sobering. He had not forgotten it four hundred years after the fact, and here some 1400 years later the Holy Spirit is inspiring the writer to remind them once again. Those who are shocked at the nature of God's wrath need to take a fresh look at the nature of His holiness. It is a terrifying thing for the creature to provoke his Creator (for sinners to fall into the hands of an angry God!).

3:18 - TO WHOM DID HE SWEAR. To whom did God swear that they would not enter the Promised Land (His rest)? He swore it to the entire adult generation who refused to follow Him.

3:19 - SO WE SEE. As a result of this exegesis of Psalm 95 we see the divine principles God follows in dealing with men and women.

THEY COULD NOT ENTER BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF. The Lord sent Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, through the wilderness to Sinai for the giving of the Law and then into Canaan so that they might possess their possession (enter His rest). They refused to go and their refusal is called rebellion or a provocation. But what was the source of their rebellion? It was unbelief. What can you expect of faithless people but faithlessness?

E. Rest Is Promised Through Jesus Christ (4:1-16).

1. There is a rest that may be entered into only by faith (4:1-7).

4:1 - THEREFORE. There is no break in the argument of Psalm 95. This is a poor chapter

division (Scripture is inspired, but not the chapter and verse designations).

Upon consideration of Israel's history (ch. 3), the author argues that God's promise to His people was not fulfilled by their entrance into Canaan. Therefore, still promised is a rest which has not yet been enjoyed (vv. 1-10), and Christians must strive for that rest, motivated by their own responsibility in the matter (vv. 11-13) [BSB: QV].

The Israelites perished because of unbelief. Those today who follow their example must prepare to face the wrath of God.

LET US FEAR. The one who loves God and trusts Him has no reason to fear. He has no reason to worry about his eternal destiny; what the future holds. But the lost person has every reason to fear, and that applies not only to the atheist or agnostic, but also to those who are “almost persuaded” but ultimately do not commit themselves to the Lord.

His warning is clear: “let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it” (NNAS). “To have come short of it” does not imply that one can be saved and then fall from grace, as clearly taught in I Peter 3:3-5, but points to those who consider Him and then fail to commit themselves to him. The Israelites perished because of unbelief and people who do not believe in Jesus Christ will perish because of their unbelief.

HIS REST. Rest is used three ways in this chapter. First, it is used of the peace of God. Second, it is used in reference to the Promised Land. Third, it is used of the rest of God after six days of creation.

The spiritual counterpart of the earthly Canaan is the goal of God's people today. Some think that the "rest" here is equivalent to heaven, while others see it more as spiritual progress and growth in maturity, occurring as believers are obedient to God's word on their spiritual journey toward heaven. Perhaps both ideas are present in the overall context [BSB: QV].

Did not the people of Israel enter the Promised Land under Joshua? If so, why did they not find rest? A study of Psalm 95:7-11 along with Hebrews 4:1-13 teach us that there was more to God's rest than simply entering Canaan. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

4:2 - GOOD NEWS PREACHED TO US. The NRSV reads, “For indeed the good news came to us just as to them; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.” The NNAS is almost identical, but the KJV and NKJV have “gospel” instead of “good news.” Only those who hear and receive by faith the gospel of Jesus Christ will benefit from it. In fact, those who hear it and then reject it will compound their guilt.

4:3 - FOR WE WHO HAVE BELIEVED. The Scripture is clear: “For we who have believed” - and only those who have believed - “enter that rest.” As Romans 10:9 teaches “ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” And in Romans 10:13 we read, “For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.”

THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST. He is adamant: "AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST." This should strike fear in the heart of any lost person and bring a sense of awe to the hearts of all people, because God is just as resolved today as He has ever been, No unbeliever will ever enter His rest even though He made provisions for our salvation from the foundation of the world.

4:4 - IN A CERTAIN PLACE. “The Greek particle pou, translated "in a certain place," may be indefinite because the quotation is found in three places (Gen. 2:2; Ex. 20:11; 31:17). So, the reference may also be general rather than particular.

GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY. A. T. Robertson has observed that this is not absolute rest from all creative activity as Jesus shows in John 5:17 (“...My Father has been working until now, and I have been working”). Robertson says, “But the seventh day of God’s rest was still going on (clearly not a twenty-four-hour day)” [ATR: p.]. On the seventh day, the day of God’s rest, there is no mention of evening at all. The rabbis said that the other days came to an end, but the day of God’s rest has no end, it is eternal and everlasting.

4:5 - THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST. There is a reason for the repetition we find here. We should pay careful attention - God was serious then and He is serious now. Immutability is one of the key attributes of God: “I am the LORD, I change not” (Mal. 3:6). God’s promise still holds true - you may enter into His rest through faith. As we see in Romans, the faith principle applies to both salvation and sanctification.

Rest in the Christian life comes through complete reliance on God's promises and full surrender to His will (2 Cor. 5:7; Col. 2:6). The word in verse 9 (rest) indicates that, just as God ceased from His creative activity on the seventh day (v. 4), so believers may cease from working for their salvation and self-reliance in sanctification. Or this sabbath-rest may look forward to believers' future rest in heaven [RSB: QV].

4:6 - THEREFORE, SINCE. The first century Hebrew readers would appreciate the argument he is making. “Therefore, since it remains for some...to enter it (His rest)” refers to those who believe. “Those who formerly had good news preached to them” denotes those who were disobedient in the wilderness.

4:7 - A CERTAIN DAY. “He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time (after the entire period of the Judges, some four hundred years) just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS." A hardened heart is a dangerous condition.

2. Rest was foreshadowed in Joshua, realized in Christ (4:8-11).

4:8 - ANOTHER DAY. The logic is irrefutable: “...if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that.” “If” is a condition of the second class (determined as unfulfilled). Joshua (NT name, Jesus) was the successor to Moses who led in the conquest of Canaan. He led them into the land, but he could not give them rest in his day because of their unbelief. The promise remained to be fulfilled at some time in the future. The Christian today cannot fully enter into that rest unless he believes the promises of God and walks with Him in the Spirit. And even if he does that, absolutely fulfillment of the promise (and complete rest) will not be completely realized until some time in the future.

4:9 - THERE REMAINS A SABBATH REST. So, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. This is the third use of “rest” in this chapter (see notes on 4:1). This verse pulls back the curtain and gives us a little richer view of the Sabbath and its significance. Is it any wonder that the Lord placed such emphasis on Sabbath observance (Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy)?

4:10 - RESTED FROM HIS WORKS. The parallel continues as the writer shows that the rest into which the believer enters is analogous to the rest of God following the six days of creation. The word “rest” occurs 292 times in the NNAS translation of the Bible (242 in the OT and 50 in the NT). It is used often in the OT in reference to physical rest, especially in connection with the Sabbath Day or the Sabbath Year. In the NT the references are more often to a spiritual rest, or rest in the Lord. Jesus said:

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS (Matt. 11:28-29, NNAS).

I have often made the statement that only in Christ can you have your cake and eat it, too. You can experience the blessings of the Kingdom of God here and now, really live life to its fullest, without taking anything away from what awaits us in heaven. Through faith the true believer will find rest in the Lord here and now, with full assurance that there awaits him a rest that is complete, fuller and deeper than anything one can experience in this world.

There is another point of interest: “For *the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works*, as God did from His” (NNAS, italics added). Spiritually speaking, we cannot enter God’s rest through our works; but by grace through faith we enter His rest and become His servants [we are saved unto good works] (Eph. 2:8-10). We are not saved by works but in His mercy and grace there is rest from our works. Rest does not point to the cessation of work, but to

relief from weariness and pain toil.

4:11 - LET US BE DILIGENT. In checking synonyms for the word diligent I found a list that included assiduous (hard working), industrious, and studious. When I clicked on studious, I found determined, intent, design, plan, purpose, meaning. What does the Lord have in mind here? To whom is He addressing this, believers or unbelievers? To answer the last question first, He has made it abundantly clear in His word that no one enters His rest (is saved) by works.

knowing that *a man is not justified by the works of the law* but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; *for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified* (Gal. 2:16, NKJV, italics added).

According to this verse it is obvious that the Lord is not saying that a lost person can be saved by hard work, so we must consider another possibility - and that is that He is speaking to believers who have already entered into His promise. If this is the case, we have the answer to both questions. The writer says, "...let us be diligent to enter that rest." We must be diligent "in our experience to enter the rest into which we have already entered. Let us be diligent. The same Greek word is used in Eph. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Peter 1:10; 3:14" [QV: RSB].

We must be diligent, which means that we must be zealous, eager, make every effort to yield ourselves to the Lord in such a way that He can nurture us, grow us, mature us in and through His Spirit. The word carries the idea of active exertion on our part, not to enter the rest of salvation, but to enter the rest of sanctification. Matthew Henry expressed it well:

Observe the end proposed: rest spiritual and eternal; the rest of grace here, and glory hereafter; in Christ on earth, with Christ in heaven. After due and diligent labour, sweet and satisfying rest shall follow; and labour now, will make that rest more pleasant when it comes [QV: MH].

SO THAT NO ONE WILL FALL. Our failure to be diligent in pursuit of holiness (righteousness, sanctification) will cause others to fall, "through following the same example of disobedience." The Christian must guard his, or her testimony and be conscious of setting a good example for the saved as well as the lost.

There is a continual tendency in the church to look back; to think the great manifestations of God are in the past. It seems that we believe that God's arm is shortened and that His power is diminished and that the golden age is either in the past (or future). The writer of Hebrews trumpets the announcement, "Never think that you have arrived too late in history; never think that the days of great promises and great achievement life behind" [BARCLAY]. This is still God's "today" and He is as great today as He has ever been.

We should note two truths. First, a word, no matter how great it is, is of no avail unless it becomes integrated into the heart of the person who hears it by faith. Second, the writer urges readers to beware lest they miss the promises. The word translated beware is the word for fear. This is not the kind of fear that paralyzes, or causes one to flee in a state of panic. Rather, it is the kind of fear that caused one to press on with strength and determination so that he will not miss out on something important.

3. Judgment is certain (4:12-13).

4:12 - THE WORD OF GOD. This denotes God's inspired Word, the written Word (the Scriptures). The believer must have high regard for and complete trust in the Word of God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16-17).

LIVING AND ACTIVE. The KJV has "quick and powerful." The Greek word translated "active" (powerful) is the word *energes*, the root of our English word "energy." The Word of God is "sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (NNAS). "It has the power to reach to the inmost parts of one's personality and to judge the innermost thoughts" [RSB: QV].

SOUL AND SPIRIT. Many people think of the human personality as dichotomous - body and soul. But the Bible reveals a trichotomy - body, soul, and spirit. In I Thessalonians 5:23, Paul writes, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The meaning is that the Word pierces to the depths of soul and spirit, not between the two. They stand for the innermost facets of our immaterial nature, just as joints and marrow the material aspect. Both soul and spirit can be involved in what pleases or displeases God. (For soul, see Mark 12:30 and 1 Peter 2:11; for spirit, see 1 Cor. 2:11 and 2 Cor. 7:1). Also see note on 1 Thess. 5:23-24 [RSB: QV].

4:13 - THERE IS NO CREATURE HIDDEN. The Word of God has the unique ability to discern not only man's works, but also to probe his hidden motivations. That is the reason the Scripture says, there is no creature hidden from His sight, "but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (NKJV). The KJV and NNAS both render it "to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." The NKJV is better - "to whom we must give account."

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST IS DECLARED (4:14 - 8:13).

A. We Have a Great High Priest (4:14-16).

4:14 - WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST. This verse introduces a major new division in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In fact, this is the main argument of the Epistle. The high priesthood of Jesus Christ, already alluded to in 3:1, 2:17, and 3:1 will now be discussed in detail, with special emphasis given to it in 4:14-5:11 and 7:1-28. The priestly work of Christ is superior to that of the Levitical line.

This verse opens a discussion that should answer a lot of questions about the ultimate purpose of the sacrificial system and the priesthood, as well as the ministry of Christ (and the relationship between them). “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession” (NNAS).

The portrayal of Jesus as High Priest must have been as shocking to the first century Jews who rejected Christ as it was exciting to those who believed. The first readers were familiar with the role and ministry of the high priest. They knew their history well, but now they are about to learn some of the deeper theological implications of that office. It is because Jesus is “a great high priest” who offered Himself on the cross for our sins, and returned to heaven that believers are encouraged and empowered to “hold fast” their confession.

4:15 - A HIGH PRIEST...SYMPATHIZE. “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses...” Matthew points out that “Christ executed one part of his priesthood on earth, in dying for us; the other he executes in heaven, pleading the cause, and presenting the offerings of his people” [MH: QV]. He adds,

In the sight of Infinite Wisdom, it was needful that the Saviour of men should be one who has the fellow-feeling which no being but a fellow-creature could possibly have... God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, Romans 8:3; but the more holy and pure he was, the more he must have been unwilling in his nature to sin, and must have had deeper impression of its evil; consequently the more must he be concerned to deliver his people from its guilt and power [MH: QV].

TEMPTED. Our High Priest “has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus was “tempted in all things as we are.” The point is not that our Lord experienced every temptation we face, “but rather that He was tempted in all areas in which man is tempted (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, 1 John 2:16), and with particular temptations specially suited to Him” [RSB: QV]. Temptation, or testing, was possible only because He had come in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). Apart from the Incarnation He could not have been tempted

(James 1:13).

YET WITHOUT SIN. A perfect sacrifice was required and our High Priest offered a perfect sacrifice - HIMSELF, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). He was tempted in all things just as we are, but with one critical difference - He never sinned. A perfect life in the moral realm is every bit as miraculous as a virgin birth in the biological world. Jesus “possessed no sin nature as we do. Because He endured and successfully passed His tests, He can now offer us mercy and grace to help in time of need, for He knows what we are going through” [RSB: QV].

This is something that should not be overlooked in considering the actual humanity of Jesus. It is true that He did not yield to sin, but there is more to it than that. “There was no latent sin in Jesus to be stirred by temptation and no habits of sin to be overcome” [ATR:]. He did, however, have the basic weaknesses common to human nature (hunger, thirst, etc.). Focusing on those areas, Satan used his strongest and most deceptive weapons against Jesus and did it repeatedly, but failed to persuade Him to sin.

The young person who has abstained from most vices and remained essentially pure before God has a great advantage over the one who has indulged in the sins of the flesh. For one thing, that worldly person has stored up memories of the pleasures of the world from which fresh temptations will spring.

4:16 - LET US DRAW NEAR. Let us keep on coming to this great high priest. Because of his perfect life and atoning death, the Scripture says, “let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” We are invited to the throne of grace because of the completed work of our High Priest on the altar. “Man's state of total transparency before a sympathetic, though sinless, God ought to encourage man to come boldly before Him, seeking mercy and grace” [BSB: QV]. The NKJV reads, “Let us come boldly to the throne of grace.” The word translated boldly means “free utterance.” Contrast this attitude of confidence to speak freely before God with that of those who will be ashamed at our Lord’s return (1 John 2:28).

We are to come with reverence and godly fear, yet not as if dragged to the seat of justice, but as kindly invited to the mercy-seat, where grace reigns. We have boldness to enter into the holiest only by the blood of Jesus; he is our Advocate, and has purchased all our souls want or can desire [MH: QV].

In 4:14-16, Jesus, our high priest, knows both God and man perfectly. The passage shows that He is absolutely divine. He is also absolutely human. This means that Jesus can sympathize with us. The Stoics held that the highest attribute of their gods was apatheia (apathy, the inability to feel anything). The Epicurians believed their gods lived in perfect happiness, detached from the world and, for the most part, unaware of it. The Jews had a different kind of God. The Christian worships the same God as the Jews, a God Who identifies with them. It is, however, almost

impossible to imagine the change Christianity has brought to the world through man's relationship with God. The Christian worships a God Who is in sympathy with him, a God Who can be touched, a God of mercy and understanding.

B. Christ Is Superior in His Qualifications for the Office of High Priest, 5:1-10.

1. Responsibilities of the earthly high priest, 5:1-4.

5:1 - FOR EVERY HIGH PRIEST. Responsibilities and qualifications are set down.

- a. He had to be a man, 5:1.
- b. He must represent men before God, 5:1a.
- c. He must offer gifts and sacrifices, 5:1b.
- d. He must deal compassionately with people, 5:2.
- e. He must offer sacrifices for the sins of the people and for his own, 5:3.
- f. He serves by divine appointment, 5:4.
- g. He had to learn through suffering (vv. 7-8).

APPOINTED. The earthly high priest (taken from among men) was (1) "appointed on behalf of men" (2) "in things pertaining to God," (3) "in order to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins" (NNAS). The writer will detail many of the responsibilities of the earthly high priest and then draw parallels between the qualifications and ministry of the Aaronic priesthood and that of Jesus Christ.

5:2 - HE CAN DEAL GENTLY. The NKJV reads, "He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness." In the O.T. a distinction is made between willful sin (sins committed with the eyes wide open) and sin committed unintentionally (missing the mark). The earthly high priest was human and subject to human weakness which should have produced empathy for those who were weak or ignorant.

5:3 - BECAUSE OF IT. Because he is "subject to weakness" (vs. 2), "he is obligated (required) to offer sacrifices for sins, as for the people, so also for himself."

5:4 - CALLED BY GOD. No earthly high priest could take "the honor" of the office to himself. The high priest, in addition to being a descendant of Aaron, "had he is called by God, even as Aaron was" (see Ex. 28:1ff).

2. The Qualifications of Christ are stated, 5:5-10.

- a. He was appointed by God, 5:5-6.

5:5 - SO ALSO CHRIST. The author points out both similarities and differences between the Aaronic priesthood and the priesthood of Christ. One of the primary analogies is seen in the appointment (divine call) to the office: “So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, *but was appointed* by the one who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you...” (NRSV, italics added). This does not deny, or minimize, the glory of Christ. He did not glorify Himself by claiming the office of High Priest; He was glorified by the Heavenly Father.

5:6 - YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER. The Father appointed Him, He said, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek” (NKJV) in contrast with the priesthood of Aaron which ended with death.

b. He suffered in the flesh, 5:7.

5:7 - IN THE DAYS OF HIS FLESH. This denotes the earthly ministry of the Incarnate Christ, Who came as Prophet, Priest, and King. It is His priestly office with which we are concerned here. **PRAYERS AND SUPPLICATIONS.** During His earthly ministry Jesus “offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety.” This is probably a reference to His agonizing experience in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26).

c. He suffered willingly for mankind, 5:8.

5:8 - HE LEARNED OBEDIENCE. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. The Suffering Servant learned obedience through suffering (see Luke 2:52; Is. 50:5-6).

The phrase "learned obedience by the things which He suffered" does not mean that Jesus was ever disobedient but rather that He learned through experience as a Man and through all His temptation and suffering what it meant to suffer and triumph in a way He did not experience before the incarnation. His humanity was in this sense "completed," which is the meaning of the Greek word translated "perfected" in this context [QV: BSB].

d. Being made perfect, He became the author of our salvation, 5:9.

5:9 - HAVING BEEN MADE PERFECT. “Being made perfect” (NKJV), Jesus “became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation” (NNAS). This is not to imply that He had ever been less than perfect in character and nature. But He had to suffer (and die) before He could

declare, "It is finished."

- e. He was appointed High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, 5:10.

5:10 - ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK. Our Lord could never have been a Levitical priest for the simple reason that He was born of the tribe of Judah (7:14) and not the tribe of Levi.

Thus He must be associated with another order of priests, that of Melchizedek. Both Christ and Melchizedek were men (7:4; 1 Tim. 2:5); both were king-priests (Gen. 14:18; Zech. 6:12-13); both were appointed directly by God (7:21); both were called "King of righteousness" and "King of peace" (7:2; Isa. 11:5-9) [QV: RSB].

C. Believers Are Warned of the Danger of Spiritual Immaturity, 5:11- 6:20.

- 1. Failure to grow to maturity carries severe consequences, 5:11-14.

- a. It is not easy to explain the high priesthood of Christ to those who are spiritually hearing-impaired, 5:11.

5:11 - HARD TO EXPLAIN. It is not surprising that the writer would say "Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain," since the subject is deep, and the argument is in the conceptual and abstract in nature. What may have been a surprise to the early readers is the charge that the reason it was hard to explain was that they had "become dull of hearing." Question. How many church members today find theological discussions hard to understand because they are dull of hearing?

"Concerning him" ("of whom," NKJV) might denote either Christ or Melchizedek. While we cannot be absolutely certain, it seems that Melchizedek is the better choice.

- b. These believers had regressed, 5:12.

5:12 - BY THIS TIME. There had been enough time for them to grow to maturity in the faith "by this time."

YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS. "By this time" they should have been teachers but they needed a remedial course in the fundamentals of the faith. This does not mean that every one of them should have been a teacher, but that each one should have known the basic doctrines of the faith well enough to have taught them. How could they teach their own children if they did not know the fundamental doctrines?

What a sad commentary this is on many church members today. A shocking percentage of church members have never gone beyond the ABC's of the Christian faith. This is one reason they are so susceptible to the proselytizing of groups like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. Many of our members are still babes (I Cor. 3:2), lacking spiritual and intellectual teeth necessary to chew solid food. These babies require a lot of attention, and they can create a lot of trouble for the church.

MILK. Ryrie comments on this verse:

Better, although by now. I.e., in consideration of the time they had been believers. milk. I.e., elementary truth (see 1 Cor. 3:1-3). solid food. Deeper truths of the Word; e.g., the teaching about Melchizedek [QV: RSB].

c. Lack of skill in handling Scripture is a sign that one is still a baby, 5:13.

5:13 - EVERYONE WHO PARTAKES ONLY OF MILK. Those who partake “only of milk” are spiritual infants who can only digest the elementary things of the faith. That is all they have ever known and consequently they are “not accustomed to the word of righteousness.”

d. Only the spiritually mature are able to discern good and evil, 5:14.

5:14 - SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE. Through study of the Word and application of the “word of righteousness, the mature believers have had their senses “trained to discern good and evil.” An individual might have been saved many years but if his diet has been limited to milk (the food of infants), he is unaccustomed to the food for mature believers. If he cannot digest solid food (deeper truths) there is no way he can grow to maturity. If they do not know the “word of righteousness” they cannot practice the works of righteousness.

Some immature believers do many good deeds and avoid the more obvious sins, in part, because they do have some knowledge of right and wrong, but also because others often discern or interpret what is good and what is evil for them. But the Christian who really loves the Lord can never be satisfied with that level of commitment (or, is that a lack of commitment?). .

2. We must go beyond the ABC's of the Doctrine of Christ, 6:1-3.

a. There are specific things we should get past, 6:1-2.

6:1 - ELEMENTARY TEACHINGS ABOUT THE CHRIST. This denotes basic doctrines about Christ and His salvation. A. T. Robertson has: “ Leaving behind the discussion of the beginning about Christ...let us be borne on to a higher stage of instruction” [ATR: 373]. The

elementary principles are essential, but not exclusive or exhaustive doctrines.

LET US PRESS ON TO MATURITY. The readers are exhorted to press on to Christian maturity and to stop wasting their time with the ABC's of the faith. They had known the basic teachings of Christ, and His Kingdom from the time they were born again, but they had not grown to maturity. What a waste! They were like babies that had learned to take their first steps, but had never gone to walk on their own. They are being exhorted to go press on to maturity. Paul dealt with the same problem in writing to the Corinthian church: "I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal" (I Cor. 3:2-3a, NNAS).

DEAD WORKS. Dead works are the only kind of works an unsaved person can do, "whether good or evil, since one who is dead in sin can only do dead works that can never gain saving merit before God" [QV: RSB].

6:2 - INSTRUCTION ABOUT WASHING. The readers needed to go on beyond "instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment" to deeper doctrines of the faith. He is not saying that these are not important doctrines - they are. Teachings about washings (or, baptisms, see NKJV), for example, are critical. As Ryrie points out, "The distinction between various baptisms is a necessary part of basic Christian doctrine (e.g., the baptism of Jewish proselytes, baptism by John the Baptist, Christian baptism)" [QV: RSB]. Baptism is still an important doctrine and churches still debate the mode of baptism, baptismal regeneration, and infant baptism. But what the writer is saying is that we must not stop with those basic doctrines. We need to go on beyond these basic doctrines if we expect to grow to maturity.

The plural (baptismon) by itself does not mean specifically Christian baptism either in this epistle (9:10) or elsewhere (Mark 7:4), but ablutions or immersions such as the mystery religions and the Jewish cults required for initiates, proselytes, and worshipers in general [Moffatt:].

The practice of laying one of hands might seem out of place in a list of elementary things. However, it was a sign of blessing (Matthew 19:13), of healing (Mark 7:32), in the choice of the seven (Acts 6:6), in the bestowal of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17f, and in ordination (I Tim. 4:14; 5:22).

The resurrection of the dead (just and unjust) was an elementary doctrine, and it was the source of heated debate between the Pharisees and Sadducees. We should believe in the resurrection of our Lord and the saints, but we must not become so focused on it that we neglect (or refuse) to go on to a deeper understanding of the Lord and our relationship to Him.

To summarize, the passage teaches that:

- (1) We must get beyond dead works (formalism, legalism).
- (2) We must get beyond elementary faith in God (go on to maturity).
- (3) We must get beyond ritual baptism.

- (4) We need to get past ordinations.
- (5) We need to get past the resurrection of the dead.
- (6) We need to get past arguments about eternal judgment.

What are some of the elementary things we should get beyond today? If we are to focus our attention on the spiritual battle before us in a way that will advance the Kingdom of God, what are some of the things which might derail us? If we are to win the lost in the community in which we live, are there not some important doctrines which may become “hang-ups” which may hinder our effort and dishonor the Lord? Consider some practical examples. A pastor who was trying to lead a lost man to the Lord was frustrated in his efforts by the man’s wife - who professed to be a Christian. She aggressively attempted to engage him in an argument over baptism. He came to the conclusion that the wife was more concerned about keeping her husband out of a Baptist church than she was in seeing him saved (and keeping him out of hell).

I believe in security of believers. To me, it is not a “Baptist thing,” it is a New Testament thing. I really do not focus attention on Baptist doctrines. If I focus my attention on the Bible, Baptist doctrine will take care of itself. I believe in security of believers, a term which I prefer to “once saved, always saved,” or even “perseverance of saints.” But that is not all I believe! Unfortunately, I have found a few people with whom it is almost impossible to have a conversation about Bible doctrines when they learn that I am a Baptist. They ask, “Is it true that Baptist believe in ‘once saved, always saved?’”

With some, the issue might be eschatology (the study of last things). I have often been amazed at the militancy with which some defend their position, and how angry some become when discussing the blessed hope of every believer. The issue with others is charismatic gifts, or possibly how or when we receive the Holy Spirit.

Fortunately, there are many Christians today who believe that we can agree to disagree on some of the elementary doctrines of our various denominations and join in an effort to try to save the lives of 1.5 million unborn babies who are victims of the abortionists each year in America alone. The war against drugs and the battle against the gambling menace require the cooperation of all believers.

But there is more. These are things we should stand against. But Christians stand for many positive things and we should not let “elementary” doctrines prevent our cooperating in the battle that is being waged against Christianity by Humanism (modernism) or New Age Movements (postmodernism). Issues like creation, abortion, right to life, and world hunger demand the support of Bible believing Christians.

There is still more. Many church members know a few of the basic doctrines but have never studied the deeper doctrines of the Scripture. Many church members are apathetic toward the deeper doctrines of the faith: Justification, Sanctification, holiness, worship, service, grace, and faith.

b. We must go on to spiritual maturity, 6:3.

6:3 - THIS WE WILL DO, IF GOD PERMITS. This is a condition of the third class. Robertson points out that this is not an idle form with the author of Hebrews. What he is saying is that he will go on with the arguments and not attempt to lay again the foundations. With God's help we can get past the ABC's of the faith and go on to spiritual maturity.

3. A difficult note is added to the warning, 6:4-8.

Here we find the first of a number of "impossible" things in Hebrews:

- (1) The "impossible" of this verse (vs. 4).
- (2) It is impossible for God to lie, 6:18.
- (3) It is impossible for blood of sheep and goats to take away sin, 10:4.
- (4) Without faith it is impossible to please God, 11:6.

6:4 - THOSE WHO HAVE ONCE BEEN ENLIGHTENED. "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit..." This passage has been widely, and often heatedly, debated. Some of the positions are discussed below.

(1) Arminians hold that the people described in these verses are genuine Christians who lose their salvation. If this is true, the Scripture says that it would be impossible for them to be saved again.

(2) Some believe that this passage does not refer to genuine believers at all, but that the "falling away" is from some experience short of salvation. That is, they fall from the knowledge of the truth, not personal possession of it. Glaze holds a position similar to this.

(3) Others understand this to be a warning to genuine believers to urge them on to Christian growth and maturity. To "fall away" is impossible (emphatic), since they are eternally secure. The phrase is there to strengthen the warning. If this is true, the author is simply using a condition contrary to fact to make his point (if you could fall away, you cannot, but if you could, it would be impossible to renew you to repentance again. In this view, verses 4-5 must be understood to refer to the conversion experience.

For additional study, see the following:

- Glaze, R. E., *"The Theological Educator"* New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Fall, 11985, p. 27.
Hobbes, H., *Hebrews*, P. 56ff.
Robertson, A. T., *Word Pictures in the NT*.
Bruce, F. F., *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NIC).

Verse 4 seems to be addressed to genuine believers rather than those who have come close to trusting Jesus and then turned away. It refers to those who:

- (1) "those who have once been enlightened,"
- (2) those who "have tasted of the heavenly gift,"
- (3) those who "have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,"
- (4) those who "have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (vs, 5).

6:6 - TASTED THE GOOD WORD OF GOD. Mortal mind could not have composed it so brilliantly, and mortal tongue could not have expressed it so well. Born again believers have "tasted the good word of God." Jesus is the Living Word Who declares Himself to be the Bread of Life.

And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst (John 6:35, NKJV).

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (John 6:51, NKJV).

WOW! And that is not all. The redeemed have also tasted "the powers of the age to come." Jesus covers the past, takes care of the present, and provides for the future.

6:6 - FALLEN AWAY. The NAS has "and then have fallen away," whereas the NKJV reads "If they should fall away." Either way, the shocker follows: "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance." Ryrie sees this as a "warning to genuine believers to urge them on in Christian growth and maturity" [QV: RSB].

To "fall away" is impossible (since, according to this view, true believers are eternally secure), but the phrase is placed in the sentence to strengthen the warning. It is similar to saying something like this to a class of students: "It is impossible for a student, once enrolled in this course, if he turns the clock back which cannot be done, to start the course over. Therefore, let all students go on to deeper knowledge" [QV: RSB].

This interpretation holds that verses 4-5 refer to the conversion experience.

As noted above, the words "enlightened" (10:32), "taste" (2:9), and "partakers" ("share," 12:10) are used elsewhere in the Book of Hebrews of those who are genuinely saved. So, what this teaches is, if a person could be saved and then fall away (lose his salvation - which he cannot do), it

would be impossible for him to be saved again.”

THEY AGAIN CRUCIFY. Jesus died once for all time for our salvation and He saves us once for all time when we place our trust in Him. In Romans 5:1, “being justified,” in the original, denotes action completions in the past from which the believer receives present and eternal benefits. If a saved person could be lost again, the only way he could ever be saved again would be for Christ to come and die on the cross again. Those who hold such a belief fail to see that by their position “they again crucify to themselves the Son of God” and such a position would “put Him to open shame.”

4. There are precautions we may take to assure maturity and fruitfulness in the Christian life, 6:9-20.

Two things stand out in verses 9-12. First, these people have failed to grow up in faith and knowledge, they have been falling away from their first enthusiasm and their first love, but they have never completely given up their practical service and help for others. They had come upon very arid times (A farmer might say that there had been long dry spell). They were still going to services, singing hymns, and giving tithes and offerings, but there was no joy in their worship. Sometimes the Christian today might find that he is continuing to attend services and to perform his duties, but there is not joy in it. There is no joy in the sermons, Sunday School lessons, or the music. There is no joy in serving on committees or visiting shut-ins. What should he do? He might give up - some do. Southern Baptists have more than fifteen million members, but only about five million are really in church.

The Christian who has lost the joy of his salvation must repent, seek forgiveness and restoration and serve the Lord faithfully with full assurance that the sun is going to shine in his life again.

In the second place, the people are told to be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherited the promise. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (II Cor. 2:11).

- a. Cautious optimism is expressed, 6:9.

6:9 - BELOVED. This is the only place in the epistle in which the author calls the readers “beloved.” The NNAS reads, “But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.”

BETTER THINGS. He means better things than those pictured above. Better things accompany our salvation than just marking time - better things than apathy, better than a life without joy.

THAT ACCOMPANY SALVATION. He looks to better things concerning them, and better things which accompany (hold to, adhere to) their salvation. “Though we speak” is explanatory, not apologetic.

b. The basis of this confidence is found in God's justice, 6:10.

FOR GOD IS NOT UNJUST. We often hear someone say, "I do not want justice from God, I want mercy." Let us not forget that the Lord is a God of both justice and mercy. "For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints" (NNAS). Because He is not unjust:

- (1) He will not forget your work and love, 6:10a.
- (2) He will not forget your ministry to the saints, 6:10b.

c. Your diligence will be rewarded, 6:11.

6:11 - DILIGENCE. The believer's decision to be diligent is a major precaution against immaturity in his Christian life. The Lord is not satisfied with these believers (5:11-14). They have not given up Christ (6:4-8), but many are still babes (5:13), and not adults (5:14); others are in danger of becoming babes (or remaining babes).

Only God can save you and only God can sanctify you, but He does neither against your will. He wants to produce the fruit of the spirit in your life but diligence in commitment to God and attention to the ministry of the Holy Spirit is essential. "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end..."

FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE UNTIL THE END. As we have seen, diligence is essential to spiritual maturity. Now, the Scripture says that diligence will be rewarded with "assurance of hope until the end."

d. Two more precautions are added, 6:12.

- (1) We must not be slothful.
- (2) We should be imitators of those who are spiritually fruitful.

6:12 - THAT YOU WILL NOT BE SLUGGISH. The Lord's desire for us that we "will not be sluggish" (slothful, dull of hearing). One does not remain at the same level of spirituality. He either grows or becomes sluggish. That principle applies to all believers - pastors, missionaries, deacons, or Sunday School teachers.

IMITATORS. Rather than sluggish in prayer, Bible study, witnessing, and ministry, the Lord would have us to be "imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." The author of Hebrews wants to awaken the sluggards and develop them. In order to do so He

challenges them to imitate those who are attentive, those who eagerly hear Him and obey Him. One way of motivating the slothful believer is to point out to them examples of those who inherit the promises (see 110:19 - 12:3). Chapter 11 is filled with worthy examples.

e. Abraham is a great example, 6:13-15.

6:13 - WHEN GOD MADE THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM. God made him a promise and Abraham believed Him. He believed God, remained faithful (endured, persevered) and obtained the promise. Although he never entered into full possession of the promise, he embraced it and claimed it by faith (11:11-13). He never had a deed or title to the land, but it was his on the basis of the promise. The promise of God, which was absolute and could not be broken, involved more than the land. Abraham believed God, knowing that He, in His own time, would honor His promises. The Lord took an oath on it: “For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself...”

6:14 - I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU. This points to one aspect of the promise God made Abraham:

“And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing, And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen. 12:2-3, NNAS).

This promise was fulfilled in “Abraham's temporal blessings (13:2; 24:35), spiritual blessings (21:22), and fame (23:6; Isa. 41:8). So you shall be a blessing. Lit., be a blessing, a certain consequence of God's blessing upon Abraham” [QV: RSB].

I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU. Even when Abraham had no son and when he was well advanced in years, God promised, “I will make you a great nation,” and Abraham believed Him. This points specifically to the Jewish nation, those descended from him through Isaac and Jacob. Of course, many other nations descended from the great Patriarch.

6:15 - HE OBTAINED THE PROMISE. “And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise.” All aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant were fulfilled, even though Abraham had not seen the fulfillment of any of them when he believed God. They were all fulfilled. I will bless you, And make your name great. This promise was fulfilled in (1) Abraham's temporal blessings (13:2; 24:35), (2) his spiritual blessings (21:22), and (3) his fame (23:6; Isa. 41:8).

The Abrahamic Covenant involved three promises: (1) the land (Canaan), (2) many descendants (a great nation), and (3) a Seed in Whom “all the families of the earth” would be blessed (the Messiah). All aspects of the covenant were fulfilled by the mighty hand of the One Who made the promise. When we consider the faith of the man who patiently awaited fulfillment of all God's

promises, it is understandable that we might be astonished at his faith. We must remember that there were precious few believers in the whole world, and not one word of Scripture had been written at the time.

f. Our hope is based on two unchangeable things, 6:16-18.

- (1) The first is God's promise.
- (2) The second is God's oath.

6:16 - MEN SWEAR BY ONE GREATER THAN THEMSELVES. Both reason and experience affirm this claim. Two principles are stated here. First, "men swear by one greater than themselves," and second, "an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute."

6:17 - IN THE SAME GOD. "In the same way" (vs. 16) and for the same reason than people take an oath, "God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath..." A major difference is that finite man may not be able to fulfill his oath, but the infinite God is always to fulfill His word.

6:18 - BY TWO UNCHANGEABLE THINGS. What are the two unchangeable things? First, there is God's promise, and second, there is God's oath. His oath rests in the nature and character, even the very Person of God. Our hope is rooted in the "immutability of his counsel or the unchangeableness of his will [ATR:].

STRONG ENCOURAGEMENT. Based on those two unchangeable things, all believers have a valid reason for being encouraged. Since it is impossible for God to lie, "we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us."

g. Hope is an anchor that holds, 6:19-20.

6:19 - WE HAVE AN ANCHOR. We have an anchor that holds! "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil..."

WITHIN THE VEIL. To "enter within the veil" is to enter into the presence of God. Christians today have an even greater reason than Abraham to have "strong encouragement," because Jesus, our High Priest, has already entered into the presence of God and "assures us of our entrance into heaven as well. Christ has gone ahead into heaven, and as our hope/anchor, though out of sight, He holds us secure, especially in times of storm. Other nautical concepts in this book are found in 2:1; 3:6, 14; 10:23, 38" QV: RSB].

6:20 - WHERE JESUS HAS ENTERED. Jesus, our High Priest, “has entered” the heavenly Holy of Holies with the blood of perfect sacrifice “as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (NNAS).

C. Jesus Is Superior in the Order of His Priesthood, 7:1-8:13.

1. Christ is the superior High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, 7:1-10.

a. Melchizedek held an exalted position, 7:11-3.

7:1 - MELCHIZEDEK, KING OF SALEM. We are introduced to the mysterious Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18-20:

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all (NKJV).

Melchizedek was king of Salem (peace), but it is his priesthood with which we are concerned in Hebrews.

PRIEST OF THE MOST HIGH GOD. In his dual role as priest and king, Melchizedek went out to meet “Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him...” (Gen. 14). It is with his priesthood that the priesthood of Christ is compared - a priesthood which is older and of a higher type than the priesthood of Aaron. This was probably a shocking announcement to the Jewish reader, even though the Scripture had spelled it out centuries earlier:

The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4.)

It was a bold move to put Melchizedek above Aaron. At first it would seem to be a risky claim. But the method is rabbinical and the Jewish mind would understand it. Melchizedek is the only one in his line and stands alone in the record we have in Genesis. The account here is taken verbatim from Genesis, except for “who met,” which is applied here to Melchizedek, Genesis 14:17 applies it to the king of Sodom. In reality, both men went out to meet Abraham, but Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek.

The Jewish readers were familiar with the slaughter of the kings by Abraham. These kings were Amraphel, Arioch, Chedorlaomer, and Tidal (Gen. 14). AMRAPHEL (am' ruh fehl) is a

personal name, probably originally Akkadian, meaning, "the God Amurru paid back" or "the mouth of God has spoken." King of Shinar or Babylon who joined a coalition to defeat Sodom and Gomorrah, then other kings in Canaan and the Dead Sea area. The kings captured Lot. Hearing the news, Abraham assembled an army, defeated the coalition, and rescued Lot (Gen. 14:1-9). Amraphel "cannot be equated with any other king of whom records are available from the Ancient Near East" [QV: HBD], even though some have tried to identify him with Hammurabi. We do know that he was king of Shinar (Babylon).

This is a difficult passage, but it is a theme of utmost importance to the writer of Hebrews. It should be important to any reader who wants to understand the inspired Word. William Barclay called this reference to the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek "the most characteristic thought of the writer to the Hebrews. Behind it there lies ways of thinking, and of arguing, and of using scripture which are strange to us, and which we must yet try to understand" [Barclay:].

To the scholarly Jew any passage of Scripture had four meanings. They were:

- (1) Paced - the literal and factual meaning.
- (2) Ramies - the suggested meaning.
- (3) Derush - The meaning arrived at through careful investigation.
- (4) Sod - the allegorical or inner meaning.

To the Jew the most important meaning by far was the fourth, Sod - the inner meaning, the allegorical meaning, or the mystical meaning. They felt that they were perfectly justified in arguing for what the Scripture did not say as well as what it did say [Barclay:].

In this passage the Jewish reader would not miss what is not said about Melchizedek. For example, the Scripture does not provide him with a genealogy which is contrary to the usual practice in Genesis. But more to the point, it is the reverse of the rules that governed the Aaronic priesthood. The Aaronic priesthood depended upon descent. Character and ability had nothing to do with it. The only thing that mattered was his pedigree. When the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity, certain priests could not produce their genealogical records and were disbarred forever (Ezra 2:61-62). The Priesthood of Melchizedek depended upon personal qualifications, what he was and not what he inherited.

In the study of the priesthood of Melchizedek in this passage we will see that "the entire seventh chapter may be divided as follows: (1) the characteristics of Melchizedek (vv. 1-3), (2) the relation of Melchizedek to the Levitical priesthood (vv. 4-10), and (3) a comparison of the Levitical priesthood to that of Christ (vv. 11-28)" [QV: BSB].

7:2 - TO WHOM ABRAHAM GAVE A TENTH (NKJV). Abraham brought to Melchizedek a tenth (tithe) of the spoils of war. It is significant that the paying of tithes by Abraham preceded the dispensation of the Law (v. 2).

KING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. By "translation of his name," the writer of Hebrews means that

he is giving Greek meanings to Hebrew words. The name Melchizedek means “King of Righteousness,” and since he was the king of Salem (which means peace), he was “also king of Salem, which is king of peace.” It seems to have been a common practice for ancients to give a tenth of spoils to their gods. Abraham recognized Melchizedek as priest of the God Most High.

7:3 - WITHOUT FATHER, WITHOUT MOTHER. The NNAS translates the verse:

Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.

The KJV has “without descent,” but modern translations clarify it with the words “without genealogy.” No genealogical records are given to qualify him for his office as priest. Even though Melchizedek is obviously an Old Testament “type” of Christ, this is not used to claim a supernatural birth. “Without father . . .” does not mean that he had no parents. It does not claim that “he was not born or did not die, but only that the Scriptures contain no record of these events so that he might be more perfectly likened to Christ” [QV: RSB].

Melchizedek stands alone in Genesis as a prominent person devoid of genealogy. He has been made even more mysterious by a misinterpretation of the significance of this. Matthew Henry points out that

Nothing is recorded as to the beginning or end of his life; thus he typically resembled the Son of God, whose existence is from everlasting to everlasting, who had no one that was before him, and will have no one come after him, in his priesthood. Every part of Scripture honours the great King of Righteousness and Peace, our glorious High Priest and Saviour; and the more we examine it, the more we shall be convinced, that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy [QV: MH].

b. The superiority of Melchizedek’s priesthood is stressed, 7:4-10.

7:4 - OBSERVE HOW GREAT A MAN. “Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils” (NNAS). The greatness of Melchizedek is amplified by the fact that Abraham, of all people, would bring tithes to him. When we consider the role of the one who brought the tithe, the patriarch Abraham, we are impressed with the preeminence of the priesthood of Melchizedek. The Jewish reader would never miss the point as to the role of the one who did the blessing and the one who received the blessing (v. 1). “Abraham, to whom God gave the promises, doubly acknowledged his inferiority to Melchizedek” QV: RSB].

7:5 - THE SONS OF LEVI. The sons of Levi (Aaronic priests) “who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren,

although these are descended from Abraham” (NNAS), who acknowledged the preeminence of the priesthood of Melchizedek.

7:6 - ONE WHOSE GENEALOGY IS NOT TRACED. That is, Melchizedek. “...The one whose genealogy is not traced from them (the sons of Levi) collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises” (NNAS). The proof that the priesthood of Melchizedek (and that of Christ) is superior to the Aaronic (Levitical) priesthood is that “Levi's great-grandfather Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, and that Levi, though unborn, was involved (v. 9)” [QV: RSB].

7:7 - THE LESSER IS BLESSED BY THE GREATER. The conclusion we should draw from the above argument is that “without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater.” The greatness of Melchizedek is seen in his blessing Abraham.

7:8 - IN THIS CASE...IN THAT CASE. “In this case (the Levitical priests and their priesthood) mortal men receive tithes, but in that case (Melchizedek and his priesthood) one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on.” “Nowhere in the record is it said that Melchizedek lost his priestly office by death, in contrast to the Levitical priests who died generation after generation” [QV: RSB]. Melchizedek is a type of Christ. Not only does the Genesis account not mention either his parents, or his descendants, it does not mention the end of his priesthood. No mention is made of his death.

7:9 - LEVI, WHO RECEIVED TITHES, PAID TITHES. The greatness of Melchizedek (as well as the supremacy of his priesthood), is seen in that all Levitical priests paid tithes to Him. They are represented in Abraham, even though they had not been born.

7:10 - IN THE LOINS OF HIS FATHER. For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. “Abraham, the ancestor, is seen as containing within himself his descendant, Levi (cf. Adam and the human race, Rom. 5:12)” [QV: RSB].

2. The Levitical priesthood yields to the superior priesthood of Jesus Christ, 7:11-24.

As we read this passage, we should never lose sight of the basic theme of the epistle. The idea of a personal relationship with God and how it is established is ever in the mind of the writer. To him, righteousness (a Pauline term) “religion” (popular term) is access to God’s presence; that which allows us to come into the presence of God (as His children), with nothing between us and Him. This is the relationship the old Jewish religion tried to produce through sacrifices and offerings and through the law.

They could not establish a relationship with Him through the law. They tried but failed. That was where the sacrificial system came into play. When a person broke the law, he required sacrifice was made and the breach was supposed to be healed by the sacrifice. Without the Levitical sacrifices to atone for the breach in the law, restoration would have been impossible. The law would

have been a complete failure. The old priesthood depended upon the flesh. The priest had to be a pure descendant of Aaron. But even then, there were 142 physical blemishes that could disqualify him (Lev. 21). Disqualification was strictly physical.

The priesthood of Jesus Christ is indestructible and without defect of any kind. His priesthood depends not on physical things which are subject to defect and disqualification, but upon spiritual things - His character, His nature, His person. These are without spot of blemish and therefore, not subject to disqualification.

- a. A change in the way of perfection was necessary, 7:11-12.

7:11 - NOW IF PERFECTION WAS THROUGH THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD.

This is a condition of the second class, assumed to be false: “If perfection was through the Levitical law (which it is not)” is the idea. The Levitical law never accomplished its purpose.

PERFECTION. Perfection means completeness or maturity (6:1, teleiotes) and “in this context indicates making men acceptable to God. ‘Another priest’ was necessary because the Levitical priesthood, with its laws and sacrifices, could not make men acceptable to God” [QV: BSB]. This points more to the fact of one’s relationship with God than to the quality, or state of the believer’s life.

ANOTHER PRIESTHOOD. The writer reasons:

Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), *what further need was there for another priest* to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? (Italics added for emphasis).

One proof that Christ is superior to the law is that the fact that the law could not produce perfection, and Jesus can. The Levitical priesthood failed to give men a perfectly adequate relationship with God [Moffatt:]. “The priesthood and law by which perfection could not come, are done away; a Priest is risen, and a dispensation now set up, by which true believers may be made perfect” [QV: MH].

To the first century Jewish reader, the contrast between the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek and that of Aaron would have been arresting.

7:12 - WHEN THE PRIESTHOOD IS CHANGED. It was changed because it was inadequate, and it was inadequate because it could not produce perfection (a right relationship with God). Jesus, Who changed it, is the authority behind the declaration that it is changed.

A CHANGE OF LAW. Follow the logic: “For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is

necessarily a change in the law as well” (NRSV). “A change in the priesthood from the Levitical to Christ as Melchizedek priest requires an end to the Mosaic Law. For Paul's different, but nonconflicting, argument on the abrogation of the Mosaic Law, see Rom. 7:1-6; 2 Cor. 3:7-11; Gal. 3:19-25” [QV: RSB]. Matthew Henry avows

That there is such a change is plain. The law which made the Levitical priesthood, showed that the priests were frail, dying creatures, not able to save their own lives, much less could they save the souls of those who came to them. But the High Priest of our profession holds his office by the power of endless life in himself; not only to keep himself alive, but to give spiritual and eternal life to all who rely upon his sacrifice and intercession [QV: MH].

b. Jesus came from the tribe of Juda, not Levi, 13-14.

7:13 - THE ONE CONCERNING WHOM. That is, Jesus. He is of the tribe of Judah, a tribe “from which no one has officiated at the altar.” .

7:14 - OUR LORD DESCENDED FROM JUDAH. “ It is evident” from the genealogy set forth in Matthew 1 “that our Lord was descended from Judah, “a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.”

c. There was a change in the qualifications for the priesthood 7:15-17.

7:15 - THIS IS CLEARER STILL. What is clearer still is simply this: “if another priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek.” Jesus could not have served as priest without there being another order of priests, the order of Melchizedek

7:16 - WHO HAS BECOME. Jesus became our high priest, “not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life” (or, “power of an endless life,” KJV). This argument must be won in the mind of the Jewish reader and the defense of the Gospel set forth here is compelling. The higher order of His priesthood was based upon higher qualifications for the office.

LAW OF PHYSICAL REQUIREMENT. The KJV reads, “the law of a carnal commandment, and the NKJV renders it, “the law of a fleshly commandment.” This does not mean that the law was “carnal” in the sense of evil, or ungodly, but that the Levitical priesthood was based on the “law of physical requirement.”

7:17 - YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER. The Levitical priest, regardless of his qualifications, served out his years and then died and his priesthood was over. Of Jesus, and Jesus alone, can it be

said, “You are a priest forever.”

ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK. Not only was Jesus of a different order, it was a superior order. This was not to impugn the order of Aaron, but to show that the order of Melchizedek was unique. He served, not because He was descended from Aaron, but because He was commissioned by God.

d. We have a new way of access to God, 7:18-19.

7:18 - ON THE ONE HAND. The contrast between the priesthood of Aaron and that of Melchizedek continues: “on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness” (NNAS). The Mosaic Law had to be set aside (because it made nothing perfect, vs. 19), in favor of a better and more effective way of dealing with sin.

7:19 - ON THE OTHER HAND. On one hand, the Mosaic Law had to be set aside. On the other hand, is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” There is a new and better way of access to God.

e. There is a change in the priesthood concerning the oath, 7:20-22.

7:20 - IT WAS NOT WITHOUT AN OATH. The oath of office is important, both in symbol and substance. The preeminence of His priesthood is demonstrated in His oath.

7:21 - AN OATH THROUGH THE ONE. The Levitical priests “became priests without an oath, but He with an oath through the One who said to Him, "THE LORD HAS SWORN AND WILL NOT CHANGE HIS MIND, 'YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER." The appointment of Christ, after the order of Melchizedek, was accompanied by an oath. “A thing which God confirms by an oath must be something so utterly unchangeable that it is woven into the fiber of the universe and must remain forever” [BARCLAY:].

7:22 - SO MUCH MORE ALSO JESUS. The NNAS has, “so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.” The KJV reads “the surety of a better testament.”

The better covenant, of which Jesus was the Surety, is not here contrasted with the covenant of works, by which every transgressor is shut up under the curse. It is distinguished from the Sinai covenant with Israel, and the legal dispensation under which the church so long remained. The better covenant brought the church and every believer into clearer light, more perfect liberty, and more abundant privileges [QV: MH].

God's oath guarantees a better covenant. "Surety" (KJV) is a pledge or guarantee. It is not clear whether the author means that Jesus is God's pledge to man or man's pledge to God, or both. He is, in fact, both; as the Mediator (8:6) between God and man. He is both Son of God and Son of Man.

f. There is a change in the number of priests, 7:23-24.

7:23 - THE FORMER PRIESTS. The former priests, the Levitical priests "existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing." The emphasis is upon succession rather than the number serving simultaneously.

In the order of Aaron there was a multitude of priests, of high priests one after another; but in the priesthood of Christ there is only one and the same. This is the believer's safety and happiness, that this everlasting High Priest is able to save to the uttermost, in all times, in all cases. Surely then it becomes us to desire a spirituality and holiness, as much beyond those of the Old Testament believers, as our advantages exceed theirs [QV: MH].

7:24 - BUT JESUS...HOLDS HIS PRIESTHOOD PERMANENTLY. There is no longer any need for a succession of priests. The priesthood of Christ "continues forever," because He "holds His priesthood permanently."

3. Christ holds a permanent priesthood, 7:25-28.

7:25 - THEREFORE HE IS ABLE TO SAVE FOREVER. In His office as High Priest Jesus Christ is "able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (NNAS). He saves all who come to God through Him. He states it clearly in John 6:37: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (NKJV). It is just as clear that no one will be saved except through Him: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, NKJV).

Where the NNAS has "save forever," the NKJV renders it "save to the uttermost."

The word translated "uttermost" has been understood by some to mean "completely," as with the woman whose body could not be completely straightened (Luke 13:11). Also, the meaning of "forever" is attested by extrabiblical Greek. Either rendering fits this context well [QV: BSB].

INTERCESSOR. He came to seek and to save the lost, He died for our sins, and He lives to make intercession for us. “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus (I Tim. 2:5, NKJV).

7:26 - FOR IT IS FITTING. Of the several versions checked, all translate the opening words of the verse, “For it is fitting,” except the NIV. For example, the NRSV renders it, “*For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.*” The NIV reads, “*Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*”

SUCH A HIGH PRIEST. It is appropriate that such a High Priest be:

Holy - set apart, hallowed, consecrated, different from ordinary things. Holy describes a person not so much as he appears to other people, but as he appears to God.

Blameless - immaculate, undefiled. In Levitical terminology, it is not only fitting, but essential that such a High Priest be without spot or blemish. Blameless (undefiled in KJV) is not merely undefiled in ritual purity, but genuine ethical purity.

Pure - chaste, pristine, unspotted. As we have seen in 4:15, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”

Set apart from sinners. The earthly priest was not sinless, but the High Priest Who is able to save sinners must Himself be set apart from sinners.

Exalted above the heavens. “Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).

7:27 - WHO DOES NOT NEED...LIKE THOSE HIGH PRIESTS. In contrast to the old order of high priests who had to offer sacrifices for his own sins, our eternal High Priest never needs to offer a sacrifice for his own sins. Jesus “does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (NNAS).

The high priest did not make daily sacrifices for his sins, but when he did sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), it was necessary to

offer first for himself. The meaning is clear: Christ always intercedes for His people but never offers sacrifice for Himself [QV: BSB].

Our High Priest, the preeminent High Priest, offered the perfect sacrifice - Himself, a perfect sacrifice. Furthermore, it was a once-for-all sacrifice. He Who all the times loves us once for all died for us.

7:28 - THE LAW APPOINTS MEN. The contrast continues: “For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever.” The Law appointed men who were weak, but God appointed a Son, Who is “perfect forever.”

4. Jesus is our High Priest, 8:1-13.

a. Jesus is the minister of the sanctuary, 8:1-2.

8:1 - THE MAIN POINT. The writer says here that

the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man (8:1-2, NAS).

HIS SEAT. Jesus, the superior High Priest, having offered the perfect sacrifice (Himself), re-entered the heavenly Holy of Holies with the blood of perfect sacrifice and sprinkled it before the mercy seat of heaven, has taken “His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens...” “His Majesty in the heavens” is simply a Jewish way of referring to God.

8:2 - A MINISTER IN THE SANCTUARY. The earthly high priest ministered in an earthly sanctuary, whereas Jesus ministers in the heavenly sanctuary. No distinction is made between the holy place and the most holy place (holy of holies) in the heavenly sanctuary as there is in the earthly tabernacle or temple. The superiority of His priesthood is stressed once again.

THE TRUE TABERNACLE. Just as Jesus is the better high priest, “The true tabernacle” in

heaven is better than the earthly tabernacle. Here the perfect and eternal tabernacle is contrasted with the imperfect, and temporal tabernacle of Moses in the wilderness. Jesus Christ is the exalted Minister of the true tabernacle, “the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.”

b. Jesus offers real sacrifices, 8:3-5.

8:3 - SOMETHING TO OFFER. As all the Jewish readers well knew, “...every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices;” so it stands to reason that “it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer.” The high priest must have something to offer, and he must have a sanctuary in which to offer it. Jesus Christ was disqualified from using the earthly sanctuary because of His descent from the tribe of Judah, and not from the tribe of Levi. For that reason His sanctuary must be heaven, and His offering was Himself. He is both the perfect high priest and the perfect sacrifice..

8:4 - IF HE WERE ON EARTH. Follow the logic: “...if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law...” If He were on earth He would not be qualified by the Law to serve as a priest, not to mention high priest, because. Levitical priests offered gifts, “according the Law,” on earth. The sphere of Jesus ministry is in heaven, not on earth.

8:5 - A COPY AND SHADOW. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is now offering an explanation of both the Law and the sacrificial system to Hebrew Christians.

who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN (NAS).

The entire sacrificial system was a shadow or a pattern of that which was to come. All the hopes as well as the imagery of the sacrificial system are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. See Exodus 25:40.

The substance, or summary, of what had been declared was, that Christians had such a High Priest as they needed. He took upon himself human nature, appeared on earth, and there gave himself as a sacrifice to God for the sins of his people. We must not dare to approach God, or to present any thing to him, but in and through Christ, depending upon his merits and mediation; for we are accepted only in the Beloved. In all obedience and worship, we should keep close to God's word, which is the only and perfect standard. Christ is the substance and end of the law of righteousness. But the covenant here referred to, was that made with Israel as a nation, securing temporal benefits to them. The promises of all spiritual blessings, and of eternal life, revealed in the gospel, and made sure through Christ,

are of infinitely greater value. Let us bless God that we have a High Priest that suits our helpless condition [QV: MH].

c. Jesus is the mediator of a superior covenant, 8:6-13.,

8:6 - A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY. “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises” (NAS). We have a perfect covenant established by a perfect Mediator. This “more excellent ministry” relates to all five points of superiority of the priesthood of Jesus Christ over the Levitical priesthood.

SUMMARY OF THE FIVE POINTS OF THE SUPERIORITY OF JESUS CHRIST AS HIGH PRIEST

1. He is a superior priest to Aaron, 8:1; 4:16-7:28.
2. He works for a better sanctuary, 8:2, 5.
3. He offers a better sacrifice, 8:3f.
4. He is a mediator of a superior covenant, 8:6.
5. His work rests on a superior promise, 8:6.

The covenant Christ mediates is a better covenant, since it is enacted on better promises. In verses 6-13, the new covenant is contrasted with that first covenant (v. 7); i.e., the Mosaic Law (Ex. 19:5). Christ's blood is the basis of the new covenant and pays for the sins of all (Matt. 26:28); Christians are ministers of it (2 Cor. 3:6); and it will yet have an aspect of its fulfillment in relation to Israel and Judah in the Millennium (as predicted in Jer. 31:31-34) [RSB: QV].

8:7 - THE FIRST COVENANT. It follows that ... “if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second.” The prophecy of a new covenant in Jer. 31:31-34 points both to the inadequacy and temporary nature of the Mosaic Law.

FAULTLESS. This is a condition of the second class and assumes that the old covenant was not without fault. This was a serious charge. To the first century Jewish reader it was nothing short of shocking.

8:8 - A NEW COVENANT. The charge that the first covenant was not without fault was indeed a serious charge. This probably explains why the writer immediately goes on to the second covenant without amplifying the charge of weaknesses in the first covenant. The old covenant was a good covenant, but the Jews failed to keep it. So, God gave a new covenant of grace to replace the old covenant of law. The Scripture reads:

For finding fault with them, He says, "BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH;

The "new covenant," we learn from Jer. 31:31-34, was to be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Here the writer is inspired by the Holy Spirit to apply it to Christians. Some students of the Word of God will see this as reference to spiritual Israel (Christians, the church). Others believe that Jeremiah's promise is to be fulfilled eschatologically, that is, in a coming millennial age.

8:9 - THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT.

NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD.

8:10 - FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT.

FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

The new covenant has a new dimension. It is an inner covenant based on the power and ministry of God within the mind and the heart. The two terms, mind and heart, cover the whole of man's inner nature.

8:11 - ALL WILL KNOW ME.

AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN, AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,' FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME, FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

Under the new covenant all will be taught the Word of God (Is. 54:13; John 6:45), whereas under the law, the old covenant, only the educated scribe could understand the fine points of the law.

8:12 - I WILL BE MERCIFUL.

FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I
WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE.

The new covenant is a covenant of mercy in which a loving Heavenly Father forgives the sins of all those who enter a covenant relationship with Him.

8:13 - OBSOLETE. The writer is writing as though the Old Testament (old covenant) legal system and ceremonial system were about to vanish before the new covenant of grace. The NAS reads:

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

If this had been written after A.D. 70 it seems that he would have written, "has vanished." Since he writes that it "is becoming obsolete," it seems that the epistle was written just prior to the great dispersion which was about to take place after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70

WE MUST CONCLUDE THAT

1. His is a superior ministry, 8:6.
2. His is a superior covenant, 8:7-13.
3. His is a superior sanctuary, 9:1-12.
4. His is a superior sacrifice, 9:13-10:18.
5. His is a superior promise, 10:19-12:3.
6. His is a superior priesthood, 4:16:7:28/

III. JESUS CHRIST IS SUPERIOR IN HIS PRIESTLY MINISTRY, 9:1-10:30.

The author has proved that Jesus is the One Who leads us into a right relationship with God. He is "the way, the truth, and the light," (John 14). He is the One through Whom we have access to God. The inspired writer has demonstrated that the highest and best this world has to offer is but a shadow, a pale copy of that which is in heaven. In fact, the entire sacrificial system given by God to Israel to enable them to worship Him is but a shadow (or type) of that which was to come. The worship that people offered under the old Covenant was but "a pale copy and ghostlike shadow of the real worship, which Jesus, the real High Priest, alone can offer" [BARCLAY:]. In chapter nine he will make this clear as he describes the Tabernacle and the ministry of the earthly High Priest.

The Tabernacle is described in Exodus 25-31 and 35-40. The court of the Tabernacle was 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. It was surrounded by a curtain-like fence of fine, twisted linen which was seven and one-half feet high, which represented the wall of holiness that surrounds the presence of God. The curtain was supported by 20 pillars on the north and south and 10 on the east and west sides. The silver capped pillars were set in sockets of brass. The one gate, on the east side was 30 x 7 1/2 feet wide. It was made of fine, twisted linen wrought with blue, purple, and scarlet.

The Tabernacle was constructed of 48 acacia beams, 15 feet high and 2' 3" wide. They were overlaid with pure gold and set in sockets of silver and bound together by outside connecting rods and by a wooden tie-beam which ran through the center of them.

The brazen altar in the outer court was 7 1/2 feet square and 4 1/2 high. Also located in this area was the laver, made of brass mirrors of the women. The priests bathed in the water in the laver before they served.

The Tabernacle was divided into two parts. The first part, the Holy Place, measuring 15 x 15 x 30, made up two-thirds of it. The Most Holy Place (the Holy of Holies) measured 15 x 15 x 15 feet.

THE HOLY PLACE CONTAINED:

1. The golden lamp stand stood on the south side. It was made of pure gold (one talent = 75 pounds). It was fed with pure olive oil and the lamps were always lighted.
2. The table for the shewbread, located on the north side, measured 3' x 18" and stood 2' 3" high. Twelve loaves were placed on it in two stacks every Sabbath.
3. The altar of incense was made of acacia wood sheathed in gold. It was 18" square, 3' high. Incense, symbolizing the prayers of the people, were burned morning and evening.

THE MOST HOLY PLACE CONTAINED:

1. The Ark of the Covenant, which contained the golden pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the Law.
2. The Mercy Seat was the lid or covering of the Ark. On it were two cherubim of solid gold. God said,

"There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel."

- A. The Earthly Priests Ministered in the Earthly Sanctuary, 9:1-10.

Five reasons are set forth in this passage explaining why the sanctuary of the Old Covenant was inferior to the heavenly sanctuary in which Jesus Christ ministers as the supreme High Priest.

1. It was on earth and it was built of materials of the earth, 9:1.
2. It was only a shadow of that which was to come, 9:2-5.
3. It was inaccessible to the people (except the priests), 9:6-7.
4. It was a temporary sanctuary, 9:8.
5. It was ineffective in changing hearts, 9:9-10.

1. The Tabernacle of the first covenant is described, 9:1-5.

9:1 - REGULATIONS OF DIVINE WORSHIP. The first covenant, which “is becoming obsolete and growing old” and “ready to disappear” (8:13) “had regulations of divine worship and the earthly sanctuary.” The repetition is not without purpose here. This “general epistle” to Hebrew believers was of utmost importance, yet believers would not hold copies in their hands for centuries (until after the Gutenberg press). During the early church period and for hundreds of years afterwards ministers would read from the scrolls in worship services and Bible studies in church or in home churches. People had to learn the Scripture by memorization or a systematic study. The repetition and seeming over simplification (for Jewish readers, anyway) was important.

The Hebrew readers were not only acquainted with the regulations of worship under the old covenant, they held them in high esteem, as evidenced by their continuing to go to the Temple for Passover, Pentecost, and other holy days. For example, there is Paul’s determination to go to Jerusalem for Passover at the close of the Third Missionary Journey, even though he was warned of the danger awaiting him.

9:2 - THE HOLY PLACE. “For there was a tabernacle prepared, the outer one, in which were the lamp stand and the table and the sacred bread; this is called the holy place.” “The outer one” refers to the first part of the Tabernacle itself, which measured 15' x 15' 30' (two-thirds of the Tabernacle.

The Tabernacle, or tent of meeting, was a “sacred tent, a portable and provisional sanctuary, where God met His people (Ex. 33:7-10). A tent was the dwelling place of a nomadic person” [HBD: QV]. As already seen, it was divided into two parts.

LAMP STAND. The lamp stand served a practical service. Since there was no window in the Holy Place, the priest depended upon it for light.

TABLE. As we have seen, this is the table for the “sacred bread” (shewbread, KJV; Showbread, NKJV). The Shewbread was:

A sacred loaf made probably of barley or wheat which was set before the Lord as a continual sacrifice (Ex. 25:30). The old bread was then eaten by the priests (Lev. 24:5-9). David requested the bread for his hungry men as they fled from King Saul (1 Sam. 21:4-6). Jesus used this account to illustrate His teaching on the sabbath, that the day was made to benefit people (Mark 2:23-28) [HBS: QV].

9:3 - HOLY OF HOLIES. “Behind the second veil there was a tabernacle which is called the Holy of Holies...” The KJV has, “Holiest of all;” the NKJV, “Holiest of All.” Many of the students of the Word during the first several decades of the Twentieth century referred to the Holy of Holies without realizing that the term did not appear in the King James Version of the Bible. It is usually referred to as “the Most Holy Place.”

9:4 - GOLDEN ALTAR OF INCENSE. The golden altar (golden censer, NKJV), an altar for burning incense, was actually not located inside the Holy of Holies, but near the veil.

In function the altar belonged to the Most Holy Place because the incense was wafted into it. This justifies the statement that the Most Holy Place "had" the golden censer. That is, a portion of the function of the golden altar of incense was to prepare the way for the high priest to make his approach to the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement (cf. 1 Kin. 6:22, in which this altar is plainly associated with the oracle of God or the Most Holy Place) [BSB: QV].

The incense was A mixture of aromatic spices prepared to be burned in connection with the offering of sacrifices (Ex. 25:6).

The word is also used to refer to the smoke produced by the burning. In the King James Version of the Bible, two Hebrew words are translated "incense"; however, the two words are practically synonymous. The incense used in worship was to be prepared according to exacting specifications and was to be offered only by the high priest [HBD: QV].

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT. As every Hebrew (including Hebrew Christians) knew, the Ark of the Covenant was “covered on all sides with gold.” They also know its contents:

- (1) A golden jar holding the manna.
- (2) Aaron's rod which budded.
- (3) The tables of the covenant;

9:5 - CHERUBIM. In the Old Testament, Cherubim is the name given for a class of winged angels whose primarily purpose was as guards (Gen. 3:24) or attendants (Ezek. 10:3-22). This is

the only reference to Cherubim in the New Testament. Here the term is used in giving a description of the furnishings of the holy of holies.

Texts descriptive of the appearance and activities of cherubim reflect two contexts. One is in the visions of the presence of God attended by living creatures (cherubim and seraphim, Isa. 6:2-6; Ezek. 1:4-28; 10:3-22). The other is Temple worship and the representations of cherubim which were a part of its furnishings (Ex. 25:18-22; 1 Kings 6:23-35; 2 Chron. 3:7-14).

The most impressive of the Temple cherubim were the large sculptures (probably winged quadrupeds) in the holy of holies. If these were arranged as was common in the ancient Near East, the two cherubim would together form a throne. Their legs would be the legs of the throne, their backs the arm rests, and their wings the back of the throne. Consistent with the idea of a cherub throne are the texts which envision God dwelling between, enthroned upon, or riding upon the cherubim (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 22:11; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron. 13:6; 28:18; Ps. 18:10; 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16 [HBD: QV]).

THE MERCY SEAT. The writer continues, “and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail.” As noted in the introduction to this section, the Mercy Seat was a slab of pure gold measuring about 45 inches by 27 inches which served as a lid or covering for the ark of the covenant. It also served as a base for the golden cherubim (Ex. 25:17-19,21) and represented God’s presence with His people. It also symbolized the throne from which God ruled Israel (Lev. 16:2; Num. 7:89). On the Day of Atonement the high priest sprinkled the blood of a sacrificial lamb on the mercy seat as a plea for forgiveness for the sins of the nation (Lev. 16:15).

The Hebrew word means literally "to wipe out" or "cover over." This has led modern translators to render the term "cover" (REB, NRSV note), "lid" (TEV), or "atonement cover" (NIV). "Mercy seat" is based on the earliest Greek and Latin translations. The mercy seat has been replaced as the symbol and place of God's presence and atonement. Christ's cross and resurrection showed the perfect presence and accomplished atonement once for all (Heb. 9) [HBD: QV].

2. The ministry of the priests is detailed, 9:6-7.

9:6 - THE PRIESTS ARE CONTINUALLY ENTERING. The earthly priests, the priests of the earthly sanctuary, were continually entering “ the outer tabernacle performing the divine worship.” Those priests ministered daily in the Holy Place, repeating the offerings and sacrifices on a regular basis. They knew nothing of a once-for-all sacrifice.

9:7 - BUT INTO THE SECOND. “The second” denotes the Most Holy Place, or the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest entered the Most Holy Place, and he once each year on the Day of Atonement. He entered “not without taking blood,” which he offered “for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.” “The Day of Atonement was one great comprehensive act of atonement for all sin and for all uncleanness” [BARCLAY:].

The significance of the statement that only the High Priest could go into the Holy of Holies, and that he had to go once each year, is that no final or eternal offering for sin was made in under the old covenant - through the sacrificial system. The offerings he made could not change the heart. That could only be accomplished by the once-for all, completed sacrifice of Jesus Christ and by His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary (vv. 11-12).

The reference is to the one day of the year, the Day of Atonement, during which the high priest ministered in the Holiest of All. The phrase does not indicate the number of times he entered it on that day. The necessity of this annual visit established the fact that what took place was ultimately symbolic rather than efficacious. The offering of the blood of the goat and the carrying away of the scapegoat provided forgiveness only in that they typified the final sacrifice of Christ [QV: BSB].

SINS...COMMITTED IN IGNORANCE. The ordinary priests served daily in the outer sanctuary, the Holy Place, but only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place - and he only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. On that day he could not enter “without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.”

Does the Scripture make a distinction between sins committed in ignorance and those committed with knowledge of the sin? Yes, as a matter of fact, in the Old Testament, a distinction is made between sins committed in ignorance and sins one committed with their eyes wide open - sins for which they could not claim ignorance. In Genesis 43:12 the word used for sins of ignorance (*agnoayma*), is translated “an oversight.” Sins of oversight, like sins of omission, were still sins and called for atonement. In Hebrews 10:26 the writer will deal with willful sinning.

THE MINISTRY OF THE HIGH PRIEST ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

1. He burned the morning incense, made the morning offering, and attended the trimming of the lamps on the lamp stand.
2. Dressed in his glorious robe, he sacrificed a bullock, seven lambs, and a ram (Numbers. 29:7).

3. He then took off the glorious robe, washed, and put on the white robe (symbol of purity).
4. Assistants brought him a bullock bought with his own money. With his hands on its head, he confessed his sins and the sins of Israel. The bullock was left at the altar.
5. Two goats were standing by, which by lots were designated, “for Jehovah,” and “for Azazel” (the scapegoat).
6. He then returned to the altar and killed the bullock, catching the blood in a basin (a swirling movement prevented coagulation).
7. With coals from the altar in a censer and incense in a dish, he entered the Holy of Holies to burn incense (His first entrance in to the Most Holy Place).
8. He came out and took the blood of the bullock and went a second time into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the blood seven times up and seven times down.
9. He came out, killed the goat marked “for Jehovah” and with its blood entered the Holy of Holies for the third time to sprinkle it.
10. Then he came out, mingled the blood of the bullock and the goat, and sprinkled the horns of the altar, the altar of incense, and the altar itself. Thus, the Holy Place, and Holy of Holies were cleansed with blood.
11. Next, with his hands on the scapegoat, he confessed his sins and the sins of the people, after which it was led into the wilderness and killed (symbolizing the taking away of their sins).
12. Still dressed in his white robe, he prepared the meat of the bullock and the goat for sacrifice and repeated the words of Numbers 29:7-11.
13. He then cleansed himself with water, dressed in his glorious robe, sacrificed a kid for the normal evening offering, and then sacrificed the previously prepared bullock and goat.
14. He washed, put on the white robe, and for the fourth time entered the Holy of Holies to remove the censer of incense.
15. He cleansed himself in water, put on the beautiful robe, again and burned the evening offering of incense and trimmed the lamps on the golden lamp stand.

This ritual had to be repeated once each year and that high priest had to offer an offering for his own sins as well as the sins of the people. In the evening, at the close of the Day of Atonement, the high priest had a feast because he had been in the presence of the Lord and come out alive. Is it any wonder that the writer of Hebrews claims the sacrifice of Christ was superior to the sacrifice of

bullocks and goats, and that he ministry of Jesus Christ was superior to the ministry of the earthly high priest?

3. This sanctuary was only a figure of the one to come, 9:8-10.

9:8 - THE WAY...HAS NOT YET BEEN DISCLOSED. “The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed while the outer tabernacle is still standing”

(NAS). The veil at the entrance to the first sanctuary kept the people out of the Holy Place, and the veil at the entrance to the second sanctuary kept the priest from entering into the Holy of Holies (the very presence of God). At best, this system was one of ritual or ceremonial purification (7:11) that called for endless repetition.

9:9 - A SYMBOL. The sacrificial system under the old covenant was only a figure or “a symbol for the present time. Accordingly both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience...”

9:10 - UNTIL A TIME OF REFORMATION. The sacrifices and offerings of the earthly sanctuary - whether the Tabernacle, Solomon’s Temple, the temple of Ezra and Nehemiah, or Herod’s Temple - was only a symbol of that which was to come, relating only “to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation.”

VARIOUS WASHINGS. Various washings (divers washings, KJV) is a reference to Jewish ceremonial immersions. “Until a time of reformation” is a definite statement of the temporary nature of the Levitical system (see also, 7:10-17; 8:13; Gal. 3:15-22). “Christianity is itself the great reformation of the current Judaism (Pharisaism) and the spiritual Judaism foreshadowed by the old Abrahamic promise (see Galatians 3 and Romans 9)” [ATR:]. In an earlier study on this Epistle the writer suggested a comparison of the Levitical system with the “I Am” sayings of Jesus in John.

Rush Limbaugh, both on his nationally syndicated radio program and in his monthly news letter, has warned of the danger of placing symbol over substance. This, in reality is what the writer of Hebrews is urging Jewish Christians to avoid. They had been a part of Judaism before their conversion and many Jews, as attested by the Judaizers who hounded the steps of Paul, had such allegiance to the Levitical system that there was a strong temptation to make Christianity another sect of Judaism. To do so would have placed symbol over substance. The Levitical system was the symbol, Jesus the substance of God’s love, mercy, and grace.

B. The Priesthood of Jesus Christ, 9:11-14

9:11 - WHEN CHRIST APPEARED AS A HIGH PRIEST. Christ, being come (having appeared) is the both an historical event and the pivotal point of all history. When He came and all things changed - forever. He is the High Priest of “good things” that have already come as a result of His coming and hope of all the good things that will come because He has come.

If someone could have video taped the ministry of the high priest on the Day of Atonement and made it available to us so that we could insert it into a tape player, what we would see on the screen would be the ministry of Jesus Christ, our eternal High Priest. If we could view the entire sacrificial system in the same way, what we would see would be the Cross, the Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ as He reentered the heavenly Holy of Holies with the blood of perfect sacrifice - the once-for- all sacrifice for our sins. He is the minister “of the good things to come.”

A MORE PERFECT TABERNACLE. Following the sacrifice - when Jesus sacrificed Himself (the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world) - “He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation.” This is a glorious picture of Christ as High Priest ministering in the heavenly tabernacle (8:2), after which the earthly tabernacle was patterned (9:24). The greater and “more perfect tabernacle” is heaven itself.

9:12 - HE ENTERED THE HOLY PLACE. The contrast also continues: “and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” Unlike the sacrifice of the earthly high priest, who repeatedly entered the Most Holy Place with once a year with the blood of goats and calves (bulls, KJV), Jesus' sacrifice was His own blood - and it was once for all time. It never needs to be repeated. It cannot be repeated - His work is finished. Furthermore, his work of atonement is done (complete); it cannot be undone. Moreover, as we have seen, Jesus' sacrifice was His own blood (not a calf or a goat), and it was offered once for all (not repeatedly), providing for eternal redemption (contrasted with a temporal covering).

9:13 - ASHES OF A HEIFER. The “blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer” were a part of the earthly, thus temporal, system. The red heifer offering was for cleansing one who was defiled by contact with a corpse [see Num. 19:2-10].

9:14 - HOW MUCH MORE. The logic is easy to follow here: “If the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling” (vs. 13), “how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

The blood of Christ is clearly the price involved in the atonement. The atonement of Christ is one of the themes of the Book of Hebrews and the pivotal doctrine of the entire Bible. The sacrifices of the O.T. were forerunners of this work of Christ. The incarnation of Jesus was for the purpose of His suffering death in behalf of mankind. Atonement is a multifaceted concept which includes reconciliation -- the restoration of man to fellowship with God (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor.

5:19, note); propitiation -- the satisfying of the just demands of God's holiness for the punishment of sin (Rom. 3:25, note); and redemption -- the purchasing of the enslaved sinner to make him free (Col. 1:13, 14). The atonement of Christ made it possible for God to justify men and to be just in so doing (Rom. 3:26). No passage could be any more lucid than Lev. 17:11, which declares that "the life of the flesh is in the blood." This life poured out in substitutionary sacrifice makes atonement for the soul. Nor is there any other possible approach to God. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (9:22). Christ's death on Golgotha was substitutionary (in our place). It is the act of Christ which makes possible man's forgiveness in that it satisfies the just and holy wrath of God [QV: BSB].

THE ETERNAL SPIRIT. There are many titles for the Holy Spirit recorded in the Bible, many of which are found in the following chart. Others include the Paraclete (Comforter) passages of John 14-16.

TITLES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT		
Title	Emphasis	Citation
One Spirit	His Unity	Ephesians 4:4
Seven spirits	His perfection, omnipresence, and completeness	Revelation 1:4; 3:1
The Lord	His sovereignty	2 Corinthians 3:18
Eternal Spirit	His eternality	Hebrews 9:14
Spirit of glory	His glory	1 Peter 4:14
Spirit of life	His vitality	Romans 8:2
Spirit of holiness Holy Spirit Holy One	His holiness	Romans 1:4 Matthew 1:20 1 John 2:20
Spirit of wisdom Spirit of understanding Spirit of counsel Spirit of knowledge	His omniscience, wisdom and counsel	Isaiah 11:2
Spirit of power	His omnipotence	Isaiah 11:2
Spirit of the fear of the Lord	His reverence	Isaiah 11:2
Spirit of truth	His truthfulness	John 14:17
Spirit of grace	His grace	Hebrews 10:29
Spirit of grace and supplication	His grace and intercession	Zechariah 12:10

C. Christ Is the Mediator of the New Covenant, 9:15-28.

1. Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant by means of His death, 9:15.

9:15 - THE MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT. “For this reason,” the writer says, Jesus is “the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” A mediator is one who stands between two parties to bring them together. Jesus, as the Mediator of the New Covenant, is the One who stands between men and God to bring them together.

“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all...” (1 Tim. 2:5, 6a).

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, note).

The purpose of the New Testament is to provide forgiveness of sin and to give an eternal inheritance. Here we see that the real value in the typical sacrifices under the Old Testament system was in the realized in the death of Christ. “It is Christ’s death that gives worth to the types that pointed to Him” [ATR:]. This means, of course, that the atoning sacrifice of Christ is the basis of the salvation of all who were saved before the Cross.

2. A will does not go into effect until the death of the testator, 9:16-17.

9:16 - THERE MUST OF NECESSITY BE THE DEATH. The Scripture states the obvious: “For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.” The testator of a will had to die before the benefits of this covenant could be fully realized by those for whom they were intended. This verse provides “strong proof that it is the death of Christ, not His life, that put into effect the new covenant with all its blessings. His sinless life qualified Him to be the suitable sacrifice for sin, but it was His death that made the payment for sin” [RSB:QV].

9:17 - A COVENANT IS VALID. Then, as now, a will is valid “only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.” The writer affirms here the necessity of the death of Christ.

3. Moses dedicated the covenant with blood, 9:18-22.

9:18 - NOT...WITHOUT BLOOD. “Therefore even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood.” Moses, with instructions from the Lord, directed the young men as they “...offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD” (Ex. 24:3-8).

9:19 - THE BLOOD OF THE CALVES AND THE GOATS. “For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the Law (see again, Ex. 24:3-8), he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people...” “Goats” are not specifically mentioned in the passage from Exodus 24, but we learn from Lev. 1:10; 4:23 that they could be used for burnt offerings. “Water, scarlet wool, and hyssop” are not mentioned in Exodus, but those items were used in the ceremony of the red heifer.

The priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet material and cast it into the midst of the burning heifer. The priest shall then wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward come into the camp, but the priest shall be unclean until evening (Num. 19:6, 7).

This offering has already been mentioned in Heb. 9:13. In Numbers 10:2-10 we find that it had become the custom to mingle water with blood and to use a wisp of wool or a stem of hyssop for sprinkling. The sprinkling of “the book itself” is not mentioned in Exodus but it may be implied. What was “the book?” In Exodus 24:4 we read, “Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD.”

9:20 - BLOOD OF THE COVENANT. As those offering were made, Moses said, “THIS IS THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT WHICH GOD COMMANDED YOU.”

9:21 - IN THE SAME WAY. That is, in the same way as Moses sprinkled the people and the book, “he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood.” The tabernacle had not been erected at the time of the sprinkling mentioned in Exodus 24:5ff. In Exodus 40:9, the Scripture speaks of the anointing of the tabernacle, and everything in it, with oil but does not mention blood. According to Numbers 7:1, Moses “anointed it and consecrated it”; this sanctification of the tabernacle would involve the sprinkling of blood [BSB: QV].

9:22 - WITHOUT SHEDDING OF BLOOD. Most students of the Scripture have memorized this verse: “And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” The NKJV renders it, “And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” The question is, Why does the Scripture say, “almost?” Exceptions to the requirement of blood for cleansing were permitted by the law, according to Exodus 19:10; Lev. 5:11-13; Num. 16:46; 31:23ff..

But if his means are insufficient for two turtledoves or two young pigeons, then for his offering for that which he has sinned, he shall

bring the tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall not put oil on it or place incense on it, for it is a sin offering (Lev. 5:11).

The blood of Christ sets aside all other plans for forgiveness of sin. Jesus said, “for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins” Matthew 26:28..

4. The sacrifice of Christ is better than that of the old sacrificial system, 9:23.

9:23 - IT WAS NECESSARY...IN HEAVEN. The Scripture reads, “Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.” Just as the Tabernacle - the copy of things in Heaven - was purified with blood, the heavenly sanctuary had to be purified by our Lord’s sacrifice. “Most refer this to heaven itself, but some to the cleansing of believers whom God inhabits (Eph. 2:22)” RSB: QV].

The real atonement in Jesus Christ replaces the copies belonging to the first covenant. Robertson is right: “To us it seems a bit strained to speak of the ritual cleansing or dedication of Heaven itself by the appearance of Christ as the priest-victim. But the whole picture is highly mystical” [ATR:].

William Barclay says of 23-28:

Here the writer to the Hebrews is still thinking of the supreme efficacy of the sacrifice which, even for so adventurous a writer as he was, is amazing. Let us remember the basic thought of the letter. The worship of this world is a pale copy of the real worship. In this world, there is a worship which can give a man a shadow of real fellowship with God; in the world to come, there is a worship whereby a man will really know God.

5. The priestly work of superior to that of the earthly priest, 9:24-26.
 - a. He does not enter the earthly sanctuary, but Heaven itself, 24.

9:24 - HEAVEN ITSELF. We have come to expect repetition or reiteration from the writer of Hebrews. He re he writes, “For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” The contrast continues between the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary, with emphasis upon the superiority of the heavenly, or eternal sanctuary, of which the earthly tabernacle was but a pale copy.

FOR US. Christ, our divine Intercessor, has entered the heavenly Holy of Holies with the blood of perfect sacrifice to sprinkle upon the mercy seat of heaven “for us.” The vicarious suffering and

death of the Messiah is stressed in the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah, which begins with 52:12 and continues through chapter 53. What He did, He did for us - the price He paid, He paid for us. In the New Testament we see that our High Priest has re-entered the Heavenly sanctuary where He is making intercession for us.

Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25).

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (I John 2:1).

b. He offered a once-for-all sacrifice, 25-26.

9:25 - NOR WAS IT THAT HE WOULD OFFER HIMSELF OFTEN. His was a once-for-all sacrifice. The one sacrifice of Christ was absolute and final. He did not have to enter the heavenly Holy of Holies with His blood “often,” as the earthly high priest “enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own.” Robertson quotes Vincent: “The sacrifice of Christ dealt with sin as a principle: the Levitical sacrifices with individual transgressions” [ATR:].

9:26 - OTHERWISE. His was a once-for-all sacrifice, “Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” “Once at consummation of the ages” denotes the first coming of Christ. “For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you” (1 Peter 1:20).

Christ's atonement conquered sin. Only one such atonement was necessary. The continuing significance of that one act of God in Christ may be observed in v. 28, in which the atonement is linked to the return of Christ, to consummating the salvation which was purchased on the cross [BSB: QV].

6. Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many, 9:27-28.

a. It is appointed unto man once to die, 27.

9:27 - IT IS APPOINTED FOR MEN TO DIE ONCE AND AFTER THIS COMES JUDGMENT. This verse must be read in context (verses 26-28). However, this often quoted verse answers once for all time the question of reincarnation. I saw a friend at a funeral a number of years ago and he told me he had been reading about reincarnation. He added, “You hear so much about it, you just wonder if there may be something to it.” I responded by quoting this verse. In that

sense we do no injustice to Scripture when we life this verse out of context. We do, however, need to study it as a unit.

It is appointed unto each person to die - and after that to stand before Jesus Christ in judgment. Today, each person must answer the question, "What will you do with Jesus?" And he had better get it right! He is going to stand before Him and hear Him say either, "Come ye blessed of My Father," or "Depart form Me, for I never knew you."

b. Having been offered once, He shall appear a second time, 28.

9:28 - SO CHRIST ALSO. Our Lord, "having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him." Jesus was both the superior High Priest Who offered the once-for-all sacrifice for our sins, and at the same time He was the sacrifice - the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Here again the writer alludes to the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah (53:12). "Isaiah was a significant source of early Christian interpretation of Christ" [RSB: QV].

WITHOUT REFERENCE TO SIN. The meaning is apart from the sin issue. "In His first coming Christ dealt with sin once for all; in His second coming He will take redeemed sinners to Himself in the consummation of their salvation" [RSB: QV].

Our High Priest, having offered the perfect sacrifice, and having re-entered the heavenly sanctuary with the blood (symbolically), and having taken His seat at the right hand of the Father in glory, He is awaiting His Second Advent. He is coming again, not as Suffering Servant or High Priest, but as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

D. The Sacrifice of Christ Is Superior to the Sacrifices of the Old System, 10:1-18.

1. The sacrifices associated with the Law were powerless to save sinners, 10:1-4.

In this chapter the author emphasizes the finality of Christ's sacrifice by contrasting it with the lack of finality of the OT system of law and sacrifices. Christ's redemption needs no repetition and no supplementation. Therefore, a rejection of His sacrifice is final and unforgivable [RSB: QV].

10:1 - ONLY A SHADOW. In verses 1-4, we see that The Mosaic Law, the Levitical priesthood, and the Levitical offerings, were but a shadow of Christ's coming and His once-for-all offering.

For the Law, since it has only *a shadow of the good things to come* and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near (NAS, italics added).

The Law was only a shadow of the real thing. Note the contrast between shadow and image. The image (*eikon*) is an exact copy (picture). A shadow is not clear. Christ is the *eikon* of God. The Law gives only a shadowy outline of the good things to come (9:11).

OFFER CONTINUALLY. The sacrifices associated with the Levitical priesthood had to be continually repeated, year after year. There was never an end to it until the perfect (once-for-all) sacrifice was offered by the supreme High Priest. The emphasis continues to be the superiority of the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ to the earthly priest. The earthly system, being on a shadow of that which was to come, could never make the worshipers perfect.

10:2- OTHERWISE. Follow the reasoning. If the Law, or sacrificial system, could have made them perfect, they would have ceased to offer those sacrifices, "because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?"

10:3 - A REMINDER OF SINS. "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year." The very repetition of sacrifices on the Day of Atonement was a continual reminder of the temporary nature of that system. What Jesus did for us He did once for all time. There has never been a need to repeat Calvary. The very thought of His having to die for our sins even a second time, let alone once a year, puts the Cross to open shame (as seen in chapter 6).

10:4 - IMPOSSIBLE ...TO TAKE AWAY SIN. "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (NAS)." The ministry of the Levitical priesthood was powerless to remove sin. The sacrificial system was but a pale copy of what real worship ought to be. "The whole business of religion was to bring a man into a close and intimate relationship with God, to give him free access to the presence of God. That is what these sacrifices could never do" [Barclay:].

2. Jesus Christ is the superior sacrifice, 10:5-10.

10:5 - WHEN HE COMES. The quotation, from Psalm 40:7-9, is a reference to the incarnation of Christ. The Psalmist was looking ahead to the coming of the Messiah. "Therefore," the writer says, "when He comes into the world, He says, "SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY YOU HAVE PREPARED FOR ME" (NAS). He came into the world to

offer a sacrifice, but the sacrifice would be no lamb, goat, or bull. It would be His own body. This is the sacrifice that answered the will of God as no animal sacrifice could.

Psalm 40:6-8 is understood to be typological, referring to Christ's incarnation. Part of the psalm (i.e., Ps. 40:12) would not apply to Christ because it speaks of the psalmist's sins. Instead of "a body You have prepared for Me," the Hebrew text of Ps. 40:6 reads "My ears You have opened." The LXX reads "a body You prepared for Me," which paraphrases the Hebrew. God forms the ears of the psalmist for the purpose of hearing and responding. The LXX understands that the body is fashioned to hear and to do the will of God [BSB: QV].

BODY. The body here seems to represent the whole body, as opposed to "ears" (Ps. 40:6), which represents a part. Complete submission is emphasized - Jesus was totally submissive to the will of the Father.

10:6 - NO PLEASURE. "IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN YOU HAVE TAKEN NO PLEASURE" (CAPS in NAS). Psalm 40:6 reads, "Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required." The Lord has no pleasure in animal sacrifices, but He did take pleasure in what they represented - worship, devotion, and faith. He took no pleasure in the animal offering, the meal-offering, the burnt-offering, and the sin offering. They were important and they were commanded, but they were only a shadow of that which was to come.

But does the Bible not tell us that God commanded those offerings, and does not the Scripture tell us that the smoke rising from the altar was pleasant in the nostrils of God? Is there, then a contradiction? No. God was pleased by the faith and repentance of the humble worshiper, represented by the offering of the sacrifices; and by the prayers rising to Him, represented by the smoke rising to Him.

10:7-8 - BEHOLD, I COME. This prophetic psalm points to the coming Messiah. Jesus was committed to do the will of the Father.

Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart" Ps. 40:7-8, NAS).

THEN. When it was plain that God could not be propitiated by such sacrifices, Christ is seen as offering Himself to do the will of the Father.

10:9 - TO ESTABLISH THE SECOND. Continuing the thought of verses 7 and 8 - "Then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL He takes away the first in order to establish the second." The speaker in this passage quoted from Psalm 40 is Christ. His whole attitude toward the Heavenly Father was, "Not My will, but thine be done."

The conclusion drawn from the quotation from Psalm 40 is stated succinctly. With the coming of Christ, God took away the old sacrificial system and established a new one. He took away the temporal and replaced it with the eternal. He replaced the inferior with the superior.

10:10 - WE HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED. We have been separated, (set apart for the glory of God) once for all time by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." This does not imply universalism in any way. Jesus paid the price but the individual must receive Him. God does all the saving by His grace, but He never saves anyone against His will. For more on Sanctification, see the doctrinal section in Romans (Rom. 1:18-8:39). The Doctrine of Sanctification is covered in 6:1-8:39.

BY THIS WILL. That is, by Christ's doing the will of God in becoming the sacrifice for sin, He offered His body as a once for all sacrifice. The will of God, unfulfilled in animal sacrifices, is realized in Christ's offering of Himself. "He came to be a great high Priest, and the body was prepared for Him, that by the offering of it he might put sinful men forever into the perfect religious relation to God" (Denny, *The Death of Christ*) [ATR:].

3. The old and the new sacrifices are contrasted (10:11-14).

10:11 - EVERY PRIEST STANDS DAILY. The Holy Spirit obviously did not think the repetition was unnecessary. When the Bible uses this much repetition there must be a reason for it. For some of the Jewish believers of the first century the initial introduction to this subject must have been a shocking as a challenge to Baptists and Presbyterians on Security of Believers, Catholics on Communism, or the Church of Christ on place of baptism in regeneration. They must see that "...every priest (the earthly priests of the Levitical system) stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins" (NAS). Three things are accentuated here. First, the earthly priest stood daily in the Tabernacle or the Temple, doing the same things over and over. Second, he was repeating the same sacrifices over and over. Third, those sacrifices could never take away sins - they could make the worshiper conscious of his sins (10:2).

10:12 - ONE SACRIFICE FOR SINS FOR ALL TIME. Jesus, "having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD." The "one sacrifice" offered by Jesus does the work that the many sacrifices offered by earthly priests had failed to do. This is the main point of this argument, and it was a point that had to be communicated to those early Jews who were making the transition for Judaism to Christianity. At this time many were still going to the Temple (as did Paul and James, the half-brother of the Lord) and they continued going to the local synagogue until they were forced out. Judaizers - Jews professing to be Christians - seemed more intent upon making Christianity another sect of Judaism than they were in embracing the new covenant about which the writer of Hebrews is addressing.

SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. With the Incarnation; the virgin birth; the perfect life, the phenomenal manifestations of authority over disease, elements, and demons; the Crucifixion; the Resurrection and appearances; and the Ascension behind Him, Jesus Christ could now sit down at the right hand of God in Heaven - just where John saw Him in the Revelation. Had He not already declared, "It is finished!?"

The NKJV renders this verse, "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God." An interesting observation is found in the footnote in the Believer's Study Bible:

"Forever" in the Greek text could be understood as either one sacrifice for sins forever (vv. 10, 14; 7:27; 9:12, 25-28) or that He forever sat down, His "sitting" being contrasted with the "standing" of the Levitical priests (v. 11), thus indicating the completion of the atonement" [BSB: QV].

10:13 - WAITING. The NAS reads, "from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET." He is waiting expectantly. The expectant attitude of Christ here is that of final and certain victory (John 16:33; I Cor. 15:24-28).

10:14 - HE PERFECTED. By His once for all offering, Jesus "perfected all those who are sanctified." He perfects us in the sense that He makes us acceptable to God, justified by grace, through faith. He has done what the old sacrifices failed to do (verse 1).

4. The Holy Spirit is a witness to us of the new covenant, 10:15-18.

10:15 - HOLY SPIRIT ALSO TESTIFIES. The Holy spirit bore witness before (in the Scripture). The author affirms his interpretation of Psalm 40:7-9 by repeating from Jeremiah 31:31ff what he had already quoted (8:8-12). We must understand what the Scripture claims here. The Holy Spirit has testified - and continues to testify. With reference to Scripture, He inspired the Scripture writers (Inspiration) and He continues to testify through the same Scripture through Illumination - He illuminates the mind of believers so that they can understand and apply the Word of God in their lives. Paul is very clear about that in the second chapter of 1 Corinthians.

That is not to claim that the Holy Spirit cannot, or will not, communicate with people today. God can do anything He chooses to do. But what he has chosen to do primarily is to give us inspired Scripture and then give us His Spirit to illuminate our hearts and minds that we might understand His Word, and that we know how to apply it in our lives. But, we must be careful when it comes to extra-biblical revelations, either by individuals, churches, or denominations. That includes individuals who claim special gifts prophecy, as well as the Roman Catholic pope, or the head of the Mormon church.

When we are saved (regenerated, justified) God places His Spirit in our heart (the indwelling by, or of, the Holy Spirit, baptism of the Holy Spirit). He convicts, guides, directs, and calls Scripture to our remembrance that we might know the will of God. Does that mean the Holy Spirit does not do anything supernatural in our lives today? Absolutely not! But it means that His primary role will be to lead us, guide us, instruct us that we might understand the divine principles He has already inspired (the Holy Scripture) and help us to apply those principles in everyday decisions.

You do not have to pray for the Holy Spirit to give you a fresh revelation about what God has already told you (in black and white) that you should do. You do, however, have to trust the Holy Spirit give you wisdom and empower you to do what you already know God wants you to do. You do not have to pray about whether or not you should pay your taxes - He has instructed you in Scripture to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21). If you are looking for a new job, you will want to ask the Lord to open the right doors and to close the wrong doors. We are to “ask,” “knock,” and “seek.” But seeking fresh revelations, or an extra-biblical “word of knowledge” demands a careful discernment of the spirit that provides this information.

10:16 - THIS IS THE COVENANT. With the New Covenant “THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART, AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,” He then says,” “AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE” (vs 17, NAS). This quotation is from Jeremiah 31:33-34 and it was quoted earlier in Hebrews. 8:10-12. Under this superior covenant, our Lord will put His law in the heart of the believer.

10:17 - I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE. Only God can will Himself to forget. I can forget because I cannot remember certain things. God can forget nothing except that which He promises to forget, can remember everything except the sins of those who have entered into a covenant relationship with Him.

10:18 - NO LONGER ANY OFFERING FOR SIN. Under the new covenant God eliminates the need for offering more sacrifices: “Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.” The blood of bulls and goats provided a temporary atonement,

but the sacrificial system in itself could not take away sin and its consequent debt (which required forgiveness), slavery (which called for redemption), or alienation (which demanded reconciliation). Christ through His death made the perfect atonement (cf. 9:14, note) with everlasting efficacy. The key contrast is between "remission" (aphesis, Gk.) and "offering" (prospora, Gk.). The O.T. sacrifices were merely an "offering," a divinely appointed temporary means to bring man to God; Christ's redemptive work, "remission," was the perfect completion of atonement [BSB: QV].

E. Parenthetical Exhortations and Warnings Are Stressed (10:19-39).

In 10:19-39 we have a parenthetical warning in which we are urged to hold fast our confession of faith in Jesus Christ. In 10:19-25 the author makes a practical application of all he has said. From theology he turns to practical exhortation. He is one of the deepest theologians in the New Testament, but all his theology is governed by pastoral instinct.

1. Jesus has presented us with a new and living way to enter His kingdom (10:19-21).

10:19 - CONFIDENCE TO ENTER THE HOLY PLACE. Under the New covenant believers “have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus.” The spirit of boldness is ours by the blood of Jesus Christ. The author gives a second summary of the five arguments concerning the superiority of Christ's priestly work (see 8:1-6), with an exhortation added, before he proceeds with the fifth one (the better promises, 10:26 -12:3).

10:20 - A NEW AND LIVING WAY. “... we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh...” (NAS). The "new and living way" is Jesus Himself. The language is highly symbolic, but Jesus clearly is the way (see John 14:6).

THROUGH THE VEIL. Here, this refers the flesh of Christ (his humanity). Because of the coming Christ in the flesh, we have a new way opened for access God (Hebrews 2:17f; 4:16). “The torn veil opening the way to the Holy of Holies symbolizes Christ's flesh (body) on the cross, which opens access to God for us (Matt. 27:51)” [RSB: QV].

10:21 - A GREAT PRIEST. This would be a good place to stop and read verses 19-25 again to see this verse in context. “Since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil,” the writer has said, “now the and since we have a great priest over the house of God,” who both empowers us and motivates us to draw near to Him in faith and assurance (vs. 22). Jesus is Our eternal High Priest (the “great priest over the house of God”) who offered Himself for our sins.

2. Some practical exhortations are in order for all of us (10:22-25).

10:22 - LET US DRAW NEAR. On the basis of what our great High Priest (vs. 21) has done for us, we are exhorted, “let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” The washing of our bodies with pure water is, it seems obvious, an allusion to baptism, but to interpret this as baptismal regeneration on the basis of this passage alone, or even in conjunction with others which are taken out of context, is eisegesis, and not exegesis. Exegesis (meaning to take out from) is a much better way of interpreting Scripture than eisegesis (which involves our reading into the text

our preconceived views). There really is no indication in the verse that water baptism has any saving virtue, power, or effect. Rather, it is “having our hearts sprinkled clean” with the blood of Christ that effects spiritual cleansing. Believers, those who have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, are to submit themselves for baptism as a testimony to the cleansing that has already taken place. They are following both the command of Christ and the example of our Lord public baptism as a symbol and a witness for Him..

10:23 - LET US HOLD FAST. On the basis of all the writer has said, he now exhorts us to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful...” The KJV has, "Let us hold fast the profession of faith." Any pastor looking for a good sermon outline with three really great points will not want to miss this one - just add an introduction, a conclusion and a couple of illustrations:

- I. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope.”
- II. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering.”
- III. “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”

One of the great attributes of our savior is that He is faithful. There can be no greater motivation for us to “hold fast our confession that the fact that He is always faithful. There can be no greater motivation to be steadfast and unwavering that the fact that Jesus is always faithful to His promises. He promised, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Mat. 28:20, NAS).

10:24 - STIMULATE ONE ANOTHER. Christians must seriously “consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.” We are exhorted in other places to encourage one another:

“Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing: (1 Thes. 5:11, NAS).

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13).

The Holy Spirit inspired the writer to use a strong word here. The Greek word, *paroxusmos*, means stimulation, but it may also be translated “being provoked (Acts 17:16), “sharp disagreement” (Acts 15:39). We must actively encourage others to Christian love and the good deeds that flow from this kind of love.

10:25 - NOT FORSAKING OUR OWN ASSEMBLING TOGETHER. God expects all His people to assemble together on His Day, in His house to worship Him. Here we have His Word one it - and He minces no words on the subject. Unfortunately, some church members in the first century had not only missed some services, but had actually missed worship so much as to make it a habit.

These early Christians had a fellowship which drew them together for worship and edification. Many people today feel that if they show up for the morning service once or twice a month they are faithful members of the church. There is no wonder that the church is so powerless in our society today. Those early believers assembled to pray, and study God's Word nightly and they set aside the Lord's Day for His worship and service.

THE DAY DRAWING NEAR. They should assemble together and “encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. They should assemble together and encourage each other even more as they saw the that is, as thee way the day of Christ approaching. “This passage provides one of the strongest affirmations in the Bible of the crucial importance of the local church and the necessity thrust upon every Christian to be faithful to a local community of the saints” [BSB: QV]. This verse also reveals the Lord's plan for believers to worship together in a local church, rather than simply sitting home watching a service on television, attending a devotional at the park or lake, or driving a long distance to an out of town church once or twice a month.

3. Some specific warnings must be considered (10:26-31).

Barclay made a point about sin in this passage by pointing out three definitions the author gives of sin: (1) Sin is to trample Christ underfoot; (2) Sin is the failure to see the sacredness of sacred things (3) Sin is an insult to the Holy Spirit [BARCLAY:].

10:26 - IF WE GO ON SINNING WILLFULLY. To “go on sinning willfully” is consistent, habitual rebellion against God. The background is found in Num. 15:30, 31, where this sin is described as sinning presumptuously (NKJV), or defiantly (NAS). No propitiatory offering, only judgment, awaited the one who sinned defiantly (lit., with a high hand; i.e., with a raised, clenched fist in defiance of God and His commands)” [RSB: QV]. This high-handed sinning is a sin of premeditation and defiance, “committed only by those who have had the advantage of great light. In the rejecting of Christ's sacrifice, they discover that there is no other acceptable sacrifice for sin” [BSB: QV].

THERE NO LONGER REMAINS A SACRIFICE. This is very serious: “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.” Man is warned against sinning willfully. Every now and again the writer speaks with a sternness that is almost without parallel in the New Testament. There are few writers who have such a sense of sheer horror and terror of sin [BARCLAY:].

The Old Testament background is Deut. 17:2-6. Circumstances made loyalty to the church a critical issue. Sin by any member was a hindrance to the church (it still is). Unfaithfulness undermines the very foundation of the church. Sin had become even more serious because of the new knowledge they had of God's will. If unfaithfulness to local church was a sin that undermined the very purpose of the first century church, it is even more serious today. At that time the church represented a very small percentage of the population, so their unfaithfulness might well have gone unnoticed by a large percentage of the population. Today in

many communities in America almost everyone in one's neighborhood knows whether or not they belong to a local church, and they are aware of how faithful they are. The offence was serious then, and it is serious now.

10:27 - A TERRIFYING EXPECTATION OF JUDGMENT. Rather than having sins covered by the shed blood of the Lamb of God, those who sin presumptuously, or defiantly (with their eyes wide open, high-handed) are guaranteed "but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES" (NAS). The consequences of sinning defiantly are disastrous. There is no more sacrifice for sins and judgment and indignation are promised.

10:28 - WITHOUT MERCY. The Hebrew Christians of the first century were well aware of the fact that "Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses." Their leaders had taught them and their history affirmed it.

10:29 - HOW MUCH SEVERER PUNISHMENT. Do you believe there will be degrees of punishment in hell? What does this verse teach us? If under the Mosaic Law people who were guilty of this kind of sin faced judgment without mercy, he asks, "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?" (NAS). If those who despise the law of Moses died without mercy, those who have trodden under foot the Son of God have no hope.

10:30 - THE LORD WILL JUDGE. The wrath of God is a fearful thing. The author closes this appeal with a threat (warning) about judgment, by quoting Deut. 32:35-36 (see also Ps. 135:14). The Scripture reads, "For we know Him who said, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.' And again, 'THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.'" These early readers knew Scripture and understood the point. People in general may not be able to quote the passage, but they are forewarned and therefore without excuse as they face His judgment.

"What," one may ask, "does that have to do with me, I'm a Baptist (Methodist, Presbyterian)." The answer is disturbing: There are a lot of Baptists and members of other churches who are lost and they are going to hell. They are sinning defiantly and hiding behind church membership - at least they think they are hidden. Is there any wonder that the Bible speaks of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? "At the heart of Christianity there remains forever a threat" [BARCLAY:]. This threat must be taken seriously. Every person will be called upon to give an account. Paul is clear about the wages of sin in Romans (6:23).

Another aspect of this is disturbing, or should be: "THE LORD WILL JUDGE *HIS* PEOPLE" (emphasis added). We are all going to be judged according to the deeds done in the flesh. If God will judge "His" people, how much more severe will the judgment of the unsaved be!

10:31 - IT IS A TERRIFYING THING. What does He call it in verse 27, “a terrifying expectation of judgment.” Here he says “it is a terrifying things to fall into the hands of the living God.” Occasionally, I will be preparing a sermon for some special occasion and John, my older son, will come by and say, “Why don’t you just preach ‘Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God?’” Two of the most famous sermons ever preached were “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” by Jonathan Edwards, and R. G. Lee’s famous sermon, “Payday Someday.” The later is the only one which I had the privilege of hearing in person!

A university student quoted his English teacher who was mocking the emotionalism of Jonathan Edwards and the Puritans by attacking this sermon. I asked him if he realized that Jonathan Edwards delivered this sermon in a town known for its hostility to preachers and preaching, and they took pride in running preachers out of town? Furthermore, I asked if the student was aware of the fact that Jonathan Edwards never raised his voice during the entire sermon and never made one gesture, yet people describing the service later said they had sense of one literally falling into hell and some in the audience were actually holding onto pillars and other things as if that would keep them from plunging into hell.

If you are going to accuse anyone of emotionalism, you will have to accuse the Holy Spirit. These people were under conviction of sin! Today, we may well wonder if by taking the guilt out of sin, we have taken away the “terrifying expectation of judgment.” We had better be forewarned - it is still in the Book!

4. The author returns to specific exhortations, 10:32-37.

There had been a time when these believers had faced trials and persecution, and through it all they had been faithful. But now they were in danger of drifting away, and the author reminds them of their former loyalty. Christians throughout the ages have seemingly been able to stand adversity better than prosperity. Ease has ruined more men than trouble ever did. Barclay illustrates with a story about Hannibal of Carthage, whose troops could stand the battle (they routed the Roman legions) but one winter in Capua did what the Romans could not do. One winter there with its luxury so sapped the morale of the Carthaginian troops that they could not stand against Rome.

The more affluent denominations today should recall how it was when they had to depend on God more and their resources less. Thomas C. Reeves (*The Empty Church: the Suicide of Liberal Christianity*, The Free Press, New York, 1996, pp. 276) laments the decline of the “seven sisters” of American Protestantism. He writes:

The mainline churches have played major roles in the shaping of the United States. For centuries, membership was often a sign of respectability, prosperity, and upward mobility [REEVES: 1].

Individuals, like churches, should pay attention to these exhortations. We seek the easy way in life, avoiding stress, pressure, and controversy. But the church has often seen its greatest growth during a time of persecution or tribulation, and it has often become stagnant when there was no suffering for the cause of Christ. Is it possible that the church in America today has forgotten what it means to suffer for Christ?

10:32 - REMEMBER THE FORMER DAYS. These readers are reminded of what it was like when “after being enlightened,” they had to endure “a great conflict of sufferings.” The readers had endured great suffering when they were spiritually enlightened and accepted Jesus Christ as Savior.

This obviously refers to a definite experience of people in a definite place - the Jewish believers had suffered in Jerusalem and other places. Many of the Gentile converts had also experienced persecution.

Possibly the ones who needed to be reminded of this suffering were also the ones who had forsaken the assembling of themselves together for worship. Many members today need to be reminded of former times in the Lord’s service. They need to remember and repent, as in Revelation 2:5.

10:33 - BEING MADE A PUBLIC SPECTACLE. Many early Jewish believers had been ostracized by society, turned out of their homes, and fired from their jobs. They were also “made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.”

10:34 - FOR YOU SHOWED SYMPATHY. The recipients of this epistle had shown sympathy for “prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one” (NAS). Whether or not the readers had been imprisoned and had their possessions seized or not, they surely knew other believers who had. Those who suffer for Christ here will have a heavenly reward. The Jewish Christians in question were in peril of a panic and of stampeding away from Christ [ATR:].

10:35 - THEREFORE. The “therefores” of Scripture are important. They form a transition between what has been said and what is about to be said. Based upon what he has just said, he will go on to draw a conclusion. Even though they had suffered for the cause of Christ, he urges them, “do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.”

10:36 - ENDURANCE. “For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.” Endurance is a quality of the mature Christian.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:2-4, (NAS)).

10:37 - HE WHO IS COMING. Here, as in other passages in the New Testament, those who face trials and persecutions are urged to remain faithful and steadfast, to endure to the end, “FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.” This quotation is from Hab. 2:3, 4 (“a little while” is added). Jesus is the Messiah, and He is the coming One Who “will come, and not delay.” Believers are admonished to wait patiently for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ

5. The just shall live by faith (10:38-39).

10:38 - MY RIGHTEOUS ONE. This quotation is from Hab. 2:4: “MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

The believer trusts God in everything. Hab. 2:4 is also quoted in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11, where Paul uses it to teach that the one who is righteous by faith (rather than by works) shall live. Paul's emphasis is on salvation by faith; this writer's is on living by faith [RSB: QV].

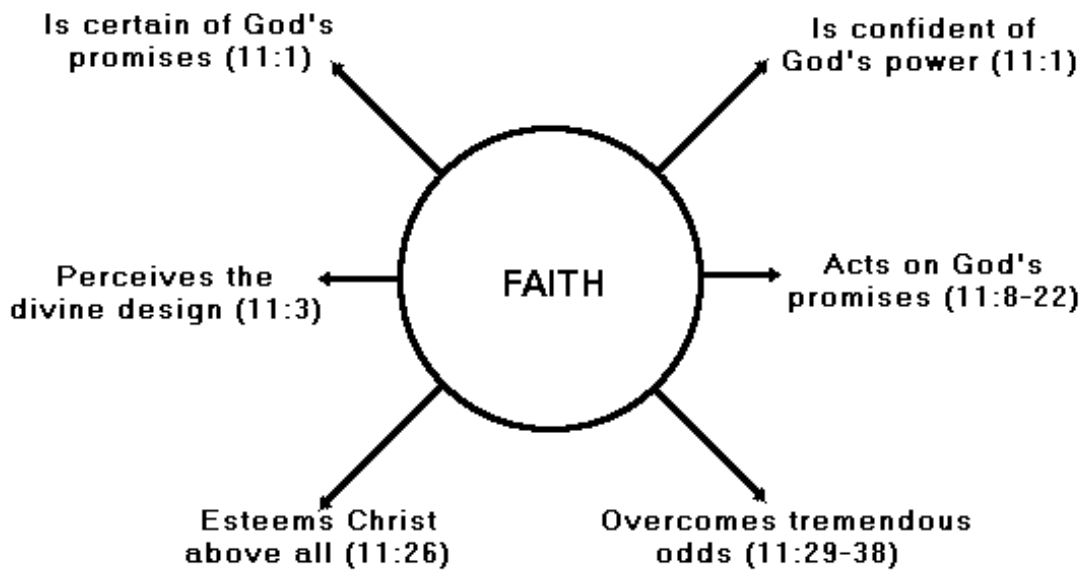
The phrase "the just shall live by faith" expresses the essence of how one relates to God. The writer will amplify this in chapter 11. This great truth is so important to the Christian that it is also quoted in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11.

10:39 - NOT OF THOSE WHO SHRINK BACK. “But we, the writer says, “ are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.” "But we" stands in marked contrast to those who would turn back from following Christ. The church movement was still young, and these converts knew many who had heard, and might have received Christ, but instead turned away and were never enlightened (see vs. 32). The writer says, “But we” are of those who live by faith “ to the preserving of the soul.”

IV. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST IS SEEN IN HIS POWER (11:1 - 13:19).

A. The Power of Faith Is Demonstrated (11:1-40).

Faith in God gives one both a new perspective and courage to act on one's convictions.. When John Bunyan was about to go to trial, he said, "With God's comfort in my poor soul, before I went down to the justices, I begged God that if I might do more good by being at liberty than in prison, that then I might be set at liberty. But if not, His will be done."



1. Faith is described, 11:1.

Faith is absolutely certain. What it believes is true and what it expects will come true. Faith is not merely believing God can do something, it is believing He will do it. Faith is believing God (above reason, science, the world, philosophy). By faith we do not mean a blind leap in the dark. Faith in Jesus Christ is based upon divine revelation - real, eternal truth, not wild speculation, or anew Age mysticism. Faith is not some abstract, mystical tenant of religion which should be dismissed by true science as void of truth. But faith is not inferior to science. In fact, science must be tested by divine truth. For example, based on available scientific evidence, many scientists are convinced that it takes more faith to believe in evolution than creation.

1:1 - FAITH IS. Ho do you define faith? Does everyone not know what it is? You hear people use the term all the time: “Keep the faith,” or “You have to have faith,” or in the vernacular, “You gotta’ believe.” But what does it mean in the theological sense? “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (NAS). The NKJV renders it, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” How could anyone improve on the biblical definition? But just what does that mean?

Does that mean that you may possess the substance - that which is real, the essence - without actually seeing it? Abraham claimed possession of the Promised Land when he had no title to it, and while pagans still occupied it. Abraham claimed possession of it on the basis of the promise of God. He claimed it by faith and the Paul tells us in Romans that it was attributed unto him for righteousness. That is the way - the only way - we receive the substance (essence) of the new Covenant.

The Holman Bible Dictionary defines faith as follows:

Trusting commitment of one person to another, particularly of a person to God. Faith is the central concept of Christianity. One may be called a Christian only if one has faith.

Our English word "faith" comes from the Latin *fides*, as developed through the Old French words *fei* and *feid*. In Middle English (1150-1475) "faith" replaced a word that eventually evolved into "belief." "Faith" came to mean "loyalty to a person to whom one is bound by promise or duty." Faith was fidelity. "Belief" came to be distinguished from faith as an intellectual process having to do with the acceptance of a proposition. The verb form of "faith" dropped out of English usage toward the end of the sixteenth century [HBD: QV].

THE EVIDENCE. Faith is the “substance of things hoped for,” as we have seen. It is also “the evidence of things not seen.” I know I have a place prepared for me in Heaven. I am more confident of that than I am anything in this world. The Holy Spirit will affirm in your spirit that you have eternal life (I John).

2. Old Testament examples of faith are given, 11:2-40.

11:2 - FOR BY IT. That is, by faith, “the men of old gained approval.” He will proceed to give examples every student of the Word of God will should recognize, and in this roll call of the faithful, show how they lived by faith.

11:3 - GOD CREATED THE WORLD. The Scripture here does not say that God, by our faith, or by His faith, created the world. What it says is that “By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.” We need to understand something else that this verse does not say. It does not say that the Bible only has “religious” faith (or “revealed” truth) to counter the overwhelming stockpile of scientific evidence amassed by legitimate scientists in support of the theory of evolution. My first question would be what evidence. Nothing in the evolutionists world is evolving more than the theory of evolution.

After years of studying Scripture, after studying material published by the Institute for Creation Research and Answers in Genesis, after many interviews with leading creation scientists, and after living my life in a society that has been inundated either by atheistic evolutionary humanism, or by Pantheistic evolutionary postmodernism (New Age religious philosophies), I have reached a conclusion. The creation - evolution debate is not a debate between religion and science. It is in fact, a religious debate.

The evidence for the origin of the world cannot be used scientifically to prove conclusive either the theory of evolution of creation, because you cannot reconstruct all the evidence and “create” creation in a test tube or in a lab. It cannot be scientifically observed. Therefore, the evidence must be examined to determine which model it fits - creation or evolution. I believe the creation scientists are right. For one reason, they have been consistent and the evolutionary views are continually evolving. When one of the leading evolutionists in the world calculates that possibility of life beginning and evolving by random chance is less than one in ten to the fortieth power, he sounds very convincing to me.

But I have not only studied this subject by reading some of the debate between secular scientists and Christian scientists. I have read the Bible and I am convinced that Scripture is truth without any mixture of error. If you reject what the Bible says in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, that may tell me more about the way you look at God than it does about what you know about the theory of evolution. If you spell your god with a small “g” you are going to have a problem with he first eleven chapters of Genesis, but if you spell your God with a capital “G” you should have no problem with the biblical account of creation. And I am not referring to some hybrid creation/evolution compromise which has already been rejected by both evolutionary and creation.

I am not a scientist, but I have concluded that creation scientists have the weight of the evidence in their corner. Furthermore, I am a student of the Bible and I spell my God with a capital “G.” Creation of the world was no challenge to the great God Almighty. “By faith” I

“understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”

11:4 - ABEL. “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.” Abel is one of my faith heroes, What do I know about Him? Just what the Bible tells me, but if he is listed in the roll call of the faithful, he is one of my faith heroes.

Because the name Abel means, "breath, or vapor, his name has associated with the shortness of life. WE know that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Growing up, I was taught in Sunday School Abel's sacrifice was a better sacrifice than Cain's because it was the sacrifice of an animal. However, the "faith" emphasis here might imply that Abel's offering was accepted because his attitude was proper. Regardless of that, Cain killed Abel because of jealousy.

Hebrews 12:24 compares Abel's blood with Christ's blood. Abel's blood calls for vengeance, but Christ's blood carries with it the idea of forgiveness (Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51; 1 John 1:7). Nevertheless, Abel is outstanding because he was the first person to worship God correctly, to demonstrate faith accurately, and to please God fully. Abel was the first shepherd and influenced the early Hebrews to place a priority on the pastoral life. Also, he was the first man to be murdered and the first human to die [HBD: QV].

11:5 - BY FAITH ENOCH. “By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.”

Here is a great Bible trivia question: “He was the oldest man who ever lived, yet he died before his father.” Answer: Methuselah was the oldest man who ever lived and he died before his father because his father never died.

A better question is, why was he taken up (without death)? Answer: “he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.” Enoch, whose name means "dedicated," was taken up to Heaven without dying (Gen. 5:18) because he pleased God, and that is why he is listed in the roll call of the faithful.

11:6 - WITHOUT FAITH. While Enoch's faith pleased God, “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

11:7 - BY FAITH NOAH. “By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”

Who was Noah? He was a righteous man who became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth who were born after he was 500 years old. God warned Noah that He was going to destroy mankind with a great flood. But because Noah walked with God in righteousness and was blameless in relation to other people, God gave him specific instructions for building an ark by which he and his family would be spared. A week before the flood (Gen. 7:4), Noah and his family entered the ark with all of the animals as God instructed him. After seven days the rain began and continued for 40 days. But according to the Scripture, it took more than an ordinary rain to cause the great world-wide deluge. Many creation scientists, and Bible scholars (including Dr. David Skinner of Mid America Seminary) believe that before the flood there was a great water canopy (the waters above the earth) surrounding the earth that protected the earth from the ultraviolet rays of the sun and that this water was released upon the earth, even as waters from great subterranean caverns (the deep) gushed forth upon the earth. God controlled the rudderless ark so that it landed on Mount Ararat and when it was safe, Noah and his family left the ark with all the animals that had been spared. Incidentally, from that day until now undomesticated animals have lived in fear of man. But not coincidentally, Noah and his family settled in the ideal place in what would one day become Babylon. Generations later Abraham, Job, and other patriarchs would inhabit this land - Abraham lived in Ur of the Chaldees. Nimrod would become founder of a great city called Babylon and before too long the Babylonians would attempt to build a tower (The Tower of Babel) to reach God and God would confuse the languages of the people, thus forcing a segregation which would eventually lead to migration to various parts of the world. The instructions (laws) Noah and his sons handed down to their children and grandchildren would provide the background for the Code of Hammurabi many generations later. Religious beliefs developed in ancient Babylon would influence masses for thousands of years. The New Age religions, including eastern mysticism, find their roots in the teachings of Nimrod's kinsmen.

While the history is exciting, the point here might be addressed with the question, “What did Noah do that placed him in the roll call of the faithful?” Answer: he believed God. God said, “I am going to send a great flood and destroy mankind from the face of the earth. You will build an ark according to My instructions and I will spare you and your family and start over with you.” Noah had never seen a flood, he had never seen a ship, and some believe he had never even seen a rain. But he built the ark, even though it took him and his sons one hundred and twenty years. When God commanded, he loaded the ark with the animals and then, with his family, boarded the ark himself to wait for the rain.

Noah did not have to see the flood to get on board the ark. He simply responded to God by believing Him and obeying Him. There is no faith where there is no obedience. We do not have to see God to get on board. He promises eternal life to those who place their faith in His Son. You are not going to see Heaven before you repent, you will have trust Him.

11:8 - BY FAITH ABRAHAM. When God called Abraham to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and go to a distant promised land, he

obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God (8-10, NAS).

Paul, in the great doctrinal section of the Epistle to the Romans, stressed that Abraham was justified, not by the works of the Law, but by a faith-righteousness.

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Rom. 4:1-3, NAS)

11:11- BY FAITH SARAH. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness, even. But Sarah, his wife, also trusted God and because of her faith she “received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised.” Read the account in Gen. 21:1-5.

11:12 - AND HIM AS GOOD AS DEAD. “Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.” Abraham “as good as dead” because Abraham was 100 years old - and Sarah was also beyond normal child bearing years.

11:13 - ALL THESE DIED IN FAITH. Abraham, Sarah and their family (Isaac, Jacob, and others) “died in faith without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. “A reference apparently is being made to Gen. 23:4, which recounts Abraham's purchase of a burial place. At that time he said to the sons of Heth, "I am a foreigner and a visitor among you" [BSB: QV].

11:14 - SEEKING A COUNTRY. “For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own,” that is they have been called out and by faith look ahead to the country to which they have been called. They demonstrated their faith in a practical way. In James 2:18 we read, “But someone may well say, ‘You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.’”

11:15 - OPPORTUNITY TO RETURN. “And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.” If they had not had faith to look ahead, and if the old land from which they had departed had a greater claim on them than the one to which they were going, they could have returned to the old one.

11:16 - A BETTER COUNTRY. “But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.” The believer is but a pilgrim in this world, as the old Gospel song declares, “this world is not my home, I’m just passing through.” Our real home is in Heaven, and we live this life with our eyes on the ultimate goal.

11:17 - BY FAITH ABRAHAM...OFFERED UP ISAAC. Few stories are better known to students of the Old Testament than the account of God’s requiring Abraham to offer his son, Isaac (the son of promise) on an altar. In complete faith in the Lord, Abraham, “when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son.” Read the account in Genesis 22. This was a shocking test for two reasons, the first being that God will command Abraham to kill anyone. The second is that Isaac was the son of promise - only through Isaac could Abraham have received the promises of the Lord.

11:18 -IN ISAAC. The Scripture says, “it was he,” that is, to Abraham, “to whom it was said, ‘IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED.’” Only through Isaac (not Ishmael) could the Abrahamic Covenant have been fulfilled. Many nations can trace their roots back to Abraham, but only the Covenant people could trace their roots back to Abraham through Israel (Jacob) and Isaac.

11:19 - A TYPE. “He (Abraham) considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.” For this period, before the New Testament, this required tremendous faith. The background, as already noted, is Genesis 22:1-24.

1. Isaac was the son of promise;
2. God commanded Abraham to take Isaac and offer him on an altar;
3. This experience not only put Abraham's faith to the test, it provides us with an insight to the Abrahamic covenant.

Abraham's offering his son is symbolic of God's offering his son:

- (1) Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice;
- (2) When the time was right, God gave His only Son to die on the cross for sinful men;
- (3) The resurrection of Jesus Christ is also portrayed (11:19).

The third point demands our attention. If we only read the passage in Genesis, we might conclude, as many do, that the message we are to get from this is that since God provided a substitute for the sacrifice, this was a type of the crucifixion - Jesus died for us. The

Substitutionary Atonement of Jesus Christ is certainly a key biblical doctrine, and the account in Genesis 22 does reveal that God provided a substitute for the sacrifice. However, based on what we read in Hebrews 11:17-19, we may want to adjust our thinking on the subject. According to this passage, we have in the account of Abraham's offering Isaac both a type of the death of Christ and a type of the resurrection of Christ.

If we assume that the message is that God supplies a substitute for us in Jesus Christ, we may miss the fact that the Crucifixion and Resurrection are typified by Abraham's offering Isaac on the altar.

God received Abraham's offering of Isaac as an accomplished fact when he drew back the knife and, with his mind totally made up to obey the Lord, was about to thrust the knife into Isaac's chest. He was not holding back anything from God. Only when this was demonstrated did God provide a substitute. Taking Isaac from the altar typified the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. God could not hold back His Own Son (and provide for our salvation), but He could raise Him from the dead.

11:20 - BY FAITH ISAAC. The son of Abraham, Isaac, by faith "blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come. Isaac was the quiet patriarch, overshadowed in some ways by a more charismatic father son. He was a man given to meditation, but he expressed his own faith in the Abrahamic Covenant as surely as did either his father or his son. He also sought to commit his twin sons to it. Read the account in Gen. 27:26-40.

11:21 - BY FAITH JACOB. "By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff" shocking Joseph by blessing the younger son over the older son. We read the account in Genesis 48:1-22. Joseph asked his father to bless two sons, positioning Manasseh, the first born son, in front of Jacob's right hand, and Ephraim, the younger son, in front of his left hand. As Israel (Jacob) blessed them he crossed his hands and placed the right hand on the Ephraim's head and the left hand of Manasseh's head, symbolizing that the first blessing, and tribe dominance would go to the younger son. Jacob had deceived his older brother, Esau, and stolen his birthright and the blessing of the first born. Here he bestows it prophetically. Centuries later when the kingdom split, the name "Ephraim" was often used to denote "Israel," the northern ten tribes.

11:22 - BY FAITH JOSEPH. There is no more godly man in the Old Testament than Joseph (with the possible exception of Enoch and Elijah). As an adult, as a slave in Egypt, and finally, as the powerful official in Egypt, Joseph manifested the character of citizen of the Kingdom of God set forth in the Sermon on the Mount more than almost any Old Testament personality. Here we read, "By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel, and gave orders concerning his bones." Read the account in Genesis 50:24-25. The point made here by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews is that Joseph, on his death bed, showed his faith in God's promise to Abraham (the Abrahamic Covenant) by requesting that his bones be buried in the Land of Promise.

11:23 - BY FAITH MOSES. “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's edict.”

The faith expressed in this case was that of Amram and Jochebed, the parents of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. The name “Moses” means “drawn out of the water,” because the daughter of Pharaoh found him in the little basket in the reeds in the Nile River and had her servants draw him out of the water. Amram and Jochebed had faith that God would save their son’s life by this means, but they could hardly have imagined what great things the Lord would one day do with their youngest son.

11:24 - BY FAITH MOSES. Because God worked it out so that Moses was cared for during his formative years by his own mother, when the time came for him to declare himself, he stood with his own people.

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward 11:24-26, NAS).

This was a decision of faith, because sight would have placed all the advantages with Egypt. By faith he spurned the riches and power of the palace in order to identify himself with downtrodden slaves.

11:25 - CHOOSING RATHER. This was a deliberate choice Moses made to identify with his own people and to follow the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel rather than the gods of Egypt. This choice would lead to a forty year alienation and self-imposed banishment from Israel, and forty years as a fugitive from Egypt justice.

11:26 - THE REPROACH OF CHRIST. What does it mean - the reproach of Christ? Christ would not even be born for another 1400 years! How could Moses have given any consideration to the reproach of Christ. He chose the reproach associated with the Covenant, even though his knowledge of the coming Messiah was very limited, compared with what the later prophets would promise and what the Gospel writers would reveal about Jesus Christ . “Or this may mean the reproach any anointed envoy or messiah (in this case Moses himself) suffers in a hostile world” [RSB: QV].

11:27 - BY FAITH HE LEFT EGYPT. Follow this carefully and answer one question: He, by faith, “left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen.” The question: Does this refer to his flight to Midian at age 40 (Ex. 2:11-15), or when he left ahead of all the Hebrew people at the time of the Exodus (when he was 80 years old, Ex. 12:37)? It would seem that what motivated his flight at age 40 was fright, not faith. He had not yet stood before the burning bush!

11:28 - BY FAITH HE KEPT THE PASSOVER. By faith, Moses obeyed God by keeping the original Passover in Egypt, and by “the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.” In Exodus 12 we read the account of the time when God sent His death angel throughout Egypt, and the first born son in every house where the people did not obey Him was slain. Even Pharaoh could not protect his own son - and he claimed to be a god. Each of the Ten Plagues was directed at some object of worship in Egypt, this one at worship of the Pharaoh..

11:29 - BY FAITH THEY PASSED THROUGH THE RED SEA. I found it interesting that some Bible maps, including P. C. Bible Atlas for Windows 95, show the circuitous route of the Hebrews circling around the Red Sea. Some substitute the Sea of Reeds for the Red Sea. But the Bible is very clear (Ex. 14:13-31) they crossed the Red Sea “as though they were passing through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.” It really would have been a miracle if the Egyptian army and all their horses had drowned in ankle deep water! No faith would have been required to cross a neck of water (or circle around it) that was only a few inches deep. All that would be required would be fright.

11:30 - BY FAITH THE WALLS OF JERICHO FELL DOWN. Their great Yahweh had miraculously delivered them from Egypt; He had miraculously sustained them during forty years of wilderness wandering; He had miraculously brought them across the Jordan River in to the Promised Land; and He had miraculously given them an incredible victory in the first great battle in the Conquest of Canaan (see Joshua 6). Preschool children learn the story of the Battle of Jericho in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. They know that God commanded them to march around the city each day for seven days and then one the seventh day they were to march around the city seven times. At the sound of trumpets and the shouts of the people, the wall came tumbling down. Children sing about it: “Joshua ‘fit the battle of Jericho, and the walls came tumbling down.”

11:31 - BY FAITH RAHAB. Perhaps this one is a surprise: “By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.” Perhaps we will not be surprised when we remember that Rahab is listed in Matthew’s genealogy of Christ (the mother of Boaz, Matt. 1:5).

What else do we know about Rahab? Her personal name meaning, "broad" - no pun intended. Rahab was called a harlot and she lived in Jericho. She is the one who hid the two Hebrew spies Joshua sent there to determine the strength of the city (Josh. 2:1). When the king of Jericho learned of their presence in his city, he sent men to arrest them, but Rahab hid them on her roof, and after sending the arresting officers off in one direction, sent them helped them escape in a different direction. She asked only that the promise to spare her and her family when the Hebrews destroyed Jericho (Josh. 6:17-25).

Why is Rahab listed among the faith heroes in the faith chapter? Simply because she believed the Hebrews would destroy Jericho and conquer Canaan. They had obviously been

monitoring the progress of the wandering Hebrew people for a long time. They knew that no nation had been able to stop their march toward a position on the eastern side of the Jordan River, opposite Jericho.

11:32 - WHAT MORE SHALL I SAY? In other words, the roll call of the faithful here is not exhaustive. For example he might have mentioned “Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets.” He mentions only four of the judges who judged Israel (see the Book of Judges). The list includes:

1. Othniel (3:7-11)
2. Ehud delivers from Moab (3:12-30).
3. Shamgar (3:31)
4. Deborah (and Barak) deliver from the Canaanites (4:1-5:31).
5. Gideon delivers from Midian (6:1-9:57).
6. Tola and Jair (10:1-5)
7. Jephthah delivers from Ammon (10:6-12:7).
8. Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (12:8-15)
9. Samson begins the deliverance from the Philistines (13:1-16:31).

Samuel was the final judge who established a judicial circuit for judging the people. He was the man God instructed to anoint Saul as king over Israel, and later, when Saul rebelled, God sent him to renounce Saul and his house. He then sent him to anoint David as the next king over Israel. One should not wonder that Samuel was listed among the faith heroes. He is representative of “the prophets” - there were many others, some writing prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, some non-writing prophets like Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha.

The Scripture mentions only one king. David. David, the first king since Melchizedec who never bowed his knees before pagan gods (or turned to the occult as did Saul). David. The man after God’s Own heart. David - the king by whom all kings were judged. The story of some kings was summed up in the words, he lived, he died, and he was buried. In some cases a postscript was added to the obituary - he did that which was evil, or he did that which was good, yet not as his father David had done. In a few cases (Hezekiah, for example) we read that he was righteous and that he followed the Lord with his whole heart as his father David had done.

11:32 - WHO BY FAITH. The Bible is filled with examples, but the writer has space for but a few. There were many among the patriarchs, judges, prophets, priests, kings and others. For example, there is Jonathan, son of Saul and friend of David. And what about David’s thirty mighty men?

CONQUERED KINGDOMS. David, the man of war, conquered kingdoms. He conquered many surrounding nations, making Israel a power in that part of the world. Solomon was able to hold what David had conquered, but the kingdom was divided under his son, Rehoboam, and it would have to wait three thousand years before it would be a power in that region again.

PERFORMED ACTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. This list would be a long one, a list that is still incomplete. Throughout the ages God's saints have been doing acts of righteousness. While the Bible tells us that there is none righteous, when we [place our faith in Jesus Christ, His righteousness is imputed unto us, and the Holy Spirit indwells us so that we not only can, but must do works of righteousness.

OBTAINED PROMISES. There were many promises which God gave His people through faithful prophets. Some involved temporal things, some eternal. And some had immediate application or fulfillment, as well as future fulfillment. The promise of a successor to Moses would be an immediate Joshua and a distant, coming Joshua (Yeshua, the name by which Messianic Jews know Jesus today).

SHUT THE MOUTHS OF LIONS. Is there any doubt as to whom he refers? Daniel. If you want a good definition of faith, try this one - Daniel. Samson and David slew lions, but to protect Daniel, God shut the mouths of half starved lions, in a lion's den, from which there was no escape.

11:34 - QUENCHED THE POWER OF FIRE. This can only point to three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who were cast into "the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up" (Dan. 3:23).

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king." He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!" Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire (Dan. 3:24-26, NAS).

ESCAPED THE EDGE OF THE SWORD. An interesting exercise would involve associating names with all three categories here. How many faithful servants of the Lord "escaped the edge of the sword" we will never know, but God knows.

FROM WEAKNESS WERE MADE STRONG. Samson, a judge; Elijah, a prophet; and David, a king would rank among the most prominent. We may list others from the Old Testament, and a host from the New Testament, not the least of which would be Paul. History is filled with great examples, as *Foxxe's Book of Martyrs* illustrates. Early Christian history

abounds with stories of martyrs who were simply ordinary people who by faith faced torture and death with strength and courage.

The history of Christianity is filled with illustrations. Every student of history knows about the Founding Fathers, their writing, their faith, their love of country, and their concern for all Americans would follow. But who really knows about Roger Williams, Obadiah Holmes, and John Leland. Would there have been a Bill of Rights if it had left to the politicians who get credit for it? Those who know a little about modern missions are aware of the courage of William Carey, the Father of Modern Missions, and David Brainerd, who poured his life out as an offering to his Savior and who by doing so has been held up as an example to countless missionaries.

BECAME MIGHTY IN WAR. Who would best illustrate this? Joshua, who led the Conquest; and David, the mighty man of war, and even and his mighty men would head the list. Then there are the Maccabees, Judas, Simon and their kinsmen.

PUT FOREIGN ARMIES TO FLIGHT. The three names at the top of this list are by now familiar to us: Joshua, David, Judas Maccabees. Add Samson and Gideon to that list and then list some of their accomplishments.

11:35 - WOMEN RECEIVED BACK THEIR DEAD. Who were the women who “received back their dead by resurrection?” And who were the “others” who “were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they might obtain a better resurrection?” The background for much of what we find in verses 35-38 is probably from the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees (2 Macc. 6:18-7:42), even though there might have been Old Testament examples.

To read about women who “received back their dead by resurrection,” see 1 Kings 17:22-23 (the widow of Zarephath's son); 2 Kings 4:35-36 (the Shunammite's son). There is also the mother of the young soldier who was killed in battle and his friends, having no time for a proper burial, threw him into the tomb of Elisha, and as soon as he touched the bones of the great prophet, he came back to life.

11:36 - AND OTHERS. The Hebrew readers could fill in the blanks from their knowledge of the Old Testament, and from the Apocrypha (especially Maccabees). Accounts there abound with stories of women who “experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment.”

11:37 - THEY WERE STONED. There is no way of knowing how many were stoned. But, Saul of Tarsus would never forget the stoning of Stephen. Stoning was an official means of execution at one time in their history, but there were stonings that were spontaneous and illegal. We have often seen on newscasts and documentaries how quickly a mob can form in the Middle East even today. By video tape we have witnessed streets filled with young Palestinians throwing stones at Israeli police, or Israelis throwing stones at Palestinians. Those are not small pebbles, but heavy enough stones to kill if they hit someone in the head.

THEY WERE SAWN IN TWO. Tradition has it that Manasseh, the King of Judah and son of the godly King Hezekiah, had Isaiah was tied and forced into a hollow log and sawn asunder in 698 B.C..

THEY WERE TEMPTED. This list would be a long one. Think of Jeremiah, Daniel, and numerous other prophets, as well as a few priests. They would know of many who “were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated.” It is still happening today, but the news media apparently does not consider it important enough to tell us about it, and no one is going to become upset enough about it to demand that Congress do any thing to help them until they see the pictures on television. That is what garnered support for the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, the situation in South Africa, and even the homosexual movement. But we know for a fact that Christians are being persecuted by Communists, Muslims, and others around the world - not just a few, but large numbers. As a pastor, I receive mail in which a few congressmen confirm this.

When we stand before the judgment bar of God to answer for the deeds done in the flesh, we may well be reminded of these martyrs and suffering saints. About the most demanding things many church members have to worry about is trying to get to Sunday School before the secretary turns in the report. Sadly enough, there are many church members who really feel good about themselves if then show up once every three weeks for a Sunday morning service. How do we compare with those who are beaten, crippled, and slain for the cause of Jesus Christ?

11:38 - WANDERING IN DESERTS. We may not know all of them, but God has never lost sight of a one of them. The Holy Spirit inspired the writer to mention these “(men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.” Suffering and deprivation for the sake of Christ did not end with those mentioned here. The faithful continued to suffer for their Lord: from James, the first Apostle to become a martyr (A.D. 44); to Peter (crucified upside down, according to tradition); to Paul (beheaded); John’s exile to Patmos; to Polycarp, the aged Bishop of Smyrna who was burned at the stake; to the Reformation saints; to Corre Ten Boom, to the millions slain by the Nazis and Communists of the Twentieth Century.

It is reported by Melissa J. McClard in *Washington Watch*, a publication of Gary Bauer’s Family Research Council (May, 1998, Vol. 9, No. 7) that currently, “over 200 million Christians are under threat of persecution [McClard: 1]. Over 35 countries have actually mounted campaigns against Christians. The chief offender is China, where faced with 70 million Christians, they have called of the “eradication of the independent Christian movement” [McClard: 1]. China is followed by closely by Sudan, and then Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Burma, Greece, Ethiopia, Vietnam and many more. And never forget Russia. If hard-liners have their was persecution could escalate there any time.

11:39 - THROUGH FAITH. “And all these,” referring to all those mentioned previously in this chapter, “having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was

promised...”Why? Continue with verse 40: “because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.”

Like Abraham, they all believed God and it was attributed unto them for righteousness. The Old Testament saints were saved by faith in God’s promise of a coming Messiah. There never has been a works righteousness.

HAVING GAINED APPROVAL THROUGH THEIR FAITH. Abraham was saved before the giving of the law concerning circumcision, and both he and Moses were saved before the giving of the Law. All those listed in the faith chapter of Hebrews found God’s approval through faith, not works or the Law. As Paul wrote to the Galatians,

... a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified (Gal. 2:16, NAS).

DID NOT RECEIVE. Those Old Testament saints “gained approval through faith,” but they never received “what was promised.” What was promised? The coming of the Messiah - and everything His coming would bring.

11:40 - GOD HAD PROVIDED SOMETHING BETTER FOR US. “Us” denotes all believers in Jesus Christ. “Something better” points to all that is ours because of His coming. The entire Book of Hebrews stresses the superiority of Christ over the prophets, the Law, the sacrificial system, the High Priest, even the Tabernacle. “Had provided” should be “foresaw” (aorist of *problepo*, to see before).

SO THAT APART FROM US THEY WOULD NOT BE MADE PERFECT. “Be made perfect” (remember our old friend, *telios*, to be complete, mature full grown?) Carries the force of bringing something to its intended goal, seeing it through to completion.

Here then is the author’s purpose in leading his readers through this Westminster Abbey of faith. It was to challenge them to a like faith in God’s world mission.

Keep in mind the idea of a relay race. Suppose that every man save the last one runs faithfully and wins his segment of the race. If the last man fails, then all have lost the race. Insofar as the overall race is concerned they might just as well have not run victoriously. The ultimate victory depends upon the final runner.

Those who went before the readers had won their segment of the race. But if these Hebrew Christians did not run their part of the race, then the race would be lost. Of course, God would find another people to carry out his purpose. But like Israel at Kadesh-barnea, the purpose would be delayed. For those who went before to see the overall purpose accomplished or completed, every generation of Christians must *by faith* win its segment of the race [HOBBS, *Hebrews: Challenge to Bold Discipleship*, Broadman, Nashville, 1971, pp. 144: 120].

I have often said that we are never more than a generation away from paganism. All it takes is from one generation of Christians to fail to reach their children for Christ. But never in my wildest dreams, did I think it would be the generation to which I addressed that statement. But here we are - moving deeper and deeper into the post Christian era in America. Christians today need to see how they fit into God's plan of world evangelism. If He cannot use us, He will find someone else. He always has.

B. Jesus Christ Is the Supreme Exile for Believers (12:1-29).

There should be no chapter division here; because 12:1-3 is the climax of the whole argument about better promises (10:19 -12:3). He concludes this argument with a passionate appeal for loyalty to Christ. Loyalty, while it is not the means of salvation, is a proof of salvation.

1. We must run the race of life with our eyes on Jesus, 12:1-2.

12:1 - THEREFORE. The "Therefore" is a conclusion of emphasis. Based on the points already made in chapter 11, we must conclude that, from the point of regeneration, we are engaged in the race of life. "This is one of the great moving passages of the New Testament; and in it the writer to the Hebrews has given us a well-nigh perfect summary of the Christian life" [BARCLAY:].

CLOUD OF WITNESSES. A vast mass of clouds is the idea. The metaphor refers to the great amphitheater with the arena for runners. Picture fans at an Olympic event or football game.

The "cloud of witnesses" refers to the list of the faithful people in ch. 11. The passage is reminiscent of the athletic events of ancient Greece and Rome. Witnesses who are former participants are present. Warm-up weights are typical of sin, which is to be laid aside in the serious competition of life. Life is a race in which the believer is asked to "run with endurance." The phrase "looking unto Jesus" connotes the idea of "having eyes for no one but

Jesus." We glance at the saints (ch. 11), but we gaze upon the Savior (12:2) [BSB: QV].

LAY ASIDE. We continue, "let us also lay aside every encumbrance..." The runners in the Roman arenas ran nearly naked. Anyone witnessing track and field events in recent years may wonder if they are trying to get back to that. "Every encumbrance" (every weight, NKJV) refers to their robes, swords, and shields, and anything else they might have been carrying. They set aside every garment that might cause one to trip and every weight that might hinder. Athletes today may wear shoes designed for various events in track and field, as well as for other sports, as well as for different surfaces. Football players wear the same shoes but change cleats when they move from grass to Astroturf. There is also a lot of difference in what athletes wear for different sports. Those who do not need the protection of a football player or hockey player wear light weight clothing that will not restrict movement. Clothing and shoes for athletes had been reduced to a science today.

The significance here for the Christian is be obvious. We are running the race of life right here and now! I wonder how many Christians are even aware of that fact. But aware or not, we are now running the race of life, and if we are to win the race there are certain things we must do. To begin with, we must lay aside every encumbrance that handicaps us (doubt, fear, pride, sloth, lust envy, jealousy immorality, all the works of the flesh).

THE SIN WHICH SO EASILY ENTANGLES US. The KJV renders it, "The sin which doth so easily beset us;" and the NRSV, "the sin that clings so closely," and the NKJV, "the sin which so easily ensnares us." Sins does all of that, it besets us, it clings closely to us, and it ensnares us. While there are many possible renderings, Robertson suggests that the true idea is, "the easily encompassing (or surrounding) sin: In this case apostasy from Christ" [ATR:].

When I was playing high school football, we had a starter who missed practiced one week when we put in a new play. He was back for the game and the coach told him what he was to do. When the play was called, I asked him if he knew what to do, and he answered, "Yeah." The ball was handed of to me and when I started toward the line I saw the biggest hole I had ever seen in a line. Everyone had done his job. There was just one very small defensive back coming into the hole and he was the one my teammate was going to knock out of there, and I knew he could do it. He was bigger, stronger, faster, and the better athlete. There was just one problem - when he came to the hole he kept going, thinking it was a sweep. I had already cut toward the hole and this little tiny boy wrapped his arms around one leg. He was so small that I could have run all the way to the end zone, dragging him all the way - if, that is, I had been the only one of the field. He ensnared me and gave the big boys time to zero in on me at the line of scrimmage.

Some of the sins mentioned above may not seem to be so great to the one who is entertaining them. He thinks he can run the race of life, only a slightly impeded by the weight of the sin. But one sin usually opens the door to other sins and before you know it, you are thrown for a loss, you are a loser in the race of life.

LET US RUN. Literally, it is, “let us keep on running” the race of life. A lot of races are won by someone who refuses to quit. A lot of boxing matches are pulled out in late rounds by a boxer who refuses to give up.

WITH ENDURANCE. The KJV has "With patience." We must run the race of life with endurance, with perseverance, and not doubt, despair or impatience. Modern track and field jargon might help - pace yourself, find your groove. A major challenge come when a marathon runner “hits the wall.” He may quit, falter, or endure until he gets his second wind.

12:2 - FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS. "Fix upon Jesus, after a glance at the cloud of witnesses, the goal" [ATR:]. We must run the race of life, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” The sprinter runs with his eyes on the tape. A distance runner may run most of the race without seeing the tape, but when he rounds the last turn on the final lap, he is concentrating on one thing, the goal or the tape. We must run the race of life with our eyes on Jesus.

The only time I was ever pulled out of a game for a mistake was on an extremely hot afternoon, with temperatures well over one hundred degrees and no shade in sight. It was late in the game and when my number was called I glanced at the ball and saw that it was only two or three yards from the line. I took the hand-off, hit the hole, and when I crossed the line I straightened up and got buried under a number of tacklers. But I really felt great, until I managed to get up and saw that no one was celebrating. It was then that I saw that I had crossed the five yard line, not the goal life. I do not know what caused the mistake, but I will never forget the horrible blunder, but while I have often thought about it, I have mentioned it very few times.

That was only a game. But unfortunately, I have taken my eyes of Jesus on many occasions - with far worse consequences. Every time you take your eyes off Jesus you stumble, you lose ground, God’s name is dishonored and His kingdom hindered. I can only thank God that He has made provisions for dealing with sinners such as I.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9, NAS).

AUTHOR. He is the author, the originator of personal faith. In what sense? In Ephesians 2:8-9, we read, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” In response to Simon Peter’s confession, Jesus assured him that flesh and blood had not revealed that to him, it came through the revelation of the Father.

PERFECTER. This word was coined, apparently by the author, for it is found nowhere else in reference to Christ. His sufferings qualified as the “author and perfecter of faith.” The NKJV

renders it, “the finisher of *our* faith” (italics means that it is not in the original). The Greek word, *teleiwtays*, may be translated either completer, perfecter, or finisher. Jesus is the one who brings our faith to completion.

WHO FOR THE JOY. Why did Jesus suffer, and bleed, and die for us? For His joy, when His mission was complete and His work done. The Scripture continues, “who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” There is a great deal of satisfaction for us when we finish a job and look back on it and see that it was a job well done. How much more so for Jesus. This denotes the joy set before Him at the end of the race. Here was the cross with its shame - but there, at the end, is the joy and the victory.

2. Christians should take discipline seriously (12:3-11).

a. The way Jesus endured hostility should give us courage, 3-4.

12:3 - CONSIDER HIM. Chapter 11 was filled with examples of people who demonstrated their faith in God. Here the author holds up to us a greater example - that of Jesus Himself. “For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (NAS). While it may be true that the faith that falters before the finish was faulty from the first, it is also true that we will all falter if we take our eyes off the “author and perfecter of faith.” Jesus is the key to the whole problem, the solution to doubt and fear. This really concludes the entire argument of 10:19 - 12:3.

12:4 - YOU HAVE NOT YET RESISTED. The writer is not trying to be facetious here, but what he is saying is that if you are reading this you have not yet been martyred for their faith in Christ. The Scripture says, “You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.” None of the readers of this epistle had yet been put to death for the Lord. There had been many martyrs and there would be many more. If we, today, can read these words, we have not yet resisted temptation to the point of death. Jesus has!

Who do we think we are if we feel that we deserve better than Jesus? Who do we think we are if we feel that we have some right not to suffer for the cause of our Savior? We must consider what Jesus did for the cause of redemption and be reminded that Jesus promised that His servants would suffer for His sake.

12:5 - THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD. The writer asks, “and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM” (caps in NAS). In verses 5-11, The Greek word *paideia* or one of its derivatives is used eight times. The

word was used by the Greeks in reference to the rearing of a child. It was applied to all aspects of the care and treatment of children,

including in its meaning both education and corporal punishment. NKJV translators have rendered it most often as some form of "chasten" (vv. 5-8, 10, 11), and once as "correct" (v. 9), but it is better translated "discipline." The divine purpose of this loving discipline is unquestionably to bring man into the privilege and responsibility of sonship [BSB: QV].

12:6 - WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES. The NKJV follows the Authorized version, "chastens." This verse is well known to every Bible student: "FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

This is a hard lesson for God's children and possibly only the most mature can appreciate it. Jerome said, "The greatest anger of all is when God is no longer angry with us when we sin." We should be grateful for discipline as David was (Psalm 23). In these verses the inspired writer deals with the subject of why Christians are disciplined (chastised)

- (1) It is part of the educational process by which a believer is fitted to share God's holiness (v. 10).
- (2) It is proof of a genuine love relationship between the heavenly Father and His children (vv. 6, 8).
- (3) It helps train them to be obedient (v. 9). (4) It produces the fruit of righteousness in their lives (v. 11). For additional teaching on this subject, see the book of Job (Job 1:1); Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; 4:16-17; 12:7-9; Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 3:12 [RSB: QV].

c. We are taught why Christians are disciplined, 12:7-11.

12:7 - IT IS FOR DISCIPLINE THAT YOU ENDURE. The writer continues, "God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" The NKJV has, "If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?"

The word translated discipline denotes the rearing of a child, which includes both training and discipline. The word used for "endure" means literally, "to stay behind, to await, endure." It shows a willingness to bear up under adversity, to patiently endure, or to persevere. This is the idea expressed in James 1:2-4 (NAS):

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

12:8 - BUT IF YOU ARE WITHOUT DISCIPLINE. "If" is the condition of the first class, determined as true or fulfilled. Which is to say that if you are without discipline it is because you are not a child of God: "you are illegitimate children and not sons." All children of God "have become partakers" both in His grace and in His discipline.

The Greek father had absolute power over his children as long as he lived. However, his relationship with an illegitimate child (*nothos*, "Bastards") would be quite different. The same principle would apply to children who are not related at all. My sons today joke about the fact that when they were growing up I was, at least in their eyes, a strict disciplinarian. But my discipline ended with my own children - it never extended to my neighbor's children. If I did not discipline the child you could be sure that he was not my child. In this context the illegitimate child might have been a biological child, but legally he was no child at all. True children of God can expect Him to discipline them,

12:9 - BE SUBJECT TO THE FATHER. Once again, the reasoning is easy to follow: "Furthermore," he says, "we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?"

WE RESPECTED THEM. The KJV has, "we gave them reverence," connoting a habitual attitude of reverence (respect) toward our earthly fathers. This is the ideal, and it is natural when the father is the kind of father God intends him to be. If we respect our earthly fathers, who are fallible, how much more should we respect the Lord God, our heavenly Father, "the Father of our spirits" (our spiritual Father)?

AND LIVE. Our life is in Him. As Paul said to his audience on Mars Hill in Athens, "... in Him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28a). He is the source of life, the key to abundant life here and now, and our only hope of eternal life.

12:10 - FOR THEY DISCIPLINED US. Our earthly fathers "disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them..." Responsible finite fathers discipline their children in a manner that seems best to them. There are many forms of discipline and parents must decide what method of discipline works best for each child. I tried sending a ten year old reader to his room for discipline only to discover that I had to force him to come out. He was so engrossed in a book that he did not want to leave. Parents discipline their children according to the method they think will help the child most, whether the purpose is punishment, instruction, or instruction.

BUT HE DISCIPLINES US. We discipline children as we think best, but God disciplines us according to what He knows is “for our good.” We discipline for their temporal good, God disciplines us “so that we may share His holiness.” Why does God discipline us? Because it prepares the believer to share in God's holiness.

What a beautiful expression of Sanctification! What better defines Sanctification than “to share in God’s holiness.” In Justification, we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ - His righteousness is imputed unto us. In Sanctification, the Holy Spirit produces righteousness in us. In Justification, we are set apart for God’s glory. In Sanctification, we are conformed to the image of His Son - we grow in holiness as we are being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

12:11 - FOR THE MOMENT. I had a professor once who often prefaced a new thought with the words, “It goes without saying.” I suppose I still remember it because one day after he made the statement and then added his view on some subject, a student whispered, “It really could have gone without saying.” But here it seems appropriate to say that it goes without saying that “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful.” Both “seems not to be joyful” is far to mild for what I thought about discipline when it was being applied to me. Even “Sorrowful” does not seem like a strong enough word! There were a few times when the point was made very painfully.

When as a college student I was invited to preach at some church, and as a student pastor, I would preach at the morning service and then go home with church members for Sunday dinner. Dinner on Sunday was no “lunch” to those country people, it was an event, a real spread. We would visit during the afternoon and eat left-overs before going back for the evening service. People often asked about my family and some asked about discipline. When I told them that my parents were strict disciplinarians, I cannot recall how many ladies the age of my mother or grandmother would say, “And they were always right, weren’t they?” It was not always easy at that point to say that they were always right, because sometimes they might not have had sufficient information. But they were always my parents and I was in subjection to them. In time, I was especially grateful for parents who cared enough to discipline me.

PEACEFUL FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Discipline may not be pleasant, it may even be “sorrowful,” yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” Why does God discipline us? To produce the fruit of righteousness.

Rather than a painful promise, these verses present the basis for happy optimism for all Christians. The strongest evidences of spiritual sonship may be deduced from the intervention of God in the life of the believer for chastisement (v. 8). Furthermore, God's discipline yields "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" in the lives of His children, and it is for their profit (vv. 10, 11). Finally, such acts of God are incontrovertible evidence of His love (Heb. 12:6). Human parents do well to observe this beautiful pattern of

education, discipline, and correction accorded by responsible love in relating to their children [BSB: QV].

3. God's discipline should produce a Godly life, 12:12-17.

a. Self-discipline is important, 12:12-13.

12:12 - STRENGTHEN THE HANDS. “Therefore” (based on what he has just written), :strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble.” Knowledge of God’s discipline should both strengthen and encourage us for whatever lies ahead of us.

12:13 - MAKE STRAIGHT PATHS. Metaphorically, a path denotes one’s walk, his way of life. In the Old Testament the emphasis is upon God’s preparing the path for His people. Here, the believer is told, “... make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.” The path is a familiar metaphor to these readers.

Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the
scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law
he meditates day and night Ps. :1-2.

You enlarged my path under me, So my feet did not slip, Ps. 18:36.

Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, For I delight in
it, Ps. 119:35.

Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path, Ps.
119:105.

This verse recognizes the reality of weakness in this world. Even God’s people are susceptible to temptations which weaken us. One may think first of addiction to drugs, alcohol, gambling, or violence, but there are many more that may not be so easily detected. We may recognize an immoral lifestyle, but secret lusts will also weaken a person. Jealousy, envy, or pride, or doubt prevent the believer from walking the path of faith.

God’s discipline may be directed at the sins of the spirit, the ego, materialism, a lust for pleasure, even recreation when those things keep us from walking in the paths of righteousness. There is a reason that the believer should make the paths straight - “so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed (italics in NAS).” Every believer has some weaknesses. By making our path straight before God, we help protect the weak that (*the limb*)which is weak.

b. Believers have responsibilities to both God and others, 12:14-17.

12:14 - PURSUE PEACE. God expects each Christian to “Pursue peace with all men.” While this is a command from the Lord, it should also be the nature of the child of God. Jesus, in the Beatitudes, declares “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” Peacemakers are, and will be blessed in any number of ways, not the least of which is that they will be called the children of God. “Child of” in Scripture carries the idea of “in the nature of.” Just as it is the nature of God to pursue peace, it is the nature of His children to pursue peace. In the New Testament, peace is never a negative word. It never denote an attitude of “You leave me alone and I’ll leave you alone.” Christian peace actively seeks the highest good for others.

SANCTIFICATION. Every child of God is to pursue “the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.” Sanctification is a process whereby we are made holy. In the Greek New Testament, sanctification shares the same root as holy or holiness. The word, in one form or another, may be translated, "holiness," "consecration," "sanctification", "treat as holy," "purify"; "saint."

The Old Testament word on which it is dependent means to separate, or to set apart (for God). Every Christian is sanctified in the sense of his being set apart for the glory of God, and he is being sanctified as God nurtures and develops him into a mature believer who is daily being conformed to the image of His Son. Justification (as in Romans 5:1) is an once for all experience whereby the regenerated individual receives a judicial pardon from his sins (they are placed by God on His Son). Sanctification is a process of spiritual growth and development which begins at the point of Justification and continued to glorification. Romans 8:28ff stresses that God predestines Sanctification for every person who is justified, and that every person who is justified will be glorified (it is so certain that God speaks of it as an accomplished fact). A good definition is given in the passage from Romans 8 - that we be conformed to the image of His Son.

WILL SEE THE LORD. Only those who are being sanctified ever really “see the Lord.” I have the matter of seeing God a great deal of thought after hearing the late evangelist, Manley Beasley, speak of his great desire to see God. When I became pastor of the Hillcrest Baptist Church of Nederland, Texas, people began asking me if I knew Manley Beasley. I could only say that I knew who he was, but that I did not know him personally. I found that Manley had been pastor at Hillcrest a number of years earlier. I also learned that I had become his sister’s pastor when I accepted the pastorate of Hillcrest Baptist Church. His sister managed his schedule for him even then.

I was attending a nationwide Bible Conference at Belvue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tennessee (a Memphis suburb) when I heard Manley Beasley. He had to check himself out of a Dallas hospital against his doctor’s orders in order to preach at the conference. He was slowly dying at the time. A tall bar stool was on the podium for his use, but he elected to stand, obviously knowing that it could be his last time to ever preach the Gospel. I was moved by everything Manley said that day, but then he made a statement that would never release me. He

declared, "I would walk a thousand miles to see God, but I wouldn't walk across the street to hear a sermon about Him." Ever since that time I have thought about how many people come to our services each week, not to see God, but to sing a song about Him, or to hear a sermon about Him. They do not even expect to see Him! They don't even want to see Him. It is more disturbing when you think of the small percentage of church members who actually attend worship services on a regular basis.

The lost person does not see God; the backslider does not see God; the nominal Christian does not see God; the carnal believer does not see God. Only those who are being sanctified see God. That makes our pursuit of Sanctification (pursuit of holiness) be all the more imperative.

12:15 - SHORT OF THE GRACE OF GOD. We must be careful here to see what the Scripture says - and what it does not say. Both are critical. As rendered in the NAS, it says, "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."

Does this warn that those who have been saved may "fall from grace" - that is, lose their salvation? Many people think so, but a careful study of Scripture reveals that such is impossible. Admittedly, human reason might lead some to the conclusion that a believer might, indeed, fall from grace. But God, in His infallible Word says that it is impossible. So what are we to conclude? And how do we decide? It comes down to this, what is your authority, the "Thus saith the Word of God," or the "thus reasoneth the mind of man?" Examine both. "Thus reasoneth the mind of man" led to the Fall, to expulsion from the Garden of Eden, to the destruction of the world in Noah's day, to the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, and to the pervasive cycle of rebellion that so often brought the wrath of God down on Israel throughout the periods of the Judges and the Kings. The Bible teaches that the wisdom of man is foolish to God.

The Scripture teaches that God's Word is eternal: "The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever" (Is. 40:8, NAS). Paul wrote that:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16).

According to the Scripture the only kind of spiritual life God offers anyone is eternal life. Jesus said,

and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. "I and the Father are one" (John 10:28-30, NAS)

We have seen in Hebrews that if anyone could lose his salvation (, a condition contrary to fact - he cannot, but if he could) it would be impossible for him to be saved again. The very thought ;puts the Cross to open shame. So, the issue here is not falling away from grace, but falling short of what the Grace of Gods provides for us and what the grace of God would do within us. The idea here is failure to keep up with what the Grace of God would do for us.

NO ROOT OF BITTERNESS. Failure to keep pace with what the grace of God would do with you and through you can lead to trouble. Therefore, we muse make sure that we do not all behind in the grace of God so that “no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it may be defiled.” Failure to grow in the grace of God, failure to follow as the grace of God leads us can lead to bitterness and other sins, which in turn will impact other people negatively.

12:16 - LIKE ESAU . In chapter eleven we have a roll call of faithful servants of the Lord, a roll call of faith heroes. Here we have the antithesis of the faithful, the very opposite of Israel (Jacob). Esau. Esau, the father of pagan nations, including the Edomites who tried to prevent the Israelites from ;passing through the wilderness in route to the Promised Land. All Christians should so follow where the Grace of God leads them so “that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.”

12:17 - NO PLACE FOR REPENTANCE. “For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.” Esau, after selling his birthright, repented of his error and sought to get it back, but it was too late. Practical advice is offered in verses 13 and 14, and now in verses 15-17 carry a warning: "no place for repentance." Esau sought the blessing after it was too late. Does this mean that Esau was saved, then lost again? No. It means that he irrevocable sold his birthright - he could not get it back. From that day forth the name of Esau is proverbial for one who commits a willful sin which allows no second chance. This should serve as a warning to those who are tempted to turn from Christ.

We know that the lost person who rejects God’s grace and mercy is in a very dangerous position, for there is a point of no return. One can willfully blind himself to the point that he can no longer see spiritual truth. We should also be aware of the fact that when Christians refuse to follow where the grace of God leads them, they are also in danger of reaching the point of no return. I once heard the story of a seventy year old man who walked down the aisle of a church when the invitation was given. He told the pastor that God had called him to be a missionary when he was a very young man, but he had refused to respond to that call. Now, at age seventy, he wanted to announce he was ready to do whatever God wanted him to do.

A friend once talked with me about someone who had once been very active in the Lord’s work, but had pulled back from his service. It grieved us that this once talented person’ talent was now significantly diminished. He seemed little more than a shell of the person he had once been. That magnificent voice was gone, my friend said, and the talent had diminished as much at the instrument he played. I could only take my friend’s word for it, but since it was a

concerned I assume it was true. But as we discussed this, I recalled another person who seemed very gifted at one point but after years of spiritual struggles, it was obvious when the person spoke or sang that something was missing. It was as though the Lord has taken away their gift.

4. Believers are exhorted to yield to Him, 12:18-29.

a. Mt. Sinai is contrasted with Mt. Zion, 12:18-24.

The Ryrie Study Bible captions this, “The drive of life, 12:18-24;” and the Believer’s Study Bible, “The Glorious Company.” The great emphasis of these verses, however, regardless of how it fits into anyone’s outline, is the great contrast between Sinai and Calvary.

12:18 - A MOUNTAIN. The reference is to Sinai: “For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind...” These Hebrew readers knew their history. They were keenly aware of the Exodus, when the Israelites assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai and watched Moses go up onto the mountain to meet with God. They understood that Mount Sinai represented the Covenant. It was at Sinai that they had entered into a covenant relationship with their Savior and Deliverer.

12:19 - THE BLAST OF A TRUMPET. The modern Gentile reader finds it almost impossible to comprehend the awesome experience of Sinai. There was one phenomenal manifestation of the presence and power of the great YAHWEY after another. Those who come to Mount Zion have not come “...to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them” (so great was their fear).

12:20 - THEY COULD NOT BEAR. “For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED (NAS)." The account to which he alludes is found in Exodus 19:12-13:

"You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 'No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain (NAS)."

There was great fear in the camp of the Israelites when they heard the command - and this was not a suggestion - that no person or beast should approach the mountain while god was meeting with Moses to give him the Law. Even their livestock would be put to death if it approached the base of the mountain. This must have shocked all people, and confused not a few.

Was God being unnecessarily severe? Was He acting without compassion, after He had compassionately delivered them from Egypt. The answer is “no.” God was being merciful. It was a simple fact that His glory was so great that they would have been consumed by it if they had come into His presence. His holiness is so great that all those who disobey Him must be punished. He is protecting them by commanding them not to approach the mountain.

12:21 - FULL OF FEAR. The people were not the only ones who were frightened. “And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, “I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling.” Moses understood far better than the people what God was doing and how He would do it, yet this experience was so awesome that he was filled with fear. The NKJV renders it, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling”.

Remember that we are not talking about Mount Zion - but (just) Sinai.

12:22 - BUT YOU. Here is the contrast: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels...” What a sharp contrast to verse 18! There is no comparison between Mount Sinai (the Old Covenant) and Mount Zion (the New Covenant).

MOUNT ZION. Zion is one of the hills upon which Jerusalem is built. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is used to symbolize “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” The old covenant (the law) and the new covenant (grace, the gospel) are contrasted in this passage by comparing Mount Sinai, where the law was given, with Mount Zion, which is called the “city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Mount Zion, a symbol of the gospel of grace, is a spiritual city and an eternal city. Sinai Paul contrasts Mount Sinai (present Jerusalem) with the Jerusalem above (Heaven) in Galatians 4:21-31.

12:23 - GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CHURCH. The writer continues, “to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect...” “The general assembly and church are synonymous terms.

CHURCH OF THE FIRSTBORN. This term may be better understood as the church of the firstborn ones - that is, the first to be born again and come into the church. If this is what is meant by the term, it would refer to the New Testament believers who belong to the church (the Body of Christ).

GOD, THE JUDGE OF ALL. God is the Judge of “the Judge of all the earth” (Gen. 18:25).

“Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered; Against them He will thunder in the heavens, The LORD will judge the

ends of the earth; And He will give strength to His king, And will exalt the horn of His anointed" (1 Sam. 2:10, NAS).

God is a righteous judge... (Ps. 7:11).

And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity" (Ps. 9:8).

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12a).

...According to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus" (Rom. 2:16).

Jesus is also Judge: "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42, NAS).

SPIRITS OF THE RIGHTEOUS MADE PERFECT. If the "firstborn ones" are the New Testament saints, then this would refer to the Old Testament saints. We can call the Old Testaments saints because they were set apart by God, for God's purpose. They were all "the elect" of God by grace, through faith, and not of the Law or works.

12:24 - TO JESUS. Jesus is Lord; He is Savior; He is Redeemer. He is the author and finisher of our faith. When I was a youth in Sunday School, the name, "Jesus" said it all. There was but one Jesus to us - "Jesus" the name above every name (Phi. 2:10f). But today, after a whole generation has been subjected to commercials by the Mormon church, after decades of visits from Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, and after a quarter of a century of New Age religion, a lot of people are confused about Who Jesus really is. Anyone who is familiar with Scripture should not be deceived by the New Age (Post Modern) Jesus, the Mormon Jesus, or the Jehovah's Witness Jesus.

Even more disturbing to many, though possibly less dangerous, is the debased, depraved Jesus of modern art and entertainment. For example, consider the opening paragraph of a column written by John Leo under the heading :Anti-Christian Bigotry Raises Nary a Peep (*The Conservative Chronicle*, Vol. 13, No. 24, June 17, 1998, p. 25):

Coming soon to Broadway or off-Broadway: a play about a homosexual Jesus character named Joshua who has sex with his disciples and is crucified as "king of queers." The play, not yet finished, is *Corpus Christi*, by Terrence McNally, who has won three Tony awards for his other work [LEO: 25].

Now look at one of the many things the Bible has to say about Jesus:

so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11, NAS).

MEDIATOR OF A NEW COVENANT. Jesus is “the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel” (NAS). “For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time” (1 Tim. 2:5-6, NAS). Strictly speaking, a mediator is a person who stands between two other parties in order to help establish an agreement or relationship between them and, possibly to act as a guarantor of that relationship. The Holman Bible Dictionary makes the point that:

all of the mediating activities of intercession, sacrificial atonement, and covenant making and guaranteeing culminate in the New Testament with Christ. He is the great Intercessor, praying for His disciples while on earth and continuing to do so in heaven (John 17; Rom. 8:34). He is the supreme High Priest who enters once for all into the sanctuary to make a sacrifice of Himself that brings eternal redemption (Heb. 9:11-12). He is the Mediator of a better covenant which replaces the old one (Heb. 8:6; 9:15). By remaining forever, He guarantees that the covenant He establishes will forever endure since His priesthood never ends (Heb. 7:22-25). As true God and true Man, Christ stands between and with both God and humankind and is the answer to Job's plea [HBS: QV].

SPEAKS BETTER THAN THE BLOOD OF ABEL. Abel's blood still speaks (11:4), but it amounts to nothing compared to that of Jesus.

b. The believer is challenged to commit himself to God, 12:25-29.

12:25 - DO NOT REFUSE HIM. With the contrast between Mount Sinai and mount Zion in mind, we go on to an admonition that carries the full force of a command and a warning: “See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking.” The author is “driving home the whole point of the Epistle by this powerful contrast between Mt. Zion and Mt. Sinai. The consequences are dreadful to apostates now, for Zion has greater terrors than Sinai, great as they were” [ATR:].

DID NOT ESCAPE. “For if those (Israelites in the wilderness) did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven” (NAS). Once again, is the Scripture warning that those believers who are not faithful to God in danger of losing their salvation? Does a born-again Christian ever have to worry about going to hell. No. Any claim that this is the case reveals a lot more about the

person making the claim than it does about God or His Word. In the first place, He has repeatedly stated that, as Christ's sacrifice was once-for-all, Justification is once-for-all. It is stated unequivocally both in direct statements and in the grammatical construction in the Greek New Testament that we are justified once for all time, as the Aorist tense proves in Romans 5:1. The participle points to the fact that we continue to receive benefits from it (from the time of Justification).

How does that apply to the Hebrews in the wilderness? They had been delivered from Egypt (a good metaphor for bondage, slavery, and death) so that they might be taken through the wilderness (for their meeting with God at Sinai) to Canaan (the land flowing with milk and honey) where God wanted them. Because they refused God's command to go in and possess their possession, they were never permitted to enter into Canaan (God's rest). God did not send them back to Egypt for their disobedience, but they did have to live in the wilderness for forty years, at least thirty-eight years longer than was necessary. For those who have been delivered from spiritual death, but refuse to live in Canaan (in Christ, the spirit filled life), there is no place for them but the wilderness (the flesh principle still dominates them). There is no joy in the wilderness life, on survival; no peace, only grumbling; no growth, only subsistence; no milk and honey, only manna (which never satisfies). Refusing to obey the Lord and follow Him produces some devastating consequences - now as then.

12:26 - HIS VOICE SHOOK THE EARTH. "And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN" (Caps in NAS). His voice shook the earth in the wilderness in connection with the giving of the Law. "Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly" (ex. 19:18, NKJV).

The first shaking of the earth which is mentioned was at Sinai in connection with the giving of the Law (cf. Ex. 19:18). Another shaking, which will be attended by a total physical upheaval, will be at the return of Christ [BSB: QV].

12:27 - YET ONCE MORE. God shook the earth once before (in the wilderness) and He will shake it "yet once more." "This expression, 'Yet once more,' denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." The reference here is to Heaven and to the second and final shaking at the Second Coming of Christ for judgment (9:28).

The temporal, or transitory nature of the world and the things that make it up are stressed in this passage (See also, I Cor. 7:31; I John 2:17.) Moffatt observes that "There is divine purpose in cosmic catastrophe" [MOFFATT:].

12:28 - A KINGDOM WHICH CANNOT BE SHAKEN. "Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an

acceptable service with reverence and awe..." (NAS). There will be a day when this earth and all that is on it will pass away and a new age will begin. In that day everything that can be shaken will be uprooted and destroyed. The only things that will remain are the things that cannot be moved or shaken. This points directly to our relationship with God and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Imagine what it would be like to live on a major fault where earthquakes were constantly destroying homes and business, killing many people and forcing the rest to flee from their homes and their towns. In CB (Citizen's Band radio) terminology, California is called "the shaky side" because of the history of earthquakes and because of major faults where major earthquakes may be expected at any time. Because of that, new buildings, bridges, and overpasses must now be built to withstand all but the most severe quakes. In Heaven there will be no more earthquakes - and there will never be a catastrophe of any kind that will cause anxiety or insecurity.

12:29 - FOR OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE. I well remember the first time I was a sign on Interstate 20 as I drove into Texas on a trip to Dallas and Fort Worth. The sign read, "Don't Mess With Texas." That sign was rather ominous. It seemed that they meant business. The sign, as most people are aware, warns that littering in Texas would carry a stiff fine.

This verse is far more ominous - "our God is a consuming fire!" He is a loving, merciful God, as He has proclaimed:

And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion (Ex 33:19. NAS)."

We must not, however, forget that our God is a consuming fire.

And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top (Ex. 24:17).

For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God (Deut. 4:24).

Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; Burning is His anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation And His tongue is like a consuming fire (Is. 30:27).

Gratitude to God for His salvation and for all His blessings leads to service with reverence and awe. He is at once a merciful God and a "consuming fire..." This verse should be coupled with 10:31.

C. Commitment to Christ Carries Social obligations (13:1-6).

1. We must love the brethren, 13:1.

13:1 - LET LOVE OF THE BRETHREN CONTINUE. This brief verse is the perfect introduction to the final chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews. This is the guiding principle for all social relationships.

This passage contains a number of concluding exhortations that will promote both holiness and fellowship in the community of faith. The emphasis on the very practical reminds us that we must always put feet to our faith BSB: QV].

Jesus, though superior to the prophets, angels, earthly priests and the Law, did not come to destroy the Law, as He emphasizes in Matthew 5:18 (NKJV): "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." This chapter reminds the reader to keep focused. Focusing our eyes on Jesus as the object of our devotion does not mean that we take our eyes off His commandments.

This passage in the final chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews holds the high standards of the Sermon on the Mount before us. Here we are urged to honor the Second Great Commandment, and the last six of the Ten Commandments. The passage also brings it all together with the Golden Rule. If you do not love your fellow believers, you are not going to love your neighbor (who may not be a believer). If you do not love fellow believers you do not really love God. John expresses it clearly:

We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also (! John 4:19-21, NAS).

2. We must not neglect strangers, 13:2.

13:2 - HOSPITALITY TO STRANGERS. “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it (NAS).” Hospitality to strangers was not a new emphasis for these Hebrew readers. They were well aware of the Levitical Law.

You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Ex. 22:21).

Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God (Lev. 19:10).

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God (Lev. 19:33-34).

ANGELS. The word "angel" in the Bible usually refers to superhuman beings. There were times when Old Testament personalities entertained without knowing it (“unaware,” KJV). Abraham, is perhaps the best known example (Gen. 18:1-8), but Lot (Gen. 19) also “unwittingly entertained angels” (NKJV). While the passage is not suggesting that we may expect the next knock at the door to bring angels into our presence. While it is not suggested that every time we see a stranger we should wonder if he is an angel, we should treat every stranger as if he were an angel sent to us by the Lord.

The Greek word translated “angel” (*aggelos*) means “a messenger,” and may refer either to a supernatural being or a human messenger, (as in the case of the addressee in each of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation). An example of one entertaining human beings as messengers from God, James (in 2:25) sites Rahab.

Angels have become very popular in recent years, as attested by the popularity of the use of angels in art and entertainment, and even in various New Age movements. One of the most popular television shows in recent years, and one of the cleanest, is *Touched By an Angel*, starring New Age guru, Della Reese. The angels portrayed in this show are often consistent with New Age angels (spirit guides) than Scriptural angels.

Angels are supernatural heavenly beings, created by God for His service and used by him for his purpose. While they are very real, we do not need to focus our attention on angels, but on the indwelling Holy Spirit. There is no guess work where the Holy Spirit is concerned. When we receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, Who will never

leave us, but empower us, guide us, direct us, comfort us, and illuminate our hearts that we might understand the Word of God.

3. We must remember those in prison, 13:3.

13:3 - REMEMBER THE PRISONERS. This admonition should remind us of the Golden Rule: “Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.” That is about as close to the golden Rule as it gets. Treat others as you would wish to be treated.

Julian Hardy owns the Hardy Daylily Garden in Demopolis, Alabama. I have spoken with him a number of times and communicated with him by mail. I called to thank him for the quality of the bulbs I ordered from him and again for writing a long hand written letter months later to inquire as to whether or not I was pleased with the flowers. Mr. and Mrs. Hardy are active members of a local Methodist Church and he is very involved with the Gideons. I commented on the fact that he conducts his business as a Christian should. He said, “Dr. Sanders, I try to treat everyone else the way I would want to be treated.” Then he went on to tell me he had ordered a special daylily and paid \$120.00 for it. When it arrived there was only one blade and a bit of a bulb about the size of a small onion. I had received a bonus daylily from that was so big that I divided it before I put it out.

I have never been a prisoner, but having spent many hours with prisoners in jails and in penitentiaries, I can truthfully say that I have visited with some prisoners I enjoyed being with more than a lot of people on the outside. Some of them I would trust more, too. There were, however, many who well deserved the name “con.” They were not only criminals, they were con men, and they tried to con me. I found that I wanted to help those I thought were sincere, but at the same time I was skeptical about some speech or attitude caused me to doubt their integrity.

I have helped people who might well have been deceiving me, and I might do it again. It would be far better to help someone who does not deserve it than to refuse to help someone who really needs it. Like most everyone else, my ego rebels against being deceived or conned, but I must remember the principle set forth in this verse.

My car failed to start once while I was working for the Quitman County (MS) ASCS office near north of Marks, Mississippi. Cars of that vintage seemed to cause more automotive problems than they do today, and it was not unusual to see someone on the side of the road with the hood up. Most of us stopped and offered to help. Why, I do not know, but as soon as the problem was solved the driver would ask his good Samaritan, “What do I owe you?” I rally think some of them did that because they were uncomfortable expressing appreciation. Plus, if the new friend had just driven into town to have to get a part or have flat fixed, he felt obligated to pay for his gas and for his time. The helper might be a farmer who really needed to be in his field, but he had stopped to help.

The usual response to that question was, “You don’t owe me anything, but if you ever see me on the side of the road some day you can stop and help me.” I don’t know why I asked the standard question, but I did, and felt a little uncomfortable with it. This man replied, “You don’t owe me anything, but if you see someone else stopped on the side of the road with car trouble, you can stop and help him.” He did not say, “If you see me....” He said, “If you see someone else...” I like that, and that is a healthy spiritual attitude.

Christians are to “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15). It has been well said that many Christians are much more adept at weeping with those who weep than they are at rejoicing with those who rejoice. In Jesus, we must do both.

4. Marriage must be held in honor, 13:4.

13:4 - MARRIAGE IS TO BE HELD IN HONOR. We need to shout it from the housetop: “Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” The deeper we move into the post-Christian era in America, the more we need to preach this message. We must teach it in the local churches and stress it in Christian homes.

Marriage has taken a beating and the family has been devastated by the moral relativism of the post-Christian culture in America. The soaring divorce rate does not give an accurate picture of the moral abyss into which our society has sunk. So many couples do not even bother to get married that it is a major challenge to get a large segment of our society to understand why we should be alarmed. Infidelity, divorce, single parents hosting overnight boy or girl friends with children in the home, and a man and his children moving in with a woman and her children have been enough to cause a morally depraved generation to lose its moral compass. With this background in mind Southern Baptists, in their annual meeting in Salt Lake City in 1998 amended the Baptist Faith and Message Statement to include the following article on the family.

Baptist Faith and Message Article XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the Foundational Institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God’s unique gift to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel for sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God. Both bear God’s image but each in different ways. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her

husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God” as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his “helper” in managing their household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children god’s pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-25; 3:1-20; Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:4-9; Josh. 4:15; 1 Sam. 1:26-28; Ps. 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Prov. 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15, 17; 31:10-31; Eccl. 4:9-12; 9:9; Mal. 2:14-16; Matt. 5:31-31; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Col. 3:18-21; 1 Tim. 5:14; 2 Tim. 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-7.

The liberal media went ballistic when the news of this action was taken by Southern Baptists. Without a doubt, many sincere Questions were made to question the action for the simple reason that a lot of people in Americans have trusted news reports they see on televisions. Radical feminists organizations like the National Organization for Women (NOW) - Rush Limbaugh calls it the National Organization for Gals (NAG) - militantly opposed such a statement. The sad part of this is that a lot of church members will reject the clear teachings of the Word of God.

Clinton White House moved quickly to counter a statement made by Mississippi Senator Trent Lott and supported by House Majority Leader, Dick Armey on June 16, 1998. When asked if Homosexuality is a sin, Senator Lott answered yes it is.

Michael McCurry, the president’s press secretary called Lott “backward” in his views and suggested that his views were backward. Lott and Armey cited Bible verses to support their position. McCurry “appeared to rely on a vote by the American Psychiatric Association, as well as his boss’s view that the subject is no longer a matter of conscience, but for science” (Washington Times, June 22-28, 1998, p.1).

“The Bible is very clear on this,’ Mr Armey replied to reporters questioning him about Mr. Lott’s remarks. He pulled a piece of paper from his pocket on which he had written several Scripture references, 1 Corinthians 6:0-11, and verses 18 and 20. ‘I do abide by the Bible” (Washington Times, June 22-28, 1998, p. 23).

But why bring homosexuality in to the discussion of the family? For one thing there are a lot of people in America who want to see the government recognize homosexual unions as legal marriages. Some churches have even performed marriages for homosexuals. Is this right or wrong? If you say it is wrong, how do you know it wrong? What is your authority? The Bible must be the authority for all decisions by Christians.

The Bible is our authority on the family and relationships in the family. According to the Bible, marriage is to be held in honor. There is an old saying. The family that prays together stays together.” We might also add that the family that substitutes play for pray might expect to fray.

5. Believers must guard they testimony, 13:5-6.

13:5 - LOVE OF MONEY. Consistent with a major theme of Scripture, the author says, “Make sure that your character is free from the love of money...” The basic principle is found in the Ten Commandments: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Ex. 20:17, NAS).

For *the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil*, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.(1 Tim. 6:10, NAS, emphasis added).

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24, NAS).

The Bible teaches that the love of money is the root of all sort of evil. It does not say that money is the root of evil. There are some very poor people with a greater hang-up about money that some wealthy people. Addiction to gambling among those on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder bear this out.

BEING CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU HAVE. In New Testament times there were two classes of people, the very rich and the very poor. There was no middle class. The middle class is a modern day development, thanks in part to capitalism. You did not see it in feudalism and you will not see it in Communism.

There was another class in New Testament times - the slave class. There are millions of people in slavery in various places in the world today. Yet, we are emotionally focused on slavery that existed in America a century and a half ago. If we are concerned about the existence of slavery, we would be crusading for the freedom of millions of children who are being forced into slave labor in Asia and Southeast Asia today.

Now, doe this Scripture say that if you were a slave you should not desire to be free? Does it teach that if you are in poverty you should not try to escape your circumstances? No, what it teaches is that when you determine that you cannot change your circumstances at any particular time, you should try to be content rather than panic. If there is something you can do, you may do it, but if there is nothing you can do, just settle down and be faithful to the Lord and take advantages of he opportunities He provides for you.

Paul applied these principles in his life as well as anyone ever has. He wrote to the Philippians, "Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am" (Phil. 4:11). Against charges by some very pious Jews, he wrote to the Corinthians:

Are they servants of Christ?--I speak as if insane--I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

I WILL NEVER...FORSAKE YOU. Jesus "Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU." When Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission He promised, "lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mat. 28:20b).

13:6 - I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. We should be faithful to Jesus Christ "so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID OF WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?" What a promise this is! Fear is a major problem for millions, and a genuine concern for all intelligent people: Fear of enemies, fear of weather, fear of death, fear of an inadequate retirement, fear of the loss of a spouse or child, fear of the loss of a job. There is fear everywhere, some many people can manage, but some need help. All need some help at times.

Faith in Jesus Christ is the key to victory of fear of what may happen to us in this world. Having been near death twice in my life, I can testify to the fact that when Jesus has promised to take care of us we do not have to worry about what may happen to us. The first time, I nearly drowned in a mill pond when I was about seven years old. I had been warned that the bottom sloped gradually to "drop-off" where the water was eighteen feet deep. I slipped off into deep water because I did not heed the warning. In fact, I was exploring the bottom in an effort to try to satisfy my curiosity as to what they meant by a "drop-off" when I suddenly found myself in deep water. I had not learned to swim at the time, but I managed to get my head above the surface several times to get my breath, but by the time I was spotted, I was told that the last time only the top of my head cleared the surface. My father saved me, and others came to offer assistance, but I really did not understand their anxiety because I did not know I was about to drown.

In 1996 I had a serious heart attack. I am convinced that the Lord controlled all the circumstances so as to have me on the table in the emergency room with all the EKG paraphernalia in place when I had the heart attack. If I had not been there at that time there is a good possibility that I would not have made it.

I believe God spared my life when I was a child, but I never thanked Him for it then. As a matter of fact, I did not even thank my father because I did not realize that I was about to drown. But I have certainly thanked God for seeing me through the latter experience. I had absolutely no fear in intensive care while they were trying to decide what to do for me. I was in His hands. I may not be able to prove it to anyone else's satisfaction, but His presence was abundantly clear to me. After going through something like that, I can hardly believe that I would let "little things" bother me. After all, He has promised that He will never forsake us.

D. The Author Makes a Final Appeal to Be Loyal to Jesus Christ (13:7-19).

1. Follow good examples 13:7.

13:7 - REMEMBER THOSE WHO LED YOU. They were urged to remember those who had preached the Gospel to them and those who had taught them the Word of God. It is always good to remember those who led us to Jesus Christ and then disciplined us in the faith.

WHO SPOKE THE WORD OF GOD TO YOU. Why are we to remember them? It is not to glorify them, but for a far more practical reason - that we might remember the lessons we learned from them, especially if we are convinced that they taught us sound doctrine.

I was surprised by a phone call from Andrea a one Saturday morning. I had been her pastor at Forest, Louisiana a number of years ago. Andrea told me she had been reading a book when she was reminded of a sermon series I had preached when I was her pastor, possibly fifteen years earlier. In that series I dealt with the Exodus in which God miraculously delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage in order to lead them into Canaan, the Land of Promise. Because of unfaithfulness they were forced to wander in the wilderness until that generation had died off, and then He used Joshua to lead them across the Jordan River, again miraculously, to possess their possessions. My major focus was the contrast between living in the wilderness and living in the Promised Land. With that background. I tried to contrast the difference between living in the spirit and living in the flesh. Andrea had faced a number of trials, including the death of her husband. She had also experienced some great blessings in the Lord. She had called to tell me that throughout the years that sermon series had been a source of comfort and assurance to her. I could only take her word

for what the sermons had meant to her, but one thing I know for sure - she certainly made my day and provided a lot of motivation as I finished preparations for sermons the next day.

Not long after that a man whom I had baptized around 1968 called me about funeral plans for a relative. While we were talking he said, I want to tell you something. Before I left home you preached a sermon about hinds' feet, do you remember that. I assured him that I did and quoted the Scripture, "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places" (Ps. 18:33). I told him that I also remembered using one of C. Roy Angell's stories I used for an illustration. My friend told me that he had gone through some major trials, but through them all he look back to that sermon for inspiration.

I assured him that I appreciated his sharing that with me. One reason is that it affirms my commitment to preach expository sermons. I am not offended when someone says, "he's a good teacher," even though some of them may not intend it as a compliment. They think you either preach or teach, but you cannot do both.

CONSIDERING THE RESULT OF THEIR CONDUCT. My good friend, evangelist Bobby Ready told me that immediately after the news broke about televangelist Jimmy Swaggart's moral fall, he stopped at a service station in another state. As he talked with the attendant, the man asked him what he did and when he told him he was an evangelist the man asked where he was from. Bobby commented later, when you tell people are an evangelist from Baton Rouge, you don't know what to expect.

I have often heard people make jokes about preachers in general after the fall of a minister like Swaggart or Jim Bakker PTL fame. I have made it a point to tell them that I know, or know of hundreds of preachers, and with a few rare exceptions, they are men of exemplary character. But their example is often lost in the shuffle when word gets out about one who did not pay his bills.

The conduct of ministers is of utmost importance. Paul was always conscious of his image, his example, his image as a minister. He wrote to his young son-in-the-ministry, Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12, NKJV).

IMITATE THEIR FAITH. We cannot over emphasize the importance of a good example. But, should we not follow the example of Jesus alone? Are we in danger of placing too much importance on another person? How do we determine what is a healthy relationship with mature Christians? Paul was conscious of the fact that others were watching him, and he did not shrink from that awesome responsibility. He wrote, "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (2 Thes. 3:7).

2. We serve an immutable Savior, 13:8.

13:8 - JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME YESTERDAY AND TODAY AND FOREVER.

He is immutable! He never changes.

Following my junior year in high school, a godly English teacher took three of her students with her to Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly, near Ashville, North Carolina. It was truly a mountain top experience for me, from beginning to end. I had been licensed to the Gospel ministry and had been invited to preach in a number of churches and missions in northwest Mississippi, and I was looking for help. In the book store as I browsed through books, I found a book of sermon outlines by Dwight L. Moody which had been marked down enough that I could afford it, so I bought it. I had heard a lot of sermons but knew next to nothing about outline one myself. As I thumbed through the book I found a sermon outline under the title, "Why Should I Cling to An Old Fashioned Christ?" I adapted that outline and wrote a sermon which I preached a number of times (trying to get it right!), especially when I preached in a youth revival to a youth group.

Our society, I had observed, was always ready to lay the old aside in favor of the new. I even observed that the automobile owners who kept saying, "They don't make 'em like they used to," kept trading 'em for a new model. Television commercials continually bombard us with terms like, "Newer, bigger, better." We have seen a lot of improvements in electronics in general, and in communication systems, sound systems televisions, power tools, home appliances, and satellite antenna systems. But nothing illustrates this better than computers. We are not thinking of annual improvements, but innovations and technology serve up monthly "upgrades." There is a temptation to trade in an old computer every time a friend buys one with a bigger hard drive and a little more speed. It is down-right embarrassing when someone asks what sized hard drive you have and you cannot answer in "gigs." The newer is supposed to be more up to date, bigger, better, faster.

We thank our God that Jesus is never out of date. He is never old fashioned. Our Savior is immutable. Immutability, is one of the key attributes of God the Fathers, is just as applicable to Jesus Christ. He is the changeless God of eternity. God says, "For I am the LORD, I do not change..." (Mal. 3:6). James wrote, "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (James 1:17).

Here the Scripture declares, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Why does the Scripture say yesterday, today, and forever rather than simply stating that He never changes?

Very likely, it is to focus on three aspects of His ministry. "Yesterday" may either refer to the pre-incarnate Christ, or to His life and ministry on earth (2:9; 5:7-8). "Today" would point to His ministry as our high priest in heaven (4:15-16). "Forever" looks ahead either to the Second Coming or to the consummate our salvation (7:25; 9:28).

3. Guard against strange teachings, 13:9-16.

a. Do not be carried away by false doctrines, 13:9a.

13:9A - STRANGE DOCTRINES. This is good advice for any believer in any age: “Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines.” Christianity is not about feelings, or “what I feel in my heart,” or some “word of knowledge” someone else tells you about. Christianity is not a religion, it is a relationship. The religions of the world are concerned with certain basics: how to find some god, how to avoid his wrath, how to get his blessings. They look for the mysteries, the religious system whereby they can conciliate (appease) their god to avoid his wrath, or to offer him sacrifices to please him that he might grant some wish.

Christianity is a relationship based upon the divine revelation of God’s redemptive love, expressed in His giving His only begotten Son to die for our sins. We do not seek Him, He seeks us. We do not find Him, He finds us. We do not figure Him out, He reveals His will and purpose to us through His Word. We do not have to wonder and pray about the primary, or ultimate will of God - He has revealed that to us in His Word. This in no way discourages prayer for guidance or dependence upon the Holy Spirit power, wisdom, or direction. But we do not have to pray about whether or not God wants us to be saved, He tells us that in His Word. We do not have to pray about whether or not He loves us, or wants us to love Him, He has told us that in His Word. We do not have to pray about whether or not He wants us to witness for Him, He has made that clear in His Word. We do not have to pray about whether or not we should study His Word, He had told us to do so. We do, however, have to pray that He will give us wisdom to understand His Word, and guidance that we might know how to witness to each person. We must pray that He will help us to take advantage of our opportunities to witness. We also pray, asking for our daily bread, and asking Him to deliver us from temptation. We are told that we must pray for one another. The ultimate in prayer, however, is prayer just to have fellowship with our Heavenly Father.

What has this to do with sound doctrine? Everything mentioned about prayer is found in God’s Word, and every thing in the paragraph above is sound doctrine! The word “doctrine” seems to disturb some people, as though they are in danger of getting in over their head. Theology is the study of God. Doctrines are the teachings of God. Sound doctrine is God’s truth, as set forth in His Word. We must avoid extra-biblical revelations, and we must be careful of simply adopting someone else’s doctrines as our own. Stay with the Scripture.

I once attended a meeting in which the speaker, whom I knew from Mississippi College, us a piece of paper with squares on it. He then asked, how many squares to you see? Some saw four, others eight, others sixteen, and a few of us saw more. He then said, “No matter how many you said, you are right! I did not ask how many squares there are, I asked how many squares you see.” I like that and I have used it form time to time. But there is a problem with that if we apply it to the study of God’s Word. There are home Bible study groups in which members of the group will read a passage and the leader will ask, “Now what does that mean to you?” After

that person “shares” (a good church word) with the group, the same question will be asked of each other member.

Sounds great, does it not? It does not! Each passage of Scripture has just one meaning. We must determine the context and prayerfully search for the meaning. We should seek help by studying the verse, or verses, in various translations, reading commentaries, Bible dictionaries, or Bible handbooks. We must avoid taking a passage out of context. No verse in the Bible will contradict the context in which we find it, and it will not contradict any other doctrine in the Bible. Our greatest help in interpreting Scripture will come from the Scripture itself and from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the divine Author, Who inspired the writing of every word. He is the One Who had supernaturally preserved the Scripture throughout the ages, and he is the One Who illuminates the heart of the believer so that he might understand the Scripture. If, however, you begin to feel that you are being given extra-biblical interpretations and revelations about doctrines, you may be getting help from an alien source. That is not the way the Holy Spirit works. How do we know that? The Bible tells us so!

There is just one meaning in each passage of Scripture, but there may be as many applications as there are people studying it. The best question to ask when we approach a passage is not, what do you “see,” but what is there - what does it say? The study of the great teachings of the Scripture, when done systematically, is called systematic theology. We may think of it simply as the study of biblical doctrines.

That which holds the church together is sound doctrine - ultimate truth. If asked what promotes unity in the local church, many will say that we must love one another. That is imperative and it is the Second Great Commandment, but what maintains unity in the church is sound doctrine. Are we saying that doctrine is more important than love? No, what I am saying is that love for one another is one of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith.

Among the basic Bible doctrines are:

1. The Doctrine of God.
2. The Doctrine of Jesus Christ.
3. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.
4. The Doctrine of Scripture.
5. The Doctrine of Man.
6. The Doctrine of Sin.
7. The Doctrine of Justification (Salvation, Redemption).
8. The Doctrine of Sanctification.
9. The Doctrine of Eschatology (last things).

Various denominations have distinctive interpretations of Scripture. Baptists are more literal than many, holding to no creed but the Scripture. Baptists, like the Presbyterians, believe that Justification is by grace and grace alone. Most denominations involve works at some point, either as a means of salvation or in order to maintain their salvation. That is grace plus works

(rejected in Romans 11:6). Works as a means of salvation is totally rejected (Ephesians 2:9). By grace we are saved, and by grace we are "...kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).

Baptists, and many other denominations baptize by immersion, whereas many others practice another mode of baptism. How do we know what is right? Do we listen to their explanations as to when and why they opted for sprinkling? Or, do we simply look to the Scripture and see that the New Testament mode of baptism was immersion and that the word used for baptism means to take beneath the surface and bring forth again and stay with the New Testament example and teaching? The New Testament is clear, so what we must do should also be clear. That is sound doctrine.

With the increasing influence of various "Christian" cults like Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witnesses, and with the increasing influence of New Age mysticism, Islam, Humanism, Evolution, and extremism in our society, we must make a commitment to sound doctrine.

b. Be strengthened by grace, not ritual, 9b.

13:9B - STRENGTHENED BY GRACE. "For it is good that the heart be established by grace..." The NKJV has, "For it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace..." We are saved by grace, and we are strengthened by grace. It is all of grace, not ritual, not works, and not the Law.

Christians need to be taught this great doctrine from the Bible from the time they are children in Sunday School. It is a lot easier to teach false doctrine than sound doctrine here because it is more easily assimilated with human reason. False doctrine sounds perfectly reasonable to fallen man (with emphasis on "fallen"). Let us remember that human thinking and logic were effected by the Fall. It makes perfect sense to a lost person, or even to a Christian who does not know sound doctrine to say "anything worth having is worth working for," or "you have to work for what you get." Fallen man likes to think in terms of getting what you deserve - they think they deserve something for their good works, and they think evil (spell that "other") people desert to pay for their sins.

The Bible teaches that Justification is by grace through faith, and Sanctification is by grace through faith. No one is saved by grace and then sanctified through works or grace plus works. Even those who believe we are saved by grace alone often blend works in with grace when it comes to Sanctification. The children of Israel were led out of Egypt by the mighty hand of God. They could not deliver themselves. God sustained them in the wilderness by grace. They could produce neither food nor water - God provided everything. When they moved from the wilderness to Canaan, it was by the mighty hand of God. He who parted the waters of the Red Sea parted the waters of the Jordan River. They could not do that.

You could not save yourself and you cannot sanctify yourself. It is all of God - by His grace. He must receive all of the credit. He leaves nothing of which any human being can boast. The only things of which any Christian can ever boast are the things God does for him. We are saved by grace, through faith, not works (Eph. 2:8-9). Paul expresses it like this:

knowing that a *man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ*, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be *justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law*; or by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified (Gal. 2:16, NAS, emphasis added).

Furthermore, once you are saved, you live by faith (By grace through faith, which God provides). Paul was inspired to write this in the introduction to the Epistle to the Romans: "For in it (the Gospel) righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith' Rom. 1:17). Paul is clear in his response to the Judaizers, who hounded the missionary's steps preaching a false doctrine, namely that grace was necessary but insufficient to please God. The missionary Apostle wrote: "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3).

Doctrinal integrity is urged upon the Hebrews. Especially is this important in terms of the essence of Christianity. "The heart be established by grace, not with foods" apparently refers to the feasts of Judaism (the author possibly had the Passover in mind). Rather than justification by ritual, one is to find justification through the grace of God (cf. Rom. 3:24). This thought continues in v. 10 with the emphasis upon an altar to which the Hebrew Christians have access. This altar is obviously the sacrifice of Jesus. Those who continue the ritualistic service of the tabernacle have no right to eat of or to assimilate the significance of the sacrifice of the eternal paschal Lamb [RSB: QV].

- c. Christians have an altar and the non-Christian has no right to partake of the Christian altar, 13:10-13 .

13:10 - WE HAVE AN ALTAR. In 13:11-12 the author gives us an illustration. Christians (under the Second Covenant) "have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat." The meaning is that those who "still want to be under the law cannot enjoy the benefits of our altar--the cross and all it stands for" [RSB: QV].

13:11 -BURNED OUTSIDE THE CAMP. "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned outside the camp." The NRSV renders it, "For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp." The NKJV has

“for sin,” with no mention of the sin offering. It may help to note that the words “*as an offering*” are italicized in the NAS, showing that they do not appear in the original.

We have already seen how the high priest killed these animals and caught their blood for use on the Day of Atonement. No mention was made there of what happened to the carcasses of those slain animals. Here we are reminded that the carcasses of sin-offering animals were burned outside the camp. We read in Leviticus: “Then he is to bring out the bull to a place outside the camp and burn it as he burned the first bull; it is the sin offering for the assembly” (Lev. 4:21).

13:12 - THEREFORE JESUS ALSO. The contrast/comparison continues between Jesus, our eternal High Priest and the earthly high priest. “Therefore,” he says, “Jesus, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate.” We read in John 19:17, “They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha” (NAS). While no attention is called to it in the Gospels, this rather shows us that Jesus is our sin offering.

13:13 - LET US GO OUT TO HIM. “So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” This is something the Jewish reader would have identified with better than the modern day Christian (possibly even the modern Jewish believer). What this epistle is exhorting Christians (initially Jewish converts) to do was to go outside the camp - that is, to leave all rituals and join themselves to Jesus Christ.

d. We have an eternal city, 13:14.

13:14 - NO CONTINUING CITY. Again, the early Jewish reader would follow the logic: “For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.” We do not look to Jerusalem as a symbol of the presence of the Lord with us. We have the indwelling spirit of the living God within us. The city to which we look is the eternal city, new Jerusalem.

e. There is a way to guard against strange teachings, 13:15-16.

13:15 - A SACRIFICE OF PRAISE TO GOD. The writer exhorts us “Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.” We do not go to an earthly temple, a temple made with hands offer sacrifices to God. Our sacrifices are those of love, service, and praise (“the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name”). Once again, the Apostle Paul is a good example:

But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; *I am amply supplied*, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, *an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing*

to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen (emphasis added).

13:16 - DOING GOOD, AND SHARING. In the previous verse we have seen that praise is one of the sacrifices of the Christian. Here we find two more examples of Christian sacrifices: “And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” We are not saved by good works but we are saved unto good works (Eph. 2:10).

4. Support to your leaders, 13:17.

13:17 - OBEY YOUR LEADERS. That is what the Scripture says! A lot of members in the church today may not like it, but here it is: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you” (NAS). The NKJV is even stronger: “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive.”

In the first place this certainly points to the pastor and other ministers, and it may well point to other leaders who are elected by the church and given specific responsibilities. But think first about the pastor. He is called to preach the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, and preach it without compromise. When he preaches the Gospel without compromising sound doctrine, members of the church are not only expected, but commanded to obey. The Scripture definitely teaches pastoral authority, but his authority is in the Word and in the Spirit. Beyond that, he will be wise to limit his authority or the areas agreed upon when he is called to be pastor of the church, or that which is found in his job description or in the church constitution.

Paul and other apostles had apostolic authority wherever they were. Paul threatened to deal with the situation in Corinth when he arrived, if they did not deal with it before then. As far as we are informed, apostolic authority ended with the apostolic age. Pastoral authority, or even denominational authority with some denominations, is usually determined by the church or that denomination today.

In a Baptist church the pastor does not simply stand and announce that he is going to purchase new carpet and it is going to be red, with gold stripes. If, however, the church has adopted a budget that allows him to order new letterheads, office supplies, or Vacation Bible School supplies, then there should be no problem when he does so.

When it comes to the pulpit, every pastor knows that only the Holy Spirit should control what he preaches. Almost every church member would agree with this, but there are a few exceptions. Most pastors appreciate it when someone tells him they would like to hear sermon on a certain subject or on a given passage of Scripture. But no one should ever tell him they he must speak on a given subject, or refrain from preaching on a certain subject.

I knew a man who was called to be pastor of a very well known church. He had only been there a short time when the organist came to him and told him that she did not ever want to hear another subject on the blood of Christ. It was, she told him, to gory and in poor taste before they had Sunday dinner. The pastor confided in her brother-in-law, only to discover that he was not surprised. When he asked the brother-in-law what he might do, the layman said, "There is nothing you are ever going to be able to do here. She runs this church. If you want to preach like that the only way you are going to be able to do it is to take those who agree with you and start a new church." That is exactly what they did. The new church completely overshadowed the old church. This is an extreme example, but no pastor could accept the restriction this woman would have placed on him. Furthermore, no church member should let anyone gain that kind of control over the Lord's church.

5. The author requests prayer, 13:18-19.

13:18 - PRAY FOR US. Pray for me. Remember me in prayer. We have heard the same request expressed in different words, but we are not surprised when a Christian asks for our prayers. We need others to pray for us and we need to pray for others. A man made a comment about something he had done and his friend joked, "I am going to pray for you." He said, "You do that, I need the prayer and you need the practice." They may have been joking, but prayer is not a joking matter. The writer of Hebrews, whoever he was, wanted to readers to pray for him. The "us" may have meant the writer and his associates or the church with which he was associated. It is also possible that he is using it in the "ministerial" sense, as some preachers are want to do. That is often referred to as the ministerial "we."

"For" denotes purpose, intent, or explanation - "for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things." We often request prayer in a time of crisis, but here the writer is requesting prayer for a very practical reason - the desire "to conduct ourselves honorably in all things." This should be the commitment of every believer, and if we are committed to a life that is honorable before God, we need the prayers of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

13:19 - I URGE YOU. He requests prayer - no, he sincerely urges them to pray for him and those with whom he is associated. "And I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you the sooner." Since we are not given the author's circumstances, there is little to be gained by speculation. He is asking prayer that he might be restored to them "sooner" than they might have expected. We have the "restored" to, but restored from what? The term might have been used of one with a serious health problem who requested prayer for healing that he might have been restored "sooner" to them. However, knowing the political climate in which he lived in the Roman world of the first century, he might have been praying that he would be released from jail or prison that he might be restored to them earlier than having to serve out the complete sentence. Perhaps this is one of the reasons Paul is thought by some to have been the author of Hebrews.

V. SALUTATIONS AND BENEDICTIONS CONCLUDE THE EPISTLE (13:20-25)

A. Concluding Benedictions Are Stated, 13:20-21.

13:20 - NOW THE GOD OF PEACE. By “now” he shows that he has come to the conclusion of this epistle, He begins the conclusion with a benediction. He writes, “Now the God of peace who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord...” Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and God the Father is the “God of peace” Who raised Jesus, the Good Shepherd, from the dead. The “blood of eternal covenant” is the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses us from sin, and by which we enter a covenant relationship with God.

13:21 - EQUIP YOU. Every believer needs to be equipped to worship God, to witness for Him, and to serve Him. The church has the responsibility of equipping the saints, but from the number of poorly equipped church members there are in the church, it is obvious that we have failed somewhere. In some cases churches have failed to try to equip the saints, and in other cases parents have never given us an opportunity to help equip their children. New converts often refuse to become involved in the organizations, like Sunday School and Discipleship Training, which are organized to equip, or disciple new members.

When I was still a young man in the ministry, I was called as pastor of the Hillcrest Baptist Church in Nederland, Texas. I was excited about the prospects of seeing a lot of people saved and before I moved I asked for maps of the town and lists of prospects. I felt that my ministry might be one of church growth. The sanctuary was filled at the second service every Sunday morning and the evening service and prayer service were well attended. The spirit was good and the response to the messages very positive. People talked about them all during the week.

I had not been there long before I discovered that my predecessor, George Clark, had a better perspective of what his ministry was while he was pastor there. George left the church to become editor of the Church Administration magazine for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, and I am sure he was chosen because he was a good administrator, a good teacher/trainer, he was well organized, and he had a clear understanding of what he should do and how he should do it.

I asked about outreach, and I was told that George had told them that he believed his ministry at Hillcrest was the edification of the saints. He called to assure me he was praying for me and my ministry at the church and as we talked he affirmed that. Edification of the saints is essential, if not synonymous with, the equipping of the saints. Most churches really want to equip the saints if given an opportunity to do so.

One of the first challenges it to convince them that they need to be equipped. Christians need to be equipped to carry out the Great Commission, to minister to those who are hurting among us, to minister to those who are facing some kind of crisis, and neither last not least, for spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6).

TO DO HIS WILL. Just as Jesus sought to do the will of the Father, every believer must seek “in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight...” Jesus said,

"For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Mark 3:35).

The Holy Spirit seeks to accomplish the will of god in our lives:

...He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God (Rom. 8:27).

We must seek the will of God for our lives:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom. 12:2).

THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. There is no other way to find the will of God than through Jesus Christ. There is no way to do the will of God other than through Jesus Christ. We seek to do the will of God in, and through, and by His grace, just as Jesus did everything He did through the Father. Jesus said, "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 5:30). Jesus is our example - as He followed the will of the Father, we follow Him.

We must always look to Jesus Christ “to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.” In his second letter to the church at Corinth Paul wrote of “the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4b). In the same passage he wrote:

For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor. 4:5-6, NAS).

B. The Salutation Is Included in the Concluding Remarks, 13:22-25 .

13:22 - BUT I URGE YOU. Closing the letter, the writer now urges the readers to “bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.” For a good part of the epistle the writer wrote as a theologian, meticulously delineating for these Jewish proof for the superiority of Jesus Christ over the prophets, angels, and the Old Testament priesthood. He has demonstrated that in Jesus we have a superior covenant, for it is based upon a superior promise. Furthermore, He is the superior sacrifice.

The author went on to briefly play the role of preacher, exhorting the people to trust Jesus Christ, to follow Him, and to pay attention to sound doctrine. Now He returns briefly to the exhortation to urge the to honor the exhortation. The Greek word (*anechw*) rendered “bear” means to hold up, bear with, or endure. The word translated “Briefly” means a short time, or a little while.

They obviously understood what he meant. Does he mean that it is a brief epistle? Compared with what might have been written, it might have seemed so. Or did it refer to the brief time between the time he had seen them and the time he wrote this epistle?

13:23 - OUR BROTHER TIMOTHY. “Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you.” Timothy was one of Paul’s associates who, having been saved on the First Missionary Journey of Paul, joined him on the Second Missionary Journey (see Acts 16:1; Rom. 16:21). Apparently Timothy had been imprisoned, but had been released. Perhaps this is another reason many believe Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. But it should be noticed here that no mention is made of the author’s having been in prison. We are not sure when or where his arrest, trial, and imprisonment took place. Obviously these people were familiar with the circumstances.

13:24 - GREET ALL OF YOUR LEADERS. From this it may be inferred that the author was well known to the recipients. However, since he does not greet them by name, it is possible that this was added as a courtesy. The writer sent his greetings to the leaders and to “all the saints.”

THOSE FROM ITALY GREET YOU. One would expect this greeting if this had been one of Paul’s prison epistles, yet internal evidence does not prove that Paul was the author. It simply does not follow the form and style of Paul’s epistles. That, of course does not prove that he did not write it. “Those from Italy” could have meant those Christians who were still living in Italy, but there is another possibility. At some point the Jews were driven out of Rome (including Priscilla and Aquila), so “those of Italy” might well point to those Jews who had been driven from Italy who were personally known to these readers. It is also possible that they did not know them personally, but they knew about them.

13:25 - GRACE BE WITH YOU ALL. What a glorious ending! And how we need to understand the significance of this closing prayer-wish for those ancient readers, and for the modern student of the Word. We are saved by grace, but we are not finished with grace when we are saved. Grace is the very environment in which the child of God lives out his life on planet earth. The just shall, indeed, live by faith, as Paul wrote in Romans, but faith would be meaningless apart from the grace of God - the source of both grace and faith. AMEN!

A PARTING EXHORTATION

“Let us...” This is a fitting exhortation with which to close this great epistle. Following is a list of thirteen “let us” exhortations.

1. Let us fear, 4:1.
2. Let us be diligent to enter that rest, 4:11.
3. Let us hold fast our confession, 4:14.
4. Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, 4:16.
5. Let us press on to maturity, 6:1.
6. Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, 10:22.
7. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, 10:23.
8. Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 10:24.
9. Let us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, 12:1.
10. Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 12:1
11. Let us show gratitude, 12:28.
12. Let us go out to Him outside the camp, 13:13.
13. Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, 13:15.

STUDY GOD’S WORD

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15).

BENEDICTION

The LORD bless you, and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.

Numbers 6:24-26 (NAS)

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